



Section coordinator:  
**Monisha Martins**  
 604-467-1122 ext. 217  
 newsroom@mapleridge.com



Contributed

Mary Trainer, brothers Rick Antonson and Brian Antonson wrote *Slumach's Gold: In search of a legend*, published by Heritage House this year. The Slumach legend cites Sheridan Hill in the Pitt Polder as one of the sites of the lost gold mine.

## Old legends never die

**History** | Republished after 35 years, *Slumach's Gold* seeks the truth behind Pitt Lake's lost mine

By **Monisha Martins**  
 Staff Reporter

While driving to work from his home in Mission, Brian Antonson looks north to the tall mountains covered in snow. Sometimes through the cloud-shrouded peaks that loom over Pitt Meadows, he sees a sparkle.

"I believe there is gold northeast of Pitt Lake," he says.

But Slumach, the central figure of a century-old legend, never found it, he adds.

Antonson and his brother Rick first heard about Slumach's lost mine in the summer of 1957, while sitting around a campfire on the shores of Hatzig Lake.

It's a tale that began in the late 1800s after Slumach, a Katzie man, was hanged for shooting a Métis man called Louise Bee.

Soon after Slumach's death, tales of giant gold nuggets and murders were spinning in the press.

People believe the native man who lived at the Silver Creek Reserve near Pitt Lake had a secret stash of the metal. He'd saunter into New Westminster and party with his riches for weeks. When he died, legend says he cursed his hidden mine.

Slumach's country is meant to cover the circumference of Pitt Lake and extends up into Garibaldi Park, Widgeon Lake, Stave Lake, De-

Beck Creek, the Stave Glacier, Terrarosa Glacier and the rocky outcrop in the Pitt Polder called Sheridan Hill.

"It is intrigue and it is full of things that nobody can say for sure. It is our own legend," Antonson says. "Slumach's lost gold mine belongs to the Lower Mainland."

Fascinated by the tale of glittering gold, a curse and hidden treasure, the brothers vowed to look for the mine when they grew up.

In 1972, they joined Mary Trainer to write *In Search of a Legend: Slumach's Gold*.

The book became a Canadian best seller, selling 10,000 copies.

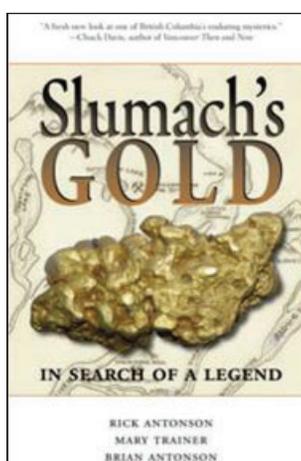
"I've been pursuing this since I was nine," Antonson, head of broadcast and media communications at the B.C. Institute of Technology says. "It's kept me going for 50 years."

Since writing *Slumach's Gold* 35 years ago, the Antonsons have continued to research the legend, whittling fact out of the fiction.

He says he has received many phone calls over the years from people who purport to found the hidden cache.

"I believe people have found gold up there but I have no idea where it would be," Antonson says.

"The people who have found it have talked about the Stave Glacier, the Terrarosa Glacier and those seem to be logically things." The reason why Slumach's legend refuses to die rests in the elements of the story.



"It is part Tom Sawyer, part Indiana Jones that attracts so many people," Antonson says.

"People love gold. It is the precious metal everybody wants."

When the trio started writing *Slumach's Gold*, Antonson says there were so many rumours, lies and missteps around.

Slumach is often vilified as a evil murderer who had cursed the shiny motherlode. Newspaper reports claim 30 people have died searching for it.

Through old press clippings, court records and interviews with other Slumach fanatics, the book methodically lays out the research.

"The goal has been to contribute to the local knowledge base and the legend," says Antonson.

They try to reveal the legends central characters: the murdered Louis Bee; the lost mine's first finder and the curse's first victim, John Jackson and introduce the research done by former RCMP officer and Maple Ridge historian Don Waite; movie maker Michael Collier and aviator-adventurer John Lovelace.

"I don't believe that Slumach ever had anything to do with the mine," Antonson says. "He just got involved, someone picked up his name and said we can use this. Legends have a life of their own."

• *Slumach's Gold: In search of a legend* can be purchased through [www.heritagehouse.ca](http://www.heritagehouse.ca) or by calling 1-800-665-3302.

## Hear A Christmas Carol

A dramatic reading of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* to benefit the Friends In Need Food Bank will take the stage in Maple Ridge next week.

Nette Plant as Learned Lady, Emmeline Newton and Al LePage as Englishman

Thomas Hutchinson, Amateur Thespian will perform the readings with accents, clothing of the era and other accoutrements.



Le Page

"Bringing great stories to life in the character of someone from the past," LePage says, "is a very powerful way to engage people. Live drama can bring these great stories to life in a way that provides both entertainment and insight."

"Lady Emmeline Newton is the perfect historic figure for me to portray," adds Plant, a performer who plays the Chief Clerk's wife in nearby Fort Langley.

Plant and LePage combine their love of improvisation with a highly interactive approach that ensure lots of drama, fast action and real surprises. They create all 26 characters – with an interesting twist here and there – all within the span of about two hours.

The Friends In Need Food Bank distributes to more than 600 families and individuals each month and assists seven community agencies to provide food and nourishment to those who are hungry.

Friends director Glenda Williams says the food bank depends solely on the generosity of the community and its members.

The food bank receives more than 105,000 kilograms of donated food each year from local grocery stores, bakeries, retailers and community members.

While food donations are always appreciated, the food bank can turn a \$1 cash donation into \$2.50 worth of food.

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players," notes LePage. "So come and play along with us. Join us for lots of laughter and hopefully some tears during our premier dramatic reading duet of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*."

• *A Christmas Carol* will be read at 7 p.m. on Friday at St. Andrew's Heritage Church, 22289 – 116th Avenue, Maple Ridge. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Admission is \$10 per person. To reserve, call 604-466-3663.