



BROWN

February 2022

Brown University

Recommendations of the Land Acknowledgment Working Group



February 1, 2022

Dear President Paxson,

The Land Acknowledgement Working Group was charged with developing recommendations for what “land acknowledgement” means for Brown University in the context of its relationship to Native and Indigenous peoples and lands. We have undertaken this work with purpose and respect, and over the past year have conducted research, reviewed models from peer institutions, read history, followed national-level conversations about this topic, and listened carefully to each other. In addition, we had the distinct privilege of accepting an invitation to visit the reservation of the Narragansett Indian Tribe in Charlestown, Rhode Island, where we spent an afternoon learning from Narragansett Tribal Medicine Man and Historic Preservation Officer John B. Brown, III. Mr. Brown told us to “follow the history and you can’t go wrong.” We have endeavored to do so in the set of recommendations that follow.

In Part I of this document we review historical background and context toward a deeper understanding of Brown University’s history and the dispossession of Indigenous lands of this region (and Narragansett ancestral homelands, in particular). In Part II we set forth our recommendations regarding specific actions the University could engage in to address the dispossession of the land on College Hill, help support the Narragansett Indian Tribe, educate our community (as well as the broader public), and support broader levels of engagement with Native American and Indigenous studies and students. Part II also provides a suggested land acknowledgement statement for University-wide adoption after it has been thoroughly and widely examined by a broad community of stakeholders, especially with the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other Indigenous tribes in our region.

It should be noted that these are recommendations of a working group and not a research paper or original scholarship. This document presents well documented and understood history, relying on the work of scholars — including Brown faculty, students and staff — to explain and understand the origins of the land on which the Brown University campus in Providence sits. We have included a bibliography that includes all of the sources of

information in our report and which we encourage members of the Brown community to make use of to add to their own individual and collective understanding of our past. We look forward to continued conversations, work and engagement with our community, and to continually contributing to a better understanding of College Hill's history and relationship to the Indigenous people of the area.

As a first step in advancing these continued conversations, we respectfully propose sharing these recommendations with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, with other Indigenous peoples in our region, with the Brown community, and the public at large (in that order). We hope that doing so will provide a platform for further discussions, research and community reflection regarding our past, present and future. Thank you for the opportunity to do this important work.

Sincerely,

Members of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group

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INTRODUCTION

Brown University is committed to developing deeper understandings of the past history and relationships between the institution, Indigenous peoples, and the land on which Brown now sits. With the goal of recognizing and respecting Indigenous peoples and their cultural and historical relationships to the land, President Christina H. Paxson in March 2021 charged the Land Acknowledgement Working Group (LAWG) to develop recommendations for what “land acknowledgement” means. Through this process, Brown seeks to strengthen relationships in the present and future with local tribes connected to this land.

To understand land acknowledgment first requires an understanding of the history of the land and its forebears. This document, therefore, leads with a necessary reflection on the history of the lands in Providence on which the University sits, as well as the Indigenous peoples with original ties to this land. This history formed the essential basis for the LAWG’s work as reflected in its recommendations. It is important to acknowledge, however, that this is not a scholarly report and also that understanding of colonial history in New England continues to develop and is impacted by whose writings and framing of that history received the most attention. Much of what is believed about the origins of the Providence and Rhode Island colony, for example, is heavily influenced by the writings of colonists themselves and interpretations over time largely by white historians relying on that narrative. The voices and perspectives of Indigenous peoples deserve to be heard and understood more broadly, and faculty, staff and students at Brown and elsewhere are collaborating with Indigenous peoples across our region to do just that.

It is similarly important to recognize, as will become clear in the presented recommendations, that our modern understanding of land ownership and rights — land as a commodity that can be purchased and sold and others prevented from its use — is a by-product of English and other colonial notions of land ownership and is vastly different from how land was thought of and stewarded by Indigenous peoples. For Indigenous people, land and water (including what is now known as Narragansett Bay) was a life-sustaining resource to be used and cared for and sustained in community. To be certain, Indigenous tribes understood

boundaries and control of territories, and prior to and after the arrival of the colonists engaged in conflict with each other over land, among other means of exerting power and control. Private ownership of land, however, was introduced by the colonists, and understanding the differences in colonial and Indigenous concepts of land use and ownership is critical to understanding the importance of a land acknowledgement statement itself.

