

Indigenous Voices: Quotes on Indigenous Knowledge and Invasive Species Impacts

From: [The Impact of Invasive Species on Traditional Species in the Nlaka'pamux Territory](#),
By Cody Thomas, Two Row Innovations, in Press (2025)

- » “Maintaining the health of the land is about more than just conservation- it is about preserving the cultural practices and traditions that have sustained the Nlaka'pamux for generations.” (Cody Thomas, Mohawk; Two Row Innovations)
- » “Bitterroot used to be a lot easier to come across, but now all you see is stuff like cheatgrass or that knapweed in the spots it usually grew.” (Nlaka'pamux Voices)
- » “When I'm walking the land and digging, there's so much cheatgrass. It's hard not to get it on you and take it to other spots.” (Nlaka'pamux Voices)
- » “Having access to kokanee salmon is not just about food- it's about maintaining food sovereignty, food security, cultural identity, and the ability to pass on beliefs and practices that have been carried through generations. If that access is disrupted, it threatens the transfer of knowledge, and with it, the strength and continuity of the Nlaka'pamux way of life.” (Cody Thomas, Mohawk; Two Row Innovations)
- » “Back in the day, huckleberries were much more common. The patch would have all you need, really, and they were easier to find, too” (Nlaka'pamux Voices)

From: [In Their Own Words: The Impact of Invasive Species on Indigenous Communities and Species at Risk](#), ISCBC 2023.

- » Invasive species management is important to deal with because it can adversely affect the enjoyment of your rights and the enjoyment of your land. It can restrict access to harvesting sites, it can restrict access to berry-picking sites, it can destroy native species and plants that you rely on and it can destroy wildlife habitat and affect your ability to go harvest moose and deer. It's a very important issue to tackle. So make it a priority. (Jake Archie, Canim Lake First Nation).

From: [Stories of Resilience: Indigenous Approaches to Invasive Species](#). By Criag Stephani, ISCBC. June 9, 2023.

- » “I grew up walking in the woods and harvesting. I think many people in my community still do. So many people understand the rhythm of the land, the tides, the moon and the seasonal round. I believe they are the ones who know about what is missing on the land and what is there that shouldn't be. And those traditional harvesters are grassroot encyclopedias.” (Carrie Reid [Xwantumaat], Qualicum First Nation)
- » “My first involvement [with invasive species] was with Scotch broom I think. It was taking over more and more here on the island [Vancouver Island]. There was an awareness about it that was contagious. People with allergies complained loudly as the flowers came out. In my own community, the berry patches are strongly impacted by Scotch broom because they like similar growing conditions.” (Carrie Reid [Xwantumaat], Qualicum First Nation)

From: [Invasive Species That Affect Indigenous Communities](#). ISCBC. 2019

- » “We have a lot of issues with burdock- burs getting on sheep and cattle, dropping off everywhere, getting into the hayfields. Canada and bull thistle too- we harvest blueberries, wild cranberries, Saskatoons, soap berries, and these plants take over areas, making it really hard to pick.” (Ferne May Garbitt, Sauteau First Nations, Chetwynd, BC)
- » “While on a weed pull by a salmon-bearing stream, there were Himalayan blackberry bushes everywhere. They were even wrapped around the salmonberry bushes, making it difficult to access these berries or even separate the two.” (Caitlyn Therrien Iannone, Syilx, Sto:lo)
- » “I remember huckleberry picking as a child, and we’d get to the car with hound’s-tongue burs on our clothes, tangled into our shoelaces. The dogs would run up to us, their fur would be completely matted with burs. They were just everywhere.” (Caitlyn Therrien Iannone, Syilx, Sto:lo)
- » Everywhere that the land has been disturbed, the invasive plants move in...we used to be all open grasslands around Merritt, good grazing for cattle and wildlife. I have really noticed the knapweeds and burdock moving in, they impact the berries as well. When the plants get over six feet tall, they are not easy to get through!” (Harold Aljam, Coldwater Indian Band/Nlaka’pamux Nation, Merritt, BC)

From: [“We are Caretakers of Mother Earth”- Nurturing Indigenous Wisdom in Land Stewardship](#). By Craig Stephani, ISCBC. September 28, 2023.

- » “We, as Indigenous people, are the caretakers of Mother Earth. Stewardship is rooted in who we are. Having our people out on the land and making sure the spread of invasive species is reduced gives me hope knowing our traditional medicines, foods and native plants can grow and prosper is a good feeling.” (Sage Flett Kruger, Penticton Indian Band).
- » “Elders watch where they are going and if they have any seeds latching onto clothes or shoes. This can be a teaching moment to show the younger children to make sure they don’t transport any unwanted seeds to other locations. Practicing mindfulness of our surroundings and creating awareness and species identification are ways of slowing the spread [of invasive species].” (Sage Flett Kruger, Penticton Indian Band).