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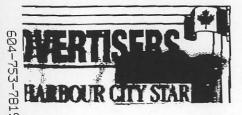
Prospector searching for platinum on Island

BY ROBERT BARRON Day News

Prospector Mikkei Schau will be busy near Lake Cowichan and the northern end of Vancouver Island this summer, banging rocks and hoping for a big. rich find.

It's not gold the former federal geologist is looking for, but platinum and palladium.

Schau is one of 54 prospectors from



around B.C. to receive mineral exploration grants from the ministry of energy and mine's prospectors' assistance program. He will get \$10,000 for his hunt.

"Platinum group minerals are fairly rare in B.C. so the chances of finding a large deposit are not large," he said.

"The reason the department of mines and energy liked my proposal is the kinds of volcanic rock found on the Island."

Schau said there have been significant finds in similar rock formations in Siberia and Alaska.

"We figured there may be deposits here as well," he said. "I'm going to promising places already mapped out by the department near Cowichan lake and in the nortic.

"Platinum and palladium are traditionally used for coinage but lately. there is increased demand as the minerals are used in catalytic motor systems, which are a growing market."

Schau said the \$10,000 grant will be used for equipment and analytical material

But he cautions against enthusiasm that the area is close to a mining boom as a result of his work.

"Even if I find something wonderful, it could be 20 to 30 years before any mining activity takes place," he said. "The prices have to be right and there has to be a large amount of tonnage and the proper mineral grade."

Schau said interesting mining companies in a significant find is also remote.

"Even if I can show the site may be profitable, I have about a one in a hundred chance that a junior mining company will look at it," he said.

"Getting larger mining companies to take interest is even more remote. It's easier to buy lottery tickets but it's more fun to prospect."

For now, Schau said he would be happy if his summer's work led to more people taking to prospecting on the Island.

"A find of any kind could develop an interest that could see people prospecting for years to come," he said.

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