After nearly a year of research and building knowledge and understanding of the historical context and these concepts among members of the working group, the LAWG developed five recommendations. These recommendations were developed recognizing that a robust conversation must take place across the Brown community and with local tribes in a larger process of engagement that will take time. Developing recommendations at this stage reflects a commitment to establishing a foundation for advancing education and broader meaningful engagement about actions and programming that Brown can pursue. The recommendations are described in detail in this document, following reflections on the land's history and Indigenous people that were essential for shaping their development.

Outlined here is a summary of the LAWG's recommendations:

1. Establish the University's official land acknowledgement statement, as well as provide education and guidance for its use.
2. Commission and support 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.
3. Explore, in partnership with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, how the Brown University campus can effectively honor and memorialize its College Hill location as part of the homeland of the Narragansett people.
4. Support educational opportunities and access for youth of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other tribal youth from New England.
5. Further investment in the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI) and the Natives at Brown (NAB) student organization.

All members of the Brown community are encouraged to read this document's reflections on the land's history and the Indigenous peoples of this region to understand the context for these recommendations. Only through shared understanding may the Brown community consider its path forward.

Part I: Historical Background and Context

1. *“an original proprietor after the Native Indians”*¹

On August 1, 1770, as construction of the building known then as the College Edifice and now as University Hall was underway, Oliver Bowen and his wife Mary affixed their signatures and seals to a [deed](#) transferring ownership of part of the land on which that construction was taking place. The deed, recorded on August 10, 1770, describes in precise detail — including reference to boundary-defining landmarks such as a nail in a pole and an apple tree — a parcel of land of about four acres in the Town of Providence. In exchange for \$400, Oliver and Mary sold the land outright to the “Trustees and Fellows of the College or University in the English Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England in America,” the institution that subsequently came to be known as Brown University.

How did Oliver Bowen come to be the owner of the land which today is at the heart of the Brown University campus on College Hill? He inherited it from Daniel Abbot, Esq., who had died ten years earlier. Abbot in turn inherited it from his father, also Daniel Abbot, who had received two-thirds of it by deed of gift from Robert Williams, who had purchased it from Robert Morrice, who had purchased it from “Daniel Abbot the first.”² Daniel Abbot the first, as carefully written in flowing script in the original deed, “was an original proprietor after the Native Indians.” The other third of the parcel had similarly transferred through several men, tracing back to Chad Brown “who was the first proprietor after the Indians.” Taken together, the deed states that “the whole of this parcel of Land making the northern half of the lot and Highways leading to it which hath been purchased to erect the College Edifice upon.”

The southern half of the lot is described in a [second deed](#), recorded in January 1771, explicating a similar transaction between John and Moses Brown — brothers in the family who were intertwined with the early history and subsequent development of the college — selling

¹ [Oliver and Mary Bowen Deed](#), 1770, p. 2

² *Ibid*

about four acres to the Trustees and Fellows for \$350. The Brown parcel traces back through a series of owners also to Chad Brown, who here is described as “one of the original proprietors after the Native Indians of whom it was purchased.”³ Both deeds relinquished all rights of the sellers and their successors to the premises and imparted to the Trustees and Fellows the right for all time to “occupy and enjoy the same free and clear of all incumbrances whatsoever.”

These two parcels have indeed been occupied and enjoyed continuously for 251 years by the institution that became Brown University. The College Green, University Hall, the Van Wickle Gates, even the John Hay Library that contains the University Archives from which we obtained copies of the original deeds, sit squarely on these parcels of land purchased in 1770 and 1771. Generations of Brown students, faculty and administrators have “occupied and enjoyed” it with, for many, little thought to how it came to be occupied by Brown University and, in particular, how Daniel Abbot the first and Chad Brown came to be the “original proprietors after the Native Indians.” The deeds themselves shed no light on that question; the text which so carefully outlines the boundaries of the parcels and the transfer of ownership from one white male colonist to another over the previous century and a quarter is silent as to the provenance of the land and how it was obtained from the “Native Indians.” Understanding the origin story of the heart of the Brown University campus requires understanding the social, political, and colonial dynamics of the time, beginning with the arrival, in 1636, on the western shore of the Seekonk River of a small group of English colonists from the Massachusetts Bay Colony led by Roger Williams.

