

Unit 1: Introduction to Nechako White Sturgeon



What is a white sturgeon?

- Has lived since the age of the dinosaurs 170-290 million years ago.
- Live in northern lakes and rivers around the world.
- Largest freshwater fish in North America, and can live for over 100 years!



What is unique about Nechako White Sturgeon?

- White sturgeon *Acipenser transmontanus* live in the Fraser, Columbia and Kootenay river systems in BC.
- The Nechako white sturgeon spawn only in the Nechako River
- They reach over 3m in length but are smaller than sturgeon in the Fraser River – can you think of why?



Acipenser transmontanus
"across the mountains" 6 m

Nechako white
sturgeon 3 m



Justin
Bieber
1.7 m



Why are we learning about Nechako White Sturgeon?



There used to be thousands of sturgeon in the Nechako, but now...

- ~650 Nechako white sturgeon adult sturgeon
- Young sturgeon are not surviving to maturity to make the next generation of sturgeon

We are working to find out WHY...



Nechako white sturgeon are an Endangered Species

- Endangered as per the Species at Risk Act (SARA) in Canada
- Now fully protected, it is against the law to keep sturgeon or any of their parts.



What does Endangered mean?

- Extirpation means that the species no longer exists in a specific place.
- Nechako white sturgeon are facing imminent extinction (extirpation) from the Nechako River
- The Nechako white sturgeon may become extirpated in the next twenty years if nothing is done!



What has happened to make the Nechako sturgeon endangered?

We do not know for sure, but what we think is:

- Habitat altered
 - Kenney Dam has changed the size and flow of the Nechako River
- Poor survival of young sturgeon
- Human impacts
 - Fishing
 - Pollution
- Climate change
- Predation



What is being done to help the Nechako white sturgeon

- Scientific Research
 - Why are they not doing well?
- Conservation Centre
 - Genetic diversity
 - Increase population
- Juvenile release
 - Public awareness
- Protected status
 - Illegal to fish for
- Education
 - Proper way to release a sturgeon
 - **School Curriculum – that's you!!**



Nechako white sturgeon curriculum

By the end of this course, you will know:

- What a sturgeon is and why it is important
- The biology and ecology of sturgeon
- About endangered status
- Where the Nechako River watershed is
- What a riparian zone is and why it is so important
- What you can do to help the Nechako white sturgeon



