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LEGEND OF FABULOUS LOST CREEK MINE BARED FOR THE
FIRST TIME BY INDIAN CHIEF

“NO WHITE MAN WILL FIND IT”

BY BRUCE LARSEN

Indian legend insists that the ghost of an Indian, who died on the gallows in New Westminster, guards Lost Creek mine. Fabulous Eldorado that lured 21 white men to mysterious deaths.

The legend was related by the 79-year old Chief (August Jack) Khahtsahlano, the only Indian still living who knows the whole story.

Lost Creek mine is “death to white men,” he says, and if ever found again will be located by a person with Indian blood.

Was in his eighties

The ghost that haunts the mine is Old Slumach, the Indian who found the treasure deep in the Pitt Lake mountains, about 45 miles north of Vancouver. He was in his eighties when he was hanged on January 16, 1891, for murdering a half-breed.

White men, present when the trapdoor was sprung on Old Slumach claim the grizzled Indian died with his secret; the Indian legend says he whispered it to his son.

White man who have plodded into the treacherous Pitt Lake mountains bent on finding the golden creek had no knowledge of guiding landmarks—the Indians say Old Slumach’s mine is “near a large tent-shaped rock with three peaks in the distance.

Without revealing the route suggested by the legend, Khahtsahlano said: “Every white man who has sought the mine started out from Pitt Lake in the wrong direction!”

Why is the wrinkled Squamish chief breaking an Indian silence of 60 years? Khahtsahlano hopes that the telling may curb the disappearance of white prospectors seeking the “hideous rockbound creek whose bed is lined with gold.” (Last October an RCMP search failed to find a trace of the twenty-first prospector, Alfred Gaspard, 60, a Langley widower who disappeared July, 1950.

The Indian story, as told by the old chief was an exiting mixture of superstition, legend, and fact.

Bullets of Gold

It started well before 1891.

Old Slumach and his family lived on the Silver Creek reserve,

**Legend of Fabulous Lost
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tucked into the “V” formed near the bottom of Stave Lake, where Silver Creek swirls into the wide Pitt River.

Simon Pierre, the bands medicine man, who died in 1949 remembered hiding in mountain-slope woods to catch Old Slumach plunk practice rifle shots into a stump. He had seen the old hunter fashion the bullets out of gold.

After Old Slumach was hanged, Simon Pierre went back into the woods and dug \$200 worth of gold from the target stump.

Old Slumach used to kill deer for a butcher in Coquitlam. The butcher found golden slugs in the meat.

Killed Eight Squaws

Nobody asked the Indian where he got his gold, but all knew he took trips into the mountains and came back with fresh supplies. They thought the mine was probably near good hunting grounds and that Old Slumach had stumbled on it that way.

Old Slumach was known as a killer of men. The Indian legend makes no attempt to whitewash his character. It says he killed at least eight squaws after forcing them into the mountains to pack out his gold. (Early newspapers also said Slumach killed 10 men before the arrival of the white man on the B.C. scene). The murders, according to the Indians, could never be tagged on Old Slumach, and he was actually hanged for murdering a “kanaka,” a part-Hawaiian, who was the descendant of Hawaiian seamen who came into Port of New Westmister and stayed to live with Indians.

(New Westminster court records show Old Slumach actually died for the murder of a half-breed, Louis Bee, in a fight on Lillooet Slough, near Pitt River, on September 8, 1890.)

Old Slumach zealously guarded his mine. When he thought prospectors were seeking his gold, he devised means frightening them off.

Otway Wilkie, a provincial police constable who died recently, was one of the officers sent out to arrest Old Slumach after Louis Bee’s death. Skirmishes followed and the roundup took several weeks. Women on the reserve were panicky during the hunt—they believed the old killer would return and take one of them away for more gold-packing and death.

The Indian story says the trail judge went to the Indian and told him that instead of hanging he would likely get life sentence if he told white men where his gold was hidden.

Old Slumach highlights the legend: meloose --- mine memloose”

Mine dies Also—(No, when I die, mine dies)

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Old Slumach's son visited his father in the death cell and the Indian story says Old Slumach said: "I tell you where mine is, but you must not go there unless times are bad, because gold is death."

How does Chief Khahtsahlano know Old Slumach's ghost stalks Old Slumach's mine? The legend says it does—and Khahtsahlano had an encounter with the ghost: "I hunted the mine many times. One time when I was alone I was sure I was nearing the gold. I found three peaks. I tried to move forward to spot the tent rock but I couldn't. A heavy black cloud came down around me and when I tried to get around it I found that it was moving me away and away. I decided to leave. I'll never go back.

(In the second of two articles in Saturday's Daily Province, the Indian legend will tell of the death of Old Slumach's son because of the mine secret and the ugly fate of the three other men—a half-breed and two US prospectors—who actually took gold out of Lost Creek Mine.)

[Second part "Lost Creek Gold Meant Violent Death" in Province 22 December 1951]