2. ***“What Cheer Netop!”***

Legend and fact surrounding Roger Williams are readily conflated. Much of what is known of him comes from his own writings which, by definition, present his actions and intentions in a most favorable light. The dominant narrative, which developed over time, was of a benevolent and tolerant friend to the Indigenous peoples of the lands surrounding the

³ [John and Moses Brown Deed](#), 1771, p. 2

bountiful and strategically valuable Narragansett Bay. While there are threads of truth within that narrative, it is by no means a complete and accurate picture of Roger Williams as an individual or his part in the complex dynamics of the early 1600s and the settler colonialism⁴ that took place across New England. Forces of systemic and violent social, political and economic change were unleashed across the region where Brown University is located throughout the seventeenth century. Between the arrival of the colonists who established the Plymouth settlement in 1620 to the devastating conflict known as King Philip's War in 1675-1676, the homelands, autonomy, and way of life of tens of thousands of Indigenous peoples who had stewarded these lands for thousands of years were irreparably and traumatically transformed.

A common telling of Roger Williams' role in the founding of the Colony of Rhode Island begins with his expulsion from what is now Massachusetts. Williams was a controversial figure from shortly after he landed at Boston in 1631, and was frequently at odds with church and colonial leaders. Having been ultimately convicted of sedition and heresy and banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony in the fall of 1635, he spent the winter of 1636 in the area that we know as Warren and Bristol today. In early spring of that year, Williams moved to a location along the east bank of the Seekonk River. That, however, was not far enough in the eyes of the colonists from Plymouth, who asserted that Williams was within their land grant and told him and his followers to leave. In the late spring or early summer of 1636, Williams and his party are said to have landed at a spot on the shore of the Seekonk River that later became known as Slate Rock, along the eastern side of what is now known as the Fox Point neighborhood of Providence. The site of his landing is memorialized by a monument in Roger Williams Square at the corner of Williams and Gano Streets. The mythology associated with it, including the greeting of "What Cheer Netop!" (described as an amalgam of an informal common English greeting and the Narragansett word for friend⁵) he is said to have received from the Indigenous people waiting for him, has been amplified over the centuries in historical narratives

⁴ We deliberately use the term settler colonialism (rather than colonization) to indicate the system of appropriation of Indigenous land and the displacement of Indigenous peoples. Additional context and background regarding settler colonialism can be found [here](#).

⁵ <https://www.nps.gov/rowi/learn/historyculture/foundingprovidence.htm>

promulgated in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that established a narrative of welcome and friendship. A powerful and well-known depiction of the scene can be found in an oil painting by Alonzo Chappel which can be viewed in the RISD Museum:



The Landing of Roger Williams in 1636; Alonzo Chappel; 1857 (RISD Museum)

While the interpretation of the painting is up to those who view it, as with the scenes of many initial encounters, it depicts Indigenous people welcoming Europeans. The gesture of extending a pipe, for example, reinforces this idea, which would be repeated through the centuries to absolve the colonists of any blame in taking land from Indigenous people. A similar scene is prominently featured in the official seal of the City of Providence:



which in turn is carved in stone on the pillar to the right of Brown University's Van Wickle Gates (the seal of the State of Rhode Island is carved on the leftward pillar):



There is, perhaps, no more important symbol to thousands of Brown University alumni of their shared experience on campus than these gates which open twice a year — inward to welcome new students and outward at Commencement — but otherwise are closed and locked. We expect that most members of the Brown community, as was the case with nearly all members of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group, fail to notice the imagery prominently displayed on the gates, much less question what its inclusion says about the University's values or the message conveyed to new students, especially students from Indigenous nations, about the community they are joining as they pass through the gates for the first time.

