

Daniel Macfarlane

Natural Allies: Environment, Energy, and the History of US–Canada Relations

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What can the five halibut treaties signed between Canada and the US from 1923 to 1977 tell us about the world's largest bilateral trading and investment partnership now valued at US\$1.95 trillion? How can we explain more than two centuries of peace along the world's longest land border by thinking about water, fish, coal, oil, migratory birds, acid rain and other aspects of the natural environment? How did the long amicable relations between Canada and the US help to create two of the world's leading emitters of greenhouse gases and a warming climate?

In the history of modern foreign policy, Canada and the US have an unusual and arguably underappreciated record. They have one of the largest trade partnerships in the world, the largest shared land border, and a prolonged period of peace. Their economies are closely integrated with goods, services and people flowing back and forth across the border more freely than most other international boundaries. Both countries are also voracious consumers of energy resources and other natural resources. They are leading emitters of carbon dioxide and contributors to global warming. Daniel Macfarlane's new book adds to our understanding of this unusual history by convincingly showing the many ways in which Canada-US diplomacy was shaped by environmental and energy concerns and how diplomacy influences ecological outcomes. It offers a new way to think about the history of Canada-US relations, environmental and diplomatic history more broadly, focusing on reciprocal influences of the natural environment and the international affairs of nation-states.

Spanning a period from the mid-19th century to the present, this book examines key episodes in the diplomatic relations between Canada and the US with a focus on issues relating to natural resource development, energy, pollution and trade. The book synthesises existing scholarship covering a long time period to yield new insights into the broader relationship between these two countries. Macfarlane also focuses closely on boundary water issues in the Great Lakes region.

Natural Allies is mainly a chronological narrative with the early chapters exploring the trilateral relationship among Canada, the US and Britain in the immediate period after Canadian Confederation. The first two chapters cover a span from 1867 to the end of the First World War. Macfarlane effectively shows how boundary waters and fisheries issues dominated early diplomatic relations between Canada and the US. Part of this was by necessity since so much of the shared border between the two countries involves boundary waters. This includes the Great Lakes/St. Lawrence region, which is primarily a water border.

These chapters cover the landmark 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty and creation of the International Joint Commission (IJC), which became a foundation for the management of transboundary environmental pollution.

The next chapters cover the middle period of the twentieth century including the Second World War and the Cold War eras as Canada established greater autonomy from Britain while simultaneously becoming further drawn into the imperial orbit of the US. Again, Macfarlane persuasively demonstrates the consistency of eco-diplomacy in structuring the international relations of northern North America. Energy trade came to take on a greater role in the relationship as Canada and the US built more electrical interconnections for the transfer of hydroelectric power and negotiated the complex markets of oil and gas trade following the advent of the mass production of oil in western Canada after 1947.

In the final chapters, Macfarlane explores the neoliberal and free trade period of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Here the book shows how Canada and the US chose to further integrate their markets through free trade agreements that accelerated the pace and intensity of natural resource exploitation, fossil fuel consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. This period also included continued efforts between the two countries to negotiate agreements over environmental pollution issues including water quality on the Great Lakes, acid rain, the depletion of the ozone layer, and global warming. Both countries also consistently struggled to manage competition for fisheries both freshwater and oceanic.

Natural Allies makes its case clear: the natural environment and energy resources had a profound effect on the diplomatic relationship between Canada and the US. Furthermore, international relations themselves had ecological consequences. The border, though a political construct, mattered in the environmental history of Canada and the US. While the point may seem obvious (neighbouring nation-states mostly interact with one another over the negotiation of issues relating to their shared geographies and the exchange of resources), this approach to the analysis of Canada-US relations is novel.

Macfarlane's work forces us to rethink both the environmental and diplomatic histories of both countries. Was Canada's growing international autonomy and divergence from Britain in the twentieth century a function of the biogeographic integration of its resources and energy flows with the US? Was ecological degradation a consequence of the market integration of Canada and the US? One might even reconsider key texts in environmental history using *Natural Allies* as a framework for analysis. For instance, *Nature's Metropolis*, William Cronon's groundbreaking study of the resource and energy flows of Chicago and its hinterland, may be understood differently through consideration of the Great Lakes water and resource diplomacy that shaped the growth and development of Chicago in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

REVIEWS

Historical scholarship of this kind, which synthesises existing research and approaches the subject with new perspective, works best when it can provoke new thinking and understanding of the past. *Natural Allies* is among the best of this genre of scholarship. For environmental history, it continues Macfarlane's body of work, which has long attempted to illuminate the linkages between environmental history and diplomatic history. This new book makes that argument clearer and compelling.

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