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BUTTLE LAKE, VANCOUVER ISLAND: 25 YEARS OF PRODUCTION, 75 YEARS OF DISCOVERY

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Geologist John Buttle began mineral exploration in 1865. Subsequent, expeditions recognised alpine beauty but, unlike the first, failed to detect mineral potential. This led to the creation of Strathcona Park in 1911. Altered social priorities opened the park to exploration in 1918. Private prospectors, particularily James Cross, immediately staked three surface showings in their search for gold and copper. These became the Lynx, Myra and Price ore zones. Trenches, diamond drill holes and adits in the early 1920's marked this era's failed attempt to develop mineral wealth.

In 1930, H.C. Gunning, in a prescient, G.S.C. Report, correlated the three areas along a "schistified zone" over a length of three miles. By then floatation was established and zinc was a commodity. Gunning concluded: "the principal possibillty is of developing a large tonnage of ore of milling grade".

Interest renewed in the 1950's. The property was consolidated and promoted by the Reynold's Syndicate. In 1961, Harold Wright optioned the property for Western Mines (now Westmin Resources) and undertook exploration and development with the support of Cominco. Development was risky and, after withdrawal of bank support, Western Mines succeeded on its own through the grace of a 3 year, tax free period and the unexpected definition of open pit reserves by underground exploration. In 1966, Western Mines committed to production at 680 tonnes/day. The surrounding Park was closed to exploration in 1973.

Exploration has always been based on geometric extrapolation and geological interpretation. The shear zone, vein replacement model prevailed until 1968 when the sea floor, massive sulphide model gained influence. Structural interpretation passed from fault control, to unstructured volcanic morphology to a current view of strong folding and faulting superimposed on bedded volcanics with linear facies. The latter model aided discovery of the Price ore and H-W Mine in 1979. Subsequent discoveries on Lynx and H-W horizons have been guided by long projections of linear trends across offsetting faults. Extreme relief dictates extensive drill drifts too follow the flat plunging zones. This long term venture tests multiple horizons on trends known to extend more than 7 km with no end in sight other than our still distant boundaries against Class A Park which enshrouds this multibillion dollar "resource of the people".

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ABSTRACTS OF TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS