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Miranda Johnson. *The Land Is Our History: Indigeneity, Law, and the Settler State.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. Illustrations. 248 pp. $99.00, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-060002-0.

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Scholars in the broad field of Indigenous studies have long focused on the experiences of particular communities, nations, or regions. The fields of anthropology and ethnohistory, in particular, have produced rich studies of local knowledge among Indigenous communities (Julie Cruikshank's work in the Yukon comes to mind here). Reluctance to impose pan-Indigenous experiences on culturally diverse people has tended to limit analysis of common experiences across countries and continents. And yet, Indigenous people in many areas of the globe have faced similar historical experiences—the imposition of settler colonialism, the signing of treaties, and the development of a paternalistic state—that cry out for comparative analysis.

Miranda Johnson addresses this issue in her expansive new book, *The Land Is Our History*, an analysis of Indigenous encounters with the modern state in three British Commonwealth nations: Canada, New Zealand, and Australia. In all cases, Johnson concentrates on the rights revolutions that began in the 1970s, eventually producing new definitions of indigeneity based on historical ties to land and the idea of Indigenous territorial sovereignty within the broader nation-state. Johnson appropriately notes that post-world war anti-colonial movements and the cultural equation of indigeneity with a critique of industrial society provided a broad context for Indigenous claims in the three Commonwealth countries. She argues convincingly, however, that Indigenous communities in these settler colonies worked not to replace or expel the foundations of the modern state, but worked within basic structures of colonial legal structures (i.e., courts, treaties, and commissions of inquiry) to advance their claims successfully during the last decades of the twentieth century.

Certainly one of the great strengths of the book is the breadth of the research and the depth of Johnson's discussion of seemingly disparate case studies. Johnson covers a lot of ground in this book, basing her findings on impressively extensive archival research in all three of the case study countries. Johnson organizes all of this research solely into a cogent mix of thematic and

discreet case study chapters. The first chapter is a broad and rich discussion of the emerging idea of Indigenous people as "citizens plus" in the 1970s as developed by new activists, such as Canada's Harold Cardinal. Johnson then moves to two case study chapters that analyze the significance of two early land rights court cases in Australia and Canada, the Ylongu's "Gove land rights case" and the Dene's "caveat case," as catalysts that prompted the courts to admit oral evidence and governments to rethink their previous firm opposition to recognizing the place-based nature of Indigenous identities. The fourth chapter examines how Indigenous groups used commissions of inquiry (the Berger Inquiry and the Indian Claims Commission in Canada; and the Woodward Commission in Australia) to advance their rights claims, challenging the primacy of the nation-state's authority over public lands. The last two chapters deal with the unique case of Maori activism in New Zealand, which focused less on holding the state accountable for previous treaties and more on discrediting the legitimacy of the 1840 Treaty of Waitangi due to the duplicitous nature of the signing processes.

While all of these chapters might have wallowed in the dreary details of legalese, Johnson's lively writing style, her deft descriptions of dramatic moments in the courts, and her remarkable ability to uncover sources that take us inside the heads of key historical actors will hold the attention of most readers with even a passing interest in Indigenous issues. Readers are treated, for example, to a fascinating description of the cross-cultural dialogue that attended the Ylongu's introduction of origin myths and ritual objects as courtroom evidence attesting to the sacred nature of their lands. Similar rich testimony from court transcripts highlights Dene claims to land rights based on usage for hunting and trapping; the presiding Judge William Morrow's memoirs reveal his admiration for hunting cultures and communities that live close to the land. Particularly powerful is the testimony of the Whanganui Maori before the Waitangi Tribunal of the early 1990s about their sense of interrelatedness with the Whanganui River, a discourse that relied on rich proverbs and metaphorical conceptions of the river as an ancestor and an umbilical cord. Taken together, all of this testimony provides a rich body of evidence to support Johnson's argument that Indigenous groups in all three case study countries used the politics of place-based identity not only to press specific land claims but also to transform the colonial foundation and identity of each of the three settler states from triumphalist indifference toward tangible accommodation of distinct Indigenous rights.

Johnson's book is all the more important because, as she highlights in the epilogue, the collective rights revolution that began in the 1970s has come under attack from conservative commentators who have led a backlash against the very idea of Indigenous land claims. There has also been a rethinking of the approach from Indigenous leaders who want to shift the focus to economic development and from a new generation of Indigenous activists who advocate a politics of disengagement with the legal and governance structures of the settler state. Amid these many voices, Johnson's ***The Land Is Our History*** provides a cogent and powerful reminder that the rights revolutions of the 1970s to 1990s in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand represented a remarkable case of dispossessed people holding colonial authorities to account. Coupled with Arthur Ray's similarly themed ***Aboriginal Rights Claims and the Making and Remaking of History*** (2016), Johnson's book is essential reading for students enrolled in university courses on the struggles of Indigenous people globally for recognition of land rights. Most importantly, ***The Land Is Our History*** finally gives due credit to creativity and persistence of Indigenous groups, such as the Dene, the Ylongu, and the Maori, as they radically renegotiated the terms of their relationship with colonialism.

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