

# Book Reviews

## A Canadian Climate of Mind: Passages from Fur to Energy and Beyond.

By **TIMOTHY B. LEDUC**. *McGill-Queen's UP*, 2016. \$34.95 CAD

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REVIEWED BY BENJAMIN J. KAPRON

In *A Canadian Climate of Mind*, Timothy B. Leduc sets out to envision paths out of our current climate crisis. He takes up the metaphor that we are currently traversing through a length of rapids—a *climatic longue sault*. And just as venturing successfully through rapids requires knowing how to engage with water, rock, and also spirit, “we are being awakened to the realization that we are part of something much bigger than our modern minds have been able to appreciate. It is not simply that the surrounding world is becoming more uncertain today, but that those changes are asking for significant shifts in how we mind relations” with each other and the more-than-human world.

Finding inspiration in the *coureurs de bois*, Leduc imagines how Europeans arriving on Turtle Island could have respected and aligned themselves with Indigenous peoples, and acted humbly and responsibly in the face of more-than-human nature. Leduc describes how ancestors, ceremonies, Indigenous knowledge systems, and the land itself can connect us to better ways of minding relations. Two tradi-

tions of thought particularly influence Leduc’s project: the ecology of mind tradition, which Leduc primarily takes up via John Livingston; and the Haudenosaunee Good Mind tradition, which Leduc has learned about from William Woodworth Raweno:kwas (Mohawk), who learned about it from the late Peace Chief Hadajigrenhta Jacob Ezra Thomas (Cayuga). Braiding these traditions allows Leduc to see how “[a]cting with thankfulness and reverence is vital to recognizing that our ‘intelligence is the property of the universe’ . . . To energize good ways of minding relations, we may have to relearn how to be responsive to ever-changing climates that remind us of our ancestral relations and duties.”

The book opens with Leduc pondering an inscription on the Howard Tomb in Toronto’s High Park, which raises dual themes of severance and reverence. Our current moment is shaped by a multitude of ecological and colonial severances that have separated us from each other, the more-than-human world, and even aspects of ourselves. But against these severances is the continuing possibility for reverence: for ex-

periencing and reconnecting with the spiritual and numinous presences that surround us.

Situating himself in High Park grants intimate, embodied, and lived qualities to Leduc’s writing, which continue throughout the book. The chapters proceed with Leduc describing his experiences on the shores of Lake Ontario, Ashbridges Bay, and the Humber River, before heading down the Saint Lawrence River/Kaniatarowanenneh, stopping at Long Sault, Île-aux-Hérons, Kahnawake, and Lorette. He travels across the Atlantic Ocean to investigate the Notre-Dame de Chartres cathedral in France, and then returns to the labyrinth and ravines of High Park. Leduc shares the ideas and insights that arise for him in these places, the histories and ancestors that he encounters, and brings them into conversation with diverse theories, making the text personal but also richly academic. For readers working for environmental and social justice in Toronto, Leduc does a great job of situating this city as a deeply natural and Indigenous place, historically and continuing today.

A few of the many theories that Leduc engages are Gregory Bateson’s analysis of dependence on fossil fuels being akin to alcohol addiction; Jane Bennett’s discussion of the humans and nonhumans whose actions in assemblage led to the 2003 Northeast black-out; and Catriona Sandilands’ work on queer melancholia and grievability.

Leduc also puts a particular focus on finding Christian examples that he can connect with the ecology of mind and Haudenosaunee Good Mind traditions. He highlights the ecological practices and beliefs of Saint Columba, Saint Dionysius, and Saint Francis of Assisi. He describes how Saint Kateri Tekakwitha, "the first native American saint," retained aspects of her Haudenosaunee traditions and understandings following her conversion to Catholicism. And Leduc ties Notre-Dame de Chartres to Haudenosaunee and Wendat creation stories to imagine Notre Dame de Turtle Island, where the Blue Virgin and Black Madonna respectively take up parallel positions to the Haudenosaunee Creator Teharonhia:wako/Sapling, and Sawiskera/Flint, a destructive force and figure. Braiding together these different theories and understandings allows Leduc to see where severances exist that do not need to, where histories could have proceeded in different ways, and where we can combat these severances by now minding our relations in good ways. Latter chapters of the book also address how Haudenosaunee Con-

dolence and Thanksgiving ceremonies may provide inspiration for the healing and renewal that many people will need in order to overcome these ecological and colonial severances.

