CU ON CAYUGA LANDS

Indigenous Student Perspectives

Pictured: Ana Bordallo (Co-Chair|NASAC) and Hi’ilei Casco (Co-President|Hawai’i Club)
The Haudenosaunee people are guided by thinking in terms of seven generations. Part of this significance involves bridging the contributions from the past and the people involved today to create a better future for those who will follow. The evolution of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program is an example of this value.

The determination of past students, faculty, staff, and community carved out space within Cornell University for Indigenous students. The 4th floor at Caldwell Hall and the Akwe:kon Program House enable students to gather and share their visions on how they want to change the world. The collective resolve of Indigenous peoples to establish and maintain a visible presence within the Cornell community has opened doors for others to follow.

The unwavering support of staff and faculty within the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program gives confidence to Indigenous students who are finding their place.

Niawenkö:wa to all those who have helped pave the way for Indigenous students to have access to these spaces, ensuring student success.

This publication embodies the voices of Indigenous students with varying backgrounds, experiences and disciplines – bringing those voices together as one.

Osiyo and Hafa Adai,

As we begin this dialogue, we recognize our role as visitors on Cayuga Nation homelands and we are grateful to Chief Sam George of the Cayuga Nation for welcoming us here. We also express appreciation to the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program for fostering this connection with the Cayuga Nation and greater Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

Recognizing that Indigenous students travel to Cornell University from across the world, this publication is meant to celebrate their diverse perspectives. Indigenous students carry their communities with them in many forms. We are showcasing these worldviews and experiences of Indigenous students, supporting one another as we navigate this world of academia together.

As we look ahead to the coming academic year, we welcome new freshmen and transfer students to Cornell University. We are also looking forward to hearing from our returning friends regarding their summer experiences.

We want to impress that if you are an incoming student, there is a community here waiting for you. If you are a current student, the people within these pages are your friends, classmates, and family members. If you are Indigenous, your experiences and perspectives are valued and you belong here. If you are a member of the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program community, thank you for actively incorporating us into your family.

We hope that the content of this publication resonates with readers as a celebration of the journey we are on as Indigenous students. We are working to create space on this campus to provide physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental support. To the Indigenous student contributors, we are very grateful for the experiences and perspectives that you have shared in this edition of *CU on Cayuga Lands*. To future Indigenous students at Cornell University, we look forward to the positive impact that you will inevitably make on this community and the Cornell community at large.

Ana Bordallo, Co-Chair | Native American Students at Cornell

Ilyssa Ward, Co-Chair | Native American Students at Cornell
After the Student Assembly passed Resolution #46 in spring 2016, Native American Students at Cornell and its newly formed and renewed allies around campus did not want to sit idly as they waited for a response from the administration. Instead, the students began planning a week of events to happen during the week of Indigenous Peoples’ Day in fall 2016. This highly collaborative week was meant to send a message to the administration that campus-wide support for Indigenous Peoples’ Day had not dwindled since the passing of Resolution #46.

Because much of the student body was home for Fall Break on Indigenous Peoples’ Day—Monday, October 10, 2016—the first event was held on Tuesday, October 11. We opened the week with a Foods of the Americas Dinner held in conjunction with the dining hall staff at Keeton House. Students could use their meal plans to attend. Chief Sam George of the Cayuga Nation opened the week with traditional words as students enjoyed buffalo, corn, squash, plantains, and other foods that originated in the Americas.

On Wednesday, Native American Students at Cornell invited Hawai‘i Club to host a game night where guests learned how to play konane, a two-player Hawaiian board game. Thursday’s event was a talk by Odilia Romero (Zapotec), who works for Frente Indígena de Organizaciones Binacionales (Indigenous Front of Binational Organizations). The Committee for U.S.-Latin American Relations worked with us to invite her to talk about her experiences keeping Zapotec culture and language alive among Oaxacan emigrants in Los Angeles. The next evening, Native American Students at Cornell invited Tracy Naganashe (Ottawa) to host a beading workshop. Students from both Cornell and Lehman Alternative Community School learned how to make porcupine quill earrings. Native American Students at Cornell also co-sponsored the Latino Studies Program’s 24th Latino Unity Dinner on Friday evening to show solidarity with Indigenous members of the Latinx community.

The week culminated in a celebration on Saturday in Willard Straight Hall’s Memorial Room. 15 Cornell-affiliated groups tabled, presenting posters with information about their Indigenous identities or engaging visitors in activities such as Tibetan calligraphy and playing Hawaiian board games. Native American Students at Cornell sold Haudenosaunee strawberry drink and corn flour cookies made with Iroquois White Corn Project flour. At the front of the room, we had five performances from Cornell Bhangra, Cornell’s African Dance Repertoire, Teioswateh Cook (Mohawk), PUKA INTI (Quechua), and the Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers. After the crowd joined in and danced with the members of the Haudenosaunee Singers and Dancers, a traditional Haudenosaunee closing concluded the week of celebrations.

