



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

Resolution to Make NYU a Viable and Non-Hostile Campus for Native and Indigenous Scholars

Preamble

New York University sits on unceded Lenape land, surrounded by the largest urban Indigenous population in the nation, during a distinct and historic renaissance of Indigenous scholarship, creativity, and representation. As an influential and important institution, NYU has great potential to meet this moment by including Indigenous scholarship and meeting the needs of Indigenous students. Unfortunately, the current system is stifling the potential of NYU Native Studies and Native students and faculty. Native scholars, both students and faculty, deserve the same support structures and spaces, to develop their craft and scholarship as Western studies, especially on their own land. It would be a misstep on the part of the university to continue to ignore its invaluable access to Native scholarship and thought and continue to lose students, faculty, and staff due to this lack of support.

New York University was founded 192 years ago. The following provides guidance on how to create the necessary support system needed for Native scholarship and is 192 years overdue.

WHEREAS, Native and Indigenous Students & Faculty do not have proper representation and advocates for their needs in the form of staff or office members. They are expected to juggle their scholarly work while simultaneously advocating for their rights and needs, which leads to a low retention of both students and faculty,

WHEREAS, many Native students struggle with financial security, housing security, and food security yet have minimal access to financial resources and support. NYU has a duty to care for the Native students that have already matriculated and are struggling to stay enrolled,



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

WHEREAS, the Calendar Task Force proposed NYU Academic Calendar from 2024-2027 has removed Indigenous People's Day as a holiday,

WHEREAS, according to the March 30th, 2023 University Senate Admissions presentation¹, only less than 1% the 5,700 accepted students in the undergraduate Class of 2027 identified as American Indian, Alaskan Native, despite New York City housing the largest urban Indigenous population in the United States,

WHEREAS, Native Studies is more than just studying the static Native subject within colonial imagery as it has historically been treated by non-Native scholars. Historically within non-Native academic spaces, the focus of studies around Nativeness or Native studies has unfortunately been focused on proving the humanity of this "static Native subject." Instead, Native Studies should be situated as a critique of humanistic reason and utilized as a platform to highlight Native/Indigenous knowledge systems, theory, and creativity that are interdisciplinary in nature. The Native scholars at NYU, through the few Native Studies courses and research scattered across different departments, have demonstrated the radical interdisciplinarity and potential of Native Studies and the wide range of fields it covers,

WHEREAS, there is a cruel irony to the fact that Native students and faculty are not provided their own space in an institution that currently occupies land seized from Indigenous people. Space is a paramount need for the success of all academic endeavors,²

¹ This was based on the March 30th University Senate Presentation from the Office of Enrollment Management and Student Success

² Though we sympathize with New York University's constant struggle to redistribute our lands, we must acknowledge the irony of these sentiments being told to NYU's Native population (further explanation in Appendix F).



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

WHEREAS, Native/Indigenous students across the country note and share their experiences at unsupporting universities that are not viable for Native and Indigenous scholars,³⁴

WHEREAS, if NYU continues to lack the support structure necessary for Native and Indigenous scholarship (support structures that many of NYU's competing universities have) then it could be characterized as one of these universities to future Native/Indigenous scholars and applicants,

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, NYU will commit to implementing the needs of Native scholars as broken out into four categories: staff, financial support, studies, and space, and does so in collaboration and communication with Native Studies Forum and the Native American and Indigenous Student Group,

FURTHER RESOLVED, NYU will provide a full-time staff of at least four staff members that would work to represent, advocate for, and organize the necessary resources for Native scholars. The responsibilities of these staff members will be delegated into the roles outlined in Appendix B.⁵

FURTHER RESOLVED, NYU starts an ad hoc committee to create more Native student scholarships that go beyond the single first-year "Lenape Scholarship." These resources will be available to Native students of all academic years,

FURTHER RESOLVED, NYU creates a Native Studies department with a Native Studies Forum where Native scholars of all fields can come together, collaborate, and push NYU into new areas of academic distinction. Though the goal is working towards creating a department, an intermediate solution would be creating a place for a Native & Indigenous Studies major/minor

³ Testimonies from Native Students, Graduates, Former Students, and Faculty in Appendix III

⁴ Page 69 of "Academic Stress of Native American Undergraduates: The Role of Ethnic Identity, Cultural Congruity, and Self-Beliefs" <https://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/dhe-dhe0000094.pdf> though the whole study is applicable to this resolution.

