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Natives become immersed in a pluralistic environment and must learn how to deal with such an environment while maintaining some sense of a tribal self.

Alexie's view of tribalism is only one thread that the reader can follow through the interviews. *Conversations* offers the reader a relatively unfettered text of fourteen years of Alexie's insights on a variety of topics. Peterson has reprinted them in their entirety with minimal editing, in keeping with the series' standards. With the exception of her introduction and the interviews she chose to include—or more to the point, the interviews she chose not to include—Peterson's presence is negligible. The interviews she has selected represent a myriad of interviewers and publications, each looking for something different from Alexie. Through his responses, Alexie brings up issues that should be further explored by scholars of his works and of Native American literary studies in general. Alexie is also spontaneous, a natural result of the genre, and brutally honest in these interviews, revealing the personality that is so characteristic of the works that his fans have come to enjoy, which should appeal to the casual reader. With the exception of Peterson's introduction, which does a great job of summarizing the issues these interviews present, *Conversations* does not offer much in terms of criticism. Considering the methodology Peterson uses, however, it is doubtful the book was intended to be a critical work. Regardless, the book is important to Native American literary studies, given Alexie's presence in the Native and non-Native literary world and the issues that are explored in the interviews.

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Documents of Native American Political Development, 1500s to 1933.
Edited by David E. Wilkins. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. 560 pages. \$99.00 cloth.

David Wilkins's latest book is a collection of laws, tribal constitutions, and reports documenting the political histories of a diverse selection of Native American peoples in the era before the passage of the Indian Reorganization Act (IRA) in 1934. The IRA famously encouraged the drafting of new tribal constitutions as part of what John Collier and his allies hoped would be a more just relationship between Indian nations and the United States. As Wilkins notes, however, by the 1930s many Native peoples had a long experience with political institution building, tribal leaders having frequently reshaped their peoples' systems of government as they responded and adapted to American colonialism. In reproducing evidence of that experience, Wilkins challenges

the common assumption that Indian nations lost or surrendered the ability to govern themselves during the nineteenth century. These laws and constitutions demonstrate that, even in the face of coercive American policies, Indian peoples continued to pursue self-government and to exercise that power in at least a limited measure.

Some of the documents that Wilkins collects will be familiar to readers. The volume begins with the Iroquois League's Great Law of Peace, for instance, and he includes the Cherokee Nation's famous 1827 constitution. Many selections, however, are rare or difficult to access, drawn from out-of-print histories, transcriptions in federal government documents, or the manuscript holdings of university archives. The diversity of these materials is quite striking. A reader encounters descriptions of traditional governments, written legal codes, Indian petitions to the United States, and constitutions from a wide variety of Native peoples. The sheer number and breadth of these documents powerfully conveys Wilkins's argument about Indian political history. Clearly, a great deal of self-governance took place in Indian country during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Not surprisingly, many of the constitutions represented efforts to protect tribal homelands. They affirmed collective ownership of land and worked to make the sale of tribal property extremely difficult. The Seneca's 1845 Constitutional Ordinance, for example, specified that land sales could be made only with the agreement of two-thirds of the adult male population and two-thirds of the traditional chiefs. Other constitutions required even greater majorities or the consent of large councils. These provisions remind one that, although the constitutions often echoed Euro-American legal traditions, they forcefully expressed tribal peoples' desire to preserve national territories and distinct political identities.

Some constitutions document stories of resistance to federal authorities, as in the case of the Rosebud Sioux documents from the early twentieth century. In 1911, the US agent at Rosebud tried to replace tribal chiefs and a general council with a smaller business council subject to his own influence. Rosebud residents responded by demanding a more representative system, and in 1920 a new constitution restored the general council. Thomas Biolsi has already told that story and others like it in *Organizing the Lakota* (1992). Still, it is fascinating to read the constitutions and to watch the drama unfold within the law. Other documents reflect tribal histories of internal political struggle. The constitutions of the Allegheny and Cattaraugus Seneca from the mid-nineteenth century, for instance, illustrate intense competition between supporters of traditional chiefs and a party seeking to develop new political institutions. An 1848 constitution replaced the chiefs with a three-branch government consisting of a council, a president and other executive officials, and a system

of peacemaker courts. Within a few years, however, the traditional chiefs and their allies regained power and drafted a new document repudiating the 1848 constitution and declaring a restoration of government by chiefs. Although this later effort ultimately failed, the two constitutions vividly illustrate a Seneca debate regarding how best to govern the nation.

