

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



VCNAA October 11, 2017
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Melody Brook, Chair; Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair; Carol Irons, Paul Fassler, Cheryl O'Neill, Rich Holschuh, Jennifer Morton-Dow, and Eugene Rich.

Members Absent: Andrea Brett, Secretary

Guests: John Moody, Sharon; Sophia Duplin; Mac Mattison; Dale Azaria, VDHP; Jess Robinson, VDHP; Jennifer Lavoie, VDHP

The meeting was brought to order by Melody Brook at 1:02 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.



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COMMISSION
Melody Brook, Chair
Carol McGranaghan, Vice Chair
Andrea Brett, Secretary
Carol Irons
Cheryl O'Neil
Paul Fassler
Rich Holschuh
Eugene Rich
Jennifer Morton-Dow

1. Changes to Agenda

There were no changes to the agenda.

2. Meeting Guidelines Discussion

Melody Brook raised the possibility of generating and posting rules of decorum and ensuring that they are followed by commissioners and members of the public throughout future VCNAA meetings. Because Andrea Brett initially raised this issue and was not in attendance, commissioners agreed to table the discussion until the following meeting. Commissioners agreed to have Paul Fassler continue to keep time for each topic as listed in the agenda.

3. Approve September 13, 2017 Minutes

The commissioners accepted the September 13, 2017 meeting minutes without any changes.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Action Plan

a. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project

Carol Irons and other commissioners stated that there is great interest in continuing the event. Nevertheless, Mrs. Irons reiterated that the project needs grant funds or a similar funding mechanism for it to continue. She stated that the Northwoods Nature Center in East Charleston has agreed to host the event in March should a funding mechanism be secured. Ms. Irons and other commissioners also discussed the possibility of having a shortened, weekend-long event to present advanced topics to attendees. This issue will be readdressed at

the November meeting.

b. Vermont Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

Jennifer Morton-Dow stated that she has not yet been able to make direct contact with relevant Department of Children and Families (DCF) staff to discuss the possibility of placing Native foster children with Native families whenever possible. Several of Ms. Morton-Dow's contacts in Oregon believe that ICWA would not be applicable to the State-recognized Abenaki tribes because they lack Federal status. Nevertheless, commissioners agreed that it would still be worthwhile for VCNAA and State Abenaki tribes to try and convince DCF of the importance of maintaining Native ties in foster families whenever possible. Melody Brook also brought up the possibility of pushing for a state-level law similar to ICWA.

c. Tribal Inter-Communication

Eugene Rich stated that communication between the state-recognized tribes has improved recently. Mr. Rich added that there has been some discussion among the State-recognized chiefs about having an inter-tribal meeting at some point in the future. One commissioner suggested the Vermont Technical Center in Randolph as a central location for the meeting.

d. Native Traditions Conference

Lucy Cannon-Neel, director of the Native Traditions Conference, stated to Carol Irons prior to the meeting that she may have found a funding source for the conference in 2018. If the funding is secured, the conference would take place at some point in the Spring.

e. Indigenous Peoples Day – New initiatives, Observances, Other Localities, and Strategies for the Next Legislative Session

Governor Phil Scott again proclaimed October 9th Indigenous Peoples Day in 2017. Several local celebrations were facilitated by VCNAA members. Jennifer Morton-Dow held a drop-in session for Abenaki and Non-Abenaki youth at the Spectrum Youth and Family Center in Burlington. Attendees shared a meal.

Rich Holschuh and members of the Elnu Tribe, including chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan, conducted a reading of the Governor's proclamation and hosted other activities under a tent in a pocket park in Brattleboro.

Melody Brook stated that she was hosting a beadwork demonstration at Champlain College on October 11.

The commissioners all agreed that they should continue to advocate in the Legislature for making Indigenous Peoples Day a permanent, state-recognized holiday. Several commissioners then discussed contacting Charles Delaney so that they might work out differences on this issue prior to the start of the legislative session.

2. New Hampshire and Vermont Joint Commission Meeting

Melody Brook spoke with representatives of the New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs and all agreed to have a joint meeting at Dartmouth College on January 16,

2018. Because the meeting is taking place in New Hampshire, it cannot constitute a formal VCNAA public meeting. As such, commissioners also tentatively agreed to keep the regular meeting on January 10, 2018 in Montpelier as well.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Goals and New Directions Continued Discussion

Melody Brook began a brainstorming session with a range of ideas that VCNAA might facilitate or participate in in the future. These ideas were not necessarily meant to be turned into action items in the immediate future, but rather to stimulate conversation and identify possibilities. She used the senses (sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch) as a thought device to understand the ways through which people experience Native culture. The ideas included: a newsletter, an Instagram and Twitter presence, broader promotion of Native events, a Native institute that would consolidate outreach, health services, food, performance and art, crafts, and education into one center, and a non-voting government representative in the Legislature, among other topics.

In addition to those broad ideas, they agreed that the current group of commissioners should have a group picture taken for the VCNAA website, which will be updated as the start of every new session. The picture will be taken at the November meeting.

2. Secretary Report: Correspondence

Because Andrea Brett was not in attendance, there was no Secretary's report.

3. Native American Mascot position

The commissioners noted that while this topic gets brought up often, the consensus was that change must be initiated at the local level and not by the VCNAA itself. Melody Brook stated that while it might not be appropriate to advocate a single stance on Native Mascots, she proposed VCNAA develop tools and guides to educate communities that wish to learn more about Native feelings on the issue. The conversation will be continued at the next meeting.

4. Anti-Bullying Campaign

Melody Brook noted that the Abenaki Artists' Association is working on an anti-bullying campaign. She suggested that the VCNAA could participate in that planning or use it as a model for its own initiative.

5. Announcements and updates (VT Public Utilities Commission Docket 8880 Vermont Yankee Sale and Connecticut River Hydro Re-Licensing)

Rich Holschuh stated that there has been no significant movement on the Abenaki's participation in the hydroelectric dam relicensing process since the previous meeting. Mr. Holschuh stated, however, that discussions regarding the decommissioning of Vermont Yankee are progressing quickly. Mr. Holschuh stated that he and Chief Roger Longtoe Sheehan recently met with Northstar group services' CEO Scott State and general counsel Greg DeCarlo. Mr. Holschuh stated that while cautious, they were initially responsive to the Abenaki's concerns.

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6. Public Comment

Rich Holschuh stated that representatives from Senator Leahy's and Senator Sanders' offices visited the parcel on the West River that Mr. Holschuh and the Elnu hope to preserve. He also noted that the Vermont Land Trust is getting the land appraised to compare their appraised value against the current asking price.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:02 PM.