



Sapperton Landing Park – Sapperton Channel, New Westminster – by Terry Slack

New Westminster in Queen's Reach, Sapperton Channel. It is an old, old channel, which had a lot of sturgeon in the channel. First Nations People would fish there in the Spring to harvest the sturgeon. The method of fishing by the First Nations People was extremely unusual, and it was recorded by scribes up in the Parliament buildings in New Westminster looking down on the river. They would see two canoes of First Nations People which were going to catch the sturgeon. Those in the first canoe were going to thrust down their spears and catch the sturgeon, and the second canoe was going to try and get the sturgeon in close to shore so they could move it to a place where they could actually butcher the fish alongside the river. It is very interesting how they did this. First Nations People had long spears, they were over 35-40 feet long, and they had eagle feathers at one end and a harpoon head on the other end of the long pole. They would tickle along the river until they found a hole they thought might have a sturgeon in it. So they would touch the sturgeon with the eagle feathers, then move up towards the head and then they would actually thrust the sturgeon pole with the harpoon head deep into the sturgeon, and then the harpoon toddle would come loose. There would be a line attached from the toddle to the canoe, so they would actually be free now, and First Nations People in the canoe would be pulled around the river. People up in the Parliament buildings were laughing because these canoes were just going back and forth and around in circles. The sturgeon and the First Nations People were kind of a wonderful thing for the people to watch in the Parliament Buildings. They didn't know how they caught these fish, but they actually said, "Well if they are catching them this way, it must be the old fashioned historic way of First Nations catching sturgeon." They would bring the sturgeon close to shore and they would sink the second canoe, put it under the sturgeon, and then with cedar bailers they would bail out the canoe, and the sturgeon would be ready to be transported to a place where they could butcher the fish.