Williams and his companions continued in their canoes around Fox Point, into the Great Salt River which opened into a cove — long since filled and on which downtown Providence now stands — and made camp at the location of a freshwater spring at the confluence of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket Rivers. The site of their encampment is memorialized today by the Roger Williams National Memorial along North Main Street. In 1636, what is now North Main Street was an indigenous trail, part of a network throughout the region and into what is now Connecticut and New York, that Williams and the colonists later named Towne Street and which ran along the base of what today we know as College Hill.

Here on the western side of the Seekonk River, Williams had to engage with the Narragansett Sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi. He was known to them already, having had some experience in and around Narragansett Bay and in Narragansett Country throughout the early 1630s. In 1636, the Narragansett tribe was among the most numerous and powerful in

New England, having been largely spared the effects of the 1616-1619 epidemic that decimated many other area tribes in those years. While relations and balances of power between tribes and sachems were fluid, and boundaries as they might be interpreted today shifted accordingly, at the time of Williams' arrival the Narragansett exerted influence over much of the land that we now know as Rhode Island. The land on which Roger Williams stood, and where he wanted to establish a settlement that would in time become the City of Providence and Brown University's main campus, was within Narragansett tribal homelands as evidenced by his subsequent purchase of those lands from the Narragansett sachems.⁶ The forces of settler colonialism, of which Roger Williams was a part, dispossessed over time the Narragansett and many other Indigenous peoples from their ancestral homelands in what is now Providence and throughout New England. Settler colonialism, with all its complexities and nuances of agency and power between colonizers and colonized, led to Daniel Abbot the first and Chad Brown becoming the "original proprietors after the Native Indians" of land that later was sold to the Corporation of what became Brown University.

In understanding these forces, it is essential to have a clear and critical understanding of the concept of land use among the Indigenous peoples of what came to be Providence and Rhode Island, as well as throughout New England and beyond. A central dynamic of the colonization by English settlers of this region in the 1600s was the conflict between English conceptions of land ownership and Indigenous cultures of land use, and the use by the English of written instruments and violence to usurp Indigenous sovereignty over the land. As noted by historian Anne Keary:

the territory in which each band on the bay lived was understood to be the possession of the sachem, but it was owned "less as personal real estate than as the symbolic possession of the whole people," whom the sachem was understood to represent.

⁶ Williams himself wrote about a subsequent controversy regarding the lands in Providence: "Soon after Williams had obtained this place now called Providence," the Pokanoket sachem Ousamequin laid claim to the land. Williams lamented, "This forced me to repair to the Nanhigganset Sachems aforesaid, who declared that Ousamaquin was their subject, and had solemnly.... subjected himself and his lands unto them at Nanhiganset, only now he seemed to revolt from his loyalty, under the shelter of the English at Plymouth. This I declared... to Osamaquin, who without any stick acknowledged it to be true." (Keary, 266-267)

Moreover, unlike European systems of land ownership, what was “owned” was not so much the land itself but the various things that were to be obtained from it during the seasons of the year. Possession, then, was not linked to permanent settlement on a fixed and bound piece of territory, although the Indians did establish temporary settlement sites to which they returned; rather it was linked to rights to use the land the band traveled over (Keary, 1996, 254-255).

English colonists, on the other hand, did not consider land in a usufruct way but, rather, regarded ownership as possession of fixed and bounded alienable property that could be transferred through written instruments (deeds). In 1636 the Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Miantonomi and Roger Williams most likely had different perceptions and expectations regarding land ownership as they negotiated over what we know today as College Hill and Providence. The Narragansett leaders, as was the case with Sachems of other Indigenous tribes, were not without agency in this transaction and there is evidence to suggest they received or expected value in return, perhaps including establishing a physical buffer between themselves and other tribes in the region and access to trade goods. Many other such transactions over land would follow as the colonies in what became New England grew, influenced and shaped by both by the expansionary appetites of the colonists and by the diversity of Indigenous approaches to European presence, as well as the agency of Indigenous leaders and communities in achieving their own strategic aims. However, over the next half century settler colonialism would overwhelm the Narragansett and other Indigenous communities across New England, and during that time a system of land ownership and transfer based on English law would be established that enabled the deeds of 1770 and 1771 representing the earliest acquisition of land by Brown University.

