



## *Keeping the Legend Alive*

### **FRSCS Skwá:lpel Swéltel Removal Initiative**

**Sleek and perfect**, the majestic Skwó:wech of the Fraser River is the last truly wild population of this species in the world. More than a link to our distant past, the Skwó:wech is a key part of our shared future.

*And that future is in very real danger.*

**The FRSCS vision is: *Skwó:wech are wild, healthy, and naturally sustaining throughout the Fraser River watershed.*** We achieve this vision through our mission to work collaboratively with First Nations, Provincial and Federal governments, and other partners, by leveraging science and knowledge to accelerate the recovery of Skwó:wech throughout the Fraser River ecosystem.

Since 1997, we have made significant progress identifying and addressing issues that affect the recovery of Skwó:wech using critical data collected through our award-winning, volunteer-driven monitoring and assessment program. As an environmental stewardship and research organization, the FRSCS brings together leaders, all areas of government and First Nations, commercial and recreational fishing sectors, science, and education to collaborate and make a difference for Fraser River Skwó:wech.

#### ***Skwá:lpel Swéltel Removal Initiative 2017-2024***

The FRSCS recognizes that Indigenous Peoples have inherent Aboriginal and treaty rights protected in the Canadian Constitution. These rights include Aboriginal title, self-government, cultural and social rights, and rights to occupy and use lands and resources including fishing rights. Since the program launch in 2017, our teams, with the support of Indigenous Groups, have removed over 8500 feet (2.6 km) of gear from the Fraser River between the mouth of the river to Yale, helping to reclaim and improve traditional family and community fishing areas for Fraser River First Nations and save sturgeon.

Success of this program is due to the collaboration and sharing of information, history, ideas, and expertise between Indigenous fishers and knowledge holders, angling guides, scientists, fisheries officers, etc. **Indigenous communities and fishers that have been involved with this program to date include: S̓c̓awaθ̓ən (Tsawwassen), Sts'ailes (Chehalis), Máthxwi (Matsqui), Xwchí:yò:m (Cheam), Sq'éwqel (Seabird), and Sq'éwlets First Nations on the Fraser River along with individuals from the Wuikinuxv Nation (ʔuwik'inuxʷ) and, Heiltsuk Nation.**

This program has been made possible **thanks to independent funding from the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society**. The 2024-25 Skwá:lpel Swéltel Removal Initiative is scheduled for **December 15, 2024, to April 1, 2025**.

#### ***Volunteer and Employment Opportunities***

We invite you to join the FRSCS team and participate in our programs. We are looking for crew members for the Skwá:lpel Swéltel program, as well as volunteer taggers. This is an excellent opportunity to share knowledge and work together on behalf of the Skwó:wech. Please contact us at: [helen@frasersturgeon.com](mailto:helen@frasersturgeon.com) for more information.

## FAQ

### **Q: What is the Fraser River Sturgeon Conservation Society (FRSCS)?**

A: The FRSCS is a research-based not-for-profit, BC Society and registered Canadian charity. Founded in 1997, the FRSCS vision is: Skwó:wech are wild, healthy, and naturally sustaining throughout the Fraser River watershed. We achieve this vision through our mission to work collaboratively with Indigenous, Provincial and Federal governments, and other partners, by leveraging science and knowledge to accelerate the recovery of Skwó:wech throughout the Fraser River ecosystem.

The FRSCS delivers critically reviewed, independent, unbiased annual reporting of the status of Lower Fraser River Skwó:wech. FRSCS Board of Directors consists of First Nation leaders, experts in business, science, environmental advocacy, finance, and industry.

### **Q: What are the sources of FRSCS funding?**

A: Our research, programs, and education initiatives are supported by federal and provincial granting programs, foundations, and the generosity of our private donors. We are a non-governmental organization that is independent of industry and special interest, and the FRSCS does not receive funding through memberships sales, association fees or subscriptions. **The current Skwá:lpel Swéltel Removal Initiative is independently funding through private contributors.**

### **Q: Who collects research data for the FRSCS?**

A: The scientific data collection and 'sampling' of Skwó:wech for FRSCS research is provided by volunteers who are specifically trained by the FRSCS in special handling and protocols. This training helps to ensure the integrity and consistency of the data, as well as minimize overall program costs. FRSCS volunteers are First Nations fishers, federal and provincial leaders, biologists, scientists, recreational and professional anglers, and guides as well as FRSCS staff and Board of Directors.

### **Q: Based on the FRSCS research and analysis, what are the most significant threats and limiting factors affecting the survival and recovery of Fraser River Skwó:wech?**

A: Key factors include habitat loss, food availability, and unintended mortalities in fisheries targeting other species. These factors have likely contributed to the observed decline in juvenile Skwó:wech in the lower Fraser River. FRSCS programs like the Skwá:lpel Swéltel Removal Initiative, juvenile monitoring and assessment, spawning area sanctuaries as well as promotion of selective harvesting methods for net fisheries, have been implemented to address these factors, increase survival of Skwó:wech, and restore and protect sturgeon habitat.

### **Q: How can the community help and become involved with the FRSCS programs?**

A: There are many opportunities for people to help make a difference for Skwó:wech and contribute to FRSCS work. We have an annual awareness and fundraising event, FRSCS Sturgeon Conservation Challenge & Awards Gala Dinner Auction. We are seeking volunteers to help with the event, planning as well as promotion. Not only that, but we also have employment opportunities for our research and outreach initiatives!

*For more information, visit [www.frasersturgeon.com](http://www.frasersturgeon.com) or call Sarah Schreier, Executive Director, 778-322-7345.*

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