Nya:weh to all who made this week possible. We hope to see you again next fall!

The first change started around 2009, when Cornell University began to refer to that weekend as Fall Break. This resolved only part of the issue raised by Indigenous students. The other component dealt with the lack of visibility of Indigenous peoples on campus. Another push was made in 2012 when students requested recognition of Indigenous people on the Event Calendar.

With little traction being made, efforts of the Indigenous community at Cornell were focused on supporting the Idle No More movement. An initiative followed this movement to have Cornell University acknowledge that the institution is located on Cayuga Lands. Once again there was a lack of support to embrace this request.

While drafting a resolution to acknowledge Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the University Calendar, the Diversity and Inclusion Committee of the Student Assembly approached Indigenous students for direction. Native American Students at Cornell and Indigenous Graduate Student Association provided feedback recommending to restructure the resolution to focus on celebrating Indigenous peoples and recognizing Cornell’s place on Cayuga Lands.

Through this collaborative effort, on March 17, 2016 the Student Assembly passed Resolution #46 calling for Cornell to recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day. The momentum from the unanimous support of this resolution sparked a resolution submission to the Faculty Senate.

Almost a year after the Student Assembly decision, the Faculty Senate voted to approve Resolution #125 recommending to the provost that the Cornell University Academic Calendar annually recognize Indigenous Peoples’ Day on the second Monday of October.

Appreciation is expressed to all of the former Indigenous students at Cornell University who continued to champion this issue. After 15 months of lobbying, the provost is expected to make a decision as part of the new Academic Calendar, to be rolled out in the Fall of 2018.

James A. Perkins Prize for Interracial & Intercultural Peace and Harmony: Honorable Mention

Native American Students at Cornell received an honorable mention for the James A. Perkins Prize for Interracial & Intercultural Peace and Harmony for their work on Indigenous Peoples’ Day activities. The James A. Perkins Prize is awarded to recognize efforts towards making a significant contribution to furthering the ideal of university community while respecting the values of racial and cultural diversity.

Native American Students at Cornell expresses appreciation to the following student organizations who showed support in Spring 2016 by making the final push towards passing Resolution #46 and those making it possible to host Indigenous Peoples’ Day Celebration.

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Islamic Alliance for Justice
- Indigenous Graduate Student Association (IGSA)
- Amnesty International at Cornell University
- Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
- Women in Computing at Cornell
- Cornell Asian Pacific Islander Student Union (CAPSU)
- Hawaii Club
- South Asian Council
- Sangre Taina: The Puerto Rican Students’ Assembly (PRSA)
- Development of the Minority ILR Student Organization
- Chikan Association at Cornell
- Cornell Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architecture Students
- Black Students United (BSU)
- La Asociacion Latina (ALA)

- ALANA Multicultural Board
- LGBTQ+ Liaison at Large
- Cornell Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers
- Muslim Educational and Cultural Association
- MeChA de Cornell
- African Dance Repertoire (ADR)
- Tibet Initiative at Cornell (TIC)
- The Women of Color Coalition (WOCC)
- Lambda Theta Phi
- Ghanaians at Cornell (G@C)
- Nigerian Students Association (NSA)
- Cornell Bhangra (CB)
- Lambda Theta Alpha
- Ujamaa Residential College
- Latino Living Center
- Akwekon Program House
- American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program
**Hawai‘i Club**

*By Hi‘ilei Casco*

On April 29, 2017, the Cornell Hawai‘i Club held yet another successful annual lu‘au for friends, family, and Cornell community at the Anabel Taylor Hall One World Room. This event showcased several aspects of both native Hawaiian and local culture present in Hawai‘i.

The evening was filled with Hawaiian music and dance with several members performing hula and oli (chants) about the islands and their unique way of life. Cornell ‘Ukulele Club also shared a few mele (songs) throughout the night. The ‘ukulele (which in Hawaiian means jumping flea) is a Hawaiian adaptation of the Portuguese machete, introduced to Hawai‘i by immigrants in the 19th century.

The lu‘au also featured native Hawaiian cuisine. The ‘ono (delicious) menu consisted of a few traditional foods, such as kalua pig (pulled pork) and haupia, a coconut milk dessert, as well as shoyu chicken and tofu stir fry—both “local” foods curated from the blend of cultures present in Hawai‘i.

As the main club event of the year, many hours of work and preparation go into planning and executing this event. It is worth it because it serves as a major way for the greater Cornell community to experience the aloha of authentic Hawaiian culture, and it breaks down stereotypes of Hawai‘i and Hawaiian people through re-education and sharing of culture.

