

## Program Staff and Structure

The Fisheries Program has been managed by Marcel Shepert since 1999. Marcel's duties include the coordination and management of the program and the projects the program undertakes as well as all associated staff. He is also responsible for performing all technical, administrative and financial reporting required by the AFS Agreement. He also participates in numerous committees and panels where he works in the interests of the CSTC First Nations and the fisheries resources of this area. Marcel's role as Fisheries Program Manager is now only part-time, as he also serves as the Executive Director of the Fraser River



Aboriginal Fisheries Secretariat. He was also recently appointed by the First Nations Summit to the Task Group on Post Treaty Fisheries.

Margo French has made the transition from the CSTC's most senior Field Technician to serve in the office as the program's Community Liaison Technician. Bill Shepert has also made the transition into the office this fall/winter, and is training as the program's Communications Officer through funding provided by PGNAETA. Bill Shepert, Albert Raphael, and Jako Prince are the senior field technicians for all projects that the CSTC undertakes. Clarisa Spencer is the program's administrative assistant. Brian Toth serves as the program's biologist and provides technical advice and direction to the program.

## 2003/04 CSTC Fisheries Program Field Project Overview

Each year the CSTC Fisheries Program undertakes a number of fisheries related projects. In the past, many projects have been wholly or partially funded through funds external to the AFS Agreement. At present the amount of external program funding dollars available for such initiatives is sparse to say the least, leaving the program mainly with its' core funding to allocate. Projects undertaken in 2003/04 include the following:

**Downstream Fry Trapping:** Downstream fry trapping is a means of measuring the spawning success and egg-to-fry survival of the previous years brood relative to the conditions the spawners and spawning stream experienced. Spawner/fry production information can assist in determining trends in habitat and stock health and stock productivity.

**Stellako River:** Over 320,000 sockeye spawned in the Stellako River in the fall of 2002. The CSTC conducted a downstream sockeye fry trapping program in the spring of 2003 and as expected fry production was very high (data has not yet been finalized).

**Driftwood River:** This was the first year of downstream fry trapping in the Driftwood River, the uppermost tributary to Takla Lake and normally a major spawning stream for early Stuart sockeye. Over the past several years the number of sockeye spawning in the

Driftwood River has decreased considerably. Fry trapping was attempted in the spring of 2003 to assess the feasibility of undertaking a formal program in subsequent years. Indications are that it would be feasible.

### Early Stuart Enumeration

The early Stuart stock of sockeye spawns in numerous tributaries to the Middle River and Takla Lake. These streams are annually enumerated by Tl'azt'en and CSTC fisheries crews working in cooperation with DFO personnel. Methods for determining the number of returning adults range from counts conducted via stream walks, drifts from boats, construction of fences and helicopter surveys. The CSTC constructed a fence on Dust Creek and completed regular stream walks and/or drifts on seven other spawning streams in 2003. Numbers of returning adult sockeye have not yet been finalized but returns were very poor.

**Stellako River Enumeration** Counts of spawning sockeye returning to the Stellako River were completed through the installation of a counting fence on Aug 18-Oct 23 near the streams confluence with Fraser Lake. Calibration of the fence counts to account for fish entering prior to the fence's installation and fish that migrate into Francois Lake are completed through drifts of the river and in some cases marking spawned-out sockeye carcasses (dead pitch). In 2003 estimated run size

through the fence was a little over 70,000 (considerably lower than pre-season forecast).

### Stream Temperature Monitoring

Temperature loggers were placed in a total of 17 streams within the CSTC member First Nations' Territories. Temperature information is logged every hour, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. 2003 data is presently being compiled.

### Nithi River Weir Management

In 2000, the CSTC in conjunction with the province and DFO constructed a flow control weir at the outlet of Borel Lake, approximately 20km upstream from Francois Lake. The purpose of this weir was to manage runoff and improve flow conditions within the lower reaches of the Nithi, where portions of the stream were frequently becoming dry during low flow periods. In addition to killing juvenile fish in the stream, this issue was also impeding sockeye access to spawning areas.

Activities related to weir management were ongoing throughout the year. The focus of activities in 2003 was refinement of seasonal flow targets for the stream.

