

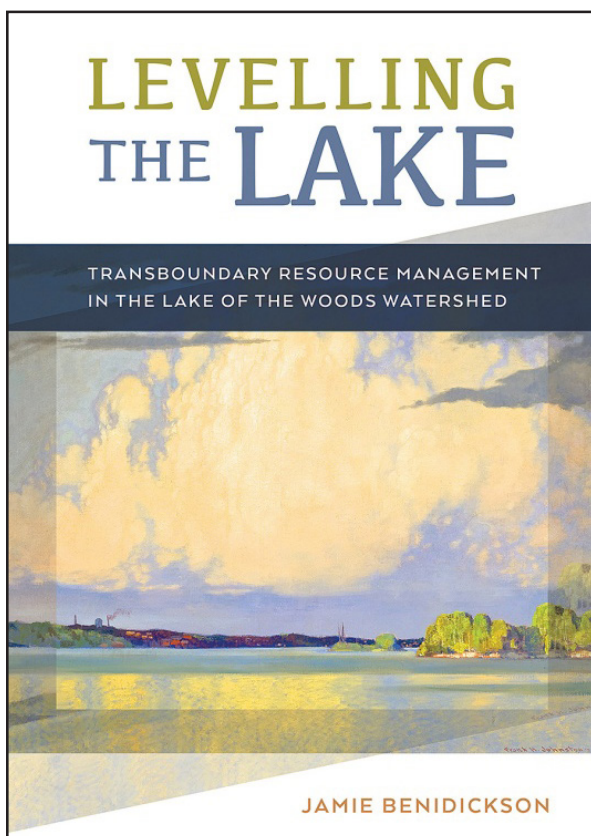
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OHS Fred Landon Award Winner: *Levelling the Lake: Transboundary Resource Management in the Lake of the Woods Watershed*

The Ontario Historical Society is pleased to present the 2021-22 Fred Landon Award honouring the best book on local or regional history in Ontario to Jamie Benidickson for his book, *Levelling the Lake: Transboundary Resource Management in the Lake of the Woods Watershed*, published by UBC Press (2019).

Jamie Benidickson has delivered an outstanding monograph in the field of regional and local history to understand intricately interrelated and evolving patterns of transboundary resource use in the Lake of Woods watershed of northwestern Ontario, Minnesota, and Manitoba, beginning with the late 1860s and early 1870s. This drainage basin carries water from northwestern Ontario and northern Minnesota into Lake Winnipeg and to Hudson Bay. This is no simple story. The work is important for its use of historical method to appreciate how political boundaries and water bodies shape us and are shaped by us.

While the main focus of Benidickson's environmental and legal history is on the southern, largely Canadian section of this drainage basin, there is an insightful and comprehensive treatment of powerful transboundary relationships which are sources of collaboration/cooperation/conflict. As Benidickson makes plain, the political and administrative entities involved are a fragmented apparatus and struggle to effectively deal with challenges of watershed management. There is an abundance of political and jurisdictional issues.



Many wide-ranging consequences flow from environmental damage (tied to a succession of harmful uses) and from the incomparable loss endured by Indigenous communities. *Levelling the Lake* uses a fine-grained analysis to pinpoint the factors at play. The title of the book is also the title of chapter 7 where Benidickson unwraps the power struggles of competing commercial interests over hydroelectric power production in the early twentieth century. Equally thorough attention to other resource management dynamics is given in other chapters (including, recreation & commercial fishing, forest & mining, & attempts to establish more collaborative institutions).

The aim is to understand in depth why this transboundary watershed developed as it did and what lessons are learned for public policy so that the overall well-being of the watershed is first in mind. Benidickson sees certain positive signs in the emergence of "new environmental norms." Watershed management is above all an understanding of the integrity of place and both power brokers and ordinary people have important parts to play.

The Honours and Awards Committee congratulates Jamie Benidickson.

UPON ACCEPTING THE AWARD, JAME BENIDICKSON RESPONDED:

*I am very appreciative of the honour involved in receiving the OHS' Fred Landon Award recognizing *Levelling the Lake* for its contribution to regional history, in the case of the Lake of the Woods a region whose evolution has been greatly influenced by broader transboundary relationships across inter-provincial and inter-national borders.*




As a legal historian with environmental interests or an environmental researcher with an historical perspective, I am gratified by the Awards Committee's description of the book as one that uses historical method "to appreciate how political boundaries and water bodies shape us and are shaped by us," as well as by their suggestion that historical understanding of the Lake of the Woods region may offer lessons "for public policy so that the overall well-being of the watershed is first in mind."

Perhaps awareness of the interaction between social and economic activity and environmental quality at the watershed level will also help to stimulate – along with Greta Thunberg's encouragement – effective responses to the broader contemporary challenges of climate change.

Founded in 1888, the Ontario Historical Society is a non-profit corporation and registered charity dedicated to the preservation and celebration of Ontario's history for people of all ages and cultural backgrounds. To learn more about the OHS's Honours and Awards Program, or to submit a nomination, please visit <https://ontariohistoricalsociety.ca/honours-awards/> or contact the Society's offices by telephone or e-mail.

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Contact: Daniel Dishaw - ddishaw@ontariohistoricalsociety.ca - 416.226.9011

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