



VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

Approved March 13th, 2024

February 14, 2024

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

Calvin Coolidge Conference Room
6th Floor Davis Building, National Life
Montpelier, VT
and Virtually

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



vcnaa.vermont.gov

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

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

Commissioners attending virtually: Doug Bent, Deb Reger, Patrick Lamphere, Melody Mackin

Guests: Jess Robinson (Vermont Division for Historic Preservation); Roland Bluto (Nulhegan); Martha Diess (Agency of Education); Brenda Gagne (Chief, Missisquoi)

Guests attending virtually: Shirly Hook (Chief Koasek of Koas), David Savoie (Canada Radio), Elodie Reed (Vermont Public), Morgan Lamphere

Meeting called to order at 1:05 pm

1. Commissioners and guests introduction and sign-in

The guests introduced themselves.

2. Changes to the Agenda

Deb Reger recommended that Brenda Gagne address the commission if she was inclined, and that her discussion be moved to the top of the agenda.

3. Approval of January Minutes

The January meeting minutes were approved by consensus.

4. Chief Brenda Gagne, Missisquoi

Chief Brenda Gagne presented updates on Missisquoi tribal activities including an announcement of a Pow Wow being organized for Memorial Day weekend which is open to all. Other activities include basket making workshops, skirt-making (sewing classes). The office is busy during the morning 9AM-Noon..

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

Commissioner Reger asked the commission to speak for the Commission only if approved by the Commission and individual opinions be identified as such.

OLD BUSINESS

1. VT Legislature in session; Native Caucus participation

Commissioners should contact Rep Sims for access to the Native Caucus meeting every other Tuesday AM.

2. VT Dept of Health 5-year assessment – contacting communities individually

The Department of Health is contacting the individual Tribes as they gather information in the 5 year assessment.

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

Dan Coutu updated on Act 182. He participated in presenting to the Appropriations Committee at the State House.

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

No update.

5. Act 154 (2022) Environmental Justice Advisory Council

No update.

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

No update.

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

Melody Mackin announced there will be a committee for community engagement with the TRC (VT Truth & Reconciliation Commission) including accessibility, keeping stories and privacy. Ten members are needed to participate. More info on the website.

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

No update.

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

Update from Deb Reger led to a discussion about health equity and the needs of the Abenaki community and individual mental health needs and some solutions the parent-to-parent group in Franklin County are developing.

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

The Curriculum Project included a discussion about timeline and affirmation of continued support within the education community of teachers and supervisors.

11. Vermont Mental Health Professional Licensing Update

The Mental Health Licensing group continues to meet.

12. VCNAA Part-Time Staff Position, Job Description, Posting

The part time job opening for VCNAA has been posted.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Guest: VT Agency of Education Martha Diess , Global Citizenship specialist

Martha Diess from the VT Agency of Education made a presentation about her work at the Agency of Education. She is supportive of the Abenaki Curriculum project and hopes the VCNAA will continue to find ways to share information and resources. She talked about state standards and how social studies can create the greatest changes. The same standards and emphasis that the curriculum committee is using is shared: college, career, civic.

2. Act 126 (2023) Community Resilience & Biodiversity Protection - Working Group

Act 126 that includes resilience and biodiversity was mentioned.

3. Vermont 250th Commission Appointment: Melody Mackin steps down, Jill Adams (Elnu) has volunteered (5 min)

Vermont 250 Commission appointment was transferred to Jill Adams, a motion was made and 7 Commissioners voted in favor, one abstained from the vote.

4. VCNAA at State House Card Room 3/12/24: protocol, staffing, handouts, goals (10 min)

There is a reservation for the card room at the state house reserved by VCNAA for March 12. Melody and Rich will be in attendance. Rich is inviting his network.

5. Native American Law Clinic at Univ of CO student research on state tribal recognition processes & commissions (10 min)

The letter was answered by Rich to students of Colorado Law School seeking information about VCNAA and state recognition process.

6. March meeting guest speakers: Fred Wiseman annual report, Educational Justice Coalition dialogue (5 min)

Discussion was had about speakers for VCNAA meetings. Informal agreement to bring other Native Scholars to present to VCNAA monthly meetings.

7. Tribal representative reports

Tribal Reports included Koasek of Koas has begun planting for 2024. Elnu is planning snow snake games for March 3. Nulhegan continues to plan events at the Holland, Vermont center.

8. Announcements/Upcoming Events

- Kids play days are scheduled and contact Melody. Mackin for more info
- There is another UVM symposium planned for April.

9. Public Comment

None

Meeting Adjourned

Motion to adjourn passed.