



## JUNE 2018 STURGEON UPDATE

This newsletter provides a fun facts, updates on activities and examples of recovery programs of the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI). It also offers ways in which our stakeholders in agriculture can engage in recovery.

### STURGEON RELEASE EVENT

On May 4, 2018, Riverside Park in Vanderhoof saw over 500 students plus stakeholders from the Nechako Watershed release 526 one-year old sturgeon into the Nechako River.

These fish were a portion of the over 4,200 juvenile sturgeon released into the river in 2018, and are a big part of the recovery process to establishing a self-sustaining population of sturgeon in the river in the future.

Funding partners for this educational event come from industry stakeholders such as Mt. Milligan, Rio Tinto and Canfor, as well as Integris Credit Union, School District 91 and the District of Vanderhoof.

**Mark your calendars for next year's Juvenile Release Event that will be held on Friday, May 3, 2019.**



*Everyone who releases a sturgeon at the event gets to name their fish and later follow its journey online on the 'Where is My Fish' page at [www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org](http://www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org).*



### NECHAKO WHITE STURGEON CONSERVATION CENTRE

To most effectively and quickly replenish the lost generation of sturgeon in the watershed, the NWSCC was built to rear young sturgeon through a conservation-based aquaculture program from eggs and milt collected from Nechako White Sturgeon adults, and then released. Funding for the NWSCC comes from the Nechako Environmental Enhancement Fund, Rio Tinto, and the Province of BC.

Tours are available year round, with daily tours from May-August (inside closed during early life stages). We invite you to come for a tour!

Staff from Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC, who operate the NWSCC, will spend 2018-2019 rearing the next generation of sturgeon. Plan your tour(s) to see the different life stages.



#### THE YEAR AT A GLANCE

##### ICE-OFF - EARLY MAY:

Release last year's juveniles.

##### ICE OFF - END MAY:

Staff and volunteers fish for adult and mature sturgeon to harvest eggs and milt.

##### END MAY - EARLY JUNE:

Fertilize eggs in hatchery.



##### MID-JUNE:

Eggs hatch to yolk-sac larvae.



##### LATE-JUNE:

Larvae enter free-swimming stage.



##### MID-JULY:

Larvae grow into juvenile form.

##### JULY - APRIL:

Juveniles grow to next year's release size. Natural seasonal changes in water temperature and day length are replicated in the hatchery.



## IF YOU SEE A STURGEON!

Nechako White Sturgeon are Endangered! It is illegal to fish for, keep any part of, or kill a Nechako White Sturgeon.

If you catch a sturgeon while fishing, or see a sturgeon when you are out on the water, please take these steps to safely release/view it:

1. leave sturgeon in the water
2. if caught on your line, remove the hook if possible or cut the line
3. if it is safe for the fish, take a photo and estimate the length
4. email the NWSRI and tell us about your amazing find at [info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org](mailto:info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org)



## STURGEON RECOVERY

The Federal Species at Risk Act lists Nechako White Sturgeon as an endangered species. The Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative, along with its partners, works toward sturgeon recovery.

Small streams in the Nechako Watershed eventually feed into the Nechako River. **Healthy streams make for a healthy watershed and help sturgeon in two ways:**

1. healthy trout and fish populations provide food for sturgeon
2. stable stream banks reduce fine sediment entering the system. Fine sediments impact spawning habitat for all fish species

## Ways to support sturgeon recovery!

- develop a Farm Stewardship Plan
- develop a manure and fertilizer program to ensure streams and lakes are not polluted
- ensure riparian zones on all farm and crown land are intact and protected
- develop off channel watering practices for livestock
- purchase farm products from farms and ranches that practice stewardship values
- visit [nechakowhitesturgeon.org](http://nechakowhitesturgeon.org) for more information about NWSRI and sturgeon recovery

## QUICK FACTS ABOUT STURGEON



Nechako White Sturgeon live to 100 years old and can grow over 3 m in length.

The 5 rows of scutes are used for protection.

The flat head and 4 barbels mean they are primarily bottom feeders.

The 'heterocercal' shaped tail (larger top than bottom) tells us they are strong swimmers that stay close to the bottom.