Impacts of Invasive Species to Indigenous Communities and Cultural Practices

Presented by:
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About the Invasive Species Council of BC

- Charitable organization
- Province wide focus including education, outreach, training, information etc.
- Cross-border collaboration: across Canada and internationally
- Founding member of the Canadian Council on Invasive Species
Through province-wide cooperation and coordination, the Invasive Species Council of BC works to:

- Minimize negative ecological, social, and economic impacts
- Reduce the **introduction, establishment, and spread** of invasive species
- Guided by **diverse Board of Directors**: all levels of government, First Nations, Industry, Tourism, NGO’s, Conservation, Recreation
What we will be talking about:

• The importance of native species
• Culturally important species
• How invasive species impact cultural practices and Indigenous Communities
What are invasive species & why are they bad?

- Economic Impacts
- Cultural Impacts
- Social Impacts
- Biodiversity
- Impacts to Health & Wellbeing
- Spreads Quickly

Frequently asked Questions
Why should we care about invasive species?

Impacts to health

- Can be harmful to human health e.g. toxicity, parasites, infections, disease, etc.
- Environmental and economic impacts can be a stressor

European Fire Ant
Credit: Dr. Rob Higgins

Invasive species affect everyone!
GIANT HOGWEED: The toxic plant causes painful blisters and boils (Image: Getty/SWNS)
Impacts to Environment

- Impacting biodiversity
- Outcompete native species
- Decreased quality and availability of natural resources e.g. food resources, water, etc.
- Increased possibility of wildfires and flooding
Impacts to Economy

- Impacts to Farming Yields & Crop Quality
- Damage to Equipment and Infrastructure
- Impacts to Traditional Economies
- Damage to Home & Property Values
- Loss of Income
Recognizing Cultural Diversity

- Over 200 First Nations communities in BC
- Distinct histories
- Distinct cultural identities

- Own economies
- Different experiences
What is Traditional Economy?

- Fishing
- Hunting
- Agriculture
- Harvesting/Gathering
What does “culturally important species” mean?

- Medicine
- Tradition
- Food
- Culture
- Identity
- Connection
- Ceremony
• Staple in many communities
• Traditional & mainstream economies
• Inter-generationally owned spots
• Spiritual beings
Culturally Important Species: Huckleberries

- Delicious berry full of vitamins and nutrients
- Some family owned spots have been harvested intergenerationally
- Seasonal indicator
Culturally Important Species: Soapberry / Soopolallie

- Helps repel mosquitos
- High in vitamin C
- Various medicinal properties
- “Ice cream”
Culturally Important Species: Sage

- Sacred plant/ medicine
- Ceremonial use
- Cleansing
- Carried in medicine pouches
Culturally Important Species: Cedar

- Sacred/medicine
- Weaving
- Carving
Culturally Important Species: Moose

- Important food staple
- Oral tradition
- 1 moose can provide enough food for multiple families
- Enough meat to last a long time
Culturally Important Species: Deer

- Smaller than moose
- Important food source
- Provides plenty of meat
Traditional Knowledge

- Knowledge of environment
- Centuries of living close to nature
- Passed down through generations

- Understanding properties of plants and animals
- Understanding ways ecosystems function
- Use and management
Knotweeds (Bohemian, Giant, Himalayan, Japanese)

- Extensive root systems
- Can grow through concrete and asphalt
- Can impact property values
- Can create blind spots
- Outcompete native plants
- Erosion and sedimentation in waterways

Photo Credit: L. Scott
• Grows in grassland, rangelands, roadsides, and disturbed habitats.

• Threat to harvesting of medicinal plants e.g. sage,
  • Can infest grassland and sage steppe.

• Impact on wildlife & livestock
  • Infest rangeland that provides important winter range for grazers.
Plants Impacted by Rush Skeletonweed
Yellow Flag Iris

- Spreads rapidly through rhizomes and seeds.
- Seeds floating downstream can cause new infestations.
- Creates monocultures
- Reducing nutrients and habitat.
Yellow Flag Iris

- Creates dense stands in wet areas
- Displacement of salmonids & native wetland species.
- Increased sedimentation
English Ivy

Western Red Cedar Trees

Photo Credit: D. Moorhead
• Grows well in disturbed soils and clearings
• Infestations hinders re-growth of harvested areas
• Contains volatile oils that increase risk of fire - threat to nearby communities and homes.
• Covered in armed spikes

Photo Credit: J. Hallworth  Photo Credit: B. Brown
Scotch Broom

- Invades rangeland
- Increases wildfire fuel loads
- Dense impenetrable thickets
- Impact Garry Oak
- Blocks access for large animals

Photo Credit: ISCBC
Garry Oak Meadow

- Culturally important
- Biodiversity
- Berries
- Nuts
- Root vegetables (e.g. Camas)
Himalayan Blackberry

- Dense thickets
- Blackberries people and bears love to eat
- Barbed thorns
  - Scratch skin
  - Gets caught on clothes

Photo Credit: L. Scott
Stop the Spread
Tools and Resources
• Co-ordinates meetings & communications between Indigenous Communities and organizations in BC
• Monthly conference calls
• Monthly updates provided by email through the IISN
Indigenous Community Toolkit

- Support for Indigenous communities across BC
- To reduce the impact of invasive species in their territories.
NEW Indigenous Webhub
Central place to find resources

Resources:
- Publications
- Videos
- Fact sheets
- Educational activities
- More

https://bcinvasives.ca/resources/indigenous-resources/
• “Invasive Species That Affect Indigenous Communities”
• Educational Activities:
  • “Create Your Own Field Guide”
  • “Past, Present, Future”


Thank you

QUESTIONS?

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