Hawai‘i Club expresses appreciation to the Student Activities Funding Commission for providing financial support to host this event, along with the contributions of their club members.

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**Pacific Islanders Initiative**

*By Ana Bordallo*

Before this year, finding other Pacific Islanders on Cornell’s campus was like trying to find needles in a haystack—or better yet—islands in an ocean. As a Chamorro from the island of Guam, I know all too well the feelings of loneliness, frustration, and culture shock. Feelings that prevent many in our community from fulfilling Cornell’s promise of “any person, any study.”

Just like our ancestors navigating the world’s largest ocean, the Pacific Islander students here are setting sail on a new initiative to cultivate, support, and empower our community in higher education.

Guided by our shared values and identities as people of Polynesian, Micronesian, and Melanesian descent, we are on a mission to create space for ourselves on this campus while actively engaging with our home communities.

Next year’s focus will be geared toward building an educational network, cultivating cultural awareness, and collaborating with Indigenous and Pacific Islander leaders from around the world.

We express appreciation to our ancestors, the Cayuga Nation, the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, Native American Students at Cornell, and the A3C for their support and guidance on this journey.
American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)

By Madalynn Madigar

Cornell’s American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) chapter plays a key role as a professional organization in the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program community. AISES provides valuable resources for students such as resume-building sessions, networking opportunities, and multiple conferences to connect with AISES members from across the nation.

AISES is not an “all work and no play” organization: it offers a great chance to bond with students in similar majors. This supportive community is dedicated to fostering student success and well-being in fields of study in which Indigenous students are traditionally underrepresented. Joining allows students to learn about internship positions, hone academic and personal skills, and gain priceless advice on carving out a pathway in the sometimes tricky Cornell terrain.

Be on the lookout for AISES members at the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program’s Welcome Back Picnic this August!

AISES members send a shout out to their advisors Kathy Halbig with the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program and Cindy Mosqueda with Diversity Programs in Engineering for always providing support and guidance.

Akwe:kon Ga’ ni go hi yo (a good mind) Garden

By Bailee Hopkins & Kyrie Ransom

The Akwe:kon Program House’s building design is mindful of cultural symbols. Specifically of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As the first Native American program house on a university campus, Akwe:kon has helped grow Cornell University’s reputation as a progressive institution.

The name Akwe:kon—“all of us”—reflects a community value of creating a family to support students while they attend Cornell University. The development of the Akwe:kon Program House community reflects the evolution of a vision of what an inclusive community could look like.

To further realize this vision, students have decided to highlight the significance of each community space of the grounds. When the Akwe:kon Program House was built, a white pine tree was planted in the parking lot. White pine trees hold special significance for the Haudenosaunee peoples as a symbol of peace. Since then, other grounds developments have taken place. A small landscaped area was installed around the house, creating a space where students can practice traditional activities—such as smudging.

Wanting to cultivate more culturally relevant space on the grounds outside Akwe:kon, a group of students have begun working on the Akwe:kon Ga’ ni go hi yo (a good mind) Garden. We envision the proposed garden to be a raised bed medicine garden, cared for collectively by Cornell students and members of the Cayuga Nation. Traditional medicine plants of the Haudenosaunee peoples that are native to this region will be planted within the garden. The process of identifying the plants will be done in collaboration with the Cayuga Nation, Friends of Ganondagan, and the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program. To date, additional support has been provided by the Community Partnership Funding Board and the Cornell Chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architecture Students. This project has truly been a collective effort.

The long-term vision is to involve Cayuga and other Indigenous youth in planting, caring for, and harvesting from the garden. We hope to hold small gatherings for Indigenous students throughout the year, as well as hosting educational days for both the on- and off-campus communities.

The conceptual design of the garden is to use the shape of a sea turtle shell reflecting the creation stories of many Indigenous communities, including the Haudenosaunee. Future projects associated with the garden will include signage in the Cayuga language, along with Latin and English names. We look forward to cultivating a garden that will connect us with the next generations of Indigenous students and Indigenous people in Ithaca.
Dear Ansley,

By Emerson Shenandoah

Omen go’ Ansley, I thank you for all the support and advice you have given me throughout my freshman year at Cornell University. Without you I don’t think I would have done as well academically or matured into the young man I’ve become.

Every time I passed by you in the hallway heading to my dorm room, you checked in with me. We had our short conversations whether about lacrosse, school or just generally asking how I was doing. I want to express how grateful I am for your caring attitude and let you know that your effort was appreciated.

I know that the other residents appreciated your concern for our well-being, making sure we were okay. You always showed unwavering support for every resident in the house. I can’t imagine a better example of what it means to be a Residence Hall Director—especially for the Akwes:ken community.

I always knew I could come to you for advice or if I needed someone to talk to when I was missing home. You carried a piece of home from the reservation with you to Akwes:ken. As someone from a Haudenosaunee community, I always felt as though you understood me.

