

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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

VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

Approved January 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025

November 13th, 2024

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Community Room  
Vermont Historical Society, 60 Washington St, Suite 1  
Barre, VT, and Virtually

**Members present in-person:** Richard Holschuh, Dan Coutu, Jeff Benay, Deanna Edwards

**Members present virtually:** Melody Walker Mackin

**Members Absent:** Doug Bent, Pat Lamphere

**Guests attending in-person:** Breanna Sheehan (VT Division for Historic Preservation), Chris LaFrance (ACC), Fred Wiseman (Wôbanakik Heritage Center), Roland Bluto (Nulhegan Elder), Marshall Rich (ICWAC), Jess Robinson (VT VDHP), Joanne Crawford (ACC)

Meeting called to order at 1:10.

**TOUR (In-person Only)**

1. **In-person Commissioners and guests will have the opportunity to tour the VHS' new Research and Exhibition**

**Gallery (45 min)**

Chris provided a brief introduction to the Abenaki Cultural Conservancy and their recent loan of more than 200 American Abenaki objects to the Vermont History Center. Fred then provided Commissioners and guests with a more in-depth tour and explanation of the objects on display in the new research and exhibition gallery.

**WELCOME (Hybrid)**

1. **Commissioners and guests introduction and sign-in**

Commissioners and guests introduced themselves.

2. **Changes to the Agenda**

No changes.

### **3. Approval of October Minutes**

The October 9, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

### **4. Intention, Goal, or Priority Setting**

No comments.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **1. Act 182 (2022) Land Access & Opportunity Board report (Dan Coutu)**

Dan shared that the LOAB has been busy assessing the repercussions the recent election has already had and will continue to have on impacted populations and is working hard to figure out how to mitigate harm given the anticipated shifts in funding, support, and political climate on both a state and federal level. A brief discussion ensued around what strategies could be utilized at a state level to address this.

### **2. Act 142 (2022) Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council (Breanna Sheehan)**

Breanna provided an update on the Council's October meeting and her selection as the Council's chair/point of contact. She shared that they are still ironing out the details of their work and the role the Council would like to serve. A brief discussion ensued about the staffing of the Division of Racial Justice Statistics and Office of Racial Equity.

### **3. 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 their mandate, define their target population, and source data. He reiterated the RFP they will be putting out for an environmental mapping tool and noted that participation has waned, likely due to low capacity amongst impacted communities. A brief discussion ensued about how to address capacity and accessibility issues to increase participation of impacted communities.

### **4. Act 128 (2022) VT Truth & Reconciliation Commission -TRC (Melody Mackin)**

Melody shared an update on their newly hired lead researcher, their October event at the State House Lawn, and their recent training with a consultant from the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission on creating safe spaces for TRC participants. She also shared that they are hoping to begin taking online submissions as soon as the end of November and are working on scheduling online and in-person truth telling sessions which include 33 community-based spaces across the state where people can come and share in-person. She finished by sharing that they are very interested in getting more people and partners involved as this is a process for all Vermonters.

### **5. Act 33 (2021) VT Health Equity Advisory Commission**

No update.

**6. Act 126 (2023) Community Resilience & Biodiversity Protection (30x30)**

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

**7. Seventh Generation Curriculum Grant Committee report**

Jeff reported that they are just waiting for feedback from a few more folks before they finalize edits and look toward printing. A discussion ensued around roll out and outreach strategies for the project and opportunities for ongoing curriculum development and collaboration.

**8. 2024 VT State Health Assessment Data and Improvement Plan**

Breanna shared that she attended her first SHIP workgroup meeting with participants from around the state. They are currently working to define the scope and approach of their work but are scheduled to develop and implement their proposed strategies by next summer. She also shared that representatives from the DoH will present on the SHIP Indigenous health data collection and analysis at their next meeting in January.

**9. Regional Planning Commission Training**

Breanna provided an update on her recent meeting with representatives from the Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission (CCRPC) including proposed timing, format, and topics of discussion for the training. She also shared that representatives from the CCRPC will present to the Commission in January to provide more context on their work and how the Commission could participate.

**10. VCNAA Website**

Breanna provided an update on the website and an overview of the process of developing a logo for the Commission. The Commission decided to shelf the idea of pursuing a logo for a later date.

**11. Communication with the Governor/Legislature**

Breanna provided an update on upcoming communications with the Governor's office regarding the appointment process for VCNAA commissioners as well as some potential strategies for outreach to legislators ahead of the session. A brief discussion ensued around the strategies presented and a motion to allow Breanna to begin outreach to legislators was passed by consensus.

**NEW BUSINESS**

**1. ORE Conference Update**

Breanna briefly described her positive experience at the ORE's recent conference and recommended it for folks interested in statewide equity work.

## 2. Tribal representative reports

- **Elnu:** Rich shared that Elnu's IPD event in October went very well with great community attendance and news coverage. He also shared that they recently held a well attended public lecture on wampum and will be hosting traditional legging workshop at the end of November that is open to tribal citizens and guests. Additionally, Rich mentioned a talk he will be doing at Fort Dummer as well as Elnu's annual Solstice Gathering, both of which are still TBA.
- **Koasek:** No representatives in attendance to share.
- **Missisquoi:** Jeff shared that Missisquoi's recent basket workshop led by Jesse Larocque was very well received and that they have a Ribbon Skirt workshop on November 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>. He also shared that Missisquoi's Spaghetti dinner fundraiser will be held on March 29<sup>th</sup>.
- **Nulhegan:** Dan shared that Nulhegan will be hosting a gathering for the Solstice, but he does not have any details yet.

## 3. Announcements/Upcoming Events

- **Perry Center for Native America Art at Shelburne Museum**
  - This Center which is planned to break ground in 2025 will be "devoted to the exhibition and care of the Museum's collection of more than 500 Indigenous items from 389 Tribal Nations." For more information, see their [website](#) or recent [news coverage](#) from NBC5.
- **November 16<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup>– Missisquoi Ribbon Skirt Workshop**
- **November 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> – Elnu Traditional Legging Workshop**
  - Open to Abenaki community members and guests.
- **December 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>**
  - **Elnu Solstice Gathering**
    - Open to Abenaki community members and guests.
  - **Nulhegan Solstice Gathering**
    - TBA
- **March 29<sup>th</sup> – Missisquoi Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser**
  - TBA

## STRATEGIC PLANNING

### 1. Priorities for the Next 6 Months

Breanna reminded Commissioners of some of the goals/interests she gleaned from her conversations with Commissioners this summer and some possible priorities and actions they may want to pursue to meet these goals. A discussion ensued around current priorities, working committees, needs assessments, community engagement, and what

actions could be taken now to meet community needs right now. Due to time constraints, the conversation had to be tabled for future consideration and discussion.

## **CLOSING**

### **1. Final Thoughts**

None.

### **2. Public Comment**

None.

### **3. Meeting Adjourned**

Motion to adjourn passed by consensus.