



Carrier Sekani Tribal Council

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MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Carrier Sekani Tribal Council Opposes the Unnecessary Destruction of Thousands of Endangered Nechako White Sturgeon Juveniles from Nechako Hatchery

Dakelh Territory, Prince George: The Carrier Sekani Tribal Council (CSTC) is extremely disappointed in the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations' (FLNRO) planned decision to cull up to 6,000 Nechako White Sturgeon which have been bred and raised as part of a recovery initiative at the Nechako White Sturgeon Conservation Centre in Vanderhoof.

FLNRO has recently informed the CSTC of its intention to halve the number of white sturgeon to be released from the facility in Vanderhoof; from 12,000 to 6,000. As a result, FLNRO is planning to destroy thousands of sturgeon ready to be released to accommodate this rushed decision and alleviate perceived risks of overstocking of the Nechako River.

The CSTC and FLNRO have been engaged in a discussion of options to avoid the cull, which is considered highly culturally inappropriate from the Carrier Sekani perspective. Options have been identified that are scientifically sound, including providing the fish to a commercial aquaculture facility, or stocking them into suitable local lakes in the Nechako watershed, where they could support a fishery. Consideration of these viable options has been obstructed by the inflexibility of the *Species at Risk Act* permitting that prohibits their use for matters unrelated to recovery; ironically the *Act* intended to protect the fish requires their destruction.

FLNRO's purported decision is being made without meaningful and timely consultation with CSTC and the Carrier Sekani First Nations (CSFNs), in the face of CSTC and the CSFNs' strenuous objection to the cull, and in breach of ss. 8.1(b) and (f) of the Environmental and Socio-Cultural Initiatives Agreement that the CSTC, CSFNs, and Province signed in April 2015.

At this time the CSFNs have engaged in government-to-government negotiations with BC and have requested that the BC government and FLNRO honor our work toward shared decision-making and stewardship. Tribal Chief Teegee states, "unless we agree on an annual rearing and release plan and/or contingency plan, we're likely to find ourselves in a similar position in coming years, which is unacceptable."

Nechako River White Sturgeon is listed as an Endangered species under Canada's *Species at Risk Act*. Following the impoundment, diversion and regulation of the Nechako River, this species has suffered a "recruitment failure" (an insufficient number of juveniles survive to maturity to propagate and sustain the population). The population has declined to the point where extinction is inevitable without human intervention. A multi-party Nechako White Sturgeon Recovery Initiative (NWSRI) has worked for several decades in an effort to reverse the declining population trend and save the species.

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