From the time I was still in High School and you brought the Cornell tutors to mentor us, to now as a Cornell freshman, without your support, I don’t think I would be on the path I am now. I might have still been lost looking for it.

Again, I am grateful and thankful to have had time with you as the Akwes:ken Residence Hall Director. I wish you and your family the best on your next journey.

Pictured: Ansley Jemison is concluding his fifth and final year as Akwes:ken Residence Hall Director. The perspective of freshman student Emerson Shenandoah provides insight into all of the ways Ansley has supported Akwes:ken Program House residents and American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program students during his tenure.

Pictured: Ansley Jemison participating in a mailing campaign sending post cards to then-President Barack Obama showing support for the Standing Rock Sioux Nation during the Ivy Native Summit hosted by Yale University.
Cornell has a lot to offer—so much in fact, that the plethora of options verges on overwhelming. Alongside the hundreds of clubs, social groups, and professional organizations, many Cornellians decide to engage in academic research. The amount of freedom available to students can seem formidable if you haven't found your niche. This decision is deceptively simple: students have the option to perform research in any discipline. Choosing one specific area is stressful when feeling you must do everything right. Academic freedom is one of the most valuable, while also daunting, opportunities at Cornell. Every student is different. While you see students quickly take to a study, if you happen to be someone with unlimited curiosity but limited time, things get tricky. With so many paths to follow, how do you know that you are choosing the right one?

I found a pathway during the summer before my sophomore year. When I was in high school, I was confident that I would stay 100% true to my—actually hazy—goals I had set for the future. I was going to:

1. major in biological engineering,
2. get a Ph.D.,
3. do some crazy lab stuff, AND
4. attain immortality in biology textbooks as a famous scientist.

Great plan in theory, but I hit some issues early on:

1. I quickly discovered I didn't like engineering,
2. I wasn't pulled towards any of the research in the department, AND
3. I hated my lab assistant job in a neurobiology lab.

After a disillusioning first semester, I applied for transfer into biological sciences in animal physiology. I found myself once again disinterested in classes and potential research areas. As my freshman year ended, I was lost at sea with no shoreline in sight.

I knew I wanted to become involved in research but felt deeply unsatisfied from my previous academic experiences. I cringed at the idea of monotonous and unrewarding benchwork in a biology lab—I knew I needed a new direction. Thinking about my true curiosities and the new routes I wanted to pursue outside of a structured major, I explored research in a more abstract area. Exploring research fields that I never pictured I would have interest in, I stepped into the abyss of the social sciences and humanities.

It didn't take me long to find a wonderful fit. While wandering without a purpose, I stumbled upon Professor Burrow's Purpose and Identity Processes Lab in the Human Development department. My work in this research area significantly affected my Cornell experience in a positive way, playing a central role in furthering my intellectual captivation and engagement with fields outside of the hard sciences. I was encouraged to change my major to Biology and Society.

I am unsure of the exact direction my work will lead me, but I am glad I took the chance to venture outside of my formal field of study, investigating new avenues of interest. Although I am involved in very different research than what I envisioned I would do when I entered Cornell as a freshman, the projects I've been involved in have encouraged new pursuits for me. I am achieving accomplishments I had never dreamed of: I have accepted a promotion to Junior Lab Manager starting in the fall and hope to design my own research project.

It can be easy to feel pigeon-holed into the concept of your expected pathway through college. I encourage students to broaden their interests and take chances to embrace newfound passions, setting new goals during their time here.

Challenge the formidable freedom; research boldly.
In 2016, the Standing Rock Sioux Nation and allies stood up against the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which now spans 1,172 miles from North Dakota to Illinois following its recent completion. One of the main camps at Standing Rock was Oceti Sakowin, established by the women and youth of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. It flourished as it maintained values of holding a peaceful and prayerful atmosphere. This camp grew as Indigenous and non-Indigenous people arrived from around the world, showing support in protesting the process used in development of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The actions taken by police in North Dakota and the U.S. National Guard grew increasingly inhumane.

Cornell students who couldn’t make it out to protest at Standing Rock looked to Native American Students at Cornell for ways to stand in solidarity with Standing Rock. Indigenous students and their on-campus student allies worked together throughout the past academic year to demonstrate that they stand with Standing Rock.
An Evening with Cody Two Bears

While the movement around the Oceti Sakowin camp was in its infancy, Standing Rock Sioux Nation leader Cody Two Bears visited Cornell University. Local Ithaca community activist Ana Goehner connected Two Bears with the Cornell community, providing students with an opportunity to learn about current events while the event was garnering broader social media attention. Native American Students at Cornell Co-Chair Alissa Jaquin provided an introduction that gave context to Cody Two Bears’ discussion.