The legal codes often illuminate Native American efforts to shape and respond to social and economic change. Cherokee and Creek laws from the early nineteenth century, for example, document adaptation to the growing influence of the American market economy. The laws regulated new kinds of property and new enterprises, such as turnpikes, ferries, and mills. The codes also reflect the arrival of new people, as both nations sought to regulate intermarriage with whites while controlling populations of black slaves. The historian Fay Yarbrough has recently used the Cherokee laws regarding slavery and intermarriage to powerful effect, examining the role of Euro-American conceptions of race in the development of Cherokee nationhood (*Race and the Cherokee Nation*, 2008).

It is worth mentioning one other interesting category of documents, statements, and petitions deriving from multiracial organizations. In Indian Territory (what is today Oklahoma), the close proximity of a great many removed and relocated peoples encouraged some Native American leaders to pursue intertribal cooperation in dealing with common political problems. Wilkins selects several documents that illustrate that development, including an 1886 compact in which representatives of the Five Southeastern Tribes and several other nations pledged to maintain peace among one another and to cooperate in law enforcement. Significantly, the compact also included a promise to resist efforts to alienate any of the participating nations' lands. As the nineteenth century closed, this Indian internationalism would become one of the tools that tribal leaders employed in fighting the allotment policy.

This reference to allotment raises a final point. Many of the laws and constitutions Wilkins reproduces date from the era of the assimilation campaigns. That is, they come from the period when the United States adopted some of its most aggressive and intrusive policies toward Native Americans. These policies helped to drive the proliferation of written tribal law, as Indian agents pushed tribal communities to adopt Euro-American institutions and political practices. At the same time, the documents in this collection repeatedly demonstrate that Native American communities worked to shape the new institutions to reflect older values and to use the law to maintain at least a modicum of autonomy during a time of terrible oppression. Read in this manner, these documents offer profound testimony to a Native American will to self-government.

Although the volume certainly represents a valuable addition to the literature on Native American political history, I have to question Wilkins's choice of format for presenting these documents. At a time when we are blessed with an abundance of Internet resources for American Indian law, this collection seems better suited to the Web than to an expensive volume from a university press. As Wilkins acknowledges in his introduction, this selection of laws and constitutions merely represents the beginning of an effort to document Indian political institution building during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Why not offer these documents through an online database, where additional material could be added and easily made available? I hope that Wilkins's plans include the creation of such a database, as a Web presence for these fascinating records could only augment their power to inspire and instruct.

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Encounters on the Passage: Inuit Meet the Explorers. Dorothy Harley Eber. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008. 196 pages. \$46.00 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Inuit have encountered people of European origin traveling through their lands over a long period of time. In *Encounters on the Passage*, Dorothy Harley Eber describes Inuit views of some of these encounters drawn from oral traditions recounted in interviews that she conducted between 1994 and 2008 with numerous Inuit living in Nunavut with additional accounts drawn from the Inullariit Elders' Society Archives at the Igloodik Research Centre. She focuses mainly on stories about which she is also able to provide an account of the explorer's perception of the same event drawn from their published journals. The main focus of the traditions that she discusses is on encounters resulting from European attempts to find a Northwest Passage during the nineteenth century.

One accomplishment of Eber's book is to demonstrate that oral traditions are alive and well among the Nunavut Inuit and that they have considerable depth and historical and cultural interest. When she is able to compare Inuit and European versions of the same event, she also offers valuable information about and insight into major differences in culturally based perceptions and behavior.

Eber describes Inuit encounters with and oral traditions about a number of expeditions: William Edward Parry's expedition from 1821 to 1823, especially