

Cornell University Student Assembly

Originally Presented on:	10/29/2020
Type of Action:	Recommendation
Status/Result:	New Business

S.A. Resolution #7

Support for Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell's Demands

ABSTRACT: This resolution calls for the Student Assembly to support the demands of Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell (NAISAC)

Sponsored by: Colin Benedict '21

Whereas, the Gayogohó:no (Cayuga) Nation of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy have a historic and contemporary presence in the Ithaca area;

Whereas, the Gayogohó:no people were displaced and forcibly removed from this region by the Sullivan-Clinton Campaign in 1779, an act of attempted genocide sponsored by the United States;

Whereas, the land claims filed by the Gayogohó:no people in the courts of the United States have proven to be largely unsuccessful in reestablishing a land base for themselves in the Finger Lakes area;

Whereas, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 established a land-grant college for each state to support higher education;

Whereas, each state received 30,000 acres of land from the federal government for each member of Congress to support the funding of the land-grant college. If the state had no available lands in its boundaries, it was issued paper scrip to acquire lands in other states;

Whereas, Cornell University was established as the land grant institution for the state of New York, and 990,000 acres of land were granted to support the University endowment;

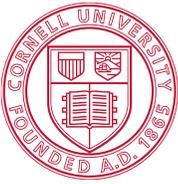
Whereas, New York had no available lands within its borders due to parceling of land in the post-Revolutionary War era;

Whereas, Ezra Cornell, John McGraw, and other Cornell founders selected land in 15 other states to fund the endowment of Cornell University;

Whereas, much of the land chosen by the University was available due to Indigenous dispossession and acts of genocide enacted by the United States;

Whereas, the University did not immediately sell the land, but let it accrue value over time, slowly selling it off years later;

Whereas, by 1914, an estimated 5.7 million was raised from the land sale (approximately \$148 million in 2020 dollars);



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45 **Whereas**, Cornell had raised over 4.5 times as much money as the second most profitable land-
46 grant university, creating the basis for the endowment of Cornell University that we know
47 today;

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49 **Whereas**, Cornell prides itself on Diversity and Inclusion, where any person can study any subject,
50 yet still refuses to publicly acknowledge the history of the territory that the University's
51 Ithaca campus occupies;

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53 **Whereas**, as an academic institution that occupies land in the Ithaca area, Cornell has a
54 responsibility to acknowledge this history of violence, the Cayuga Nation's history with this
55 land, and support the Cayuga Nation as they seek to recover from this history, and reclaim
56 their territory;

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58 **Whereas**, to this day, the University upholds a tradition of profiting from acts of colonial violence
59 and Indigenous erasure;

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61 **Be it therefore resolved**, in order to begin to rectify these crimes, the members of Native American
62 and Indigenous Students At Cornell put forward the demands in Appendix A to the
63 University Administration;

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65 **Be it further resolved**, the undergraduate Student Assembly will recognize these demands, and
66 support the efforts of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, in moving these demands into
67 practice;

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69 **Be it finally resolved**, that the Student Assembly calls on the University to meet these demands,
70 acknowledge the historical and contemporary relationships that Indigenous people have with
71 the Ithaca campus, and make steps towards a more inclusive and reconciliatory relationship
72 with Indigenous people in the Ithaca area and beyond.

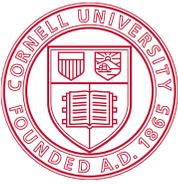
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75 **Respectfully Submitted,**

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77 Colin Benedict '21

78 *Former Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion, Student Assembly*

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80 *(Reviewed by: Executive Committee, 5-0-2, 10/28/2020)*

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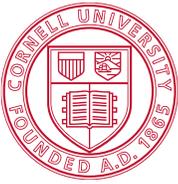
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86 *Appendix A:* Cornell University was founded on Indigenous dispossession and genocide. To this day,
87 the University upholds a tradition of profiting from acts of colonial violence and Indigenous erasure.
88 In order to begin to rectify these crimes, the members of Native American and Indigenous Students
89 At Cornell put forward these demands to the University:
90

- 91 1. The American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program shall transition to department status;
92 this transition is to be completed within the next four years.
- 93 2. Increased funding shall be granted to the AIISP for the recruitment and retention of new
94 Indigenous faculty members, to support the transition of the program to department status.
95 A minimum of five new faculty members shall be hired within the next four years.
- 96 3. Increased funding shall be granted to the AIISP to support increased recruitment and
97 retention efforts of Indigenous students. In 2017, there were only 67 Native Americans
98 enrolled across all colleges, undergraduate and graduate. We only make up 0.3% of the
99 overall Cornell student population¹. We demand that the number of enrolled Native
100 American/Alaska Native students be increased to 1.7% of the total Cornell student
101 population, equal to the percentage of Native American/Alaska Natives in the United
102 States². The University shall make efforts to increase the number of enrolled
103 Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students to 1% of the total student population. In order to
104 support increased rates of retention, an additional staff member shall be hired to separate the
105 duties of recruitment and retention efforts within the AIISP. Recruitment conducted by the
106 University shall focus on Indigenous students from communities historically affected and/or
107 displaced by the Morrill Land Grant Act. Any student coming from a community affected
108 and/or displaced by the Morrill Land Grant Act shall receive a free education, regardless of
109 field of study.
- 110 4. An Indigenous therapist will be hired by Cornell Health, to aid in addressing the unique
111 mental health struggles affecting Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.
- 112 5. The University shall include a land acknowledgement of the Gayogohónq' (Cayuga) people
113 before all Ithaca-based University-affiliated events. The land acknowledgement used will be
114 the AIISP-approved version.
- 115 6. The University shall put out a statement acknowledging the amount of land acquired,
116 interest accrued, and mineral rights funds received through the Morrill Land Act and thus
117 through Indigenous dispossession. The University shall commit to a policy of refraining
118 from mineral and resource extraction on lands gained through the Morrill Land Grant Act.

¹ <https://datausa.io/profile/university/cornell-university>

² <http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes/demographics>



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- 119 7. The University shall return all lands in the Ithaca area not immediately utilized for
120 educational purposes to the traditional Gayogohó:nq' leadership. The University shall build
121 and maintain channels of communication with the traditional Gayogohó:nq' leadership until
122 the land return process is complete.
- 123 8. To ensure that all students have a basic understanding of the gravity of Indigenous genocide
124 and their own positionality on stolen Indigenous land, the University shall mandate that all
125 students take an introductory Indigenous Studies course during their first year of study.
- 126 9. To ensure that monuments to historical figures of colonization and violence against
127 Indigenous people are removed, the University shall rename Morrill Hall on the Arts Quad.
128 Consultation with AIISP Faculty and Students in the renaming is required.
- 129 10. The Ad-Hoc Committee on Native American Affairs shall be reinstated to oversee the
130 approval of these demands. The Committee shall be made up of Indigenous students, staff,
131 faculty, local Indigenous leadership, and delegates from University administration.

132
133 *Supported by:*

134 Native American and Indigenous Students At Cornell
135 the American Indian Science and Engineering Society
136 Indigenous Graduate Students' Association
137 Cornell Asian Pacific Islander Student Union
138 Black Students Union
139 People's Organizing Collective
140 Black Women Support Network
141 South Asian Council
142 The Puerto Rican Students Association
143 The Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society
144 Climate Justice Cornell
145 the Caribbean Students' Association
146 Cornell Welcomes Refugees
147 Cornell Vietnamese Association
148 Cornell Dream Team
149 Thread Magazine
150 The Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition
151 International Students' Union
152 First Generation Students' Union
153 Haven
154 Cornell Higher Education Review
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