Striving for environmental justice and combatting the climate crisis are, for Leduc, fundamentally spiritual projects. While Leduc invites readers into his conversations with his own familial, cultural, and scholastic ancestors, he also compellingly encourages readers to (re)connect with our ancestors, to find our own ways of (re)minding our relations. What Leduc makes exceedingly evident is that we are not alone in this work and we are not starting from nowhere: we have ancestors, ceremonies, and the land itself on our side.

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BENJAMIN J. KAPRON is a PhD student in York University's Faculty of Environmental Studies, exploring how he might inform his decolonial praxis, as a settler, through understanding Land to be a decolonial agent and teacher. He'd like to thank all of the Lands and waters that he has lived with, and give a shout-out to the Odenabe/Otonabee River, which he grew up with.

## A Line in the Tar Sands: Struggles for Environmental Justice.

*Edited by TOBAN BLACK, STEPHEN D'ARCY, TONY WEISS and JOSHUA KAHN RUSSELL. Between the Lines, 2014. \$25.95 CAD*

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REVIEWED BY JACOB MCLEAN

This fine collection belongs in the pockets of activists on the job: at a downtown rally or behind one of the many blockades resisting fossil fuels across the country and the globe. From the small details, such as the provision of a long list of excellent websites about the tar sands (partially reproduced below), to the overall structure, especially the editorial focus on the voices of front-line activists, every aspect of this book lives up to its stated goal of being useful to activists. The achievement of that goal should not come as a surprise; of the four editors, three of them (Black, D'Arcy, and Russell) are notable for hav-

ing managed to carve out careers that synthesize theory and practice. Black, for example, is an associate editor for the beloved Toronto-based *Upping the Anti*, described on their website as "a journal of theory and action." D'Arcy, meanwhile, is the author of *Languages of the Unheard: Why Militant Protest is Good for Democracy* [reviewed in this volume]. And, finally, Russell is co-author of *Organizing Cools the Planet*, and has a blog called "praxis makes perfect." Rounding out the editorial quartet is Tony Weis, an Associate Professor in Geography at Western University

whose research focuses on the ecological impacts of agriculture.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, "Tar Sands Expansionism," concentrates on the machinery which drives growth in the industry. The chapters include an analysis of the tar sands in the context of the history of petro-capitalism (Carter, Chapter 1); a study in the Canadian state's efforts to lobby foreign governments to bend to the interests of tar sands investors (Engler, Chapter 4); and an interview with migrant justice activist Harsha Walia, wherein the lesser-known story of "insourced" migrant tar sands workers is given much-needed attention (Walia and Russell, Chapter 7). The chapters in Part II, "Communities and Resistance," feature the voices of activists from directly impacted Indigenous communities in Alberta, such as that of Melina Laboucán-Massimo of the Lubicon Cree (Chapter 10), and Crystal Lameman of the Beaver Lake Cree (Chapter 11). We also hear from U.S.-based activists struggling against Keystone XL (Chapters 16 & 17). If Part II predominately features dispatches from the front-lines of tar sands activism, Part III, "Future Prospects," looks to take a bird's-eye view and asks, 'where are we going and how do we get there?' Answers about where we might go after petro-capitalism include Ojibwe economist Winona LaDuke's prescription of "building an economics for the seventh generation" (Chapter 21), a proposal seemingly congruent with Greg Albo and Lilian Yap's coy but crucial question, "[s]olar communism, anyone?" (Chapter 27).

One of the book's key through-lines is the continual linkage made between the tar sands and settler-colonialism. In their introduction, for example, Black et al. demonstrate how Indigenous rights, especially the right to "free, prior, and informed consent" (FPIC) as laid out in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP), are being "trampled on by the expansion of the tar sands." Later on, Didikai Métis spoken word artist and anti-Line 9 activist Sâkhitowin Awâsis states unequivocally, "[t]he tar sands industry is a form of colonization, both in the sense that it disproportionately affects Indige-