



**Laura Araneda\***

Age 42

Sussex, New Brunswick

**PRESIDENT**

Vic Progressive Diamond Drilling, providing contract drilling for the mining industry

**2011 REVENUE**

\$5-\$10 million; sales are up 21 percent from 2010

**EMPLOYEES**

Started with four in 1987, growing to more than 100 today

**WHY WE LOVE HER**

Because she wasn't afraid to go underground and ended up on top

*Treat employees the way you'd like to be treated."*

## Power Driller

**WHILE STUDYING BUSINESS** in university, Laura Araneda asked her dad to take her into one of his mines. "He was a bit surprised that I'd want to go, you know, because I'm a girl. But I come from a long line of miners and grew up with the lore and the adventure." Once underground, "I was hooked," she says. So Laura convinced her dad to let her become a driller's helper deep in the mine. "It was cold and wet, and you had to keep moving to stay warm—it was a different world. At the end of the shift I would drive the tractor up the tunnel, which was an adventure in itself." She completed her degree and worked her way up in the company, becoming president in 2005.

**TRADE SECRET** "I ask for multiple offers for each financing deal I do. I don't assume that one financial institution will always give me the best rate."

**LESSON LEARNED** In 2009, when the economy tanked, Laura rallied the management team and developed a strategy. "We focused on our existing customers to help them find efficiencies and get good results in a very tough market." It worked. "Our financials suffered, but not catastrophically as so many other companies' did."

**FORWARD THINKING** Laura is the driving force behind the company's eco-policies, developing equipment that minimizes environmental impact and adopting less disruptive exploratory-drilling practices. "Mining has a bad rap. Our goal is to leave no footprint. You shouldn't be able to see where we've been."