

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS

VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

Approved November 13th, 2024

October 9th, 2024

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Room 513
5th Floor Davis Building, National Life
Montpelier, VT, and Virtually



Members present in-person: Richard Holschuh, Doug Bent, Jeff Benay

Members present virtually: Dan Coutu, Melody Walker Mackin, Pat Lamphere, Deanna Edwards

Guests attending in-person: Chief Shirly Hook (Koasek of the Koas), Breanna Sheehan (VT Division for Historic Preservation)

Guests attending virtually: Andrei Jacobs (Tribal Partnerships Director, America250), Melissa Miller (Professional Services, America250), Elodie Reed (Vermont Public), Christopher Roy (Anthropologist, Philadelphia), A.J. Ruben (Attorney)

COMMISSION
Richard Holschuh, Chair
Daniel Coutu, Vice Chair
Doug Bent
Melody Walker Mackin
Jeffrey Benay
Pat Lamphere
Deanna Edwards
Open Seat
Open Seat

Meeting called to order at 1:01.

1. Commissioners and guests introduction and sign-in

Commissioners and guests introduced themselves.

2. Changes to the Agenda

Breanna requested a discussion on the VT Office of Racial Equity's conference at the end of October, and the Commission agreed to add it into the agenda.

3. Approval of September Minutes

The September 11, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

4. Intention, Goal, or Priority Setting

Breanna reminded the Commissioners that they would have a guest speaker joining remotely around 2-2:30.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Admin Update

Breanna provided an update on the Commission's determination as an advisory body and on the Commission's meeting location beginning in the new year.

2. Act 182 (2022) Land Access & Opportunity Board report (Dan Coutu)

Dan reported on the LAOB's current focus on addressing the housing needs of people who utilized the State's motel placement program now that the program has ended. Dan shared that the Board is working aggressively with the legislature and organizations across the state to provide this basic need. A brief discussion ensued about community housing initiatives.

3. Act 142 (2022) Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council (Breanna Sheehan)

Breanna shared that she attended the Council's second meeting and provided a brief update on council engagement.

4. Act 154 (2022) Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Rich shared that the Council had had one meeting in the past month, and they are still working on how to engage with community feedback and feedback synthesis. He also reiterated the RFP they will be putting out for an environmental mapping tool and noted that they are back on a regular meeting schedule.

5. Act 174 (2020) "Vermont State Parks - Abenaki signage" status

Breanna did not have an official update, but she noted a nice social media post by the VT Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation about the project. Dan shared some contacts for additional place name resources.

6. Act 128 (2022) VT Truth & Reconciliation Commission -TRC (Melody Mackin)

Melody reported the TRC has finished their strategic plan and are moving into the next phase of implementation in their work, and that this will be kicked off with an event on Friday, October 11th on the State House Lawn. The new phase will include committee expansion and restructuring and the beginning of public and confidential truth telling sessions across the state. Community members can stay up to date on this work on the TRC's [website](#) or at their public meetings on the first Tuesday of each month. Melody also shared that they had hired a new lead researcher and provided an update on the search for the TRC's 3rd Commissioner.

7. Act 33 (2021) VT Health Equity Advisory Commission

Breanna shared that she has been in contact with the Commission but will not be able to attend their October meeting.

8. Act 126 (2023) Community Resilience & Biodiversity Protection (30x30) (10 min)

Rich did not have a formal update to share. They are still working on inventorying conserved land in Vermont.

9. Seventh Generation Curriculum Grant Committee report

Dan shared that the process is in the homestretch. Materials are now out for external review after which they will begin to incorporate feedback. In the meantime, they are working on the terminology and website development. A brief discussion ensued about the project's timeline and roll out.

10. 2024 VT State Health Assessment Data and Improvement Plan

Breanna provided a brief overview of the VT State Health Assessment and Improvement Plan and shared that she had been selected to participate in the Cost of Living work group. She then presented the DoH's recently published [Data Brief](#) and [Presentation](#) on the health needs of Indigenous Peoples in Vermont. Discussion ensued about the needs for more robust and specific data on Indigenous Peoples in Vermont. Commissioners discussed Tribal needs assessments and wanting to learn more about the Health Assessment's data collection process.

11. 250th Commission Update

Breanna reported that she had officially been appointed to the 250th Commission. She also shared some updates on the 250th Commission's work and solicited feedback on a curriculum they are working on. Commissioners suggested some resources to add to incorporate Indigenous perspectives and suggested strategies for ongoing feedback.

12. Regional Planning Commission Training

Breanna shared that she and Rich had a meeting coming up with the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission to discuss the details of the training, and they would update the Commission in November.

