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THE WAY IT WAS | SLUMACH'S GHOST GUARDS MINE

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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 hung 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 old man told said: "I tell you where the mine is, but you must only take as much 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 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 and mountain goat 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 \$1,500 worth of raw gold.

Then it also 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 fashion bullets out of gold and shoot them into a stump. 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 Khahtsahlano, who had known Slumach as a young man and firmly believed the legend that no white man would ever find the mine, and if it was rediscovered it would be by a man with Indian blood.

**Slumach's ghost guards
mine**

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He had hunted for the lost gold creek many times after Slumach's death and on one occasion he found the telltale 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 away from the tent-rock and at that moment he recalled Slumach's curse and never went back.

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

For 50 years he kept records of the men who were lost in the rugged Pitt Lake Mountains. When his friend Alfred Gaspard of Langley disappeared without a trace in 1950, the chief decided to make public his knowledge of the Lost Creek Mine.

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

If my memory serves me right, the Mounties found Gaspard's first three night 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 the white prospectors seeking the hideous rockbound creek whose bed is lined with gold." Whether it was the breaking of the 80-year-old Indian's silence, or just a coincidence, the fact remains that no lives have been lost for the past 20 years.

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. He is said to have killed 10 men and at least eight women, after forcing them into the mountain to pack his gold.

The murders could never be tagged on him, and surprisingly enough, the Indian legend makes no attempt to whitewash his character.

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It is difficult to picture Slumach as a cold-blooded murderer as he undoubtedly was 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 from 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.