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### **New Westminster – Harvesting Caviar - by Terry Slack**

There were 2 sturgeon canneries in the late 1800's on the wharf in New Westminster. They were actually processing sturgeon. First Nations people and commercial sturgeon fisherman brought their catches in to these canneries. The cannery owners were looking for the female sturgeon for caviar to sell to Europe. They also, later on, found a market for the flesh of sturgeon, so it was a lucrative business. By 1902 there were millions of pounds of sturgeon being caught on the Fraser River. As long as there was a flesh market the actual fishery continued. The lucrative money was in the females being harvested for their caviar. This lasted for about 7 years until the whole sturgeon fishery collapsed. First Nations People warned all the cannery owners that this was going to happen, and in 1905 it did happen. There was a complete collapse of the sturgeon on the Fraser River, and it has taken years and years now just to recover a little. The Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society is very concerned about trying to get the sturgeon back to numbers where they can spawn and build themselves back up to a population in the lower Fraser which will be very sustainable in the future.