

BOOK DIGS UP MYSTERIOUS MINE: LEGENDARY PITT LAKE GOLD MINE SAID TO BE CURSED

Riches are still to be found, as the search continues for a lost gold mine at Pitt Lake.

The mine, which is said to be cursed by a Salish man known as Charlie Slumach, is written about in *Slumach's Gold: In Search of a Legend*.

The book, written by brothers Rick and Brian Antonson and Mary Trainer all of whom are former Burnaby residents – details the legend, while separating fact from fiction.

“All of us are Burnaby people. Rick and I grew up in Burnaby. Mary was a Burnaby resident for many years,” said Brian, who is the associate dean of broadcast and media communications at B.C. Institute of Technology.

The legend of Slumach begins with gold nuggets being brought back to New Westminster saloons. “Slumach would come, according to legend, to New Westminster and throw around gold nuggets,” Brian said, adding that there is no record to back those claims up.

The legend also says Slumach was hanged for murdering a local First Nations girl whom he allegedly took with him to help find the gold.

“He was actually hanged for murdering Louis Bee,” Brian noted.

Slumach was charged, convicted and hanged on the gallows at the B.C. provincial jail in New Westminster for murdering Bee in 1891, an incident covered in the British Columbian newspaper at the time, according to the book.

Brian and his brother became interested in the lost gold mine while sitting around a campfire on a summer night in 1957. An old aboriginal woman began to tell them the tale:

“There’s a lost gold mine on Pitt Lake,” she had begun. “It’s got an Indian curse. You’ll never find it. At least not find it and live.”

“She was probably my age (now),” Brian said with a laugh. “We called her an old woman at the time.”

After hearing the story, the brothers became obsessed, but they have found neither the gold nor concrete proof

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that the gold mine exists.

In 1972, Trainer joined the Antonsons' quest and together they have written the book, which was recently released. It has since become a Canadian bestseller, selling more than 10,000 copies.

The authors not only retell the legend of Slumach, but they have also researched every detail to confirm the truths surrounding several events, including Slumach's death and the international fascination that followed.

Rumours include Slumach's possession of gold nuggets "the size of walnuts," the Slumach curse meant to protect his gold from others, the reported claims that people have died searching for the gold and the characters in the legend - including the murdered Louis Bee.

Several others have died or have gone missing after searching for Slumach's gold, but Brian doubts a curse is to blame for their run-ins with death.

"It's pretty tough country," he said. "The country is terrible."

Brian plans to keep searching for the gold, however, and will be continuing the hunt this summer.

"If there is any gold, it's going to be northeast of the lake in the Stave glacier and Terrarosa glacier area. ... Several people we talked to say they've found it," he said, adding that he will believe the mine to be found when he sees the nuggets for himself.

The authors are signing copies at the Chapters store at Metropolis at Metrotown on Dec. 16 from 2 to 4 p.m.