

Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs
Meeting Minutes
September 28, 2006

The Commission on Native American Affairs held a public meeting on September 28, 2006 @ 1:00pm at the Title VII Indian Education Offices at 49 Church Street, Swanton.

Present were: Chairman- Mark Mitchell, Judy Dow, Donald Stevens, Tim De La Bruere, and Charlene McManis. Absent were: Jeanne Brink, and Howard Lyons.

Also present were: Jeff Benay, Fred Wiseman, Anna Roy Wiseman, John Moody, Roger McManis, Lester Lampman, Jedd Ketler- County Courier Newspaper, and Heidi Britch-Valenta- Board Secretary

1) **CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman, Mark Mitchell called the meeting to order at 1.05pm. He explained that there was much business to cover in a short period of time and encouraged all to be brief and remain focused on the work at hand.

Mitchell asked if members had been able to review the minutes from the first meeting of the Commission on August 24, 2006. The members gave consensus for acceptance of the minutes as written.

2) **AGAINST THE DARKNESS**

Fred Wiseman, (Abenaki Tribal Musuem) was present to demonstrate and explain his digital teaching system, "*Against the Darkness*". After presenting the 35 minutes video he briefly explained the potential for use by educators. Wiseman then introduced Gyan Baird (Fiddle Head Design) and allowed her to further the conversation. She provided the Commission with graphic proofs for the packaging of the DVD/ CD ROM and she explained the manual that had been prepared to mail out to 1000 schools within the State of Vermont. Baird clarified that the information that would go out to schools was not a use manual but an explanation of the product, and an invitation for stake holder (teacher, administrators, etc) to comment or make suggestions on the potential uses of the system.

3) **UPDATE ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN QUADRICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION**

Mitchell requested that Wiseman present an update on the quadricentennial next month due to the length of time of agenda 2. Wiseman stated he would provide the Commission a verbal presentation or written presentation as he maybe unable during the October meeting.

4) **UPDATE ON WINOOSKI INTERVALE LAND PURCHASE**

Mitchell began to explain the meeting in Montpelier with several representatives present including himself, Judy Dow, John & Donna Moody, John Hall - Commissioner of Housing and Community Affairs, and Jane Lendway- State Historic Preservation, to discuss the possible sale of 200 acres by Burlington Electric Department to the Intervale Foundation. The land is of interest to the Commission because it is identified as a highly sensitive archaeologically area and the need to

determine presence/absence of significant prehistoric and/or historic archaeological deposits throughout the entire Intervale.

Judy Dow expressed optimism at the tone of the meeting with the Intervale Center and stated that she felt the various factions were willing to work collaboratively to understand the nuances of the situation, and plan accordingly. Dow explained a direction gained from the meeting was to use funding for a sensitivity survey as a means to work toward a change of cemetery protocol to cover the Burlington side of the Intervale location. Cost of survey was roughly estimated to be less than \$20,000. And possible sources for funds were to be from the Department of Housing and Community Affairs and from the Historic Preservation funding for unmarked burial sites. When asked by Jeff Benay, Dow responded that there had been a tentative committal of funds by Jane Lendway and VHCB. Benay clarified that those funds committed by Lendway may have been premature if they were the same funds which are now under the direct control of the Commission. He explained that Commission Members would disperse money from the unmarked burial site fund at their own discretion. He suggested that clarification was necessary in wording of statutes so that this issue was clear. Benay further suggested that the Commission verify if the previously allocated funds for veteran interment has been replaced as had been agreed upon by Lendway and himself.

Mitchell agreed that the meeting was positive and he also believed that an amiable resolution was possible for this situation. He cited a lack of knowledge as explanation for possible past infractions and perceived a willingness to learn by all parties involved in the meeting. John Moody suggested there were other sources for funding for this purpose.

Benay stated that the Commission was in a position that everyone was watching and waiting for policies to be developed by the Commission.

5) **OTHER BUSINESS**

A) Dow asked if Benay would be able to send out letters to Supervisory Union regarding Title VII. The Commission agreed they were not prepared to proceed on this topic at this time.

B) Mitchell brought up the presentation by Dave White- Assistant Director of Standards at the Department of Education. Mitchell forwarded an open invitation to members of Commission to meet with Sigrid Lumbrá- Department of Education Social Studies, who was unable to make the last meeting. Mitchell, Dow and McManis will attend. Mitchell encouraged that others not from the Commission interested in education be invited to will meet with Lumbrá with the possibility of creating a task force.

C) Stevens questioned the possibility of accessing funding for education gained through the VT State lottery. The Commission felt this money was committed to the general fund and there was no other way to access it.

D) Benay mentioned that the Human Rights Commission's diversity manual created for use in schools does not have an entry for a Native American person. He asked for someone to call and dialogue with the department as to potential remedies for this oversight. Mitchell suggested reviewing a copy of the manual prior to action by the Commission. Benay agreed to provide a copy

to the Commission.

E) Charlene McManis brought the VT NEA Conference date in October to the attention of the Commission and asked for opinions on the presence of the Commission at the conference. Dow replied that in previous years she and Jeanne Brink had attended but this year there were so many new demands with the Commission that she did not feel it possible. The Commission agreed that a goal for next year was reasonable.

F) Moody stated he would like to see the sign which delineates the Missisquoi River changed to a more accurate reflection of history.

G) The Commission agreed to begin dialogue on Council Indian Arts and Crafts Act. Tim and Don agreed to research information and provide the Commission in its October meeting.

Next regular meeting of the Commission will be the October 28, 2006.

Respectfully Submitted,

Heidi Britch-Valenta
Secretary