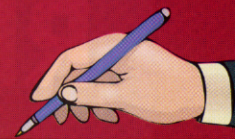


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## editor's comments



TGS → Britannia

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**F**rom July 2-4 the Britannia Mine reunion took place at the mine site located at Britannia Beach on beautiful Howe Sound north of Vancouver, British Columbia. Everyone who worked or lived at Britannia Beach was invited to the event that celebrated 100 years since mining began at the famous copper mine in 1904.

Kirsten Clausen, Director of the B.C. Museum of Mining, located at this National Historic Site and BC Historic Landmark, said that over the three days over 500 guests showed up for the festivities to meet old friends. In addition, there were throngs of tourists who dropped by to visit the museum, view the hundreds of historic photographs, take the underground train ride and learn some of BC's history, a province that got its start with the most basic of all industries – mining.

Over 60,000 people from all over the world worked at the Britannia Mine and witnessed great successes and great tragedies. By 1916 the operation was producing 2,000 tons per day. However, the year before, a terrible accident occurred. Sixty men were killed when an avalanche destroyed the Jane Camp. In response, a new town was built at the 2,200-foot level known as the Townsite or Mount Sheer. By 1929, the Britannia Mine was the largest copper producer in the British Commonwealth. The mine finally closed in 1974, even though 60,000 tons of concentrate were produced each year. The prevailing metal prices, taxes and high operating costs led to the stoppage of the operation.

The Britannia Mine was built at a time of inadequate environmental regulations and the mine site has been in need of reclamation. I'm glad to report that site remediation and the serious water pollution problem are being addressed with the Province of BC and the former owners of the mine involved in the project. The remediation comprises the treatment of acidification of water, the removal or treatment of contaminated soils and the re-vegetation of hillsides. To facilitate the construction of a plant for the extraction pollutants seeping out of the abandoned underground workings, a \$30 million fund was created. Funds have been provided by companies including Arco, Anaconda, Ivaco, Arrowhead Metals Ltd., Canzinc Ltd., Alcoa, Intalco Aluminum and Alumax Ltd.

What is interesting to me is the future of Britannia Beach. The museum and, indeed, the entire town, is presently receiving a big face lift. Thanks must go to developer Bob McDonald who bought the company holding the mortgage on the Britannia lands, much of which he donated to the provincial government. He is now building a new community above the present Britannia Beach homes. Lots are being sold with the current tenants being offered a first right of refusal to buy their rental properties at below market value.

For the past two years, Natural Resources Canada has been working with the museum and other supporters and recently completed Phase II of a four-phase program to build a world-class interpretive, educational and research destination. The project has the objective of demonstrating the importance of natural resources to Canada's future and the promotion of responsible mineral development around the world. For more information, visit [www.britanniaproject.com](http://www.britanniaproject.com).

Improvements are also underway at the museum and the former mill will see hundreds of broken windows reglazed. The Tunnel Fundraiser program is seeking donations to advance these improvements. The gift shop, which by the way, offers excellent mineral specimens at reasonable prices, also provides valuable funding. If you are interested, give Kirsten a call at 604-896-2233, Ext.224. As a final note, you have probably seen the Britannia Mine on TV or at the movies as the location has been used for filming The X Files, Insomnia, 21 Jump Street, Scooby Doo 2 and many more productions. Checkout [www.bcmuseumofmining.org](http://www.bcmuseumofmining.org). ♦

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