

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

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

June 12th, 2024

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Koasek Tribal Gardens
Allen Bent Road, Braintree, VT

Members present in-person: Rich Holschuh, Dan Coutu, Doug Bent, Jeff Benay, Pat Lamphere, Deanna Edwards

Absent: Melody Walker Mackin

Guests: Breanna Sheehan (Vermont Division for Historic Preservation), Roland Bluto (Nulhegan), Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan (Elnu), Louise Lamphere (Alnobaiwi), Chief Don Stevens (Nulhegan), Chief Brenda Gagne (Missisquoi), Marshall Rich (Department of Children and Families), Linda Longtoe Sheehan (Elnu), Chief Shirly Hook (Koasek), Bonnie Rich (community member), A.J. Ruben (visitor)

Meeting called to order at 1:50

1. Commissioners and guests introduction and sign-in

The guests introduced themselves.

2. Changes to the Agenda

No changes.

3. Approval of April Minutes

The May 8, 2024 meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

4. Commissioner's annual priorities, goals, & suggestions

No comments.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Reminder: Ethics certifications for Commissioners

Communicated to all Commissioners.

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

Dan provided an update on an RFP posted by the LAOB for an equity assessment of housing and land programs in the State of Vermont.

3. Act 142 (2022) Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council (Stacy Gould)

No updates. There was discussion about the Commission reaching out to better understand the RJSAC's work and timeline.

4. Act 154 (2022) Environmental Justice Advisory Council

Rich relayed that they have had one meeting and are in the process of writing the guiding policies for the council. Rich noted that they will be putting out an RFP for a mapping tool, and guests shared the importance of accurately tracking the number of Native people in the state.

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

No official update, but guests shared a VT Fish & Wildlife announcement about the new Awasos Wildlife Management Area. Discussion ensued about various informal signage collaborations throughout the state.

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

No official update, but Rich shared that there are ongoing meetings the 2nd Tuesday of each month. Brenda and Dan shared that the committee has started to meet. Guests shared the importance of sharing and knowing the history of eugenics in VT so that all communities can reconcile and heal.

7. Act 152 (2022) Nondiscriminatory School Branding/Mascots – Status

No update.

8. Act 33 (2021) VT Health Equity Advisory Council (HEAC) Ongoing

No official update.

9. Act 126 (2023) Community Resilience & Biodiversity Protection - focus groups (10 min)

Rich shared that there will be an initial report next month.

10. Seventh Generation Curriculum Grant Committee report (Jeff Benay)

Jeff shared that to accommodate for the unexpected interest in printed materials, the project has had to seek additional funding sources. He also shared that they will be seeking community input soon. He reiterated the rollout date as Indigenous People's Day 2024.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Assign secretary duties and VCNAA point of contact to Admin Director

A motion was made, 5 Commissioners voted in favor, two absent from the vote.

2. Appoint Breanna Sheehan to 250th Commission as VCNAA representative

Vermont 250 Commission appointment was transferred to Breanna Sheehan. A motion was made, 5 Commissioners voted in favor, two absent from the vote.

3. Sowing Seeds: Vermont statewide conservation conference

Discussion ensued about the need for an Abenaki presence at the conference. Rich shared that an Indigenous led coalition has submitted a panel proposal. Guests echoed the need for Indigenous representation in these spaces.

4. Status report on Commissioner terms, reappointments, and open seats

Breanna shared an update on the status of current Commissioner term expiration dates, upcoming reappointments, and filling the two open Commission seats.

5. Admin Director onboarding update and summer project brainstorm

Breanna shared an update on the status of her onboarding and asked for suggestions for projects to take on while the Commission is on their summer break. Commissioners and guests offered their thoughts and suggestions.

6. Tribal representative reports

- **Missisquoi:**
- **Nulhegan:** Dan shared that Nulhegan is planning some Cultural programs and are seeking instructors/teachers. Chief Stevens shared that he will be making a trip to New Zealand soon and the tribes should let him know if they'd like him to share a gift on their behalf.
- **Koasek of the Koas:**
- **Elnu:** Roger shared that Elnu recently has their annual Shad fishing outing in Turner Falls. Breanna shared that Elnu is also starting to put on cultural programs.

7. Announcements/Upcoming Events

Fire Shooting Ceremony hosted by Alnobaiwi on June 20th

Elnu Summer Solstice Gathering on June 20th

Abenaki Heritage Weekend the last weekend in June.

Abenaki Day Gathering on August 3rd

Nulhegan Annual Gathering on August 24th and 25th

Indigenous Peoples Day Celebration in Stowe on October 5th

Public Comment

Roland shared that he would like to thank Doug and Shirly for having the Commission and guests to the garden. It was nice to see the bands together in this space.

Meeting Adjourned

Motion to adjourn passed by consensus.