⁵ As a suggestion, this unit can be housed under the Office of Student Affairs, or any respective unit as determined by the University, and does not have to be the creation of a new office.



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

program under the Department of Social and Cultural Analysis similar to the set up of the Africana Studies Program,

FURTHER RESOLVED, NYU will provide an intentional space dedicated to Native students and scholarship that is open to all, but not exclusive to Native students. This space would be a permanent home for Native scholars and Native Studies to congregate and communicate.⁶

As proposed by Saira Coye-Huhn, Senator at-Large for Native and Indigenous Students and Co-President of the Native American and Indigenous Student Group.

⁶ Refer to Appendix C



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

Appendix A: Resolution Endorsements

This resolution is endorsed by:

Native American and Indigenous Student Group (NAISG)
Native Studies Forum (NSF)
Student Government Assembly Diversity Committee
Columbia University Native American Council

Appendix B: Native and Indigenous Staff and Roles

1. Head of Staff
 - a. This staff member would lead and advocate for the other staff members and the overall affairs of the Native & Indigenous Community Center. These efforts would include but not be restricted to analyzing and identifying areas within the university in which Indigenous students require support maximization.
2. Financial Resource Counselor
 - a. This need coincides with the concern over the lack of Native student financial security. This staff member would have expertise on how to guide Indigenous students with their tuition payment, housing, food, and overall financial struggles to maintain retention. They would also be involved in any Native student financial support/scholarship initiatives.
3. Mental Health Counselor
 - a. Someone who is trained and knowledgeable about the mental health needs of the Indigenous community so that they can provide culturally relevant mental health resources and programming. This could look similar to the Center of Multicultural Education and Programming's (CMEP) clinical psychologist but does not have to be the same set up. The emphasis is having a staff member that can connect scholars with resources and plan events like Sweats, mental health conversations, and de-stressing events like Beading Workshops.
4. Advisors



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

- a. At least one staff member whose focus is checking up on the overall wellbeing of Native/Indigenous students and ensuring that they have the resources and support they need to graduate.

Appendix C: Proposed Spaces

The goal of this space is to serve as a hub for Native scholars, creatives, and intellectuals to come together, share ideas, and build the community and relations that are essential in providing a strong foundation for Native Studies and Native support on campus.

Due to this, space for Native Students should be in the form of a Community Center that provides Office space for Staff, Study Space/Library for Native scholarship, a Community/Hangout Space, an Event Space, a Kitchen or Kitchenette, and preferably some kind of Garden or Growing Space. The details and purpose of these resources in this proposed Community Center are described below.

A. Office Space for Staff

Office space for staff and potentially faculty would allow for the Community Space, Native Studies, and Native student resources to be organized efficiently and effectively. Staff members need a work environment where they would be able to easily connect with one another and be easily accessible to the students/faculty that they represent.

B. Community Hangout Space

Native and Indigenous community-building has always been a critical part of the Native student experience at NYU. Native students and faculty have used Native community to provide a support structure for our peers and make up for the lack of Native student support and resources at NYU. The Native community on campus has been a source of guidance/support through the



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

educational system, which has historically been a genocidal tool used against Native communities. This guidance/support provided a source of healing, access to basic needs, relationships, networking, and any other resource that Native students could need.

However, Native students/scholars do not have a reliable or designated space on campus to call their own and build intentional community and relations. This impact is evident in the low retention of Native students AND faculty at NYU who consistently cite insufficient support as a reason for leaving NYU. Past and present NAISG and NSF members and leaders recognize that without reliable and dedicated space, any efforts to build Native community will be drastically limited.

C. Study Space/Library for Native Scholarship:

A common shared experience amongst Native students is that they feel like their Nativeness is under constant surveillance within academic settings. A study space dedicated to Native scholarship would be an intentional and welcoming environment for all. It would be a safe space for (1) Native scholars and non-Native allies to study free of harassment and discrimination and (2) for Native scholars and non-Native allies to have easy access to Native knowledge sources through the proposed library that would work in conjunction with this space. The library would be full of donated and requested Native/Indigenous books and other academic resources.