3. *“Rhode Island was purchased by love”*

Roger Williams himself would spend considerable time over the years explaining and justifying the agreement with the sachems, adding to the narrative that it was a benevolent agreement based on friendship or, as Williams wrote, “It was not price or money that could

have purchased Rhode Island. Rhode Island was purchased by love” (Warren, 2018, 69). Not long after 1636, however, “as the balance of power between the English and the Narragansett began to shift, Williams and his fellow settlers moved to establish greater control over the meaning and terms of their settlement in the region” (Keary, 1996, 267-8).

In 1638 Williams executed a deed for the purchase of Providence to which Canonicus and Miantonomi affixed their marks:

The [1638 Providence deed](#) and the performance of its signing no doubt provided the settlers a reassuring confirmation of the validity and security of an English cultural reality in an Indian world. While the document does bear the marks of a still negotiated relationship and while it contains references to Narragansett understandings of ownership and transfer, the deed is, for all that, a written contract and, as such, it situated the agreement made between the English and the Narragansett within the framework of English law. That framework not only structured the relationship between the Indians and the settlers; it also allowed the settlers to formalize relations among themselves and with the land according to familiar procedures” (Keary, 1996, 272).

Shortly thereafter, Williams signed another document — the Initial Deed — which divided the land along and across what is now College Hill into parcels that were divided amongst the “original proprietors” in return for thirty shillings paid to Williams. In 1639 those proprietors included Daniel Abbot and Chad Brown who took ownerships of two parcels (labeled 28 and 29 on the map in Appendix A, although it is important to note that the map itself is largely conjectural) that ran from Towne Street up the hill to what we now know as Hope Street, encompassing what is today the heart of Brown University, the College Green.

4. *The Legacy of Roger Williams and the Initial Deed*

The aftermath and legacy of settler colonialism is well documented. What became the Rhode Island Colony (by royal charter obtained by Roger Williams in 1663) grew and prospered, in large part due to the natural bounty and strategic value of Narragansett Bay. Additional deeds

and documents were drafted, further securing the colonists' legal (in the eyes of the Crown) control of the land and ability to bequeath and transfer ownership as they wished. Throughout the 1600s further lands were obtained from the Narragansett by Williams and others, including islands in Narragansett Bay and areas of land we know today as Warwick, Portsmouth and Newport. In 1659 permission was granted by the colony's Court of Commissioners "to the town of Providence to 'buy out and cleare off Indians within the boundes of Providence as expressed in their town evidence, and to purchase a little more in case they wish to add, seeing they are straytened'" (Keary, 1996, 278). The Narragansett sided with the English in conflict in the late 1630s with the Pequot Tribe (whose lands are in what is now known as Connecticut) but got little in return. In the 1675-1676 conflict known as King Philip's War, the Narragansett remained neutral until the Great Swamp Massacre in December 1675, when hundreds of the Narragansett, including women and children, were killed by English colonists.⁷ In 1676 the Narragansett and colonists engaged in a number of conflicts, including burning many of the houses (but notably not killing any of the occupants) in Providence in March of that year, but by April the Narragansett Sachem Canonchet was captured and executed, and by the summer, colonial power had widely prevailed across the region.

Colonial and, post-Revolutionary War, state and federal efforts to destabilize, disperse, enslave, and eliminate Indigenous peoples continued, including in Rhode Island through the illegal detribalization of the Narragansett in the late 1800s. Starting in 1879, a committee of the Rhode Island State Assembly "held meetings...to effectively dismantle the Narragansett tribe of its title and property" (Geake, 2011, 93). The committee's report led to action by the Assembly to abolish the tribal status of the Narragansett and the sale of all except two acres of land that had been the Tribe's reservation. As written by Geake, "With this act, and the subsequent division of their lands, the "ghosting" of the Narragansett was complete, at least in the minds of those state politicians and Charlestown officials who had long wanted to make the tribe accept ordinary citizenship" (Geake, 96).