13. VCNAA Website Update

Breanna reminded the Commission that she is updating the website and welcomes feedback. She also solicited feedback on any guidelines for the calendar and news section of the website and asked the Commission if they would be interested in a logo. The Commissioner's offered their thoughts and showed interest in a logo.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Guest Presentation: America250 Tribal Partnerships Director (10 min)

Andrei Jacobs and Melissa Miller from America250 did a presentation on America250's America's Field Trip Contest for distribution to Tribal communities and Indigenous youth in Vermont. The Commission posed questions around challenges and successes in

engaging Tribes and Indigenous youth, and Andrei and Melissa shared additional information, contact information, and resources for distribution.

2. VHS November Meeting

Breanna shared that the Commission had been invited by the Vermont Historical Society to hold their November meeting at and tour their new facilities in Barre. A motion was made to hold the Commission's November meeting at the VHS and the motion passed by consensus.

3. Communication with the Governor

Breanna shared an update on the process for communicating with the Governor's office and legislature and discussion ensued about potential strategies that could be employed and connections that could be made toward this goal.

4. Tribal Relations Census Meeting

Rich described the meeting he had with representatives from Tribal Affairs at the U.S. Census. He shared their interest in being a resource for Tribal communities in Vermont. Discussion ensued about the evolution of the census and census data over time and the importance of accurate census data for Indigenous communities in Vermont.

5. Tribal representative reports

- **Elnu:** Rich shared that Elnu will be hosting an IPD Celebration at Retreat Farm in Brattleboro from 1-4pm on the 14th which will feature demonstrations by Elnu artisans. The event is free and open to the public.
- **Koasek:** Doug shared that they have been busy shucking and canning beans and picking ground cherries and peppers. For IPD, they are planning to do some traditional trout fishing on the river.
- **Missisquoi:**
Jeff shared that Missisquoi will be hosting their annual Harvest Meal this Sunday, the 13th from 12-3:30pm. He also shared that the first Abenaki Parent Advisory Committee meeting will be taking place from 5-8pm on the 15th.
Pat shared that Alnobaiwi will be losing their exhibit at Ethan Allen Homestead Museum at the end of the month, and they are figuring out how to compensate for that. He also shared that their burned-out canoe event went very well and that was he had to thank a lot of people, and he was very, very grateful. They are now looking for a place to sink it for the winter. Finally, he shared that Alnobaiwi had helped sponsor Nulhegan's IPD Rocks! Event, and it was a very happy event.
- **Nulhegan:** Dan shared that their IPD Rocks! Event happened over the weekend, and they had good participation and questions. He also shared that this month, their food

shelf is running every other Wednesday from 4-7pm, and every other Saturday from 9am-12pm. Their next date will be Saturday, Oct 12th.

6. Announcements/Upcoming Events

- **October 11th – VT TRC [Truth & Healing: In Search of a Common Memory](#)**
 - 1-4pm, State House Lawn, Montpelier, VT
- **October 13th - Missisquoi [Annual Harvest Supper](#)**
 - 12-3:30pm, Swanton Central School, 24 4th St, Swanton, VT
- **October 14th- [Elnu IPD Celebration](#)**
 - 1-4pm, Retreat Farms, Brattleboro, VT
- **October 15th – [Indigenous Peoples’ Day](#) at UVM**
 - 12-1pm, John Dewey Lounge, 50 University Place, Burlington, VT
- **October 17th – [UVM Planetary Health Initiative Launch](#)**
 - 4-5pm, Andrew Harris Common, Burlington, VT
- **October 24th – VAAA Speaker Series: [Encountering Ndinakina: Reconsidering Abenaki History in Vermont and New Hampshire](#)**
 - 6:30-7:30pm, Virtual
- **October 26th – Free Pop-Up Dental Clinic**
 - 9am-4pm, Brattleboro VFW, 40 Black Mountain Rd, Brattleboro, VT
- **October 28th & 29th - [VT Office of Racial Equity Conference](#)**
 - 9:30am-4pm, Spruce Peak, Stowe, VT
 - Commissioners briefly discussed their interest in the conference and how to get involved.
- **November 14th – [Vermont Statewide Housing Conference](#)**
 - 7:45am-4:30pm, South Burlington, VT

STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Strategic Planning Timeline

Breanna provided an overview of the steps and timeline of the strategic planning process and led a discussion on the uses of this type of strategizing and how the Commission could incorporate this process into their current schedule. Commissioners provided input and agreed to begin the process in the new year.

2. Priorities for the Next 6 Months

Due to limited time, this topic was shelved for the Commission’s November meeting.

CLOSING

1. Final Thoughts

None.

2. Public Comment

None.

3. Meeting Adjourned

Motion to adjourn passed by consensus.