



BROWN

May 8, 2026

Dear Members of the Brown Community,

Five years ago, Brown undertook a year-long exploration of the relationship between the University, the Native and Indigenous peoples of this region, and the land on which Brown is situated. This work was born out of a commitment to develop a deeper understanding of the histories and experiences that intersect and connect us, and to strengthen the relationships between our community and local Native and Indigenous peoples.

The result of this work was to establish a land acknowledgment for the ongoing recognition of the land on College Hill as part of the ancestral lands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The University also established five commitments, adopted in May 2022, as an important first step in what President Christina H. Paxson announced would be a years-long process of reckoning with the past and building relationships with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other Native and Indigenous communities.

This 2026 Status Report on the Land Acknowledgment and Five Commitments shares the efforts undertaken since this work was launched. The report provides an update on the progress we have made toward the commitments and also shows areas of continued focus. It reflects our ongoing effort to ensure that our words and actions are aligned so that our presence on these ancestral lands is marked by accountability, respect and mutuality.

The report highlights key progress, including the growth of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI), the successful establishment of the critical Native American and Indigenous studies concentration, and the ongoing, sensitive work by the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology related to the repatriation of ancestral remains and cultural belongings. These efforts, among many others, represent a shift toward a more sustainable infrastructure for Indigenous scholarship and enduring partnership.

This has been the work, not of one office, but of many offices, departments and groups of stakeholders across campus dedicated to a relationship of mutuality with Native and Indigenous peoples. The Office of Community Engagement has served as a steward in compiling these efforts for the purposes of this report, but the work to develop programs and initiatives and deepen scholarly study has been a collective effort of the Brown community with its many partners and collaborators, both across and beyond campus.

This report is also an acknowledgment of the work that remains. Along with announcing the land acknowledgment and commitments in 2022 came the understanding that the actions would move

forward through the University's established governance processes and under the guidance of groups identified to act on their implementation. Importantly, this has meant respecting shifts in the regional tribal landscape and at Brown, as outlined in the introduction of this report. Significant changes and enhancements in Brown's approach to community engagement and internal support structures have also shaped and informed the implementation of the commitments.

The report introduces an updated, action-oriented framework that maintains accountability to the goals of the original commitments while allowing progress to continue beyond the specific projects identified in 2022. Since then, we have worked to understand the five commitments within Brown's mission and core institutional values, as well as the evolution of Brown's approach to [community engagement](#). Going forward, the five commitments will be situated and reflected within this broader context.

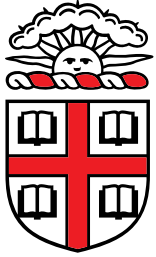
This approach recognizes that building trust and sustaining multigenerational relationships is a long-term endeavor that requires patience and cultural humility. We remain focused on a guiding framework for the future, which includes continued investment in Indigenous scholarship, student support, collaborative research and educational access.

As we look forward, our commitment to these ancestral lands and the people who have stewarded them for millennia remains steadfast. I invite you to read this status report, not just as a record of past actions but also as a guide for our collective responsibility to the tribal nations and Indigenous communities of this region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MJ Callan', with a stylized, cursive script.

MJ Callan
Vice President for Community Engagement and
Stark Family Executive Director of the Swearer Center



BROWN

Brown University

**2026 STATUS REPORT ON THE
LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND
FIVE COMMITMENTS
(INCLUDING AN INVENTORY OF TRIBAL
ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES)**

May 2026

INTRODUCTION

In 2021 President Christina H. Paxson charged a working group with developing recommendations for how Brown University can acknowledge the land on College Hill as being connected to regional tribal nations and Indigenous communities. The Land Acknowledgment Working Group was responsible for developing recommendations for what “land acknowledgment” means for Brown University through consultation with regional tribes, beginning with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, to recognize and respect Indigenous peoples and their cultural and historical relationships to the land. The development of the recommendations involved relevant partners, including regional tribal nations and members of Brown's Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI), and was guided by Indigenous-centered protocols.

The working group completed its work in 2022, and Brown established an official [land acknowledgment](#) as part of a set of five commitments to build a better understanding of the relationship between the campus community, the Indigenous peoples of this region, and the land on which Brown is situated. The commitments reflect a diverse and ambitious set of interconnected pledges. This is an update on the progress and areas of continued focus in relation to the five commitments.

Some of the commitments proved to be more immediately feasible than others, and offices engaged in this work across the University have been careful and thoughtful in adjusting their work to focus on positive outcomes in areas directly aligned with the commitments when it has not been possible to fulfill the commitments as first articulated. In the four years since the University established the five commitments, there have been significant and important changes, both in the regional tribal landscape and at Brown, that have continued to inform alternative approaches as the University embarked on fulfillment of the original set of goals. It has been important for the University to recognize and respect the relational dynamics with regional tribal nations, Indigenous communities and the Narragansett Indian Tribe that exist within a larger context that spans centuries and generations.

Situated within this deeply historical, nuanced and complicated context, there continue to be areas of challenge that shape tribal engagement and Brown's ability to advance the five commitments arising out of the land acknowledgment work. Therefore, the University is working toward outcomes that support the intent and expected positive impact of the original commitments, particularly in cases where a change in the external tribal and Indigenous landscape and other circumstances would have meant significant delays in fulfilling the original commitments. Brown has dedicated resources to an evolving set of initiatives and programs. The persisting goal is to build a foundation for reciprocal and multigenerational relationships that afford mutual benefits to Indigenous communities and the Brown community over time.