### Endako Chinook Enumeration

The Endako River provides spawning and rearing habitat for a small stock of chinook salmon. The CSTC has actively pursued several projects related to the conservation of this stock and has continued to monitor the stock's strength. Enumeration in 2003 indicated an estimated 350+ adult chinook.



## What's New Within the CSTC Fisheries Program

At the request of the CSTC Chiefs, the Fisheries Program initiated an overview of its' strengths and weaknesses in 2002 and also created a preliminary strategic planning framework. The major deficiency related to the program was determined to be the lack of community knowledge of the purpose, activities and benefits of the program. Additionally, there was a perceived lack of community involvement in the direction of the program.

In order to address these deficiencies and to serve the CSTC communities better, the Fisheries Program has restructured itself. The following is an overview of this restructuring and how it

is intended to address these issues. The Community Liaisons in each community have an increased budget and will have correspondingly increased responsibilities related to participating directly in meetings dealing with stock management issues and informing their respective communities about related issues. As well, a new position termed the Community Liaison Technician (Margo French) has been created and is tasked with working directly with each Community Liaison and each CSTC Community to increase information transfer from the community to the program level. This is in-part being accomplished through

a reduction of the program manager's duties to a half-time role. The program receives part-time administrative assistance from a clerical position within the CSTC office (Clarisa Spencer) and from the Community Liaison Technician. The program has also received funding from PGNAETA to partially support the costs of the training position of a Communications Officer, which is where and how this newsletter is originating. This position is being filled by Bill Shepert and is intended to continue until March 31, 2004, after which it may become a permanent seasonal fixture within the program.

## NEWS RELEASE - Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection

### Prince George - Funding to Help Protect Endangered Sturgeon - November 13, 2003

Funding of \$152,000 is being provided to protect white sturgeon in the Price George area, Water, Land and Air Protection Minister Joyce Murray announced today at a news conference at The Exploration Place in Prince George. "The province is committed to ensuring strong, sustainable management of our fish and wildlife for future generations," said Murray. "This funding supports that goal." "Today's funding is a great example of what can be achieved through partnerships," said Prince George North MLA Pat Bell. "Government is supporting the efforts of the Nechako River White Sturgeon Recovery Initiatives recovery team to preserve this important local species." "The Nechako white sturgeon is of great importance to our local commu-

nity," said Shirley Bond, Prince George Mount Robson MLA and Minister of Advanced Education. "This funding will help protect and restore this ancient species by improving our knowledge and scientific understanding of the fish and its habitat in the Nechako River." During the last few years, studies have shown that the Nechako white sturgeon, a genetically distinct population, is declining. The funds, delivered through the Habitat Conservation Trust Fund, will support recovery planning needed to rebuild a self-sustaining Nechako white Sturgeon population. The funding, part of government's province wide commitment to protecting species-at-risk, will support the efforts the Nechako River White Sturgeon Recovery Initiatives. The initiative is a partnership effort including all

orders of government, First Nations, industry and stakeholders. As well as providing administration and support for the team, the funding will also allow team to do planning that is essential for the sturgeon to thrive in the Nechako. "This funding will go a long way toward developing First Nations technical capacity and increasing our role in the recovery of this valuable species," said Chief Harry Pierre of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. "It will help maintain our recovery team, and allow us to develop a plan for the recovery of the white sturgeon in the Nechako River." "The sturgeon is one of our planet's greatest survivors," said Murray. "It has been around for nearly 200 million years, it survived when the dinosaurs perished, and this government is committed to protecting it."

## Run Failures and Issues of Concern

On a more serious note, the CSTC is increasingly anxious about the state of the early and late Stuart sockeye stocks. For the 2003 fishing season, abundance levels for both runs were far below expectations and adult returns to spawning streams in the Stuart/Takla areas were some of the poorest on record. This marks the second year in a row that late Stuarts have returned at below expected abundances, and the third year for the early Stuart stock. The CSTC recommends that a full scientific study be initiated, perhaps in conjunction with the Pacific Salmon Com-