Two Bears then provided a historical perspective on the treaties signed between his nation and the United States government. Based on those treaties, the Sioux Nation has always possessed the lands being developed as part of the Dakota Access Pipeline project. Cody articulated a clear message for Indigenous students: it is paramount to have Indigenous people educated to fight the legal battles being waged in court.

Sgeñnoñh Unity March (Stop The Violence at Standing Rock)

The Onondaga Nation community and Neighbors of the Onondaga Nation (NOON) coordinated a unity march spanning 6 miles from the Onondaga Nation to the City of Syracuse. A van of students left Cornell University early that Saturday morning to join the march, eager to bring awareness about the events transpiring in South Dakota to the communities along the route of the march.

During the march, students were able to see friends and allies from neighboring universities, as well as Cornell University alums. Local Indigenous leaders, and individuals who spent time at the Oceti Sakowin camp shared their thoughts and experiences. As one of the banks financing the Dakota Access Pipeline, the Bank of America in Clinton Square was the end of the march route.

Ivy Native Summit Postcard Campaign

At the Ivy Native Summit: Centering Indigenous

Feminisms, the host school coordinated an activity for Indigenous students to show solidarity with Standing Rock. A postcard was designed with the summit logo, and students in attendance mailed messages on the postcards to then-President Barack Obama. The Indigenous students from Yale University collected the postcards and mailed them on behalf of the group.

An additional discussion was facilitated at the end of the day for schools to share activities that they had done in support of Standing Rock.

Penny War Benefitting Standing Rock Sioux Nation

Student organizations on Cornell’s campus reached out to Native American Students at Cornell to coordinate shows of support to the Standing Rock Sioux Nation. Working with 12 student organizations, Native American Students at Cornell held a week-long penny war in Willard Straight Hall. Water jugs were placed in this public space to collect pocket change from people passing by. A point system associated with the denominations of currency enabled the organizations to earn points with pennies and dollar bills. All other denominations subtracted points from an organization’s total score.

Enabling students to show their support for the Standing Rock Sioux Nation with a penny, the Cornell community collectively raised $1,000.00 in support.

Chairman Archambault Lecture

The Standing Rock Sioux Nation has a Cornell connection that ties back several years. Professor Karim-Aly Kassam has worked with the Standing Rock Sioux as part of his research, addressing issues like Indigenous ways of knowing and food sovereignty. David Archambault II, Chairman of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, agreed to visit Cornell University in the spring to lecture. Chairman Archambault’s lecture entitled, “Standing Rock: The Violation of Indigenous Peoples’ Rights,” was possible through a coordinated effort by the Department of Natural Resources, American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, and the Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs.
Indigenous students listened to the message carried by Chairman Archambault:

“Water is a source of life. Sun is a source of life. Earth is a source of life. Air is a source of life. What if instead of saying, ‘I’m guilty,’ you can say, ‘this is what I’m doing to try and change [the world].’”

Native Nations March on Washington

In early 2017, the Standing Rock Sioux Nation called for a national day of protest for Native Nations with a march on Washington, D.C. This global call to action was brought directly to the Ithaca area by Chairman Archambault, who expressed this as being an opportunity for Indigenous peoples and their allies to stand with Standing Rock.

The Cayuga Lake Water Protectors are a community group from Ithaca and neighboring areas who are in solidarity with the Cayuga Nation and Indigenous peoples, focusing on protecting waters and the environment. Through grassroots mobilization, the Cayuga Lake Water Protectors raised funds to arrange bus transportation to the march on Washington. They then extended an invitation to Indigenous students from Cornell University, and the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program worked to coordinate logistics for students to attend. Appreciation is expressed to the Cayuga Lake Water Protectors for making it possible for students to rally together and stand with Standing Rock.

Gathering Our Hearts at Standing Rock

In late April, Oscar-nominated filmmaker/director Fidel Moreno (Huichol, Chichimeca, Mexican-American) visited the Ithaca community to share his film Gathering Our Hearts at Standing Rock and to present at local schools to raise awareness about Indigenous peoples. Gathering Our Hearts is a documentary project that shares the stories of 33 diverse Water Protectors at Standing Rock, their connections to the American Indian Movement, and their fight to uphold treaty rights.

Collaborators hosted three screenings of Gathering Our Hearts around Ithaca. The Cornell screening was followed by a panel discussion with Fidel Moreno, Chief Sam George (Cayuga), Abraham Francis (Mohawk), Grace BullTail (Crow), Cole Norgaarden, and Eva Bighorse (Cayuga), and moderated by Laura Lagunez (Nahua and Dine). The panel discussion focused not just on the Dakota Access Pipeline but also on Indigenous sovereignty, environmental justice, and how to get involved with local pipeline opposition efforts.