⁷ A portion of the land in what is now South Kingstown, RI where the massacre took place [was just this past year returned](#) to the Narragansett Tribe.

Despite the systematic and centuries-long acts of oppression, the Narragansett Tribe has survived and in 1983 became the only federally recognized tribe in Rhode Island. The Narragansett, and many other Indigenous peoples, have an enduring presence in the City of Providence and throughout the State of Rhode Island, and individually and collectively are integral members of the communities of which Brown University is a part. However, the legacy of settler colonialism is clear as the Native American population in Rhode Island is among the [most impoverished demographic in the state](#)⁸:

- The percentage of Native Americans living in poverty is three times that of whites and the state as a whole.
- Native Americans have a higher percentage of unemployment than whites and the state as a whole.
- The median household income for Native Americans is \$21,476, roughly \$34,000 less than the state median household income, and \$39,000 less than the white median household income.
- Only 18.6% of Native Americans own their housing unit, compared to 64.7% of the white population.

During the same time frame that the Narragansett, and other Indigenous peoples, were being intentionally and structurally discriminated against, the College of Rhode Island that began so modestly with the construction of the College Edifice on lands purchased from the successors of Abbott and Brown has prospered and expanded into one of the great institutions of higher education and research in the world. It is with humility and recognition of the privilege that membership in this institution provides that we turn to a series of recommendations intended to honor and acknowledge our past and chart a better future.

⁸ See <https://health.ri.gov/publications/factsheets/minorityhealthfacts/NativeAmericans.pdf>

Part II: Recommendations of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group

It is important to emphasize that these recommendations are the work of the LAWG and the next phase of this work will be to share them with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, other tribes and Indigenous communities in Southern New England, members of the Brown community, and the public at large. The intention in summarizing the history that informed these recommendations is to begin the process of informing the Brown community and the public about the history of our region and the land on which we live, work, and learn. For many on the Land Acknowledgement Working Group, this knowledge was newly gained in the course of this work (and we benefited from the generosity of working group members and others with whom we met sharing a history that is both deeply known and presently felt); this will also be true for many who read this document.

The sites and signs of how the land on which Brown sits in Providence came to the University are all around, from the deeds in the John Hay Library to the monument in Roger Williams Square, to the stone carving of Roger Williams's arrival on the Van Wickle Gates, to the rivers that encircle the campus. Yet the truth of what took place in 1636 and the centuries after is largely invisible to many, collectively and conveniently forgotten. If this work to date has no other impact, the LAWG hopes it will shed some additional light on the origin story of Brown's campus and especially on the proud history and ongoing oppression of the Narragansett people in Rhode Island. With that aspiration in mind, we offer five recommendations at this time:

- 1. Establish the University's official land acknowledgement statement, as well as education and guidance for its use.**

There is no more important step that Brown University can take than to formally and publicly acknowledge that the campus grounds in Providence are within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett tribe. While a statement of land acknowledgment may seem insignificant compared to the weight of the history surveyed as a preliminary step in this

report, it is an essential and urgent action for the University to take; doing so is fundamental (and a first step) to developing a collaborative and sustainable relationship with the Narragansett Indian Tribe based in mutual understanding and respect.

We recommend, accordingly, that the University consider and adopt the following as its official land acknowledgement statement and develop appropriate and necessary education and guidance for its use:

Brown University is located in Providence, Rhode Island, on lands which are within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. We acknowledge that the Narragansett Indian Tribe was dispossessed from their lands by the forces of settler colonialism, and we acknowledge our ongoing responsibility to understand and respond to the legacy of those actions. We acknowledge that the Narragansett and other Indigenous peoples have called Providence home for centuries and continue to do so today. We acknowledge with humility and respect the Narragansett Indian Tribe whose ancestors stewarded these lands with great care, and we commit to working together to honor our past and build our future with truth.⁹

A statement alone is not sufficient, and in order to avoid it becoming a rote recitation at the beginning of campus events and lectures, we recommend the development of educational materials about its meaning and intent, usage guidelines, and other related context that can be housed, along with the statement, on a central University web page. There are many models for doing so at other institutions and surveying best practices and developing a framework can be among the next tasks of the LAWG if this recommendation is accepted.

