

Broken Landscape: Indians, Indian Tribes, and the Constitution. By Frank Pommersheim. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 424 pp. \$35.00 cloth.

Professor Frank Pommersheim's new book eloquently explains how America's Indian peoples became legally and politically enveloped in their present state of dependency on the continued good will of the federal government. He reliably guides his readers through those early US Supreme Court decisions that—based on their expedient adaptation of the specious, and arguably racist, doctrine of “discovery”—subjected the Indian peoples to the overriding sovereignty of the United States. But aside from his astute analysis of Indian legal history, his book is distinguished by the tantalizing question he raises in his introduction: Can today's Indian peoples somehow escape their federally imposed dependency so as to become truly self-determining? He answers that question with a resounding “yes.”

Pommersheim's proposed escape route for the Indian peoples is both bold and audacious. He contends that, through his proposed program of “constitutional reform and amendment,” Indian sovereignty will flourish anew because a “new constitutional mooring [of the Indian peoples' inherent and treaty-reserved rights will] constrain excessive federal (and state) authority in Indian affairs, while guaranteeing a meaningful and enduring tribal sovereignty” (6). He concludes that, absent the success of his proposed program of reform, the Indian peoples' contemporary self-help efforts to achieve self-determination are “unlikely to flourish in the dependent and depleted soil that covers the field of Indian law” (7).

After reading the introduction, I was tempted to shout “yes” to his proposed reform program because I believe, like Pommersheim, that it may enable them to escape their longstanding dependency on the federal government. Unfortunately, and disappointingly, Pommersheim does not really mention again, in the remaining four hundred pages, his bold and audacious program. It is as if he was overcome by the sheer audacity of his proposal and decided instead to use it as the analytical foil for his explanation as to why any such efforts will likely be thwarted by the US Supreme Court. Therefore, I suggest that the reader skip the introduction so as to focus on the remainder of the book, which does provide interesting and valuable insights into the origin and evolution of federal Indian law over the past two hundred or so years.

Once freed of his self-imposed requirement of engineering the Indian peoples' escape from their dependent status, Pommersheim successfully and satisfyingly tackles, and largely demolishes, the Supreme Court's continued use of expedient, and arguably unconstitutional, judicial rationalizations to justify the federal government's continued assertion of a largely unfettered plenary power over the Indian peoples. He lucidly explains how the Indian peoples' original sovereign rights have been shattered to bits and pieces by both the past and present decisions of the court. Within the compass of his more traditional Indian law analysis, Pommersheim provides useful counsel as to how the Indian peoples—given that they likely will not escape their dependent status any time soon—can use Indian law so as to function more successfully within its confines.

Thankfully, Pommersheim never does successfully reconcile himself to the reality that those historic forces, unleashed by the American efforts to colonize this continent,

possibly succeeded in permanently enveloping the Indian peoples in their present dependent status. This is what I find most admirable about his book: he really does wish that the Indian peoples could use his reform program to escape their dependent status. His steadfast refusal to become reconciled to the Indian peoples' fate—despite his inability to explain how that fate might be escaped—is what, for me, elevates his book above the norm of today's somewhat dour and fatalistic Indian law scholarship.

In sum, Pommersheim's new book deserves to be read because it recognizes that Indian law, when used thoughtfully and appropriately, can substantially assist the Indian peoples in their self-determination efforts. However, Indian law's role, despite Pommersheim's suggestions to the contrary in his introduction, is not to ultimately free the Indian peoples from their dependency on the federal government. Instead, the Indian peoples themselves—and not lawyers, courts, or legislatures—must decide when, and if, they will choose to exit their present state of dependency on the federal government. Pommersheim wisely expresses no opinion as to what choices, if any, the Indian peoples should make in this regard. Instead, he appropriately focuses on how Indian law, and perhaps Indigenous rights law, can be used to enlarge the Indian peoples' sphere of action within their existing dependent status.

Raymond Cross
University of Montana

Cherokee Narratives: A Linguistic Study. By Durbin Feeling, William Pulte, and Gregory Pulte. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. 240 pages. \$32.95 cloth; \$19.95 paper.

The Cherokees represent one of the largest Native American nations in the United States. Perhaps the most famous episode in Cherokee history was the creation, in the 1820s, of a unique syllabic writing system for the language. This writing system, the Cherokee syllabary, has allowed the Cherokees to nurture a nearly two-hundred-year tradition of Indigenous literacy. Like all Native American nations, the Cherokees have struggled to maintain their language and culture in the face of tremendous pressures to assimilate into mainstream society. The 1970s saw a renewed resurgence of interest in teaching and learning the language. One of the most impressive products of this trend was the collaboration between Cherokee linguist and speaker Durbin Feeling and professor William Pulte that produced the 1975 *Cherokee-English Dictionary* and an accompanying grammar sketch, which remains today the single most important work on the Cherokee language.

Cherokee Narratives: A Linguistic Study, the third volume in their decades-long collaboration, completes the classic trifecta of language documentation: a dictionary, a grammar, and a narrative collection. Aiming at a broader audience than linguists and anthropologists, the goal of this collection is well stated in a foreword by Bill John Baker, principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Chief Baker notes that the “accounts are written in a conversational style that is critical for Cherokee language learners” (ix) and that the work “represents a huge leap forward, possibly the biggest we have had