

Blake McGready

2024 UELAC Loyalist Scholarship Award Recipient

Blake McGready is a PhD Candidate at The Graduate Center, CUNY, where he studies the environmental legacy of the American Revolution. His dissertation, “Making Nature’s Nation: The Revolutionary War and Environmental Interdependence in New York, 1775-1783,” examines how non-human nature and environmental perceptions shaped the American Revolution.

Paying attention to the Revolution’s environmental legacy can shed new light on the meaning of the war and independence. Blake studies different wartime theaters in New York and its borderlands, including British-occupied Manhattan, the Lake Champlain watershed, and the Haudenosaunee heartlands. Soldiers, officials, enslaved refugees, and Native peoples passed through New York’s northern plainlands, forests, and waterways during the war. Political identities in this region were fluid; independence and civil warfare did not dissolve all ties between British Canada and the new United States. Shared environmental conditions such as deciduous continental forests, rivers and lakes, and a temperate interior climate stitched these nations together further. Such interconnectedness makes the New York



borderlands an ideal region to better understand how colonists’ environmental expectations informed their responses to revolution. Although the revolutionary generation did not impose strong boundaries between the human and non-human worlds, war and rebels’ eagerness to distance themselves from their European and Indigenous enemies strengthened their anthropocentrism. The Revolution’s environmental consequences were manifold: it injected the environment with novel political meaning, ruined forests, wetlands, and other ecological communities, and established a beachhead for imperious environmental attitudes to expand throughout the Atlantic world.

Blake received his BA from SUNY New Paltz and an MA from Villanova University. He has served as a co-chair of the CUNY Early American Republic Seminar (EARS). His previous work has been published in *Pennsylvania History* and in the *Journal of the American Revolution Annual Volume* series. He has previously worked at The Gotham Center for New York City and for the National Park Service. He works with public history professionals to develop environmentally focused programs on the revolutionary era.