



Fiji looking golden for Lion One Metals

by Jennifer S. Getsinger, PhD, PGeo

LION ONE METALS LTD. [LIO-TSXV; LOMLF-OTCQX] holds Fiji's Tuvatu gold project, one of the highest-grade gold mining prospects in the world. Led by North Vancouver entrepreneur Walter Berukoff (with Red Lion Management and real estate interests, including First Quay Holdings), Lion One Metals plans to mine the yellow metal in the near future. Tuvatu, located on the edge of the Navilawa caldera, lies on the same structural lineament as the Vatukoula gold mine, near Nadi International Airport on Fiji's main island of Viti Levu. A Fijian government ceremony in January 2016 marked the presentation of the mining lease permit for the go-ahead of the Tuvatu Mine, from Prime Minister Bainimarama. With a mining lease in place, the next steps for Lion One Metals include awarding contracts for construction of the processing plant and site infrastructure, and beginning to mine

and stockpile gold before 2018.

Berukoff, Chairman and CEO of Lion One Metals, has a long history of owning and operating various assets worldwide, including more than 20 gold mines in seven countries and real estate ventures in Cuba. Stories of successes have come and gone for Berukoff – resource companies founded, built up, and sold – Miramar, Northern Orion, La Mancha Resources. He values environmental concerns and has a personal interest in organic agriculture.

In 2006-2007, Berukoff acquired not only the longest operating gold mine in Fiji from Emperor Mines, but also several other properties on the main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Around that time, a change in government resulted in leadership of Fiji's current Prime Minister, Commodore Voreqe (Frank) Bainimarama, who has been encouraging to Lion One Metals' projects.

Other people key to Lion One Metals are Stephen Mann, geologist and Managing Director, whose career included gold mining discoveries in Australia; and Ian Chang, Chief Development Officer, who was VP Project Development for Pretium's Brucejack gold project (now producing gold bars).

Gold mining has been carried out on Viti Levu at the historic (and currently operating) gold mine of Vatukoula. Vatukoula is one of the large volcanogenic, epithermal gold systems of the South Pacific segment of the Ring of Fire, along with Barrick's Porgera and Newcrest's Lihir in PNG. Since 1933, Vatukoula has produced some 7 million ounces of gold, and contains 21 million tonnes at 6 g/t gold (or from VGM website, mineral resources of 4.1 million ounces gold and mineral reserves of 750,000 ounces).

In 2006-2007, companies controlled by

Lion One CEO Walter Berukoff, right, and Lion One Managing Director Stephen Mann, centre. Photo courtesy Lion One Metals Limited.

Berukoff acquired Vatukoula from Emperor Mines and then sold it with proceeds directed to the Tuvatu Project. Fijians were eager to get the Vatakoula Mine operating again after the 2007 closure since so many people depended on its continued production for their livelihoods.

With a similar gravity signature to the Vatakoula gold mining area, the entire Navilawa Caldera is under application by Lion One Metals to expand the mineral tenement base for its Tuvatu Gold Project, in addition to a large exploration license. Even without the extra land holdings, the current resource model at Tuvatu suggests a mine life of at least seven years. Future high-grade gold production is estimated at 262,000 ounces at 15.30 g/t gold for three years, and 352,000 ounces at 11.30 g/t through year seven, based on a gold price of US \$1,200/oz. Estimates in 2012 for Tuvatu for inferred resources were 480,000 ounces of gold from 2,618,000 tonnes grading 5.71 g/t gold, and indicated resources of 172,000 ounces from 760,000 tonnes grading 7.05 g/t gold.

An advantage for mining in Fiji is that the workers from Vatukoula have years of expertise in narrow vein mining. This is crucial in places where high-grade veins might occur, such as the recent intersection in drill hole TUDDH406, which yielded 71.41 g/t gold over 8.41 metres, including 126 g/t gold over 4.5 metres. Although gold is generally evidenced in the Navilawa Intrusive Complex over a large area with at least 1.00 g/t gold, some veins are studded with visible crystalline gold. As Berukoff said in the interview, "It's a jewel box!" He said now that the Tuvatu Mine has permits in hand, it has the potential to be the "greenest gold mine yet" with its plan to mine underground and have dry stacking of tailings to preserve environmental integrity of the tropical paradise that is Fiji. Berukoff concluded, "It's a culmination for me in the past 40 years, the best project in my experience." ■