This report, divided into five sections and an appendix, includes the following:

- I. Enhanced Internal Support Shaping Brown's Evolved Approach** — a look at changes in support and resource frameworks within Brown since 2022 that better advance Native and Indigenous scholarship and engagement
- II. Building on the Commitments: An Updated Framework for Brown** — an overview of how the original commitments have evolved into an action-oriented framework to enhance the relationship between the campus community and the Native and Indigenous peoples of the region
- III. Reporting on the 2022 Commitments** — status updates on four years of projects and initiatives aligned with the goals of the original commitments arising from the Land acknowledgment Working Group
- IV. Inventory of Tribal Engagement Initiatives** — preface for the snapshot of activities in the appendix
- V. In Conclusion: Reflections on the Path Ahead**

Appendix: Inventory of Tribal Engagement Initiatives

I. ENHANCED INTERNAL SUPPORT SHAPING BROWN'S EVOLVED APPROACH

Brown has launched multiple initiatives since the Land Acknowledgment Working Group made its recommendations in 2022. New structures and systems of support provide avenues of effective and responsible engagement that were not envisioned when Brown established the original five commitments. These have shaped a positive evolution in the approach to fulfilling the core tenets of the commitments.

NEW INITIATIVES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AGENDA

In the years after Brown adopted the five commitments, University leaders worked toward establishing Brown University's Community Engagement Agenda: A Call to Partnership and Action. The University adopted this institution-wide strategic plan in 2024 with a focus on amplifying and deepening Brown's efforts to advance quality of life in Rhode Island. Its adoption became a critical step in establishing a foundation for reciprocal relationships across the state. Engagement with Native and Indigenous communities — each with distinct histories, legacies and political dynamics of tribal sovereignty — is an important part of Brown's efforts to engage with a constellation of communities with which Brown strives to build relationships.

The Community Engagement Agenda established five key domains through which Brown can coordinate its current resources to make meaningful impact: deepening collaborative research; building students' foundational skills to become engaged community members through teaching and learning; enhancing access to both campus- and community-based expertise on important local and societal issues; expanding institutional "anchor" resources for community contributions in areas of priority for community partners; and advancing equitable educational outcomes, college access and economic mobility for Rhode Islanders through inclusive pathways. Many of these domains align closely with the five commitments Brown made in 2022 based on the recommendations of the Land Acknowledgment Working Group.

Through the resources and initiatives of the Community Engagement Agenda, Brown's goals for engaging with Native and Indigenous communities can be recognized more fully and supported campuswide. While expertise and responsibility for this work live in units across campus, the Office of Community Engagement stewards Brown's engagement, projects and initiatives related to deepening understanding and relationships with Native and Indigenous communities.

CONCENTRATION IN CRITICAL NATIVE AMERICAN AND INDIGENOUS STUDIES

Another important change at Brown supporting work with Native and Indigenous communities was the launch of the critical Native American and Indigenous Studies concentration in 2022, stewarded by the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI). This vital step in supporting Indigenous scholarship was the culmination of generations of student, faculty and staff intellectual, emotional and spiritual labor. The first cohort of critical Native American and Indigenous Studies concentrators received their degrees in May 2025. This collaborative work with numerous units across campus has been critical to advancing the commitments.

RELOCATION OF THE HAFFENREFFER MUSEUM TO PROVIDENCE

The Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology has long been split across two locations: Providence, where it maintains an exhibition and event space, and Bristol, where most of its collections and staff are housed. For scholars and community members looking to access the museum's nearly 1 million ethnographic objects, archaeological objects and images representing human cultures and societies across the globe, this division can present less than ideal access. The relocation of Haffenreffer's collections from Bristol to Providence, slated for completion in 2027, will expand access and opportunities for public engagement, research and learning. Key audiences include residents of Providence, K-12 educators and students throughout Rhode Island, as well as tribal nations and Indigenous communities throughout southern New England.

REPATRIATION OF ANCESTRAL REMAINS AND BELONGINGS

As part of the ongoing and critical work supporting acknowledgment and recognition, Brown's Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology is actively pursuing the repatriation of Native American ancestral remains and cultural items to tribal nations in compliance with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA). The museum has invested additional resources over the past two years to address federal revisions to NAGPRA that took effect in 2024. This increase in resources has yielded significant repatriations to tribal communities both in the Northeast and across the United States. The museum is committed to repatriating all Narragansett ancestral remains and belongings and the timeframe for this process is currently under discussion.

ARTICULATION OF CORE UNIVERSITY VALUES

Making a positive impact locally has long been woven into the fabric of Brown's mission and commitment to serve the community, the nation and the world. However, the University for the first time articulated its core institutional values in 2025, adopting the Statement of University Values and Voice as an official policy. Formalizing the core values provided another supportive structure for Brown to continue to demonstrate the underlying commitments called for in 2022—that is, “to build meaningful relationships with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other Indigenous peoples and increase understanding of their lived experiences.”

Four core institutional values were approved by the Corporation of Brown University after being approved by the faculty: (1) the pursuit of knowledge and understanding; (2) academic freedom and freedom of expression; (3) a commitment to openness and diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences; and (4) responsibility for a thriving academic community. The core institutional values have become the bedrock of Brown's ongoing work aligned with the original five commitments. Taken together, these core institutional values uplift the centrality of advancing knowledge and understanding and inviting diverse ways of knowing, including Indigenous knowledge systems. They formalize the basis for pursuing a multitude of research and related collaborations with tribal nations and Indigenous communities. These, in turn, have the promise of providing rich opportunities to foster and share in a reciprocal knowledge economy for Native communities and the betterment of all Rhode Island and regional communities.

