The 2014 Graduate Horizons summer workshop at Cornell University targeted current college students and college graduates who are seeking to apply to graduate/professional programs in the near future. This year the focus was on Native American, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and First Nations students in preparing them for the competitive admissions process. About sixty native college students and graduates arrived for the four day intensive workshop on the Graduate Admissions process. The participating faculty represented thirty-seven graduate/professional and partner organizations. In addition, the students had an opportunity to learn from the experience of Cornell’s current graduate students and to participate in various info sessions about Cornell’s programs, internships and funding resources.

The chief organizers of Graduate Horizons, Carmen Lopez (Navajo), the Executive Director of College and Graduate Horizons, Hilary Abe (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara), Coordinator of Recruitment and Alumni Affairs, as well as Cornell’s Dr. Tremayne Waller, Director of McNair Scholars Program, OADI, were all in charge of facilitating this four-day workshop. In the traditional manner, they exchanged gifts of appreciation with Dr. Rickard on behalf of AIP and Cornell. Dr. Waller later commented that “Graduate Horizons is a fantastic grad school prep program for Native American students to help them explore different opportunities as it relates to grad school and refine the application process, demystify what it means to be a graduate student and really provide support around different types of opportunities for graduate study.”
On the first day, American Indian Program’s faculty, Dr. Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora), AIP’s Director and Dr. Troy Richardson (Saponi/Tuscarora), welcomed the participants of the workshop to the Haudenosaunee homelands at large and Cornell specifically. In her talk, Dr. Rickard encouraged the next generation of graduate students to strive to be leaders in their academic and professional fields, noting that their role requires them to make positive impacts within their communities and continue to have an open dialogue about indigeneity so that their voices are heard, respected, and have an impact on the way the world operates.

Dr. Richardson spoke about a wide range of issues that prospective students should consider before applying to graduate school. For instance, he encouraged them to seek out an institution that meets their needs in terms of academic interest(s), teaching and research methodologies, as well as the existence of cultural and social support networks. When considering applying to a selected school, he advised students to find internal advocates in the form of professors working within their department of interest or current graduate students that could potentially give them feedback prior to submitting their application. With regards to the importance of their indigenous heritage, the guest participants were asked to think about how they might intersect their career path with the discourse of indigenous studies.

On the following day, a panel of graduate students involved in the American Indian Program, represented by Jason Corwin (Seneca), Nadine Thornton (Cherokee), Simon Velasquez (Apache/Yaqui/Mexican) and Morgan Ruelle, spoke about their experience at Cornell and provided the participants with valuable perspective and advice on choosing an academic path. For instance, Nadine stressed the importance of being driven and focused while pursuing a graduate degree, whereas Simon and Jason told their personal stories of transitioning into graduate school and the importance of finding a support network.
Lastly, Morgan spoke about the benefits of conducting research with Native communities, which an institution like Cornell helps facilitate.

The two key cultural events that addressed Cornell's connection to an Indigenous subjectivity and its place in the Cayuga/Haudenosaunee homelands were the "Haudenosaunee Dedication of a White Pine as a Tree of Peace" and the Haudenosaunee Social. John Block (Seneca) officiated the dedication of a white pine as a tree of peace at the Cornell Plantations with an opening and statements about the historical significance of the tree, which was followed by the talented Allegany River Indian Dancers (all members of the Seneca Nation from the Allegany Indian Reservation), who performed traditional Haudenosaunee music and dances at the dedication and later at the Graduate Horizons dinner.
Overall, Graduate Horizons had a promising turnout of engaged students and faculty from all across the Indian Country, which contributed to its success. According to Ms. Lopez, the Executive Director of College and Graduate Horizons, Cornell’s hosting and AIP’s support to the workshop’s organizers, encouraged her to make plans towards working with Cornell in the future on recruiting efforts, such as the undergraduate College Horizons in 2016.

Visit the link provided below to view a video that chronicles 2014 Graduate Horizons:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AAQPXTwo4w