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Review of *American Indian Law Deskbook* Edited by Julie Wrend and Clay Smith

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American Indian Law Deskbook. Edited by Julie Wrend and Clay Smith and sponsored by Conference of Western Attorneys General, Nicholas J. Spaeth, chair, Editing Committee. Niwot, Colorado: University Press of Colorado, 1993. Contents, foreword, table of cases, table of statutes and codes, bibliography, index. xv + 466 pp. \$49.95.

A hornbook in the legal vernacular is in essence a huge *Cliff's Notes*, relating not to a Shakespearean play but to a particular field of law. It is a useful shortcut; it is a synthesis; and it is a reference guide. *American Indian Law Deskbook* is a hornbook.

This particular Indian law reference work is special in several ways. Foremost, it includes significant sections on very recent Indian legal issues that have historical roots. These include civil and criminal jurisdictional disputes; the Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, also known as the Indian Bill of Rights; Indian water rights; the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978; hunting and fishing regulation; Indian gaming; and taxation.

Second, it is especially thorough in its treatment of statutory analyses. Perhaps this characteristic is its strongest component. No other reference guide is as thorough. And third, this legal compendium is edited with care.

As a complete reference tool, however, *American Indian Law Deskbook* is merely adequate. While significant case law is included, it is not as thoroughly analyzed in the body of the book as one might expect. Moreover, the bibliography of non-statutory law and non-case law is significantly shallow. Another weakness is found in the first five sections. They purport to offer a summary of the evolution of federal Indian policy; legal definitions of Indian, Indian tribe, and Indian country; and criminal law and civil law regulations. These sections are very limited, briefer than the treatment accorded them in Felix Cohen's *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* published in 1942. Apparently the editors assume, incorrectly, that minimal new developments have occurred in the past half-century.

In the preface, Nicholas J. Spaeth, North Dakota's Attorney General and chair of the committee who sponsored this compilation, explains the purpose of the *Deskbook*. Western attorneys general needed an "objective treatise on Indian law" so they could represent their states better in legal disputes involving Native American parties (p. xiv). "Objective" might describe *Deskbook*, as it is sparse on adjectives and conceptual creativity.

Spaeth also notes that the volume is not comprehensive; it is limited because it does not examine Native legal issues involving Alaska, Hawaii, and Oklahoma, three states containing the largest Native populations. For readers concerned with the Indian nations of the Great Plains, all but those of Oklahoma are covered.

If one needs information on current Indian legal issues with hints on historical background, this is a useful reference guide. It should not, however, be the only reference one consults.

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