



## VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

**DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED**

May 10, 2023

1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.

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

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



[vcnaa.vermont.gov](http://vcnaa.vermont.gov)

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

**Members present:** Rich Holschuh, Doug Bent, Dan Coutu, Jeff Benay, Deb Reger, Deanna Edwards; online Commissioners: Melody Mackin, Patrick Lamphere

**Absent:** none

**Guests:** Shirly Hook (Chief Koasek of Koas), Roland Bluto, (Nulhegan), Meagan Edwards (Nulhegan), Marshall Rich, (Missisquoi), Jess Robinson (VDHP), Jayna Ahsaf (presenter of Free Her Campaign); online guests: Mollie Flanagan (Green Mountain Club), Aaron Marcus (VT ANR Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee), Jane Barber (ally), Christopher Roy (Temple University), Elodie Reed, (VT Public), Shalini Suryanarayana, (Office of Racial Equity), Kate Fredrick (Vt Law and Graduate School)

- 1. Meeting called to order at 1:09 pm**
- 2. New member welcomed, Deanna Edwards (Nulhegan)**
- 3. Meeting Protocols and Expectations**
- 4. Changes to the Agenda**

There were no changes to the agenda

### **5. Approval of April Minutes**

Motion made by Rich Holschuh and approved by consensus.

### **6. June VCNAA meeting**

The June meeting was confirmed to be located at the Koas Tribal Gardens in Braintree, Vermont. Details for the public will follow.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **7. Legislative Caucus 2023 action items – tobacco, trapping, support**

Tobacco exemption for minors using tobacco for spiritual practices supported in both houses, trapping bill has been tabled and there is support for VCNNA to receive some “support” for work the Commission does. \* A sub-committee is being formed for Commissioners to describe this initiative, contact Rich Holschuh.

### **8. Act 182 (2022) Land Access & Opportunity Board report**

Act 182 continues a 3-year process that is unfolding with work expected during summer. Dan Coutu volunteered to be on the committee.

### **9. Act 142 (2022) Racial Justice Statistics Advisory Council**

Stacy Gould reports work is getting up and running.

### **10. Act 154 (2022) Environmental Justice Advisory Council**

Act 154 on pause, will continue next month, says Rich Holschuh.

### **11. Act 174 (2020) "Vermont State Parks - Abenaki signage" status**

Nothing new to report.

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

Melody Mackin (TRC Commissioner) tells us there are jobs available including researcher, administrative assistant and there will be community outreach thru social media and a website.

### **13. Act 152 (2022) Nondiscriminatory school branding/mascots – status**

No reports on school mascots and school branding although local decisions are encouraged.

### **14. Seventh Generation Curriculum Grant Committee report (Jeff Benay)**

The Abenaki Curriculum Project is still in a process with agreement made that there will be an independent public access website when it is available.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **15. Indian Child Welfare Act Coordinator**

Marshall Rich updated VCNAA on his position with Vermont Department of Child and Family Services. He has finished training and is Vermont's first Indian Child Welfare Coordinator. He is working on establishing relationships with the recognized Tribes. VCNAA will be writing a letter to Vermont State DCF to encourage the Federal law Indian Child Welfare Act be used.

### **16. Jayna Ahsaf, The National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls, carceral reform presentation**

Jayna Ahsaf (field representative for the National Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women) presented. [freehercampaign.org/Vermont](http://freehercampaign.org/Vermont) and email; [vermont@thecouncil.us](mailto:vermont@thecouncil.us) She tells us about Hawaii that has passed a law that keeps youth out of prison changing punitive sentencing to Indigenous Programming. There are bills that put prison construction on hold in Vermont and a bill that looks into alternatives to incarceration.

### **17. Report on UVM April 28th event "Indigenous Sovereignty..."**

The Parent Advisory Committee of Franklin County met with UVM representatives and representatives from all the recognized tribes. Letters from the youth that were verbally assaulted at the event were read. no action has been formally adopted.

### **18. Announcements**

- The Press Conference at the Statehouse May 2 included the following resolutions that were passed unanimously: Governor's Proclamation of Abenaki Recognition and Heritage Week 2023, Vt House Resolution support of Vt Abenaki, Vt Senate Resolution in support of Vermont Abenaki Joint Vermont US Congressional , letter of support of Vermont Abenaki.
- VCNAA affirmative vote on repudiation of Doctrine of Discovery
- Jeff Benay volunteered to be on Health Equity Advisory Council (motion made by Rich, passed unanimously)
- Mark Mitchell scholarship discussed.

### **19. Tribal representative reports**

- Elnu working on land and cultural center.
- Missisquoi continues to work in schools,

- Koasek of Koas hosting next Commission meeting
- Missisquoi having a celebration June 24 in Swanton, Vt
- Alnobaiwi (Non-profit) signed lease with Winooski Valley Park District to continue to gather at Ethan Allen Homestead with exhibit opening this month.

## **20. Public Comment**

Public Comments were made.

Meeting Adjourned