D. Event Space:

For lectures, murals, art galleries, and other events it is crucial for connecting Native scholars and the wider campus to Native/Indigenous knowledge systems. This would be a space where NYU can host Indigenous scholars and artists from all over the world and fulfill their promise of a global education to the student body.



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

This space could parallel the CMEP lounge, where it is a convertible community space and event space; however separate spaces should be prioritized as consistent access to a community space is invaluable.

E. Kitchen or Kitchenette

A kitchen or kitchenette would serve three purposes. First, it would be a solution to the ongoing issue of food insecurity that Native students face. Students would have access to a community fridge and participate in community cooking. Second, a kitchen or kitchenette would be a source of community-building. Students, staff, and faculty would finally have a designated space for popular food based community activities such as Fry Bread Fridays and community meals. Third, many Native students come to NYU with an interest in studying and practicing food sovereignty as it relates to Native Studies. A community kitchen or kitchenette would allow them to explore that side of their scholarly and career interests.

F. Garden

The need for garden space ties to the need for kitchen/kitchenette space. Many students have expressed interest in practicing and studying food sovereignty and the growing of traditional plants as part of their academic interests. It would also be a source of community building and healing for many students as a connection to land is an important part of many Native and Indigenous cultures, spiritualities/religions, and identities. This would be similar to the religious space/resources provided to other religious groups at NYU.

While this plan is an ideal scenario and it is acceptable if the Kitchen or Kitchenette, and Garden are not prioritized or feasible at this time. Also, it is understood if the spaces have to be combined or rearranged similar to the structure of the CMEP lounge and office space.



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

Appendix D: Competing Universities

[Competing Universities that Provide the Requested Native/Indigenous Resources](#)

Appendix E: Testimonies

[Testimonies from NYU Native Community](#)

Appendix F: Further Arguments for Space

“NYU Doesn’t Give Space to Ethnic Groups”

The Glucksman Ireland House, Casa Italiana Zerilli-Marimò, Deutsches Haus, La Maison Française, King Juan Carlos I Center of Spain Center, and the Africa House:

- a. There are **four centers** dedicated to **four** different European ethnicities/nationalities and their languages and cultures.
- b. There is **one center** dedicated to the entire supercontinent of Africa and its over 3,000 ethnic groups and over **50 nations**.
- c. There are **0 centers** to represent the **574 Tribal nations** recognized by the United States federal government. This does not account for the non-federally recognized sovereignties and bands in and out of the United States or the millions of Indigenous peoples around the world.

This is not a case of giving an ethnicity a gathering space and if it were it is not as if NYU is unfamiliar with giving European ethnic groups dedicated spaces.

“We All Need More Space”

Though we sympathize with New York University’s constant struggle to redistribute our lands, we must acknowledge the irony of these sentiments being told to NYU's Native



Student Government Assembly
60 Washington Square S, Ste. 212
New York, NY 10003
P: 212 998 2234
student.government@nyu.edu

population. This irony grows when considering the thousands of Land Acknowledgements that this institution has delivered that all end with some kind of declaration made by the university to promise to take further steps to help the local Native community in hopes of making up for NYU's participation in colonial occupation. The local Native community, in this very institution, is right in front of you asking for space. It is not an unreasonable request. This is especially true considering the current and constant reshuffling of space that is occurring at the New York City campus. This document is also being written during the unveiling of one of NYU's largest "space" related projects — the 181 Mercer building. We are asking that a space for Native scholars be considered and prioritized.

“You Can’t Make a Space only for Natives”

We never had the intent to make an exclusionary space but instead a more welcoming and intentional space. A space where Native scholarship, creativity, and thought is encouraged and focused on in ways that it is not in other NYU spaces. Since the founding of this university, the spaces at NYU were created with the intent to exclude Native scholars. Though some efforts have been made to include the Native/Indigenous population, we are still treated as the exception, “other,” or second-thought in all of those spaces.