

2-8-2018

## Cleaner, Greener, Healthier: A Prescription for Stronger Canadian Environmental Laws and Policies by David R. Boyd

Alex D. Ketchum  
*McGill University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose>

 Part of the [Critical and Cultural Studies Commons](#), [Environmental Law Commons](#), [Literature in English, North America Commons](#), [Nature and Society Relations Commons](#), and the [Place and Environment Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Ketchum, Alex D. (2018) "Cleaner, Greener, Healthier: A Prescription for Stronger Canadian Environmental Laws and Policies by David R. Boyd," *The Goose*: Vol. 16 : Iss. 2 , Article 14.  
Available at: <http://scholars.wlu.ca/thegoose/vol16/iss2/14>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by Scholars Commons @ Laurier. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Goose by an authorized editor of Scholars Commons @ Laurier. For more information, please contact [scholarscommons@wlu.ca](mailto:scholarscommons@wlu.ca).

**Review of *Cleaner, Greener, Healthier: A Prescription for Stronger Canadian Environmental Laws and Policies* by David R. Boyd**

***Cleaner, Greener, Healthier: A Prescription for Stronger Canadian Environmental Laws and Policies* by DAVID R. BOYD**

University of British Columbia Press, 2015  
\$34.95

Reviewed by **ALEX D. KETCHUM**

As a leading expert in Canadian environmental law and sustainability, David R. Boyd uses his expertise to provide readers with a comprehensive guide to improving Canada's environmental policies. Boyd's book is a necessary addition to the collections of policy makers, activists, and anyone interested in effecting environmental legal reform on the federal level. This well-researched text serves as a valuable reference guide and a call to action.

*Cleaner, Greener, Healthier* counters the "myth of a pristine green country providing environmental leadership to the world" (6) and shows that despite the narrative of Canadian excellence, Canada lags behind numerous other nations in terms of environmental performance. However, Boyd argues that Canada can benefit by studying other countries' policies in order to improve its own. He particularly focuses on the work done by countries in the European Union, Australia, and the United States. As a result, he has structured the book into three parts. Section one exposes the current reality of Canada's environmental health problems. The next section explores the reasons for Canada's current state of affairs. The final chapters prescribe solutions for these problems

based on the proved policies of other nations. Each chapter contains useful statistics and peer-reviewed research as evidence, and Boyd details the methodologies through which the data was obtained. By organizing the text in this manner, Boyd makes a convincing argument for change.

The book covers broad territory, addressing myriad issues, including discussions of air and water quality, energy technologies, pesticides, diseases, and deforestation. However, any book that tries to cover such expansive subject matter is unable to delve into detail about any specific topic. Boyd's decision to approach environmental degradation by focusing on impacts to human health allows him to create a cohesive work that also speaks to economic concerns. Although he reminds readers that these policies impact living, breathing humans, he states that "even reduced to cold monetary terms, using conservative valuation techniques, the economic benefits of improved environmental laws and policies will dwarf the costs" (302), particularly costs to the Canadian health care system. By framing his argument in a way that speaks both to emotion and economics, Boyd simultaneously speaks to different audiences.

Although organizing the text in three parts creates a cohesive argument, if readers are interested in a specific topic, such as food, they will have to flip to references scattered throughout every chapter. However, the fact that each subtopic is present in every chapter demonstrates Boyd's argument that Canada's environmental problems are interconnected and any viable solution requires addressing more than just one issue at a time.

I appreciate the book's chapter on environmental justice, particularly the attention Boyd gives to the intersection of class, race, and colonialism. *Cleaner, Greener, Healthier* devotes significant attention to the environmental injustices that affect indigenous communities. However, the text lacks a significant gendered analysis, despite the fact that scholars such as Karen J. Warren, Greta Gaard, and Lori Gruen have demonstrated the specific harm of environmental sexism.

While his book assuages concerns of readers who trust such economic models as the GDP and GNP, by arguing that bolstering Canadian environmental policies will not hurt but actually help the economy, Boyd also challenges Canada's focus on creating policies based solely on the goal of endless economic growth. He offers other indices such as the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW), the Genuine Progress Indicator, the concept of genuine wealth, the Happy Planet Index, and the Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare as potential replacements (270). Furthermore, although the text is structured primarily around how the environment affects human health, Boyd does not neglect to speak to the need to protect nature as Canada's responsibility to the planet.

The text ultimately makes several recommendations: the development of a national environmental health action plan; the integration of existing surveillance programs into a national environmental health surveillance system; the strengthening of environmental laws, regulations, standards, and policies; the implementation of measures to ensure effective enforcement of environmental laws; and the recalibration of foreign policy to ensure consistent promotion of environmental health (225). These policies would help Canada "evolve from an environmental laggard to leader" (303).

After finishing the text, the reader is left feeling hopeful. Boyd has outlined concrete and possible policy changes that would be economically and socially beneficial.

**ALEX D. KETCHUM** is a doctoral candidate in the Department of History at McGill University, where she focuses on food, environmental, and gender history in Canada and the United States.