

Ais on Trial

Theme: Aquatic Invasive species are a threat to ecosystems and recreational values in the Kootenays, they must be brought to justice, and who better to deal them the firm hands of the law, than the EKISC team

Objective: To provide information and knowledge about AIS species that threaten the East Kootenays, to help audience learn how to identify invasive and native species.

Props Required

- Large photos of zebra mussels
- Large photos of native species
- Script cards for participants (up to 3)
- Fabric board to post photos
- Large print of extra information
 - o Life cycles
 - o Clean, drain, dry
 - o Water clarity
 - o Economic impact
- Sample of native species?
- Clear totes with boats and parsley for children (clean drain dry)
- Prizes

Costumes for Witnesses

- Bruce- hard hat and safety vest
- Christy Onthebrinkley- wig, hat, glasses
- Lawyer- suit jacket, glasses
- Expert Witness – geeky glasses and a lab coat

Introduction

How many of you have been out hiking, swimming, boating or fishing and have seen a weed, a fish or a mussel and thought, “huh, what is that?” I know I have. Some species are easy to recognize, and are unmistakable even to a novice observer. Others are somewhat confusing and difficult to tell apart. This can create uncertainty, confusion, discombobulation, and dare I say, downright hysteria in some cases where a harmless shrew is mistaken for a mouse, or an inedible berry is eaten because it resembled something edible.

We are here to help

We are here to dish out some details, clear the confusion, fish for facts, defend the defenseless, aid the unaided, and identify some invading scoundrels in our aquatic world.

Now before we get started, I'll need a few brave volunteers

- 1) 1 kid who is a good reader (zebra quagga mussels)
- 2) 1 kid or adult (tall)(Judge)

And for the rest of you, you will all act as the jury. (crowd participation make them yell guilty totally guilty yadda yadda)

We have a freshwater mussel on trial for numerous charges. It is your civic duty to act as jury. Let me call upon our defense attorney.

Crown Lawyer: We are here today for the case of the Crown versus the Zebra Mussel. I thank you for your presence here today to serve as the jury for this trial. Today we will determine if the accused here is in fact, the SCOUNDREL, he is accused of being- an invader, a threat to our ecosystems, a threat to our infrastructures, and to our cherished recreational opportunities.

Mr. Mussel is here to face numerous charges, the first charge is:

- Causing a nuisance (180 counts)

I am here to prove the crowns case that this fiend is guilty on these charges.

Judge: May we call upon the first witness please.

(Western Pearlshell mussel enters and takes the stand)

For the court may you please state your name and where you live

Pearlshell: My name is Western Pearlshell, and I live here in Slocan Lake: and I have lived here since my great great great great great great great great great grandmother arrived here on a fish thousands of years ago.

Crown Lawyer: Arrived on a fish?

Pearlshell: Well yes, as a baby she hitched a ride on a trouts gills, and well, here I am today!

Crown Lawyer: Well, how fascinating. Mrs. Pearlshell, can you tell the jury why you are here today?

Pearlshell: People have always found me mysterious and elusive. I am not easy to see because I tend to prefer cold, fresh water that is a bit murky. I like sandy creeks or lake bottoms. My family and I have lived a good life for the most part. We keep to ourselves, like our space and privacy, and go about our lives very peacefully.

Then that... that... that interloper shows up and begins harassing myself and my family! He and his offspring attach themselves to ANYthing, including myself and my

family. They regularly trespass onto our home making it an unbearable place to live. I know several of our neighbors who are completely unable to move or burrow due to these annoying zebra mussels.

And they eat ALL our food! There is nothing left for my family! Once they arrive, there is NO getting rid of them. It is breaking my little open circulatory heart!

Crown Lawyer: So what you're saying is that the accused, Mr. Mussel, is causing a nuisance, entering your home without lawful excuse, harassing you, and even assaulting you and causing bodily harm?

Pearlshell: That's exactly what I'm saying! You hit the mussel on the head!

Crown Lawyer: Thanks Mrs. Pearlshell, you may step down

(Western Pearlshell Leaves)

SHOW EXHIBIT A (PHOTOS)

If I could now direct your attention these pieces of evidence. First I would like to illustrate the external features of both Mrs. Pearlshell and Mr. Mussel. If you see here, Mrs. Pearlshell is actually quite a large mussel rather dark in colour, where Mr. Mussel is noticeably smaller and has a distinct zebra coat.

I know what you're all thinking, a mussel that small can't be a nuisance. But if you look at THIS (show picture of mussel covered in mussels) hopefully your mind is changed. This is a picture of many tiny zebra mussels invading Mrs. Pearlshell's space. After seeing this, its safe to say that Mr. Mussel is indeed guilty of being a common nuisance to these poor native mussels.

I would now like to call upon our Expert Witness.

(Expert Witness takes the stand)

Expert Witness or Narrator:

Freshwater mussels play an important role in nutrient cycles, food webs- similar to earthworms in terrestrial soil- they mechanically oxygenate the sediments where they live. This makes them a key component of freshwater ecosystems. When there are too many, as in the case of Zebra and Quagga mussel infestations, the bottom of the food chain is removed quickly.