RELATIONAL CHALLENGES

All the initiatives captured above have demonstrated the University's commitment to enriching and advancing tribal relationships; however, it is important to acknowledge that challenges continue. Relational dynamics with regional tribal nations, Indigenous communities and the Narragansett Indian Tribe exist within a larger context that spans centuries and generations. Situated within this long, nuanced- and complicated context, there continue to be areas of challenge and controversy that shape tribal engagement and Brown's ability to advance the original five commitments.

Additionally, Brown has not been exempt from national and international dynamics, including concerns about scholar identity appropriation and misrepresentation and recent land claims and transfers. These issues have impacted the University's institutional relationships with regional tribal and Indigenous partners. Building trust and strengthening these relationships are foundational to the work moving forward.

II. BUILDING ON THE COMMITMENTS: AN UPDATED FRAMEWORK FOR BROWN

In light of the enhanced support infrastructure outlined above, Brown has been able to refine its approach to the five commitments. Activities and programs developed in alignment with the commitments are now situated within the University's mission and core institutional values, as well as Brown's broader commitment to mutually beneficial community engagement. At their core, the five commitments reflect Brown's enduring dedication to build understanding of and strengthen relationships with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other Indigenous peoples.

Even as the initiatives Brown is pursuing have changed and evolved, the commitments continue to serve as an important organizing framework for tribal engagement at Brown, and they have played an important role in institutional actions and codified values that seek to advance understanding and mutuality more broadly. A new action-oriented framework for this work builds on the original commitments to animate Brown's current and continuing efforts — guiding the University's focus in seven key areas:

- Recognition that the University is located within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, including public education and acknowledgment
- Advancing education and scholarship regarding Indigenous peoples in and around what is now southern New England
- Facilitating opportunities for collaborative research to benefit stakeholders and partners in advancing understanding of Native and Indigenous history and contemporary issues, including shared resources with Native and Indigenous peoples for this work
- Supporting educational access initiatives and activities that address issues impacting Native and Indigenous youth

- Strengthening and expanding community engagement to address community priorities identified by Native and Indigenous communities by creating clearer pathways to engage with the University
- Continued strategic investment and support for Brown's Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI) to advance knowledge and understanding of the traditions, histories and experiences of Native American and Indigenous peoples
- Building community at Brown and locally among those dedicated to honoring and celebrating Native and Indigenous peoples, and cultivating and building understanding of Native and Indigenous history and experiences

III. REPORTING ON THE 2022 COMMITMENTS

This section provides a description of projects and activities related to the five original commitments established in 2022. The status update for each commitment is accompanied by a brief description of emerging or planned work within Brown's updated framework, outlined in Section II. As noted earlier, the commitments continue to serve as an important organizing framework as Brown evolves its initiatives and support in response to relational dynamics with regional tribal nations, Indigenous communities and the Narragansett Indian Tribe.

By aligning specific projects and activities with this updated framework, Brown seeks to demonstrate institutional accountability to the original commitments and a sustained commitment to building reciprocal, trustworthy relationships with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other Indigenous communities.

2022 COMMITMENT 1

The University will adopt the official land acknowledgment statement developed by the Land Acknowledgment Working Group and supported by the Narragansett Indian Tribe. Education and guidance for its use will be provided to the community on a land acknowledgment website, and members of the Brown community are strongly encouraged to follow this guidance when they choose to use a land acknowledgment.

RELATED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

The land acknowledgment statement is complete, available for use and widely used across the University. To raise awareness about the land acknowledgment and all five commitments, as well as the Community Engagement Agenda as it relates to tribal engagement, the Office of Community Engagement has responded to requests from offices across campus to provide presentations to and consultations with more than 300 campus colleagues across 10 departments.

UPDATED FRAMEWORK:

Recognition that the University is located within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, including public education and acknowledgment

ONGOING WORK:

While education and guidance about the land acknowledgment is provided upon request, a more comprehensive approach to educating the University as a whole about the land acknowledgment and a basic understanding of the tribal landscape in which Brown is situated could more fully animate this commitment. Guidance materials are a starting place from which Brown can build tribal competence across campus, helping to educate and inform students, staff and faculty about the historical and cultural context of acknowledgment and the place where they teach, work, learn and live.

2022 COMMITMENT 2

The University will commission and support new original scholarship regarding the origins and founding of Brown University and its relationships to the Indigenous peoples in and around what is now southern New England. Recognizing the preliminary nature of the Land Acknowledgment Working Group's findings, new scholarship commissioned by the University will include collaboration between Indigenous peoples of the region and the John Carter Brown Library, the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative and other academic units at Brown.

