

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Native American Affairs Commission to meet in Swanton

The Commission Will Convene a Community Forum in Swanton April 19th, 2011

MONTPELIER, Vt. – The group established through legislation to oversee the process for State Recognition of Native American Indian tribes in Vermont is hosting a series of community forums around the state.

The Native American Affairs Commission is organizing the meetings to hear concerns and questions from the public about the role of the commission and the process of state recognition. This Tuesday, the 19th, the Commission will host a community forum at noon at the Swanton Village Complex.

“Different communities have different needs and interests,” said Commission Chairman Luke Willard. “We want to know what they are.”

To date, the commission has approved the recommendations of four tribes. State recognition will allow members of recognized tribes to market crafts as “Native American Made.” Recognition will also open up educational opportunities for school districts and broaden the availability of scholarships for Native students.

“Our accomplishment will be, knowing that Abenakis, many of whom have waited and hoped for decades, will finally be acknowledged by their own state,” said Willard, who coined the term ‘No Abenaki left behind’.

The recognition process is but one aspect of the commission's focus. The commission looks forward to working with Native American communities on issues such as cultural awareness and revitalization, education, and economic development. “Addressing these issues will benefit all Vermonters, Native or not,” added Willard. “This is why we're traveling around the state. We want to know how we can best serve each community.”

The Commission will begin with public discussion followed by their regular meeting. The Swanton Village Complex is located at 120 First Street, across from Dunkin Donuts just south of I-89 exit 21. Those attending are asked to use the rear parking lot off Elm Street so as not to interfere with the customer parking for the Village Office.

To learn more about the process of Native American tribes seeking state recognition, please visit the VCNAA website at <http://vcnaa.vermont.gov>