

Cornell University University Assembly

U.A. Resolution # 2

Support for Native American and Indigenous Students at Cornell's Demands [11/10/2020]

Sponsored by: Colin Benedict '21, External Relations Chair of NAISAC and Uchenna Chukwukere, Student Assembly Representative

On Behalf Of: Native American and Indigenous Students At Cornell (NAISAC)

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

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;

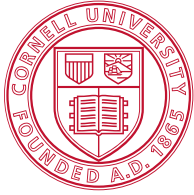
Whereas, the Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 established a land-grant college for each state to support higher education;

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;



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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);

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

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

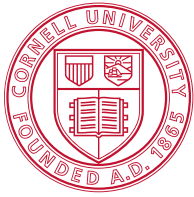
Whereas, as an academic institution that occupies land in the Ithaca area, Cornell has a responsibility to acknowledge this history of violence, the Cayuga Nation's history with this land, and support the Cayuga Nation as they seek to recover from this history, and reclaim their territory;

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

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

Be it further resolved, the University Assembly will recognize these demands, and support the efforts of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty, in moving these demands into practice;

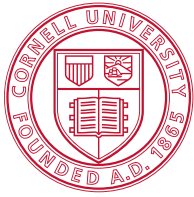
Be it finally resolved, that the University Assembly calls on the University to meet these demands, acknowledge the historical and contemporary relationships that Indigenous people have with the Ithaca campus, and make steps towards a more inclusive and reconciliatory relationship with Indigenous people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



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

1. The American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program shall transition to department status; this transition is to be completed within the next four years.
2. Increased funding shall be granted to the AIISP for the recruitment and retention of new Indigenous faculty members, to support the transition of the program to department status. A minimum of five new faculty members shall be hired within the next four years.
3. Increased funding shall be granted to the AIISP to support increased recruitment and retention efforts of Indigenous students. In 2017, there were only 67 Native Americans enrolled across all colleges, undergraduate and graduate. We only make up 0.3% of the overall Cornell student population¹. We demand that the number of enrolled Native American/Alaska Native students be increased to 1.7% of the total Cornell student population, equal to the percentage of Native American/Alaska Natives in the United States². The University shall make efforts to increase the number of enrolled Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students to 1% of the total student population. In order to support increased rates of retention, an additional staff member shall be hired to separate the duties of recruitment and retention efforts within the AIISP. Recruitment conducted by the University shall focus on Indigenous students from communities historically affected and/or displaced by the Morrill Land Grant Act. Any student coming from a community affected and/or displaced by the Morrill Land Grant Act shall receive a free education, regardless of field of study.
4. An Indigenous therapist will be hired by Cornell Health, to aid in addressing the unique mental health struggles affecting Indigenous students, staff, and faculty.
5. The University shall include a land acknowledgement of the Gayogohó:nq' (Cayuga) people before all Ithaca-based University-affiliated events. The land acknowledgement used will be the AIISP-approved version.
6. The University shall put out a statement acknowledging the amount of land acquired, interest accrued, and mineral rights funds received through the Morrill Land Act and thus through Indigenous dispossession. The University shall commit to a policy of refraining from mineral and resource extraction on lands gained through the Morrill Land Grant Act.
7. The University shall return all lands in the Ithaca area not immediately utilized for educational purposes to the traditional Gayogohó:nq' leadership. The University shall build and maintain channels of communication with the traditional Gayogohó:nq' leadership until the land return process is complete.
8. To ensure that all students have a basic understanding of the gravity of Indigenous genocide and their own positionality on stolen Indigenous land, the University shall



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mandate that all students take an introductory Indigenous Studies course during their first year of study.

9. To ensure that monuments to historical figures of colonization and violence against Indigenous people are removed, the University shall rename Morrill Hall on the Arts Quad. Consultation with AIISP Faculty and Students in the renaming is required.

10. The Ad-Hoc Committee on Native American Affairs shall be reinstituted to oversee the approval of these demands. The Committee shall be made up of Indigenous students, staff, faculty, local Indigenous leadership, and delegates from University administration.

Supported by:

Native American and Indigenous Students At Cornell
the American Indian Science and Engineering Society
Indigenous Graduate Students' Association
Cornell Asian Pacific Islander Student Union
La Asociación Latina
Black Students Union
People's Organizing Collective
Black Women Support Network
South Asian Council
The Puerto Rican Students Association
The Cornell Abolitionist Revolutionary Society
Climate Justice Cornell
the Caribbean Students' Association
Cornell Welcomes Refugees
Cornell Vietnamese Association
Cornell Dream Team
Thread Magazine
The Gender Justice Advocacy Coalition
International Students' Union
First Generation Students' Union
Haven
Cornell Higher Education Review