

Report on Business

B2 Report on Business Weekend

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GIVING BACK » BY PAUL WALDIE

A mining executive digs deep to preserve history

The donor Lukas Lundin

THE GIFT:
\$1.7-million

THE CAUSE:
The B.C. Museum of Mining

THE REASON:
To help renovate the historic mining site

For years anyone driving north from Vancouver to Whistler, B.C., couldn't help but notice the dilapidated building that ran along the side of a mountain like a giant staircase. The 20-storey structure was once the heart of the Britannia mine which at its peak in the 1920s was the largest copper mine in the Commonwealth.

The mine closed in 1971, after more than 80 years of operation, leaving behind a toxic mess and a public eyesore. The site ended up in the hands of the Britannia Beach Historical Society which turned part of it into the B.C. Museum of Mining.

More than \$100-million has been spent cleaning up the area, now a National Historic Site, and a few years ago the society launched a \$15-million upgrade to the museum called the Britannia Project.

One of the people they turned to for support was long-time mining executive Lukas Lundin.

"They approached me and I said, 'Why not?'" Mr. Lundin recalled. He donated \$1-million personally and arranged another \$722,000 from Red Back Mining Inc., where he is chairman.

The site "didn't look very good," Mr. Lundin said, recalling how he used to cringe whenever he drove to Whistler and saw the old milling building. "I think it's necessary to preserve the site because [mining] is a big part of our heritage and it's still a big part of this country."

Mr. Lundin's gift will go toward building a new visitor centre which will include several exhibits, theatre space and the Canadian Mining Hall of Fame. The overall project also involves refurbishing many of the site's 15 historic buildings. Several other mining companies and executives have contributed as well, including Ross Beary, founder of Pan American Silver Corp., who kicked in \$2-million.

"I think if we can explain mining and show the good side of it, that's good," Mr. Lundin said. "We can't live without it."



'I think if we can explain mining and show the good side of it, that's good,' says Lukas Lundin. JOHN LEHMANN/THE GLOBE AND MAIL

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