Individual native mussels can filter up to 40 litres of water a day, where Zebra and Quagga can only filter about one litre. But the densities of zebra and quagga mussels are much higher. One colony of Zebra Mussels have the ability to filter all of the water in Slocan Lake in one week and eat all the food that's in there for other small fish and mussels.

(Expert Witness Leaves)

Judge to Defense: On these charges, how do you plead?

Zebra Mussel: Not Guilty

Judge: Jury, how do you find the accused, guilty? Or totally guilty? The court finds the accused guilty of these charges. Next witness please.

Crown Lawyer: Not only is Mr. Mussel charged for being a nuisance, he is also charged for 349 counts of trespassing. I would now like to call upon our next witness, Bruce.

(Bruce Enters and takes the stand)

Crown Lawyer: can you please state your full name to the court.

Bruce: Bruce

Crown Lawyer: No, your full name

Bruce: Bruuuucceee

Crown Lawyer: Uhhhhh okay... Bruce, may you please tell us what interactions you have had with the accused Mr. Zebra Mussel

Bruce: I am the manager of a local electric generating plant just down the river. I began to notice a strange rough sandpapery growth on the outside of our structures. Over about a month this growth has increased until it was obvious the objects were small mussels, or so im told.

Crown Lawyer: Is THIS what these 'objects' are that cover your dam and generating structures?! (show picture of Zebra Mussel)

Bruce: YES! That's exactly what they look like!

Crown Lawyer: I draw your attention to exhibit A (picture of zebra mussels). Have you had any other difficulties with Mr. Mussel?

Bruce: Recently, I noticed that water flow was dropping dramatically. When I investigated, to my horror, I found that many of our pipes had been clogged by mussels! This is a clear case of trespassing if there ever was one. Because they don't move I easily got pictures of the trespassers.

Crown Lawyer: Is this your picture? (Picture of clogged pipe)

Bruce: Yes sir.

Crown Lawyer: I draw your attention to exhibit B (picture of clogged pipes). Thank you Bruce, you may step down.

(Bruce leaves)

Crown Lawyer: Again, I would like to call our Expert Witness to explain a little more about the complications of zebra mussels in pipes.

(Expert witness takes the stand)

Expert Witness/ Narrator:

When zebra mussels clog these pipes, there is no simple solution to removing them. You can scrub out the pipe and clear up the clog, but it is only a matter of time before the mussels re-colonize and clog the pipe again. These pipes have to be constantly cleaned in order to keep the outflow running smoothly.

It is roughly estimated that over the past ten years, zebra mussels have cost both Canada and the U.S upwards of 5 billion dollars. Now imagine if those mussels made it to BC, that number would raise quite a bit! BC has some of Canadas biggest dams and if they got infested it would directly increase the taxes BC residents pay just to try and combat this problem. And nobody likes higher taxes.

Crown Lawyer: Thank you, you may step down

(Expert Witness leaves)

Judge: Jury, how do you find the accused on the charges of trespassing?

Jury: Guilty!

Judge: Lastly, Mr. Mussel has been charged with 267 counts of harassment causing bodily harm. We will call up our next witness, famous model, Mrs. Christy Onthebrinkley

(Christy enters and takes the stand)

Crown Lawyer: Mrs. Onthebrinkley, can you tell us what happened?

Mrs. Onthebrinkley: Well, I was called to do a photo-shoot on a beautiful sandy beach that I have worked at many times over the years. This year was different. Not only was the beautiful beach no longer beautiful, it smelled horrible! There were little striped shells covering the beach. Normally I could do our shoots in my bare feet, but those shells cut my foot open!

Crown Lawyer: Are these the pictures you took of the beach and your cut foot, and the shells that cut you?

Mrs. Onthebrinkley: Yes, it is. I didn't need stitches but I had to cancel my next two bookings because I couldn't wear shoes due to the injury.

Crown Lawyer: Thank you very much Ms. Onthebrinkley, you may step down.

(Ms. Onthebrinkley leaves)

(Exhibit C, cut foot- back to exhibit A)

Crown Lawyer: (Discusses loss in recreational values)

As you can see, not only do these mussels affect our ecosystems and our infrastructure, they also have quite the affect on many of the recreational opportunities that we take for granted. Entire beaches can be shut down, populations of fish can be removed from lakes meaning we can no longer fish there.

To recap, Mr. Mussel has been charged with 180 counts of being a common nuisance and disturbing our ecosystems by negatively interacting with native species. He has also been charged with 349 counts of trespassing causing billions of dollars in damages to our infrastructure. Lastly he has been charged with 267 counts of harassment causing bodily harm to humans.

How do you plead?

Zebra Mussel: Guilty, I guess. But I can't help it, I shouldn't have even been allowed here in the first place!

Judge: Jury, how do you find the accused of the charges against him/her as an invasive species?

Crowd: Guilty, totally guilty

Judge: You are found guilty and are indeed an invasive species that does permanent damage to the environment here in BC. You may leave.

The End