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The many stories of Slumach's Gold

One of our most enduring tales is the compelling story of Slumach's gold mine in the wilderness north of Pitt Lake.

Many versions of this story have been told, embellished and repeated, inspiring eager fortune seekers to enter one of the most difficult hiking areas in a rugged mountain range.

The most common version tells of a man known only as Slumach who had a cabin at the north end of Pitt Lake, near Widgeon Creek. Supposedly he came out of the wilderness area from time to time with a bag of gold nuggets to cash them in at saloons in New Westminster.

He was eventually hunted down, tried and hanged in 1891 for the murder of Louis Bee near the Pitt River on Lillooet Slough.

On Jan. 28, Brian Antonson will be presenting an illustrated talk for the Maple Ridge Historical Society on *Slumach's Gold, In Search of a Legend*.

This will take place at 7:30 p.m. in St. Andrew's Heritage Hall, 22279 - 116th Avenue. Members may attend free, while visitors are welcome for a \$2 drop-in fee.

Please don't expect to find a map and directions to sudden riches.

There really was a man called Slumach who was hung for murder, but much speculation has grown up about his life and activities.

There was no mention of his gold at the brief murder trial, but people began seeking his secret supply soon after his death.

Talk of a curse placed on anyone finding Slumach's gold was fostered by the fact that several prospectors either died, disappeared or were badly injured in their search.

Antonson and his brother Rick were fascinated by the story of Slumach after hearing it told around a campfire.

In 1972 they brought out a slim edition of their search into the details and facts about the legendary man. They were assisted by a friend, Mary Trainer.

They have recently re-issued an enlarged edition of *Slumach's Gold: In Search of a Legend*, with photos and further research and speculation.

Another local person to add to the story of Slumach is ex-RCMP officer and photographer Don Waite.

He uncovered the connection between Slumach and his nephew, Peter Pierre of the Katzie First Nations. His recounting of the story appeared in *Tales of the Golden Ears* in 1975.

The Antonson's also consulted local historian Fred Braches in researching their new edition.

Braches had looked into the available archival information about all the participants in the original story, and was able to dismiss as untrue many aspects of the legend.

Today's photograph came into the Maple Ridge Museum collection recently from the family of George Campbell, who was a pharmacist in Hammond.

It illustrates the fact that many local people spent time and energy exploring Slumach country.

Campbell is standing at the wood timbered entrance of an exploratory mine in the Pitt Lake area.

The photo was taken some time in the 1920s.

Is there really any gold in the shadow of the Golden Ears, our iconic landmark?

If anybody really knows, they aren't telling.

Sheila Nickols is a board member of the Maple Ridge Historical Society.



Pharmacist George Campbell standing outside a mine entrance in the area of Pitt Lake, some time in the 1920s. (Photo Maple Ridge Museum)