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Allen, Cain

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Review: Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples: Readings in Environmental History

By Dale D. Goble and Paul W. Hirt (Eds.)

Reviewed by [Cain Allen](#)
Portland State University, USA

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Goble, Dale D., & Paul W. Hirt (Eds.). *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples: Readings in Environmental History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999. xiv, 552 pp. ISBN 0-295-97838-4 (paper). US\$29.95. Recycled, acid-free paper

"Anthologies," geographer Yi-fu Tuan noted in his 1974 book *Topophilia*, "have a smorgasbord appeal and threaten us with indigestion should we be rash enough to run through the course." This is true of most anthologies, and legal scholar Dale Goble's and historian Paul Hirt's *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples*, a collection of essays on the environmental history of the Pacific Northwest, is no exception. In this case, however, the editors' choice of essays makes for what turns out to be quite a tasty smorgasbord, while their useful introductory pieces help to minimize the indigestion.

Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples consists of 24 essays divided into six sections, framed by an opening essay by the editors and a concluding essay by journalist William Dietrich. The six section divisions—on "place" in the Northwest, first peoples, rivers, agriculture, forests, and mining—and their prefaces help to give the book cohesion, as the essays generally complement each other. Part two, for example, consists of five essays on first peoples. The first four essays, written by anthropologists, a zooarchaeologist, and a geoscientist, give the reader a fascinating and comprehensive summary of what we know about the relationship pre-contact Native peoples had with their environment. The final essay, a fine piece by historian Barbara Leibhardt Wester on the 1887 Dawes General Allotment Act's impact on the Yakama Indian Reservation, is a bit out of place, though, an example of the indigestion anthologies can sometimes trigger. More would have been welcomed on 20th century Indian environmental history.

There are similar omissions, great and small, throughout the book. There is, for example, little to no mention of either Canada or the Pacific Ocean in any of the essays, nor is the urban environment given the attention it deserves, an oversight the editors admit in their prefatory essay. The insights a gender analysis of the Northwest's environmental history would give us are also lacking. These omissions, however, are largely a reflection of the state of the field. There has been little research done on the environmental histories of

Northwestern cities. Likewise, a gender analysis of the Northwest's environmental history has yet to be written.

While the holes in the literature leave plenty of room for future researchers, the sophistication and depth of the essays in *Northwest Lands, Northwest Peoples* are reflective of the maturity environmental history has gained as a field. The editors have done a fine job of bringing together the best research on the Northwest's environmental history, producing one of the finest anthologies I have had the pleasure to read. It would serve as an excellent text for educators in the fields of history, environmental studies, geography, and natural resource management.

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Cain Allen <cainallen@excite.com> is a graduate student in the History Department at Portland State University, 1831 SW Park Avenue #507, Portland, OR 97201, USA. TEL: 1-503-725-7749.
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