

Jim Utley, BA Commerce '75, Vice President, Human Resources, TeckCominco

Human resources - working with people - is a challenging job at the best of times but for Jim Utley, the year 1992 was more challenging than most. Then a manager of Human Resources at Cominco, one of B.C.'s largest mining companies, the industry was in the midst of a metal-prices meltdown along with significant operational difficulties at the Trail smelter. Utley and a small team of senior managers were charged with helping to restructure the operation. It was Utley's job to handle layoffs, employee reassignments and labour negotiations.

"We completed a breakthrough agreement on Labour Day 1993," he recalls. "That agreement laid the foundation for a new labour management relationship and ongoing viable operations." It was Utley's proudest moment, he says, because the new contract helped convince Cominco to invest in a new smelter, a move that ensured the continuation of many well-paying jobs in the town of Trail.

Today, Utley is vice President, human resources at Teck Cominco, which has 7,100 employees worldwide. The two mining companies, Teck and Cominco, merged in 2001. Utley was there along with his HR team to handle issues covering pensions, benefits, salaries - even parking stalls.

Utley has also provided guidance to the Province of B.C., sitting on an advisory committee for apprenticeships and trades education that reviewed and formulated standards, accountability, and strategy.

Utley, who graduated from SFU in 1975, says he still uses lessons learned. "The courses in accounting, finance and economics taught me the analytical tools that are the foundation for what I do every day."