Bringing Fidel to Ithaca was made possible through collaboration with the Multicultural Resource Center, Native American Students at Cornell, Cornell Environmental Collaborative, the Lehman Alternative Community School, American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, Amnesty International at Cornell University, Climate Justice Cornell, GreenStar Cooperative, the ALANA Multicultural Funding Board, and various community members.

By Skye Hart

At the beginning of the spring semester, a group of students from Native American Students at Cornell, Amnesty International @ Cornell University, the Indigenous Graduate Student Association, Cornell Environmental Collaborative, and Climate Justice Cornell came together over a common concern about pipeline development. This resulted in a campaign, now entitled Project Zero Pipelines (PZP), with two goals. The first goal is to encourage people and institutions to divest from the entities funding the Dakota Access Pipeline and the Keystone XL Pipeline. The second goal is to raise awareness about pipeline development in New York to mobilize student and community #noDAPL supporters to oppose similar issues that are happening in the area that they may not have been aware of. In late March, PZP students wrote and gathered support for Student Assembly Resolution #36, which calls for Cornell to denounce local pipelines and to work with communities to develop alternatives where appropriate, and for Cornell to make its financial and programmatic ties to Wells Fargo clear, with the possible end goal of asking Cornell to divest its money from Wells Fargo. The Student Assembly passed this resolution on April 13.

Following the Gathering Our Hearts screening, a group of community members engaged with PZP students to discuss how to make this campaign happen on a local level. Next steps include developing educational materials about local pipelines, finding productive ways to engage with the companies responsible for them, and determining whether divestment is realistic for Cornell or local municipalities.

#noDAPL Resolution
Haudenosaunee Confederacy

Indigenous students at Cornell University have ample opportunity to experience Haudenosaunee community. Haudenosaunee—"the people of the longhouse"—are the original inhabitants of this region. There are many Haudenosaunee communities that surround the main campus of Cornell University. This provides opportunity for the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, Akwe:kon Program House, and Indigenous student organizations to work with these communities on programming in and around campus.
Canandaigua Treaty Day

The Haudenosaunee Confederacy signed a peace treaty with President George Washington after the Revolutionary War on November 11, 1794. The Treaty of Canandaigua established peace and friendship between the Six Nations of the Confederacy and the United States. The agreement defined boundaries for each Haudenosaunee Nation and granted the United States the right to access lakes in New York. The Confederacy receives annuity payments for agreeing to the treaty. While there have been moments of strain since the signing of the treaty, ultimately it has remained unbroken for 222 years.

In honor of this treaty, the Ganondagan State Historic Site and the Quaker community coordinate an annual Canandaigua Treaty Day Celebration. The day’s events begin with a march along Main Street in Canandaigua, NY, ending on the front lawn of the Ontario County Courthouse. Haudenosaunee leaders, representatives of the United States, and members of the Quaker community (who had assisted with interpreting between parties to negotiate the treaty) then speak about the continued relationship.

Following the commemoration ceremony, visitors walk to the Canandaigua Primary School to see displays of information on Haudenosaunee culture, local craftspeople and vendors. This past year’s schedule included a performance by Oneida singer Joanne Shenandoah, additional speakers and a Haudenosaunee social dance.

Arrangements for transportation from Cornell University to the Canandaigua Treaty Day Celebration are coordinated each year by the Akwe:kon Program House.

The Good Mind – Movie Screening

In the fall semester, director Gwendolen Cates screened her film The Good Mind at Cornell. The Good Mind features Haudenosaunee leaders and the environmental and political challenges facing them, especially as they fight for Indigenous rights in high-profile venues such as the United Nations. The film focused on the use of Haudenosaunee passports as an assertion of sovereignty. Tadodaho Sid Hill, Faithkeeper Oren Lyons, and Director Gwendolen Cates participated in a panel following the film screening.

Pictured (L-R): Tadodaho Sid Hill and Faithkeeper Oren Lyons responding to questions following the screening of The Good Mind.

An invitation to travel to this event is extended each year to the broader American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program community.

By Alexandra Gigliotti

Entering Cornell as a Junior Transfer in 2015, I was immediately challenged with finding a feeling of belonging. Spatially, it’s a huge school and I struggled to find my place in it. I was also struggling through the question of identity and finding an answer to the question: “who am I?”

As my graduation day from Cornell approaches, reflecting on my time here, I realize how lucky I’ve been. I was fortunate to know people who heard of the Akwe:kon Program House. My acquaintances that lived in Akwe:kon connected me to the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program, whose staff provided support as I explored previously untapped aspects of my identity.

My brother always told me, “If anyone asks you, you are 100% Italian.” I didn’t understand why he wanted me to lie about my identity. I was confused why he neglected the other side of our identity, because our maternal grandmother is Native American. Growing up, our family spent more time with my father’s family, resulting in a deeper connection to the Italian culture.

