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Surrey Delta Messenger 18
April 1974

SLUMACH'S GOLD BULLETS LURE 21 TO STRANGE DEATHS

The ghost of Old Slumach guards the Lost Creek gold mine in the formidable Pitt Lake Mountains, about 40 miles north of New Westminster.

This was firmly believed by all the Indians and a good number of white people, who claimed that Old Slumach put a curse on the mine before he was hanged for the murder of Louis Bee, January 16, 1891.

His last words before he dropped into eternity were: "Nika memloose, mine memloose," "When I die, mine dies."

Another version of the legend says that Slumach's son visited his father in the death cell and the old man said: "I tell you where mine is, but you must no go there unless times are bad and you need the gold to live. But you must only take as much gold as you need to carry you over hard times, because gold is death."

However, soon after his father's death, the son went to the mine and in a frenzy of gold fever began scooping up all the gold he could carry, but he never left the place alive.

John Slumach lived with his family on the Silver Creek reserve, near the bottom of Pitt Lake, where the Silver Creek swirls into Pitt River.

He appears to have supported his family chiefly by hunting, and it is generally believed, he discovered the fabulous gold creek during a hunting trip.

He used to kill deer for the butchers in Coquitlam and New Westminster, and sometime in the middle 1880s they began finding gold bullets in the carcasses.

Apparently they kept mum about it for several years until Slumach eventually turned up in New Westminster with some \$1500 worth of raw gold.

Then it became known that a Pitt Lake Indian had been supplying a local dentist with gold for a considerable time.

The medicine man at the Silver Creek Reserve, Simon Pierre, had seen old Slumach making bullets out of gold and shoot them into a stump, and as soon as the old man was dead, Simon went into the woods and dug \$200 worth of gold from the target stump.

This, and much more information was revealed by Chief August Jack Khatsahlano, who had known Slumach when a young man, and firmly believed the legend that no white man would ever find the mine and if it was ever rediscovered, it would be a person with Indian blood.

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Khatsahlano hunted for the lost gold creek many times after Slumach's death and on one occasion, when he found the tell-tale large, tent-shaped rock with the three peaks in the distance, he knew he was near the golden bonanza.

But, as he started toward the tent-rock, a heavy black cloud descended over him and made it impossible for him to move.

After some time the dark cloud seemed to be moving him away from the tent-rock and at that moment he recalled Slumach's curse and never went back

Chief Khatsahlano has been considered the greatest authority on the Slumach legend, and he appears to have been concerned about the mounting toll of human lives among the miners hunting for the "illusive creek whose bed is lined with gold."

For fifty years he kept close record of the men who were lost in the rugged Pitt Lake Mountains, and when his friend, Alfred Gaspard, of Langley disappeared without a trace in 1950, the chief decided to make public his knowledge of Lost Creek Mine.

According to Chief Khatsahlano, Alfred Gaspard was the 21st victim of Slumach's curse and many will still remember the day-by-day reports in the newspapers about the hopeless search, carried out in October 1950, by the RCMP, aided by airplanes and tracking dogs.

If my memory serves me right, the Mounties found his first three night's camping places, but after that not even the dogs could pick up his trail.

Khatsahlano hoped that the telling of the story, "would curb the disappearance of white prospectors seeking the hideous rockbound creek whose bed is lined with gold."

Whether it was the breaking of the 60-year-old Indian's silence, or just a coincidence, the fact remains that no lives has been lost for the past 20 years.

The old chief strongly emphasized his belief that the lost mine "is death to white men, and if ever found, it would be by an Indian."

Without actually revealing the exact location of the mine the chief said that: "every white man who sought the mine started out from Pitt Lake in the wrong direction." (If I were to look for the lost mine, I would head for the Stave Lake watershed.)

Old Slumach was accused of being a killer of both men and women and is said to have killed ten men before the white

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man came on the scene, and at least eight women, after forcing them into the mountains to pack his gold.

It is difficult to picture Slumach as a cold-blooded murderer as he was undoubtedly a devoted family man and appeared to have been a respected citizen, until the time he was forced to shoot Louis Bee in order to prevent him divulging the location of his gold creek.

But at least, Old Slumach could not be accused of murdering the 21 prospectors who disappeared in the rugged Pitt Lake Mountains, long after he was gone.