

**VCNAA Meeting Minutes  
December 21, 2010**



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**COMMISSION CHAIRMAN**

Luke Willard  
(802) 754-2216

**COMMISSION**

Charlene McManis, Secretary  
Melody Walker Brook  
Dawn Macie  
Takara Matthews  
Nathan E. Pero  
Shirly Hook  
David K. Vanslette  
Fred W. Wiseman

**Members Present:** Luke Willard, Chairman; Melody Walker Brook, Vice Chair; Nathan Pero; Shirly Hook; David Vanslette; Fred Wiseman

**Staff:** Giovanna Peebles, SHPO

**Guests:** Chief Donald Stevens, Chief Nancy Millette-Doucet, Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan, Professor Fred Wiseman, Jared Pero, Eric Cruger, Munro Brook, and Doug Bent.

This meeting was brought to order by chairman Luke Willard at 12:24 pm in the Ellsworth Room, Johnson State College, Johnson, Vermont.

**1. Approve minutes of November 30, 2010.**

Fred Wiseman made a motion to accept the minutes. Shirly Hook seconded. All approved.

**2. Scholar's Panel Update**

Due to work restrictions, David Lacy, having completed his review of two applications must be removed from the active scholar's list.

**3. Teacher's Resource Manual Presentation of Completed Manual**

Chairman Willard introduced "Abenakis and Their Neighbors" Teachers and Interpreters Resource Guide by Professor Fred Wiseman and Melody Brook. At November's meeting in Newport, Luke challenged the commission to produce a Vermont Native American resource guide for educators after visiting schools and meeting with teachers who expressed a desire for such a guide. Professor Wiseman spoke on the manual. This detailed guide is now available on the VCNAA website. Professor Wiseman also introduced a fourth grade lesson plan and is currently working on middle and high school curriculum that meet the Vermont standards. They are also working on a virtual Wabanaki museum. Nancy Millette-Doucet reminded the commission of the Koasek curriculum booklet as a useful tool to teachers in the region. Luke agreed it would be good to have a general curriculum but regional curricula could be beneficial and made a note to come back to this discussion at an upcoming commission meeting. Don Stevens noted that the Department of Education had promised to distribute any materials to teachers.

**4. Overview of Rules for Hearings**

Luke distributed a copy of the rules for the hearings and allowed everyone time to read through them before the hearings began. He also read them out loud. He mentioned the hearings are

bound by the statute and will be kept within the outlined framework. All formalities will be upheld.

Roger Sheehan asked for clarification on the format. Luke clarified that the applicant's spokesperson may give an opening statement followed by public testimony and rebuttal time if requested.

Professor Wiseman explained the possible confusion around governance in the twentieth century. A band is composed of closely related families and ascribed status determines membership. The leadership and governance fall with alpha male/female and grandparents as elder advisers. Governance is legitimate when band members recognize the alpha male/female and grandparents as people in charge. Frank Speck used the band level to reconstruct Penobscot society. Large-scale socio-cultural integration is not necessary to be legitimate.

Roger explained the determination in a Canadian court case similar to the Vermont situation amongst the Montagnais and Cree. They were a hunter/gatherer society and were never integrated into large groups but the courts agreed they were a tribe. If Vermont bands were not spread out throughout the state with members in other areas and they had a reservation, family names would be on the registers, just like in Canada. In Vermont, most Indians received the determination “white” on their birth certificates because they were not assigned to reservations.

### **1:30 - Public Hearing: Koasek of the Koas Application**

Chief Nancy Millette thanked everyone, gave a brief introduction, and recognized the process as horrifying but good has come out of it. Luke opened the floor to public testimony.

Professor Fred Wiseman read Dave Skinas' report on the Koasek application and confirmed that it met requirements. He also included sources not found in the application that supported the findings in the application. He also discussed the importance of the breakthroughs in academic material within this petition, especially regarding fish-fertilized mounds (sucker fish) backed up by Father Rasles' dictionary.

