

University of Delaware Anti-Racism Initiative – Indigenous Programming Subcommittee

Living Land Acknowledgement

This is a living land acknowledgement developed in consultation with tribal leadership of Poutaxet, what is now known as the “Delaware Bay,” including: the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware, the Nanticoke Indian Tribe, and the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation in 2021. We thank these leaders for their generosity. This document will be revised biannually to incorporate ongoing feedback and Indigenous relationship building.

The University of Delaware occupies lands vital to the web of life for Lenni Lenape and Nanticoke, who share their ancestry, history, and future in this region. This interactive map shows that the Lewes, Georgetown, Dover, Newark and Wilmington campuses are located in these Indigenous homelands. <https://native-land.ca/> UD has financially benefited from this regional occupation as well as from Indigenous territories that were expropriated through the United States land grant system since the institution was established in 1743. We acknowledge that the centuries of harm to Indigenous people and their homelands are beyond repair. Yet, we pledge a sustained commitment to accountability.

We honor that the Nanticoke and Lenni Lenape have lived in harmony with one another and this land since ancient times. The ancestors of the Lenni Lenape, translated as “the Original People,” were farmers and diplomats throughout their homeland, Lenapehoking, which includes present-day New Jersey, most of Delaware, and the eastern parts of New York and Pennsylvania. The ancestral Nanticoke, known as the “Tidewater People” because their livelihood depended upon the bounty of the land, ocean, and rivers, lived along the present-day Delmarva Peninsula. We express our appreciation for ongoing Indigenous stewardship of the ecologies and traditions of this region, despite the centuries of colonial-capitalist plunder.

We commit to learning the stories of all those who have, and have not, survived genocide, ecocide, displacement, slavery, and ongoing occupation. In the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, the Dutch, Swedes, and British established settler colonies in this region, resulting in Indigenous epidemics and warfare. In parallel, the trans-Atlantic slave trade had devastating consequences for people of African descent, Indigenous communities, and their shared kin. European nations and eventually the United States forced some Nanticoke and Lenni Lenape westward and northward. Others never left their homelands or returned from exile when they could. Many survived by forming tribal congregations in Christian churches and controlling segregated Native American public schools in the 1800s and 1900s, while maintaining much of their traditional spirituality. They persist today as the Lenape Indian Tribe of Delaware, the Nanticoke Indian Tribe, the Nanticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation, the Ramapough Lenape and other continuing tribal communities throughout the eastern seaboard. Other Nanticoke and Lenni Lenape form the Delaware Nation in Anadarko, Oklahoma, the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians in Bowler, Wisconsin, the Munsee-Delaware Nation near St. Thomas, Ontario, the Delaware Nation at Moraviantown near Chatham-Kent, Ontario, and the Delaware of Six Nations near Brantford, Ontario.

We will foster right relationships going forward through tangible and actionable institutional steps elaborated in collaboration with tribal leadership. The future viability of the University of Delaware necessitates reparations for Indigenous people. With this living land acknowledgement, UD commits to building relationships with Indigenous people based on respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility to redress centuries of harm.

Oral version for members of UD: (<1 minutes)

The University of Delaware occupies lands vital to the web of life for Lenni Lenape and Nanticoke, who share their ancestry, history, and future in this region. UD has financially benefited from this regional occupation as well as from Indigenous territories that were expropriated through the United States land grant system. European colonizers and later the United States forced Nanticoke and Lenni Lenape westward and northward, where they formed nations in present-day Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada. Others never left their homelands or returned from exile when they could. We express our appreciation for ongoing Indigenous stewardship of the ecologies and traditions of this region. While the harms to Indigenous people and their homelands are beyond repair, we commit to building right relationships going forward by collaborating with tribal leadership on actionable institutional steps.

Oral version for visiting speakers at UD: (<30 sec)

The University of Delaware occupies lands vital to the web of life for Lenni Lenape and Nanticoke, who share their ancestry, history, and future in this region. European colonizers and later the United States forced members of these groups westward and northward, where they formed nations in present-day Oklahoma, Wisconsin, and Ontario, Canada. Others never left or returned from exile when they could. Their continuing tribal communities steward the ecologies and traditions of this region today.