

INDIGENOUS LEADERSHIP ON INVASIVE SPECIES



CONFEDERACY OF MAINLAND MI'KMAQ **Chain Pickerel Project**

About the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) is a Tribal Council and non-profit organization, located in present day mainland Nova Scotia, that promotes and assists its eight member First Nations in initiatives that advance their self-determination and community enhancement.

The Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management (also known as the Mi'kmaw Conservation Group or MCG) provides policy- and program-related supports to the CMM's member communities, and is committed to enhancing their engagement and capacity building through environmental education and action initiatives. In doing so, the Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management is restoring the Mi'kmaq law of Netukulimk—showing respect for lands and waters by taking only what is needed and leaving some for tomorrow.

Impacts of Invasive Species on Traditional Practices

In 1945, invasive chain pickerel (*Esox niger*) were illegally introduced into three Nova Scotia lakes and have since spread throughout much of Mi'kmaq territory. As opportunistic feeders and strong competitors with few natural predators, chain pickerel have significantly impacted numerous culturally important native species, including American eel, striped bass, and Atlantic salmon—an endangered species that has declined 90% to 95% since the 1980s.

When combined with the effects of other introduced aquatic invasive species, such as smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) and European green crab (*Carcinus maenas*), traditional Mi'kmaq harvesting practices that rely on ecosystem health and stability have been increasingly impacted within their territory.



Community Efforts to Combat Invasive Species Impacts


Mi'kmaq communities have identified chain pickerel as an invasive species of concern since the Mi'kmaq Conservation Group's establishment in 2012. In response, the Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management has advanced numerous programs and initiatives aimed at raising public awareness about chain pickerel's spread and impacts, as well as actions that individual community members can take to mitigate and reduce their future effects.

Public communication campaigns have been a longstanding cornerstone of the Chain Pickerel Project. From distributing educational videos and bumper stickers to hosting education-focused fishing days in elementary school classes to promoting the power of citizen science, the Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management has directly reached hundreds of Mi'kmaq community members on invasive species issues through its awareness-raising efforts.

The Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management is also encouraging community members to target invasive species when conducting traditional harvesting practices. In addition to developing outside-the-box solutions like using chain pickerel for fertilizer or pet food, they released a Chain Pickerel Cookbook in 2020 featuring ten recipes that were submitted by Mi'kmaq community members. With a bag limit of 100 chain pickerel per person each day, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq are constantly thinking of new and creative ways to promote grassroots invasive species action that is relevant to peoples' everyday lives.



Learn More About the CMM's Department of Aquatic Resources & Fisheries Management

 cmmns.com/department/aquatic-resources-fisheries-management/

 www.facebook.com/mikmawconservationgroup

 twitter.com/netukulimk

 www.instagram.com/mikmawconservationgroup

On behalf of the Canadian Council on Invasive Species (CCIS), Advocate Strategies engaged indigenous communities and organizations to construct a series of spotlights on Indigenous-led invasive species initiatives. The intention of these case studies is to inspire future projects and promote action-oriented collaborations that collectively address invasive species issues.