Nancy spoke on her current trip to the Bradford Middle School and many of the children that identified a native heritage also used fish in their gardens. Giovanna Peebles spoke about possible collaborations with indigenous people of Vermont and historic preservation in regard to sustainability. They can play a role in climate change. Good gardeners might use that type of sustainability. Luke mentioned the native voice will be heard in this regard.

Nancy asked what was the response from the commission. Luke explained that the application is still being reviewed by a work group of commissioners and a decision will be made after the scholar's panel has issued their findings.

Nancy wanted to articulate that the connection with Elnu as explained in the report from Dave Skinas was not necessarily recent in the strict sense but began in the early 1990s with Rose Hartwell and family/friends that worked on village demonstrations.

Melody asked if Nancy could expand on what the band has done in terms of language revitalization. Nancy explained their efforts regarding Father Aubery/Laurent dictionary and the connection with Dartmouth College to put out a 50 cd set for use by Abenaki bands. Anyone from the larger community can purchase them through Dartmouth. She received a grant for these and created a website for tribal members to access lessons. The website was expensive to maintain. Giovanna asked why the website cost so much to maintain. Nancy explained it was the amount of space used and the complexity of the site. Giovanna was surprised that Dartmouth didn't help financially with the language efforts. Professor Wiseman explained the history of the tapes. Nancy described the language summit at Missisquoi attended by people from Odanak, Elnu, and Koasek. She has recorded stories from the elders in her community for posterity.

Don mentioned that recognition will bring some measure of legitimacy that will allow bands to talk to companies and other resources to begin a process of revitalizing the language.

Nancy thanked the commission for our time.

Luke concluded the hearing at 2:30 pm.

#### **2:45 - Public Hearing: Elnu Application**

Luke opened the hearing. Melody excused herself from her duties and Shirly Hook assumed the recording of minutes. Chief Roger Sheehan began with an opening statement and welcomed questions.

Roger spoke about the Woodland Confederacy. He spoke about the difference between reenactment and living the history of his people. He stated that by living the history, it helps to revitalize customs and traditions.

Professor Wiseman read a statement from Eloise Beil on the Elnu application. She will send a complete response as soon as possible. Her comments were positive. Professor Wiseman read the review of scholar, David Lacy, who finds that Elnu have met the criteria set out by S.222, although the application was sometimes difficult to navigate. Professor Wiseman commented on his own review of Elnu's application and testified that Elnu has met all the criteria of S.222.

David asked Roger what Elnu's goals for the future are. Roger answered that it is all about the revitalization of traditions and culture. The sharing of music, arts/crafts, and language take a front seat to corporate existence.

Roger thanked all present for the opportunity to speak and answer questions about his people.

Luke concluded the hearing at 3:45 pm.

#### **4:00 - Public Hearing: Nulhegan Application**

Vice Chair, Melody Brook assumed the duties of facilitator as Luke excused himself from his duties for the duration of the hearing. Melody resumed the recording of minutes.

Chief Don Stevens thanked everyone. He mentioned that they were there fighting for recognition so that their kids might simply be allowed to enjoy their heritage without having to fight for the same thing in the future. He added that Natives are the only people in the world who are required to prove their 'pedigree' and provide 'papers' for someone else to validate them.

Luke spoke of how painful it has been over the years watching elders, who have hoped and fought for recognition for so many years, pass away without the honor of being recognized for who they are.

Don mentioned that through this process all sorts of important information has come out - new ideas and new validation of their distinctive identity. "This isn't about money. We take care of our own. We always have and we always will."

Professor Fred Wiseman read the scholar's responses from Dave Lacy, Dave Skinas, and Kevin Dann. Each scholar agreed that Nulhegan's application and genealogical material met all criteria of S.222. Don reiterated that the tribe has now been validated by all three scholars and has complied fully with S.222. Anything short of recognition would be an affront to the scholars and the commission.

Shirly inquired when a recommendation would need to be presented for the upcoming legislative session. Don thanked the commission for it's time and urged the commission to move forward with Nulhegan's application since they have complied with the process.

Melody concluded the hearing at 5:00 pm.

An early January meeting was discussed and it was decided to meet on January 4<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 pm in Montpelier.

The commission adjourned at 5:15 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,  
Melody Walker Brook, Vice Chairwoman