RELATED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

- **Stolen Relations: Recovering Stories of Indigenous Enslavement in the Americas** (Department of History) — This [tribally collaborative project](#) seeks to illuminate the significance of the enslavement and servitude of Indigenous peoples in American history, as well as their resilience, through the recovery of individual stories. (Ongoing)
- **Appointment of a Coordinating Curator for Native American and Indigenous Collections at the John Carter Brown Library** (Brown University Library) — This position at the JCB supports the libraries in their focus on Native American and Indigenous collections of significance and assists with programming, including outreach and engagement with Native and Indigenous communities. (Ongoing)
- **Tall Oak Weeden Historical Documents Collection** (NAISI, JCB and John Hay Library) — Staff members, faculty and students are processing the writings, drawings and historical documents of tribal community historian, activist and culture bearer Tall Oak Weeden (Narragansett, Wampanoag, Pequot). (Ongoing)
- **Indigenous Materials Research Night and Open House** (JCB and John Hay Library) — Pre-selected primary and secondary source materials from the libraries' collections are available to visit, view and discuss during scheduled events. Library staff members are on hand at both locations to provide research support and to discuss further opportunities for research and engagement. Community members interested in Indigenous languages, ethnobotany, placemaking, memory and the critical Native and Indigenous studies concentration are encouraged to attend. (Ongoing)
- **John Carter Brown Research Fellowship for Indigenous Communities** (JCB) — This fellowship, established in 2024, supports community-prioritized and community-based research involving materials in the JCB collections, undertaken by community members, including Native or Indigenous scholars, elders, tribal librarians or archivists, and knowledge keepers. (Ongoing)
- **North Burial Ground Documentation Project** (Department of Anthropology) — This community-engaged archaeology research project explores social issues throughout Providence's history, including changes in religious beliefs, public health and life expectancy, and histories of communities typically not centered in colonial U.S. narratives. (Ongoing)
- **Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century New England Indigenous History and Federal Indian Policy** (Department of History) — This ongoing research project by a group of scholars analyzes the role that Christianity and tribal churches have played in some New England tribal petitions for federal acknowledgment, including the Narragansett Indian Church and the Narragansett Indian Tribe. (Ongoing)
- **Indigenous Erasure and Survivance in a Settler Colonial City** (Department of Anthropology, Cogut Institute for the Humanities) — This faculty-led research project examines forms of spatial and symbolic violence in settler colonial cities such as Providence that contributed to the erasure of Indigenous modernity to shed new light on Indigenous persistence in the context of domicile, ruination and right-to-the-city discourses. (Ongoing)
- **Dawnland/Narragansett Histories and Intersections of Indigeneity, Race, Memory and Futurity** (NAISI) — This faculty-led research and public history project centers Indigenous agency and survivance and examines the ethical responsibilities of historical storytelling, to be rooted in Indigenous ethics and epistemologies. (Ongoing)
- **Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty and Freedom** (Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice) — This project supports the creation of an anthology on the Indigenous histories in New England featuring the perspectives of tribal historians and knowledge keepers. Two programs for K-12 students were developed from this project: the Black and Indigenous Histories Summer Institute for high school students (described further under Commitment 4) and the Reimagining New England Histories K-12 Curriculum Project. (January 2021 to January 2025)
- **Seeqan Sessions 2025: Light, Growth, and Preservation** (Simmons Center) — This conference, held at the Mystic Seaport Museum and Mashantucket Pequot Museum and Research Center in Connecticut, focused on honoring the promise of the spring season by bringing together knowledge keepers, scholars, advocates, artists, teachers and youth from across the region known by some Indigenous peoples as “the Dawnlands,” plus interested members of the public, for conversation, connection and community. (April 24-26, 2025)

UPDATED FRAMEWORK:

Advancing education and scholarship regarding Indigenous peoples in and around what is now southern New England

Facilitating opportunities for collaborative research to further advance solutions to pressing concerns that benefit stakeholders and partners in advancing understanding of Native and Indigenous history and contemporary issues, including shared resources with Native and Indigenous peoples for this work

ONGOING WORK:

Brown has the opportunity to build upon these and other scholarly projects by engaging in meaningful and culturally relevant listening and dialogue with tribal nations to gain insight into their scholarly interests and priorities to inform future research. NAISI and the Office of Community Engagement are working to organize a tribal community advisory body that would lend expertise and consultation on this and other forms of scholarship and engagement.

2022 COMMITMENT 3

The University will establish a working group to work closely with the Narragansett Indian Tribe to explore how Brown can effectively honor and memorialize its College Hill location as part of the homeland of the Narragansett people.

RELATED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

This commitment has not yet been realized. However, the traditional medicine and pollinator garden, located at the John Nicholas Brown Center for Advanced Studies and supported by critical Native American and Indigenous studies concentrators and other NAISI students, staff and faculty, has emerged as a promising project to advance this commitment. The garden represents an opportunity for the University to support an Indigenous-centered understanding of memorialization, i.e., caring for and being in relationship with the animate world, which includes both plant and animal relatives.

UPDATED FRAMEWORK:

Both Commitment 1 and Commitment 3 share the same updated framework, as reflected also in the ongoing work:

Recognition that the University is located within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, including public education and acknowledgment

ONGOING WORK:

As noted in the ongoing work under Commitment 2, NAISI and the Office of Community Engagement are working to organize a tribal community advisory body, which will consult with NAISI-affiliated faculty, students from the Natives at Brown (NAB) student organization and subject matter experts on the full range of initiatives related to the goals of acknowledgment. Brown remains dedicated to restoring mutually beneficial connections with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, which was an important partner in developing the original commitment.

2022 COMMITMENT 4

The University will support increased educational opportunities and access for youth of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other tribal youth from New England. To advance this work, Brown will establish a working group in Fall 2022 to coordinate efforts around existing initiatives, including Summer@Brown, Brown Summer High School, the College Access initiative and other programs.

RELATED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

- **Black and Indigenous Histories Summer Institute** (Simmons Center) — This free summer program for Rhode Island students entering grades 9-12 was designed within a restorative justice framework that centers on self-reflection, critical thinking and reading against the grain to reframe how students understand history. (Ongoing)
- **Teach-In for K-12 Educators** (Simmons Center, John D. Rockefeller Jr. Library) — This two-part workshop series offers educators an opportunity to engage with the histories of Black and Indigenous communities in New England. (Ongoing)

- **Representation at the Native American College Access Conference** (Office of College Admission) — Hosted by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Education Department, the conference is an opportunity for Native high school students and their families to learn more about the college application process and financial aid, and ask questions about participating colleges and universities. (Ongoing)

UPDATED FRAMEWORK:

Supporting educational outcomes and access initiatives that benefit Native and Indigenous youth

Strengthening and expanding community engagement to address community challenges identified by Native and Indigenous communities by creating clearer pathways to best engage with the University

ONGOING WORK:

Faculty and staff from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform, the Office of College Admission, the John Hay Library, the Simmons Center, the Brown Collegiate Scholars Program, Brown Pre-College Programs, NAISI, the Department of History, the Department of Computer Science and the Office of Community Engagement convened in Spring 2025 to discuss this commitment and envision potential next steps. As of Spring 2026, this working group was in its initial organizing stages and will be stewarded by the Division of Pre-College and Undergraduate Programs and the Office of Community Engagement.

