

Spotlight on Merci Hillis NWIPC's First Nations partnership assistant

Merci Hillis is a Gitksan in the Fireweed Clan of the Wiigyet House. She has worked since 2005 as an invasive plant identification technician on the Gitksan's Invasive Plant Program, 'Weeding Out the Invaders.' She has received training in invasive species identification, Invasive Alien Plant Program (IAPP) a data management and inventory system, and is certified as a Herbicide Applicator. What do you do at the

NWIPC Merci? I work in building partnerships among First Nations and bringing about awareness of invasive alien plants. How are the partnerships coming along? Overall, I have received a positive response, and people I have talk to are on board towards building a better relationship. Thank, Merci! So far the NWIPC has four strong First Nations partnerships and, with Merci's help, there should be many more to come.



Merci Hillis, NWIPC's First Nations Partnership Assistant at Terrace Farmer's Market

Weed of the Month



Japanese Knotweed photo by Bradley Kriekhaus

Japanese Knotweed, *Fallopia japonica*. A very persistent plant, it is part of a not-so-nice family of knotweeds that have escaped from gardens. Similar noxious species are Bohemian, Himalayan, and Giant knotweeds. It invades open and disturbed sites such as riparian areas and ditches. Flowers are small, loose, greenish-white, plume-like axial sprays 2.5 to 3 mm long. Flower size increases with maturity. Leaves are alternate, oval-shaped, long-stalked, straight leaf base (truncate), abruptly pointed tip, up to 10 cm long, with a leathery texture. This plant's

most obvious feature is its stems of swollen nodes that look like canes of bamboo. Spreads with rapid vegetative reproduction through spreading rhizomes and can sprout from rhizome and shoot fragments. Seed production can be sporadic with low seed viability. Mowing or cutting of knotweed is a constant task that must be repeated for many years. When pulling roots, make sure that no fragments are transported elsewhere. Saltwater treatment has been found to dry up leaves after a few days. Call to report any sightings of this plant to 1-866-449-3337.

NWIPC Events in July & August:

July	12th:	-Farmers Market - Prince George
	11th -13th:	-Atlin Music Festival - Atlin
August	2nd:	-Farmers Market - Prince George
	7th-10th:	-Prince George Exhibition
	9th	-Pioneer Days - New Hazelton
	15th-17th	-Nechako Valley X - Vanderhoof
	21st-23rd	-Bulkley Valley X - Smithers

Program Manager: Andrea Eastham
Newsletter: Luke Wichrowski, P.A.
Editor: Paul Glover, Director



A New First Nation Partner – The Gitga’at by Bob Drinkwater and David Benton

The Gitga’at’s web page, <http://www.gitgaat.net/>, begins: “From the beginning of time, the Gitga’at people have existed in their Territory on what is now British Columbia’s northwest coast. The well being of their people is intricately related to the health of their lands, waters, and resources, and the community continues to work to sustain their abundance and richness. Gitga’at culture is strengthening, and traditional practices continue to shape day-to-day life in the village.” The beautiful, board-walked village of Hartley Bay has some alien plants: knotweeds and yellow flag iris have found their way there, and they love the place so much they have decided to spread out. Unfortunately these invasive alien plant species, although quite beautiful, are threatening structures as well as the native vegetation and the unique habitats of the Gitga’at territories. To protect the health of their lands and community the Gitga’at are paying attention to



The Hartley Bay Weed Warriors - Glen, David, Eddie, and Merci

these aliens. The Gitga’at are not new to the invasive plant or weed business. In fact, the Hartley Bay Band passed a weed control by-law way back in 1956. The Band wasn’t kidding, either: the by-law has provisions for fines and even short jail terms. At a recent breakfast for elders, great concern was expressed at the potential for damage by the weeds, and they were described as “No good.” Community members were very

supportive of the program to get rid of them and recognized the value of sharing and working within the partnership with NWIPC. The partnership was initiated on May 22nd to 24th. Merci Hillis—the NWIPC’s new Partnership Assistant—and invasive plant specialist Bob Drinkwater delivered training to Band Manager David Benton and Hartley Bay maintenance crew members Glen Reece and Eddie Robinson. Merci and Bob got a good taste of life in Hartley Bay, and David, Eddie and Glen got some experience using the knotweed key to determine that they have two and possibly three of the knotweed species as unwanted invaders. The training also covered the use of IAPP (the Invasive Alien Plant Program), and discussions about strategies to protect all of the Gitga’at’s vast tracts of rain forest and other lands. It’s reassuring to know that there is now a NWIPC partner on the northwest coast protecting the Gitga’at territories.

Standing United: First Nations and NWIPC

When it comes to alien invasive plants, we are all united. Anyone who has lived in BC can attest to its natural beauty and its captivating native flowers and trees. When we see something invading and changing nature’s delicate balance, a feeling calls from deep within us to do something. This growing feeling brings people together and it has brought together the first nations and the NWIPC. The Gitksan, Gitga’at, Tl’azt’en, and Saik’uz first nations are currently partners with us and they share a set of five common goals: 1.

Create awareness among community members and affiliated organizations; 2. Develop a strategic plan to coordinate actions; 3. Carry out an inventory of plants and sites; 4. Implement treatment directed by local values and priorities; and 5. Continue monitoring and (mechanical) treatment. With good old elbow grease and persistence, the noxious weeds are being held back. These partnerships would not be possible without our First Nations directors Ron Winser from the Tl’azt’en and Myrtle Muldoe from the Gitksan

providing valuable advice, and direction on how we operate. With the help of Merci Hillis, we hope to increase the number of First Nations partnerships. She is currently working with the Nadleh Whut’en and the Nisga’a First Nations, comprised of the Gitlakdamix, the Gitwinksihlkw, the Kincolith, and the Lakalzap. She says, “We are building relationships and hopefully partnership and involvement.” This land is vast, with many diverse people. Regardless of our differences, let us stand united in protecting its natural diversity.

The Northwest Invasive Plant Council
Report Invasive Plants
1-866-44WEEDS (1-866-449-3337)
www.nwipc.org email: info@nwipc.org

Bright Idea!
Give this to
your Neighbor