

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



VCNAA MEETING MINUTES

Approved at February 9, 2022 Meeting

January 26, 2022

2:00PM-4:00PM

GoTo Virtual Meeting



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COMMISSION
Carol McGranaghan, Chair
Carol Irons, Vice Chair
Hillary Hoffmann, Secretary
Patrick Lamphere
Beverly Little-Thunder
Lucy Neel
Douglas Bent
Jeffrey Benay

Members present: Carol McGranaghan, Chair; Carol Irons, Vice-Chair; Doug Bent; Beverly Little-Thunder; Lucy Neel; Patrick Lamphere; Jeff Benay

Absent: Hillary Hoffman

Guests: Jess Robinson, Vermont State Archaeologist; Jon Bostock; Fred Wiseman; Rich Holschuh; Madeleine Gosselin-Wright

1. Commission members and guests introduced themselves.
2. No changes to the agenda
3. Response to Race-Shifting Advocacy in Canada and Vermont

Carol Irons gave some background on the topic, including Darryl Leroux's work with purported race-shifting among the Metis in Canada, and his more recent scrutiny of the Abenaki in Vermont and New Hampshire. Others stated that the Odanak Abenaki have also recently come out vocally against the Vermont Abenaki.

Possible reasons for this animosity were discussed.

After general discussion, Carol McGranaghan pointed to two specific issues that potentially needed to be addressed by the Commission and the Abenaki community: an open email from Peter Langella (CVU Librarian) to Vermont librarians asserting that the Vermont Abenaki are race-shifting and are not legitimate, linking to Darryl Leroux's and others' assertions, and a forthcoming conference to be held at UVM where members of the Odanak Abenaki Tribe will be attending and giving presentations. The presumed topic is the Vermont Abenaki and their assertions of race-shifting.

Doug Bent stated that he and the group he represents are Abenaki, the State put them through a process to determine that and confirmed that, and that they have the documentation, so he does not feel personally threatened. He stated that he was saddened, however, that no Vermont Abenaki have apparently been invited to the conference to offer their perspective and evidence. Patrick Lamphere expressed the same sentiment regarding the lack of invitation.

Carol Irons stated that the format and tone of the conference, if it actually goes ahead, isn't clear to her yet, may be "more smoke than fire", and potentially falls into the realm of academic freedom. For her, the far more concerning issue was Mr. Langella's open email to librarians, because it came from a fellow Vermonter and places Abenaki, and potentially Abenaki children, under threat. She also stated that the email contains inaccuracies and misrepresentations that need to be corrected and/or condemned.

Jeff Benay said that perhaps the Commission should write a letter to the district superintendent (potentially copying Peter Langella) expressing its concern and outrage at a State employee using his official email to disseminate misinformation to fellow librarians across the State. They should also state their case and rebut his claims. After back-and-forth discussion among the Commissioners, several people also thought that the librarians originally copied on his email should be sent a copy of the letter as well.

Discussion then turned to the forthcoming conference at UVM. Jeff Benay stated that it was outrageous that the Odanak would take a position against the Missisquoi and other Vermont Abenaki now, when members of that tribe once embraced them and openly taught them dancing and language skills. Fred Wiseman and Rich Holschuh provided additional context on the conference and where they believe it stands.

Rich Holschuh then provided some background on the email from Peter Langella to Vermont librarians, stating that it started as a twitter thread on his own account. After discussion among the commissioners, Beverly Little-Thunder made a motion that Commission draft a letter to the district superintendent (copying the original author) and the librarians originally sent Langella's letter, expressing the Commission's frustration and anger at Langella's email. That agreed that the letter should state that it was inappropriate to use his official platform to spread one-sided misinformation of that kind, and that his actions were harmful to the Abenaki community.

Carol Irons seconded the motion. All attending Commissioners voted in the affirmative.

After some brief additional discussion, it was agreed that the subject of the UVM conference would be addressed again at the next regularly scheduled meeting in February.

4. Announcements

No announcements

5. Public Comment

Lucy Neel made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Patrick Lamphere seconded the motion. All attending commissioners voted in the affirmative.

The meeting as adjourned at 3:31 PM