

CEGA is delighted to award the 2023 Patricia J. Lee Trailblazer Award to Matt Young, VP Exploration at Spur Petroleum, for the extraordinary work that he and his team conducted to explore and produce the Clearwater oil fairway using cold flow multilateral drill technology. This drilling technique had been written off by several operators in the WCSB for this reservoir/hydrocarbon type, but Spur's success brought life to a play that had been bypassed for decades. Matt's understanding of its development potential was far ahead of industry peers and his advocacy and collaboration skills directly led to the discovery of several massive oil pools in the Clearwater fairway, starting at Marten Hills in 2015.

Years before the Marten Hills discovery, the idea for multilateral drilling in the Clearwater fairway was being tested by Spur in the Central Alberta Whitford region 100 kilometers to the south. The Whitford pool proved to be the testing grounds for future Clearwater drilling as Spur refined various well designs and the crucially important drilling fluid design. Along with the lessons learned in Whitford, Matt and his team applied key foundational geologic principles such as detailed stratigraphic architecture, sedimentological analysis and reservoir characterization to challenge industry cutoff norms to identify new prospects within this prolific fairway.

In December 2015 Spur drilled the first two multi-lateral horizontal wells at Marten Hills resulting in a significant discovery. The multilaterals were challenging to drill and cross disciplinary management was required for ideal lateral placement to optimize well performance. Matt collaborated with engineering and drilling staff to unlock and solve various challenges to ensure success.

The Clearwater Formation has grown rapidly since discovery and is one of the most sought-after formations in Canada due to its industry-leading economics. Today, Spur Petroleum is recognized as the pioneer in this play (Daily Oil Bulletin, 2022). Remarkably, despite a rapid influx of competitors, Spur remains the dominant producer and landowner nine years later. Matt and his team's discovery and development success have had a direct impact on the development of regional infrastructure and revenue generation for the province of Alberta.

Matt Young and his team at Spur Petroleum exemplify the characteristics of Trailblazer winners. Their ability to generate a unique idea (cold flow multilateral drilling in semi-conventional Clearwater reservoirs), develop a strategy around how to best implement that idea (through extensive land capture strategies) and improve (through close collaboration across disciplines) is an exemplary model for our industry.