To further understand my journey in exploring identity, what I knew when first encountering the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program was that I have Native American heritage. My family had never explored this part of our identity – with ties to the Mohawk community – but we didn’t know much beyond that.

Becoming involved with the Native American Students at Cornell organization was motivated by wanting to save, preserve, and engage with Native American culture and communities. Learning about my culture and the history of what our ancestors endured, I have a better understanding that I wasn’t alone in a search for where this aspect of my identity fits in my life. I have also seen where this affects others in my family, like my mother and aunts.

It took a leap of faith to explore my culture so that I could embrace these aspects of my identity. I appreciate the opportunity of being involved with Native American Students at Cornell. I am grateful to the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program staff and members of the Indigenous community for being welcoming, caring, genuine mentors and friends.

My experience is that we are a family, and I’m proud to have the chance to be a member of this family. This community cares about their identity, their nations, and their people the way I do. They work hard to preserve and fight for our collective futures. Everyone is welcome here, and that acceptance is what makes this community so great to be a part of.
Indigenous peoples approach science from an experiential perspective, placing value on the interconnectedness of the world. This perspective has conflicted with Western approaches to science, mainly with the approach of separating the object being studied to test reactions and responses to stimuli. As an Indigenous person within Plant Sciences, my experience taking courses offered through the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program has given me the confidence to speak up about these differences within my classes.

I was excited when the Professor for my ethnobotanical medicine course asked me to lecture on a project I had been pursuing all semester, the Akwe:kon Ga’ ni go hi yo (a good mind) Garden. My professor asked me to focus on the garden itself and the native plants I’d be tending. As I developed my outline, the lecture shaped itself into something that was more significant.

Starting with the recognition that we are currently on the traditional homelands of the Cayuga Nation, I described what that means. This included a brief history of the lands on which Cornell University was built — the colonization mechanisms that made it possible — and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy.

If these students ever conduct research around Indigenous communities, my goal was to inspire them to take a thoughtful and respectful approach. To recognize that there is value in the knowledge of these communities, and their ways of knowing.

This is challenging for me because I am Chahta — commonly known as Choctaw — not Haudenosaunee. I’ve spent significant time in my courses learning about Haudenosaunee culture so that I can work within their territory in a respectful way, ensuring that my personal actions match the lessons I am providing.

During my lecture, I highlighted the importance of collaborating with the Cayuga Nation. Describing the process of respectful collaboration and the layers of consideration that people outside of an Indigenous community may overlook. I shared my experience in seeking out and meeting with community leaders within the Cayuga Nation.

As I wrapped up and opened the floor to questions, I was pleasantly surprised at the questions being asked. They were thoughtful and honest questions, making me feel that my approach was successful.

Completing my third year in academia, focusing on Plant Science, I’ve observed an underlying issue of a lack of understanding between scientists and the communities they work with. In the realm of ethnobotany, ethnobotanists often go into Indigenous communities, and the resulting literature misrepresents the Indigenous community’s issues and viewpoints. This happens often because scientists do not have the background to begin to understand or relate to a worldview of science that values interconnectedness.

Witnessing this miscommunication and misunderstanding has sparked a desire to create change — change within this class, and hopefully change within the academic field that I want to be part of.

As the clock indicated that my first lecture at Cornell University had ended, I extended an invitation to my professor to incorporate a visit to our garden, once complete. It is meant to be a space for students to learn about medicinal plants from an Indigenous perspective.
Indigenous Student Achievements

This space highlights the achievements of Indigenous students at Cornell University. The American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program hosts an annual awards ceremony to acknowledge graduating students, and to award Indigenous students. Also included in this list are other achievements by Indigenous students at Cornell. We hope that in the future students will share their accomplishments so we can celebrate with them.

Ron Lafrance Memorial Award: Hi’ilei Casco ’18
Recognizes Native American students displaying leadership, persistence, and fortitude in achieving academic goals and serving Native American communities. The award honors the memory of Ron Lafrance, Ph.D., a Mohawk leader and Director of the AIP (1981-1993). Dr. Lafrance was instrumental in establishing Akwe:kon — the first Native American residential program house in the country.

American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) Award: Ben Oster ’17
Recognizes individuals participating in AISES meetings and events, demonstrating leadership, promoting professional development, and who are team players.

Native American Students at Cornell (NASAC) Award: Chase Neese ’20
Recognizes involvement within the NASAC above and beyond the call of duty, as demonstrated by dedication, initiation, organization, and leadership within NASAC.

Akwe:kon Peer Appreciation Award: Emerson Shenandoah ’20
Recognizes a resident of Akwe:kon for their contribution supporting the development of the Akwe:kon community, both on and off campus.