2022 COMMITMENT 5

The University will increase investment in the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI) and the Native Americans at Brown (NAB) student organization. This will include building support for the new NAISI faculty director and the critical Native American and Indigenous studies undergraduate concentration, a new offering as of the Fall 2022 semester. This also will include establishing a residential program house in the 2022-23 academic year that centers on community building for Native and Indigenous students and those with an interest in Native and Indigenous studies and the historical and contemporary experiences of Indigenous peoples (this work is underway).

RELATED PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES:

- **Native and Indigenous Studies Initiative** (University administration) — Brown continues its support for NAISI, a cross-disciplinary initiative focused on teaching, research and engagement to increase understanding of the cultural traditions, histories, political experiences and contemporary experiences and knowledge of Native American and Indigenous peoples. (Ongoing)
- **Critical Native American and Indigenous Studies Concentration** (NAISI) — Brown established this concentration in 2022 as the culmination of many years of investment by faculty and staff associated with NAISI, and the result of interest expressed by students for years. The first cohort of critical Native American and Indigenous Studies concentrators received their degrees in May 2025 and there are nine current concentrators. (Ongoing)
- **Annual Spring Thaw Powwow** (The Brown Center for Students of Color and NAB) — This annual event, facilitated by the Native American Heritage Series housed in the BCSC and the students of NAB, is an intertribal cultural celebration including dance competitions, food and artists that is open to the public and widely attended and valued by Indigenous people across the region. The Spring Thaw Powwow was paused for 2026 and scheduled to resume in 2027, stewarded as a signature tribal engagement event supported by multiple units at Brown. The powwow is one of several events organized through the Native American Heritage Series, with support from both BCSC and NAB. (Ongoing)
- **Ivy Native Council Conference** (NAB) — Brown hosted this student organization of representatives from all the Ivy League schools. The Ivy Native Council meets at rotating Ivy League Schools for a semi-annual summit. Featuring Indigenous activists, scholars, authors, artists, poets and musicians, the summits provide community-building and learning. (April 2025)
- **The House of Ninnuog program house** (Division of Campus Life, Residential Life) — Established in 2019, this program house serves as a communal and healing space centering Indigenous and those with an interest in Native and Indigenous studies on campus. In honor and recognition of the original stewards of the land Brown occupies, House of Ninnuog refers to "House of the People" in the Narragansett language. As a living space, the house is dedicated to connecting students and serving as a center for visibility, wellness and a diverse range of Indigenous cultural expression. (Ongoing)

- **NAB Annual Indigenous Peoples’ Day Retreat** (NAB and NAISI) — Since 2023, NAB students and NAISI staff and faculty have been visiting regional tribal nations to learn about governance structures, history and culture on reservation land. The group has traveled to meet with the Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation and the Narragansett Indian Tribe, learning from elected tribal leaders, culture bearers and community historians. (Ongoing)
- **NAISI Spring Research Symposium** (NAISI faculty, staff and students) — This annual two-day event provides an opportunity for Brown undergraduates and graduate students to share Native American and Indigenous studies-related research and projects developed over the past year. (Ongoing)
- **Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies and NAISI-affiliated Assistant Professor of American Studies** (University administration) — As part of the continued support of NAISI and the critical studies concentration, the University created these teaching positions, with the first appointments slated to begin in July 2026. (Ongoing)
- **Tribal Community Member in Residence** (NAISI, University administration) — Established in 2020 through a three-year grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, this position within NAISI provides culturally centered support and mentoring for students on campus and serves as a resource for offices and departments across the campus in an advisory role for faculty and staff members. It incorporates Indigenous political and governance knowledge from southern New England. Brown is continuing to support this position through its endowment. (Ongoing)
- **Visiting instructor who speaks Wôpanâak, the Wampanoag language** (NAISI) — Brown has continued to contract annually with this visiting instructor, offering courses on culture-based education and culturally appropriate curricular models, language education and Indian education in line with the federal Indian education policy. (Ongoing)
- **Native Americans at Brown** (NAISI) — This student group continues to receive support from NAISI through funding, advising and by providing its members with dedicated meeting space. (Ongoing)
- **Practitioner in Residence for Tribal Engagement** (Office of Community Engagement) — In 2024 the OCE established this new position to focus on coordination, advice and consultation on tribal engagement, as well as data tracking and reporting on tribal engagement, the land acknowledgment and all of Brown’s five commitments. (Ongoing)

UPDATED FRAMEWORK:

Continued strategic investments and support for Brown’s Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI) to advance knowledge and understanding of the traditions, histories and experiences of Native American and Indigenous peoples

Building community at Brown and locally among those dedicated to honoring and celebrating Native and Indigenous peoples, and cultivating and building understanding of Native and Indigenous history and experiences

ONGOING WORK:

There has been significant progress in this area. Ongoing efforts include continued investment in cross-unit collaboration and coordination to ensure that multiple units are sharing in strategy, planning and facilitation. Key coordinating units should include, at a minimum, the Division of Pre-College and Undergraduate Programs, the Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology, NAISI, the Division of Research (particularly Research Strategy and Development) and the Swearer Center for Public Service.

