



Nechako White Sturgeon 'Cupcake' caught in First Nation fishing net in Stuart Lake, BC.

On July 11, 2018 a First Nation fisher family pulled their net set for char in Stuart Lake. What they found in their net was a surprise - it was a young sturgeon. Unfortunately, the sturgeon had died in the net, but the crew knew to report the capture and contacted the local sturgeon Catch Monitor. The Catch Monitor arrived with equipment that determined that this sturgeon had a Passive Integrated Transponder tag or PIT tag implanted in it with ID 152209781A. Knowing that this fish had been either caught before or raised at the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Center, the Catch Monitor then sent this information to Christina Ciesielski the Fisheries Manager with Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC), as well as Cory Williamson the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre Hatchery Manager.

The PIT tag ID was compared with the records in the database and revealed that this fish is of hatchery-origin from the Conservation Centre. For recovery managers, this is an exciting find as it is the first verified hatchery-origin sturgeon that has migrated into Stuart Lake. Not only was this sturgeon raised at the Conservation Centre, it was released into the Nechako River on May 4, 2015 by student Cadence during the Juvenile Sturgeon Release at Riverside Park. Cadence named her sturgeon 'Cupcake'.

When Cadence let Cupcake swim free in the cool Nechako River, Cupcake was 45.3cm long and 622 g. Measurements taken three years later on July 11, 2018 show that Cupcake had grown to 78cm long and roughly 7kg. The movement and growth rate provide important information and data to Nechako White Sturgeon researchers because to date little is known about sturgeon that are over about 70cm in length. Understanding the movement patterns, habitat needs and growth and survival rates of the young sturgeon will help the Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI) Technical Working Group members make more informed recommendations on sturgeon recovery and release decisions. Juvenile sturgeon sampling crews from CSTC, Freshwater Fisheries Society of BC and the Province of BC will be soon gearing up for the fall juvenile sampling program with part of that sampling to occur in the Stuart River, which has not been sampled before for juvenile sturgeon.

Cupcake has reminded us all about the important work of the NWSRI and specifically four important recovery programs: the Emergency Boat Kit Program, the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre, the Juvenile Sturgeon Release Event, and the Juvenile Sampling Program. To learn more about all of these programs, and to 'look up' specific fish that have been released during the Juvenile Sturgeon Release Event, go to www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org.



For more information contact:
Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative
Michelle Roberge, NWSRI Coordinator
Email: info@nechakowhitesturgeon.org
www.nechakowhitesturgeon.org