⁹ Note that we have intentionally limited our recommendation to a land acknowledgement of the campus in Providence. While the University also owns property in Bristol, RI the vast majority of Brown activity takes place in Providence.

2. Commission and support 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.

As stated previously, this document is not a work of scholarship, and members of the LAWG understand both its limitations and also that a fuller understanding of the history in New England continues to develop and is impacted by whose writings and framing of that history received the most attention. The University would benefit from a critical and rigorous study of the history of the University, as well as its early formative years as it relates to the Narragansett Tribe and the other Indigenous peoples who lived in what is now southern New England and whose lives and communities were so severely and negatively impacted by the forces of settler colonialism. There is much to be learned and revealed about this history that would further contribute to the Brown community's understanding of its collective institutional history and obligations and responsibilities today.

The scope and focus of such a study would need to be developed by scholars interested in and able to undertake the work, in collaboration with the Narragansett Tribe and other Indigenous peoples. One model that can be considered as a guide is the research conducted [fifteen years ago](#) by the Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice.

3. Explore, in partnership with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, how the Brown University campus can effectively honor and memorialize its College Hill location as part of the homeland of the Narragansett people.

There is no appropriate or thoughtful physical acknowledgment on the Brown campus today of the history of the land described in this document. Exploring, with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, if there should be one and, if so, what shape it might take would be a step toward further understanding and acknowledging the peoples who lived here before settler colonialism (and beyond), and could represent a tribute to all that the Narragansett have contributed, and continue to contribute, to Providence, Rhode Island, the nation and the world.

4. Support educational opportunities and access for youth of the Narragansett Indian Tribe and other tribal youth from New England.

The Brown University Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan launched in 2016 and Phase II of the plan, which was launched in 2021, explicitly includes Native American students in the goal of enhancing diversity among undergraduates (see goal 3 page 10 of the 2016 DIAP; see goal 3, page 5 of DIAP Phase II). Building upon this intentional goal and the work to achieve it that is already underway, the LAWG recommends that the University develop specific initiatives to address educational inequities among Indigenous youth in our region. While there are likely many programs and opportunities this recommendation could entail, we recommend prioritizing exploration of: 1.) summer program(s) for high school-age tribal students of the region, building on programs already offered by the University; 2.) opportunities for study at Brown University; and 3.) the inclusion of high school students of the Narragansett Indian Tribe along with Providence residents in the [college access program](#) the University is currently designing.

5. Further investment in the Native American and Indigenous Studies Initiative (NAISI) and the Natives at Brown (NAB) student organization.

