

GÉOGRAPHIE
historique

MATTHEW G. HATVANY

A person wearing a wide-brimmed hat and overalls is using a scythe to mow tall grass in a marshy field. The background shows a hazy landscape with hills under a pale sky.

MARSHLANDS

***FOUR CENTURIES OF ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE
ON THE SHORES OF THE ST. LAWRENCE***

Les Presses de l'Université Laval

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*A*long the south shore of the St. Lawrence River a series of massive dikes 5 meters in height and nearly 27 kilometres in length, called *aboiteaux* in the local patois, stretch along the coast of Kamouraska, Quebec. Through an interdisciplinary approach combining historical geography and paleoecology, the book explains the fascinating origins of these marshland dikes, and their vital role in the modernisation of Quebec. In a novel approach, *Marshlands* also makes a vital contribution towards amending the prevailing understanding of the place of humans in the environment. In the past 150 years more than half of the salt marshes of the St. Lawrence Estuary have disappeared. Too often, this tragic loss of vital habitat has been portrayed as a result solely of human ignorance and greed. Such an interpretation is thoroughly debunked as the author weaves his way through the centuries explaining the commonalties and conflicting perceptions in how Amerindians, French colonists, agricultural improvers and modern ecologists all viewed the St. Lawrence marshlands as central to their survival. The study illustrates the necessity of an historical geography approach towards any understanding of the place of humans in their environment.



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