IV. INVENTORY OF ONGOING TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Appended to this status report is an Inventory of Tribal Engagement Initiatives that provides a snapshot of activities led by units and groups across Brown since the five commitments that arose from the Land Acknowledgment Working Group were approved in 2022. It includes recent or current scholarship, research and programming undertaken in collaboration with a tribal nation, a Native or Indigenous community or citizens of a tribal nation.

As a part of stewarding the original five commitments and the updated framework, the Office of Community Engagement inventoried projects in various stages of development that represent important foundations on which to build new and lasting forms of tribal and Indigenous engagement. These initiatives directly align with the original commitments, Brown’s Community Engagement Agenda and the University’s mission and core institutional values. While many of Brown’s current

and recent tribally engaged projects are documented in this report, there may be additional projects yet to be identified. This inventory will serve as a mechanism for ongoing updates for this work.

Each project listed in this status report contributes to reciprocal tribal engagement and is integral to Brown's reputational integrity within Indigenous communities and tribal nations, reflecting a cumulative effort. Brown has an opportunity to scaffold trust and demonstrate trustworthiness through the processes of meeting the actionable outcomes listed in this report while cultivating an institution-wide culture that understands the complexity and nuance of tribal nationhood and Indigeneity in this region. Every interaction with a tribal citizen, tribal nation, Native person and Indigenous community may add to or detract from Brown's trustworthiness as read and interpreted by Native communities.

V. IN CONCLUSION: REFLECTIONS ON THE PATH AHEAD

Much has changed in the four years since Brown established its land acknowledgment, and the University community has made progress on some, but not all, of the work outlined in the original commitments. This status report is a part of a truth-telling process, providing information about the context and dynamics shaping Brown's progress on the commitments. The report also contextualizes these original commitments within Brown's recently codified core institutional values and focuses on the priority of mutuality in Brown's community engagement efforts.

Brown's Statement of University Values and Voice has established a bedrock for understanding the University's continuing work to honor the spirit of the original commitments. "The pursuit of knowledge and understanding" and "a commitment to openness and diversity of ideas, perspectives and experiences" call on the Brown community to consider diverse epistemologies — including the holistic ways of knowing inherent in Indigenous communities. Efforts around community and tribal engagement and the University's continued demonstration of its institutional commitments to honor tribal and Indigenous communities are aligned with what it means to pursue knowledge at Brown.

The institutional value of "responsibility for a thriving academic community" empowers all parts of the Brown living and learning ecosystem to foster safe and healthy Native communities on campus. Recognizing that a diverse student body enriches academic excellence, Brown will continue to demonstrate a commitment to support and create pathways to the University for people from a diversity of backgrounds, experiences and perspectives.

While expertise and responsibility are distributed across campus, the Office of Community Engagement serves as the institutional steward for this work. The office coordinates campus efforts, provides strategic consultation, maintains an annually updated inventory of related activities on the [Land Acknowledgment website](#) and provides status updates on Brown's efforts to build understanding and deepen relationships with tribal and Indigenous communities. The Office of Community Engagement also convenes campus stakeholders and collaborates with community practitioners to support trustworthiness and reciprocity in Brown's tribal engagement.

Moving forward, the seven elements that comprise the updated framework for ongoing work will serve as the guide for these activities. By situating its original commitments within this expanded strategic framework, the University ensures that the work of its faculty, staff and students remains transparent and aligned with the underlying goals informing the original commitments and Brown's core institutional values. This represents a continuation of a long-term journey — a sustained commitment to repair and relationship-building that serves as the foundation for all future collaboration with tribal nations and Indigenous communities.

APPENDIX

INVENTORY OF TRIBAL ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES ALIGNED WITH THE FIVE COMMITMENTS

Location	Commitment	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	1	Office of the President	<p>Land Acknowledgment</p> <p>Brown has established an official land acknowledgment for members of the community who choose to honor and recognize the relationship of the Narragansett Indian Tribe to the lands in Providence.</p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	1	Office of Community Engagement	<p>Cultural Responsiveness Training Sessions</p> <p>Offers ongoing professional development on Indigenous history, land acknowledgment, and cultural protocols for university stakeholders.</p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Department of History	<p>Stolen Relations Project</p> <p>Investigates the histories of Indigenous enslavement across the Americas, reframing the narrative to focus on stolen people, materials, and land. <i>Collaboration with citizens of or tribal government representatives from Assonet Band of Wampanoags, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Tribe, Massachusetts Tribe at Ponkapoag, Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band, Chaubunagungamaug Nipmuck Indian Council, Montaukett Indian Nation, Pocasset Wampanoag Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	John Carter Brown Library, Brown University Library	<p>Appointment of Coordinating Curator for Native American and Indigenous Collections</p> <p>Supports the libraries in their focus on Native American and Indigenous collections of signal importance as well as programming, including outreach and engagement with Native American and Indigenous communities.</p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Tall Oak Weeden Collection</p> <p>Processes and preserves the historical materials of Tall Oak Weeden, a prominent Indigenous historian and activist, for research and public engagement. <i>In collaboration with citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Department of Anthropology, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World	<p>North Burial Ground Archaeology Project</p> <p>Investigates colonial-era burial practices through a community-engaged lens, highlighting marginalized histories in Providence, including changes in religious beliefs, public health and life expectancy. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe and Indigenous community members in and around Providence</i></p>	Ongoing

