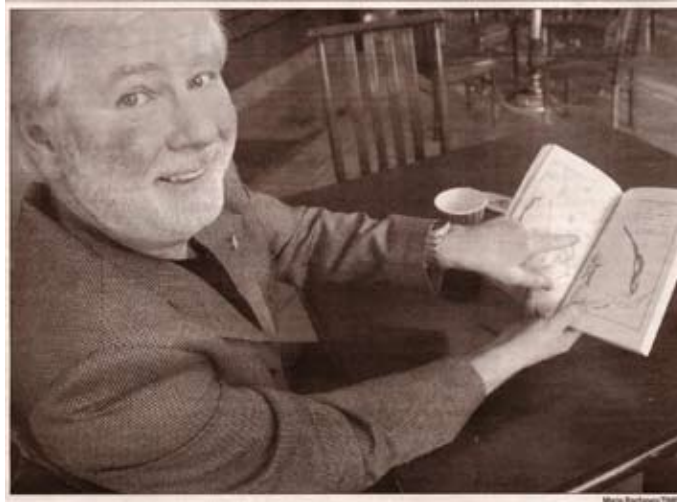


BOOK STRIKES GOLD WITH PITT LAKE TALE

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Brian Antonson with the book *Slumach's Gold*, which he co-wrote with his brother Rick and Mary Trainer.

Book strikes gold with Pitt Lake tale

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Brian Antonson is not sure whether this information should be published—it might be dangerous, people might get killed. After all, the curse is still on Pitt Lake.

Antonson, co-author of *Slumach's Gold* said he's worried about creating another generation of gold seekers and every time he and his fellow authors speak. They warn their audience about the dangers of searching for gold in the area.

But the intermingled legend and history is too good to keep unpublished, and Antonson has revised and republished the story he and his brother Rick heard around a campfire at Hatzic Lake as children. It's a tale they then researched and wrote with Mary Trainer originally in 1972.

There's the legend and then there's the truth.

According to legend, the Coast Salish native Slumach entered a saloon in New Westminster and threw down gold the size of walnuts.

He then disappeared with a girl and she was never seen again.

He did this three times, until the third time when one of the women was found with Slumach's knife in his back. He was caught, convicted and hanged at the New Westminster courthouse. His dying words were "nika memloose, mine memloose"—Katzie for "I die, the mine dies."

The gold mine is supposedly in the area north of Pitt Lake, perhaps as far away as Alvin near a "tent-shaped" rock.

The most commonly cited location of the gold mine is Sheridan Hill just north of Pitt Meadows. This is where Alouette or Lillooet Slough was located until the Dutch diked the area.

Native legends claim gold is in the area.

The authors of *Slumach's Gold* recount a native legend about a serpent guarding a cavern filled with gold whose entrance is revealed when the tide in Pitt Lake goes down, with a warning that if any white man finds the gold, it will mean the end of the happiness for the First Nations.

Antonson believes the story of Slumach's trial for murder and the legends of gold north of Pitt Lake have melded into one and have become the legend of Slumach's gold.

The real story of Slumach's demise, as collected by the authors from newspaper reports, has no mention of gold, but it does end with a murder and Slumach's hanging. The lead in a *Daily Columbian* article on Sept. 9, 1890 reads, "Louis Bee, a half-breed, is deliberately shot and killed by an insane Indian named Slumach, at Lillooet Slough."

According to newspaper accounts published in the book, Slumach tried to run from the law, but was eventually tracked down and tried by judge Montague Drake for the murder, and was hanged at the New Westminster courthouse.

Ten years later, a man named Jackson reportedly came out of the bush north of Pitt Lake very ill but having found \$8,000 worth of gold which he deposited in San Francisco. He kept its source secret until his death when he wrote a letter to Volcanic Brown—another prospector.

"I believe there is gold," Antonson said. "I don't believe Slumach had any gold."

But gold fever has sent many people to meet their maker at Pitt Lake. The story kept circulating and people kept looking for gold in the area. In 1961, it was reported that 23 people had been killed looking for gold.

"What would the number be today?" Antonson said. "It's dangerous - it's straight up and down. People have heart attacks - they fall off cliffs."

But the legends and stories keep circulating.

Shortly after the book was reprinted last October, Antonson was at a book signing at Chapter's in Coquitlam. He was approached by a man who said he's a guide in the area, and once took three Americans to Alvin north of Pitt Lake. The men disappeared into the bush for three days, and then came out with 15 ounces of gold, and gave one ounce to the guide.

Antonson and Trainer were at the Maple Ridge library last Wednesday evening talking about their book and the con-

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versation turned to gold. A woman brought [a] knife to the library claiming it was the knife Slumach used, information Antonson and his co-authors continue to collect for another possible updated version of Slumach's gold.

Slumach's Gold is going into its second printing. Information about the book can be found at www.slumachgold.ca.