mission staff. The time has come to take a serious look at these runs to find out what is causing them to fail year after year. Further to this issue, CSTC fishing communities will have to start assessing the viability of the FSC fishery and begin looking at alternatives for harvesting FSC fish. The CSTC fisheries program is also becoming concerned about the increasing number of issues and initiatives it must remain informed about and/or participate within. Some of those being initiated by DFO include new species at risk legislation, the wild salmon policy,

the AAROM program, the Fraser Watershed Process, and the Fraser River sockeye spawning initiative. To be able to fully remain informed about or participate in these processes, and therefore assess the impact of these initiatives on the CSTC's interests, requires a lot of time, energy, and capacity. The rate of change is too fast and will only lead to long-term discontent if the grass-roots community members are not fully consulted. In order to achieve this, DFO must slow to accommodate First Nations' capacities to deal with these issues.

**Ongoing Future Activities of the CSTC Fisheries Program**

Program staff have been actively pursuing efforts to increase the number of anglers participating in the program and to increase the number of anglers participating in the program. The program has been successful in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program and in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program. The program has been successful in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program and in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program. The program has been successful in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program and in increasing the number of anglers participating in the program.



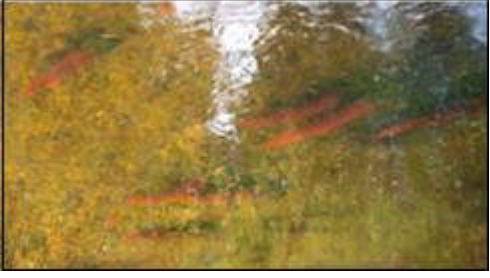
A CSTC technician checks down stream trap.



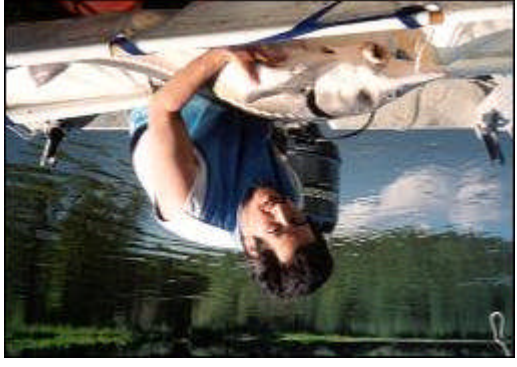
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Early Stuart sockeye fish in a fence constructed by DusCreek.



Spawinigo sockeye program conducted by the CSTC.



CSTC technician Alber Rappaholdt is seen capturing a dample in the check river in 2002.

**Carrier Sekani Lho Dust'us**

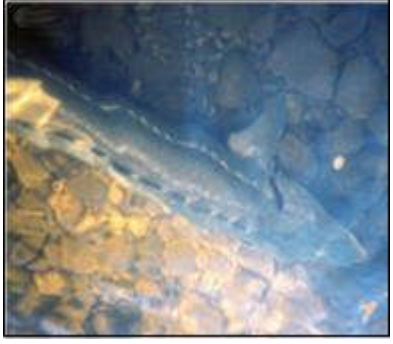


**Carrier Sekani Tribal Council**

**Volume Issue  
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**Introducing The Carrier Sekani Lho Dust'us - "Fish News"**

Feel free to respond to any information provided in the Fish News by e-mail or by phone. We are happy to hear from you. For more information, please contact us at (250) 621-6279 or visit our website at [www.carriesekani.ca](http://www.carriesekani.ca).



An adult white sturgeon is the bottom sturgeon in the "Fish News" is critical to its continuation.

Welcome to the Carrier Sekani Lho Dust'us (Chlo Dust'us), or "Fish News". This is intended to be a regular quarterly publication of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council. The program is a continuation of the "Fish News" and is intended to provide information to the community. The program is a continuation of the "Fish News" and is intended to provide information to the community. The program is a continuation of the "Fish News" and is intended to provide information to the community.

**New Carrier Sekani Tribal Council Leadership**

The first CSTC Fisheries program was initiated in 1992 and has since then grown to become a major part of the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council's operations. The program is a continuation of the "Fish News" and is intended to provide information to the community. The program is a continuation of the "Fish News" and is intended to provide information to the community.



CSTC technicians collect eggs from Stella sockeye for an important study.