Location	Commitment	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	2	John Carter Brown Library and John Hay Library	<p>Indigenous Materials Research Night and Open House</p> <p>Pre-selected primary and secondary source materials from the libraries' collections available to visit, view and discuss. Library staff is on hand at both locations to provide research support and to discuss further opportunities for research and engagement.</p> <p>Community members interested in Indigenous languages, ethnobotany, placemaking, memory and critical Native and Indigenous studies are encouraged to attend. <i>Attendance by citizens from Narragansett Indian Tribe, Navajo Nation, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah), Cherokee Nation, and members of the Wolastoqey Nation, Pokanoket, Seekonck, Quechua, and Aymara communities</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	John Carter Brown Library	<p>Research Materials for Indigenous Communities</p> <p>Supports community-prioritized and community-based research that would benefit from research time in the JCB's collections, that could be undertaken by community members, including Native or Indigenous scholars, Elders, <i>Tribal librarians or archivists, and knowledge Keepers. Participation from citizens of Nipmuc Nation, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and members of the Ramapough Lunaape Nation, Waccamaw, Quechua and Aymara communities.</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Department of History	<p>Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century New England Indigenous History and Federal Indian Policy</p> <p>Research analyzes the role that Christianity and tribal churches have played in some New England tribal petitions for federal acknowledgment; including the Narragansett Indian Church and the Narragansett Indian Tribe. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Dawnland/Narragansett Histories and Intersections of Indigeneity, Race, Memory, and Futurity</p> <p>Research and public history scholarship centering Indigenous agency, survivance, and ethical responsibilities of historical storytelling rooted in Indigenous ethics and epistemologies. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	2	Department of Anthropology and Cogut Institute	<p>Indigenous Erasure and Survivance in a Settler Colonial City</p> <p>Research on Providence to examine forms of spatial and symbolic violence in settler colonial cities contributing to the erasure of Indigenous modernity and to shed new light on Indigenous persistence in the context of domicile, ruination, and right-to-the-city discourses. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe and Indigenous community members in and around Providence</i></p>	Emerging

Location	Commitment	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	2	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Reimagining New England Histories (RNEH) Anthology</p> <p>Supports the creation of an anthology featuring tribal historian and knowledge keeper perspectives on Indigenous histories in New England. <i>Contributions from citizens of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band, Schaghticoke Tribal Nation, Niantic community, and Chappaquiddick Wampanoag Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing
Mashantucket, CT, Mystic, CT	2	Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice	<p>Seeqan Sessions 2025: Light, Growth, and Preservation</p> <p>Conference focused on honoring the promise of the Spring season by bringing together knowledge-bearers, scholars, advocates, artists, teachers, and youth from across the Dawnlands plus interested members of the public for conversation, connection, and community. <i>Collaboration with representation from Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation government and citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Past
Providence, RI	2	Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice	<p>Reimagining New England Histories: Historical Injustice, Sovereignty and Freedom</p> <p>Sought to highlight how the Indigenous communities and Black communities made sustained vigorous efforts to create spaces for their self-determination, freedom and cultural sovereignty in New England. <i>Tribal nations and Indigenous communities throughout New England</i></p>	Past
Providence, RI	3	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Native Garden at John Nicholas Brown Center for Advanced Study</p> <p>Continues a student-initiated project cultivating Indigenous medicinal and pollinator plants, connecting ecological care with cultural knowledge. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Emerging
Providence, RI	4	Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice	<p>Black and Indigenous Histories Summer Institute</p> <p>Engages students in studying pre-colonial African and Native American societies to contextualize early contact with Europeans. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	4	Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery and Justice	<p>K-12 Educator Teach-In: Black and Indigenous Histories</p> <p>Inviting local K-12 educators to participate in The Teach-In: Black and Indigenous Histories which will focus on the Reimagining New England Histories curriculum. <i>Participation from citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)</i></p>	Ongoing
Mashantucket, CT	4	Office of Admission	<p>Representation at Native American College Access Conference</p> <p>Hosted by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Education Department, the conference is an opportunity for students and their families to learn more about the college application process, financial aid, and ask questions about participating colleges and universities. <i>Participation in event facilitated by Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation</i></p>	Ongoing

Location	Commitment	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	5	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Oversight of NAISI Initiative and Concentration</p> <p>Provides strategic leadership and coordination for the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative and undergraduate concentration, with a focus on community-informed academic programming.</p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	5	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative, American Studies	<p>Continued Support of NAISI and CNAIS Concentration</p> <p>Appointment of Teaching Professor of Native American and Indigenous Studies, to begin in July 2026.</p> <p>Appointment of NAISI affiliated Assistant Professor of American Studies, to begin in July 2026.</p> <p>Continuation of Tribal Community Member in Residence position, NAISI-Supported by endowment, provides culturally-centered support and mentoring, for students on campus and serves as a resource for offices and departments across the campus in an advisory role for faculty and staff, incorporating Indigenous political and governance knowledge from southern New England.</p> <p>Annual contract with NAISI Visiting Instructor, with expertise in Wôpanâak (Wampanoag Language), offering courses on culture-based education and culturally appropriate curricular models, language education and Indian Education.</p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	5	Natives at Brown student organization, Division of Campus Life	<p>Ivy Native Council Conference</p> <p>Hosted in 2025 at Brown by NAB, convened Indigenous and interested students from Ivy League institutions for knowledge-sharing, cultural celebration, and collective advocacy.</p>	Past
Providence, RI	5	Brown Center for Students of Color, Natives at Brown student organization, Division of Campus Life	<p>Spring Thaw Powwow</p> <p>Hosts an annual intertribal celebration of dance, food, and art, welcoming Indigenous communities from across the region. <i>Tribal nations and Indigenous communities throughout New England</i></p>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	5	Division of Campus Life, Residential Life	<p>House of Ninnuog (Residential Community)</p> <p>Creates a dedicated space for Indigenous students focused on wellness, visibility, and cultural expression.</p>	Ongoing
Mashpee, MA, Narragansett Indian Tribe, RI, Ledyard, CT	5	Natives at Brown student organization, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	<p>Annual Indigenous Peoples' Day Retreat</p> <p>Since 2023, NAB students and NAISI staff and faculty visit regional tribal nations to learn about governance structures, history and culture on reservation land and learning from elected tribal leaders, culture bearers and community historians. <i>Participation from Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, and citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i></p>	Ongoing

