



# Imaginary Line: Life on an Unfinished Border

*Jacques Poitras*

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## **Imaginary Line: Life on an Unfinished Border** Jacques Poitras

Once, a single francophone settlement shared both sides of the Saint John River, until a political trade-off between countries split it down the middle. From that inauspicious start, the Maine-New Brunswick border, the first boundary to be drawn between the two nations, has served as a microcosm for Canada-U.S. relations. For centuries, friends, lovers, schemers and smugglers have reached across the line. Now, post-9/11, mounting political paranoia has led to a sharp divide, disrupting the lives and welfare of nearby residents. An elderly Canadian couple's driveway touches the border, leading to a Kafkaesque overreaction by Homeland Security. The Tea Party political movement advocates complete border shutdown. Once friendly neighbors have become increasingly isolated from each other. In this timely exploration, Jacques Poitras travels the length of the border, from Madawaska and Aroostook counties through Passamaquoddy Bay to a tiny island still in dispute to uncover the arbitrarily drawn line that shouldn't be there, almost wasn't there, and can be difficult to find even when it is there. The stakes are high as New Brunswick and Maine re-imagine their relationship for the 21st century and communities strive to stay together despite the best efforts of parochial politicians, protectionists, and overzealous border officials.

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