Dwelling in the waters of the Nechako Watershed is a survivor from the age of the dinosaurs – White Sturgeon (Acipenser transmontanus). This magnificent animal is the largest freshwater fish in Canada, and has existed relatively unchanged for millions of years.

Dakelh Elders tell the story of when the river flowed backwards - when the Stuart River flowed north instead of south into the Nechako River as it does today. It is likely that White Sturgeon arrived to the Nechako Watershed from the Upper Columbia River system when the two were connected over 10,000 years ago after the last ice-age.

Research to date indicates the Upper Fraser Designation Unit (DU) of White Sturgeon (Upper Fraser, Middle Fraser and Nechako River populations) is genetically distinct from other populations of White Sturgeon.

We know today that the White Sturgeon in the Nechako Watershed inhabit lakes such as Stuart Lake, and that adults congregate to spawn in the Nechako River at Vanderhoof.

Researchers continue their work to determine the bottlenecks to survival, life history patterns, and habitat needs of Nechako River White Sturgeon.

Over 100 years ago Hudson Bay Company records from the 1880’s state catches of multiple sturgeon from Stuart Lake, most of which were 3 m long.

In the 1990’s it became illegal for anyone to catch and/or keep Nechako White Sturgeon.

Today, if a sturgeon is caught or encountered, either during the First Nation Food, Social and Ceremonial salmon fishery or by recreational fishermen, there are programs in place that provide information on how to safely release a sturgeon back into the water and report the encounter.

If you see a sturgeon contact info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org. Reporting helps researchers understand the population, and supports recovery.