Location	Commitment	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	5	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	Annual NAISI Spring Research Symposium: Two day event provides an opportunity for Brown University undergraduates and graduate students to share NAIS-related research and projects developed over the past year.	Ongoing

ADDITIONAL PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES:

Location	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Detroit, MI	Cogut Institute for the Humanities, Department of History, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	Wyandot and Western Education Study Examines the impact of Western schooling on the Wendat/Wandat community, centering oral histories and Indigenous perspectives. <i>Collaboration with citizens of Wyandot of Anderdon Nation</i>	Ongoing
Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota	Department of History	Lakota Sovereignty and Earth Sciences Explores the intersection of Lakota sovereignty, land, and earth sciences through oral history and archival research in partnership with the Oglala Sioux Tribe. <i>Collaboration with citizens of Oglala Sioux Tribe</i>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	Brown Arts Initiative	Eric-Paul Riege Exhibit Featured the first major solo exhibition of Indigenous artist Eric-Paul Riege, showcasing multimedia works in fiber, sculpture, and performance. <i>Collaboration with citizens of Navajo Nation</i>	Past
Guahan, Northern Mariana Islands	American Studies, Ethnic Studies	Indigenous Transnational/Immigrant Scholarship Learning from the experiences of immigrant students along the educational pipeline. <i>Participation from transnational CHamoru Community</i>	Ongoing
Cochiti, NM	Department of Anthropology	Archaeology of the Pueblo Revolt Collaborated with Pueblo of Cochiti elders to incorporate oral histories into archaeological analysis and interpretation. <i>Collaboration with Pueblo of Cochiti</i>	Past
Providence, RI Bristol, RI	Haffenreffer Museum of Anthropology	Repatriation of Ancestors and Objects of Cultural Patrimony Facilitates the return of ancestral remains and grave goods to tribal nations in alignment with cultural protocols and federal law. <i>Collaboration with Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)</i>	Ongoing
Providence, RI	Sheridan Center for Teaching and Learning	STEM and Tribal College Collaboration Develops culturally responsive undergraduate STEM programming in collaboration with tribal colleges and Indigenous educators.	Emerging
Providence, RI	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	Tribal Leadership and Sovereignty Workshops Offered workshops on Indigenous governance and nation-building, supporting both emerging and established leaders in community-defined leadership roles. <i>Participation from citizens of Mashpee Wampanoag Tribe, Eastern Pequot Tribal Nation, Narragansett Indian Tribe, Mohegan Tribe, Navajo Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina</i>	Past

Location	Brown University Department	Project	Timeframe
Providence, RI	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative, School of Public Health	Health Equity Partnerships with Tribal Communities Uses community-based methods to co-develop interventions supporting Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ health in tribal contexts. <i>Collaboration with Mohegan Tribal government, and citizens of Narragansett Indian Tribe</i>	Ongoing
Andes, Peru	Department of Anthropology, Joukowsky Institute for Archaeology and the Ancient World	Archaeology of Peruvian Coastal Communities Centers Indigenous oral histories and data sovereignty in archaeological research on coastal burial sites. <i>Participation from descendant communities from the North Coast of Peru</i>	Ongoing
South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota	Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative, American Studies	Sensorial Insurgence and Anti-Colonial Geographies in Dakota Women's Aesthetic Practices Analysis of gendered forms of settler colonial carcerality that surround Native women in boarding schools, activist spaces, and everyday geographies. <i>Participation from Sisseton-Wahpeton Dakota citizens</i>	Ongoing
Southern OR, Northern CA	Program in Linguistics, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	Klamath Language Revitalization Supported language reclamation through documentation, community-led camps, and collaboration with the National Park Service. <i>Participation from Klamath Tribes</i>	Past
Modoc, OK	Program in Linguistics, Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative	Modoc Language and Nationhood Analyzed the connections among language, race, and sovereignty to sustain Modoc political and cultural identity. <i>Participation from Modoc Nation</i>	Past
Amazonian, Ecuador, Providence, RI, New Bedford, MA	Program in Linguistics	A'ingae and K'iche' Language Support Develops multimedia language resources and classroom tools that address the needs of A'ingae and K'iche' communities across Ecuador and New England. <i>Participation from A'ingae, K'iche' language speakers in Ecuador and in Providence and surrounding areas</i>	Ongoing
Pawtucket, RI	Department of Chemistry	Blackstone River Water Sampling Conducts community-led analysis of ancestral waters to assess environmental damage and support ecological restoration. <i>Hassanamisco Nipmuc Band</i>	Past
Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah	Office of College Admission	Rural Student Outreach Focuses on Native/Indigenous prospective students, including Santa Fe Indian School and Navajo Preparatory School, with a focus on American Indian Students.	Ongoing
Alaska, Northwest Territories, CAN	Department of History	Environmental History of the Yukon River Researches the entwined legal, cultural, and ecological histories of the Yukon River in partnership with Indigenous communities. <i>Participation from tribal nations of the Yukon River watershed</i>	Ongoing