Akwe:kon Leadership Award: Natalie LeMoss ’19
Recognizes students who through their leadership in Akwe:kon encouraged multicultural learning, fostered the extended family concept, and promoted Native American awareness on behalf of all Native people.

AIISP Junior Class Merit Scholarship Award: Skye Hart ’18
Recognizes students who have earned the highest Grade Point Averages in the junior class.

OADI’s Solomon Cook Award for Engaged Research and Scholarship: Marcos Moreno ’17
Recognizes scholar-leaders demonstrating engaged learning and leadership inside and outside of the classroom.

Henry Ricciuti Award for Outstanding Seniors in the College of Human Ecology: Marcos Moreno ’17
Recipient chosen from top 25% of graduating class, who has achieved distinction in research or contributed to exceptional community and campus service at Cornell.

Udall Scholarship: Skye Hart ’18
Recognizes students with excellent academic records showing potential for careers in environmental public policy, health care, or tribal public policy.

Pi Alpha Xi - Honors Society for Horticulture Induction: Bailee Hopkins ’18
This honors society recognizes junior and senior students with high scholastic achievement demonstrating strong interest in horticulture.

Hunter R. Rawlings III Cornell Presidential Research Scholar: Skye Hart ’18
With access to research funding, Skye's independent research focuses on planning and community development with urban Native American communities around Seattle.
Four and a half years later I sit at home, an alumnus of Cornell University. Out of the Ivy walls — at least for now — I have the time to reflect on my experience in Ithaca. Cornell was a very challenging and rewarding experience in academics. Even more so off campus in the Haudenosaunee community.

As an Oneida student growing up in Anishinabek territory, I chose to attend Cornell because it's located in the heart of Haudenosaunee territory. Wanting to learn Haudenosaunee teachings in addition to my western studies, I focused my time on studying biology and chemistry along with American Indian and Indigenous Studies.

I've taken advantage of the lectures, discussions, panels, and workshops coordinated by the American Indian and Indigenous Studies Program. Feeling appreciative of the opportunities to explore my Haudenosaunee culture, I wanted to be able to give back to the program. Being a full-time college student, the ability to donate financially wasn't in the cards. But I had another resource that I could contribute: my time and knowledge of science.

The Akwe:kon Program House offers a tutoring program with neighboring high schools. Every week a small group of students piles into a small minivan, making our way up to the Onondaga Nation to help students. The students seemed like they didn't want to be there at the beginning. I mean, they did spend all day at school. However, once the snacks came out these students were ready to work — well, at least open the textbook.

I didn't have a tutor in high school. Especially not a Native tutor. This experience meant a lot to me. I helped these students to understand concepts from their notes, work through problems, and showed them that they can be successful in school. At times, we talked about college applications or the Promising Futures student recruitment event held at Cornell.

Despite being cramped in the back of a minivan traveling an hour to get there, it was worth every minute to spend time tutoring at Onondaga. While my graduation day was also a momentous academic achievement, that moment doesn't compare to hearing the news that one of our students was accepted into Cornell the following fall!

Even if you studied every minute of every day while in undergraduate school, you forget information you don't use. I can't remember details of my introductory chemistry courses. The most impactful teaching was learned in Cayuga territory: it was the principle of Ga’ni go hi yo, or the “Good Mind”. In its simplest interpretation, it acknowledges the humanness of our relationships between others before discussing business or conflict. Proceeding with “our minds are one,” we respect and love one another even if we disagree.

Ga’ni go hi yo allows us to share greater knowledge and ideas while also being kind. I’d go as far as to argue that this teaching was vital for the Haudenosaunee Confederacy to persevere through years of colonialism, for our communities to continue to exist, and for me, a Bear Clan Oneida first-generation-college-grad, to be able to write this message today.

Yes, it is important to put your time in with textbooks learning western approaches in your education, but it is equally important — if not more so — to take those opportunities to spend time learning in the community. These are the experiences that stay with you once you leave The Hill.
Raising awareness about Indigenous peoples is a logical step forward in strengthening Cornell's awareness and commitment to campus-wide diversity and inclusion.

Land acknowledgement is a formal statement recognizing and respecting Indigenous people as traditional stewards of land, and the enduring relationship existing between Indigenous peoples and their traditional territories. One powerful action students, faculty and staff can take is to provide land acknowledgement to the local Indigenous community: the Cayuga Nation.

We propose the following language be used to begin events, meetings or classes throughout the year:

“We [I] begin this event by acknowledging the Cayuga Nation who’s traditional territory we are gathered on.”

“We [I] wish to acknowledge this land on which Cornell University operates. For thousands of years it has been the traditional land of the Cayuga Nation - members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. Today, this meeting place is still home to the Cayuga and Indigenous people from across Turtle island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.”

Tag your events on social media: #CUonCayugaLands