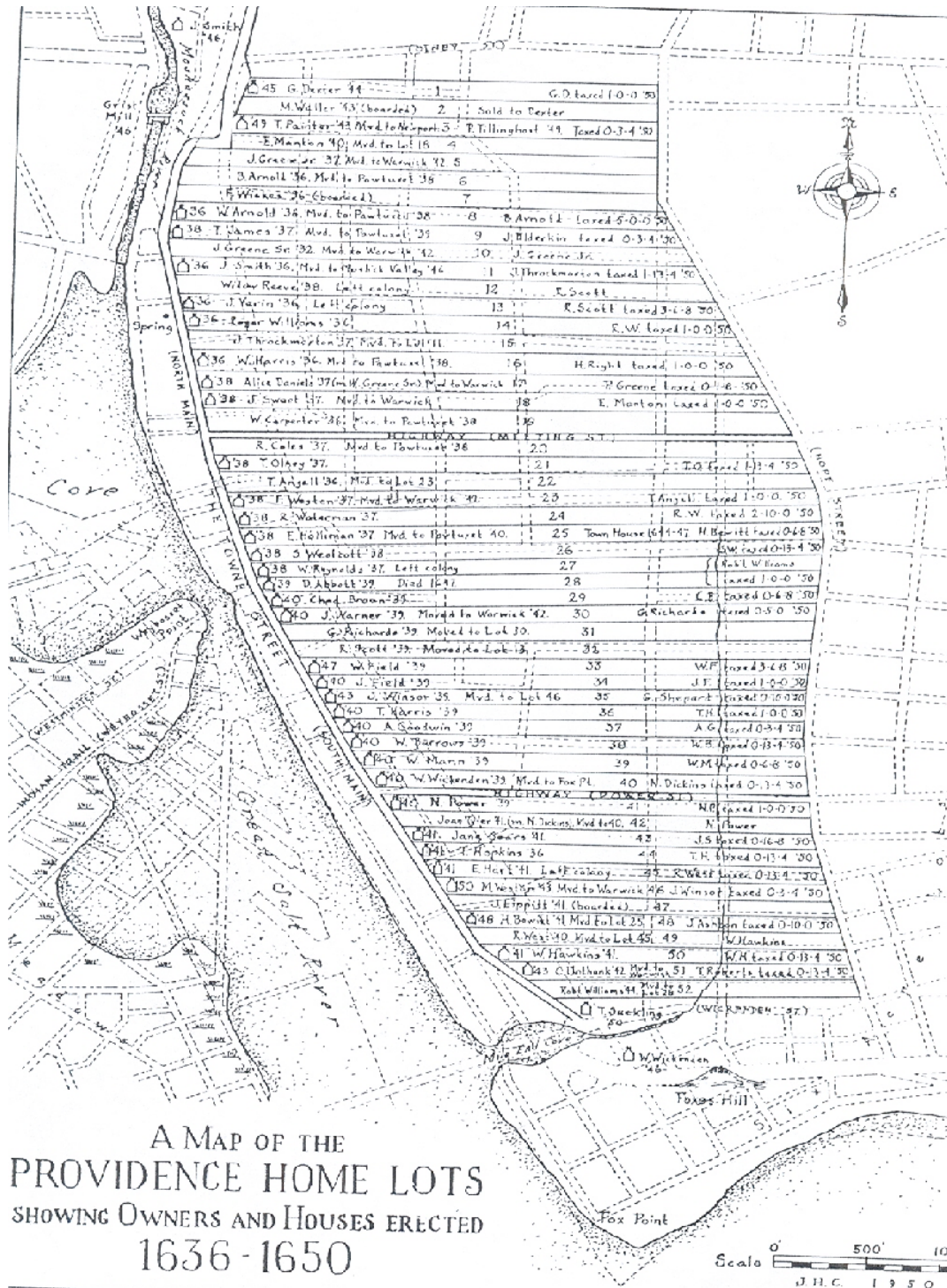
The anticipated extension of the *BrownTogether* campaign provides a timely opportunity to increase resources available to the academic program devoted to studying the cultural traditions, histories, political experiences, and contemporary experiences and knowledges of Native American and Indigenous peoples (NAISI). The program also engages in programming connected to NA+I students and the student organization (NAB) that lead so many of the efforts at Brown today to address the history surveyed in this document. Investing in these areas would increase support of our Native American and Indigenous students, faculty and staff and foster increased research and engagement in these fields. Such investments could include, for example, incorporation of local tribal history related to College Hill and NA+I material in University tours, as well as in first-year seminars or

readings, and also provide meaningful ways to expand education at the University and its connections to Indigenous peoples of the region (and beyond).

CONCLUSION

These recommendations of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group are offered with the hope that they will provide a common foundation for further reflection and discussion. As stated above, a first step in this regard is sharing this document with the Narragansett Indian Tribe, with other Indigenous peoples in our region, with the Brown community, and the public at large (in that order). The members of the Land Acknowledgement Working Group look forward to the next phase of broader dialogue with the many communities who have a stake in this important work.

Appendix A



Selected Bibliography for Further Reading

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