

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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VCNAA February 12, 2020  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Andrea Brett (by phone), Joanne Crawford, Hillary Hoffmann, Rich Holschuh, Eugene Rich

**Members Absent:** Jennifer Morton, Beverly Little Thunder

**Guests:** Jess Robinson (VDHP), Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4), Tristan Toleno (Windham 2-3), Paul Fassler (Will Miller Social Justice Committee), Aaron Marcus (Vermont Agency of Natural Resources Diversity and Equity Committee), Murphy Robinson (Mountaineering Expeditions), Maddie Laves (Vermont Law School), Andrew Cliburn (Vermont Law School), Derek Tonizali (Vermont Law School), Yurika Suzuki (Vermont Law School)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:11 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

### 1. Changes to Agenda

The commissioners agreed to accommodate Rep. Brian Cina whenever he arrived due to his busy legislative schedule. Because Andrea Brett was on the phone, the commissioners recognized that all decisions had to be made by a formal roll-call vote.

### 2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were welcomed.

### 3. Approve June 12, 2019 Minutes

Joanne Crawford suggested one correction to the unapproved January minutes. Carol McGranaghan moved to accept the minutes with that single correction. Rich Holschuh seconded the motion. All commissioners vote in the affirmative. The motion passed.

## OLD BUSINESS

### 1. Representatives Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4) and Tristan Toleno (Windham 2-3)

Representative Cina began by introducing his legislative colleague Tristan Toleno. He then summarized the proposed bills introduced with the input and consent of the VCNAA

and the bills introduced at the request of Chief Don Stevens (Nulhegan Tribe). Representative Toleno stated that he was interested in attending the VCNAA meeting to better understand their positions on the legislation and on the proposed Joint Resolution (JRH7). He also expressed his opinion that the Abenaki people think strategically about the proposed bills, evaluate which bills have the highest likelihood of passing in this session, and which bills might best benefit from the potential exposure gained by the reading of the Joint Resolution (JHH7), should it pass.

Rich Holschuh stated that citizen advocates for these pieces of legislation needed to be made aware of the legislative process surrounding them so that they can properly advocate for them. Hillary Hoffman expressed similar sentiments.

Carol McGranaghan stated that with regard to the Joint Resolution, she was concerned that the language was not broad enough. Specifically, she wanted the apology to acknowledge that the eugenics movement was not limited to specific actions like forced sterilization, but that one of its broader goals was the erasure of indigenous people and their cultures. Representative Torino and Representative Cina stated that the apology needed to come from a place of integrity. If people are against the resolution language in its current form and won't endorse it, that might be a powerful incentive to either change the resolution language or use the resolution as a springboard for further action.

Rich Holschuh made a motion requesting that Representative Cina approach the legislative committee holding hearings on the Joint Resolution and express the VCNAA's concerns about the resolution language in its current form. Carol McGranaghan seconded the motion. All present commissioners voted in the affirmative. The motion passed. The commissioner's thanked Representatives Cina and Toleno for their work and advocacy.

## **2. Legislative Permitting – Rich Holschuh**

Rich Holschuh stated that he had nothing to add regarding legislative permitting. He added that with regards to the various proposed bills and other matters pertinent to all the Abenaki tribes and Indigenous people more broadly, the tribes and other entities needed to talk with one another and that this was currently not happening. Mr. Holschuh suggested that they organize a roundtable discussion with tribal leaders and advocates. As a first step, he suggested that the VCNAA draft a letter proposing a potential inter-tribal meeting. Andrea Brett formally made the motion that the letter be drafted. Hillary Hoffman seconded the motion. All present commissioners voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Agency of Natural Resources Diversity and Equity Committee and Assistance/Support with Abenaki Signage - Aaron Marcus**

Aaron Marcus from the Agency of Natural Resources came to the VCNAA meeting to offer support or assistance with the adoption of Abenaki place names on State Park

signage should the legislation pass. He also expressed a desire to have a more direct relationship with the Abenaki community in the future.

**2. Indigenous Feminist Anti-Imperialism opportunity/request - Paul Fassler**

Former VCNAA commissioner Paul Fassler came the meeting to formally invite the commissioners to an upcoming lecture featuring a Navajo activist, entitled *Toward an Indigenous Feminist Anti-Imperialism*. The lecture is part of a series honoring former University of Vermont professor Will Miller.

**3. AmeriCorp resources for Vermont Native American Tribes - (email from Philip Kolling) - Carol McGranaghan**

Phillip Kolling wrote an email to the VCNAA stating that Americorps has resources for Native American tribes. He wanted to make the VCNAA aware that these funds were available for Native American projects and that they are currently not being utilized in Vermont. He also requested that someone from the VCNAA potentially serve on the board overseeing these funds. Carol McGranaghan stated that she will invite Mr. Kolling to the March or April meeting to discuss these items further.

**4. Vermont Care Partners (VCP) Conference - Joanne Crawford**

Joanne Crawford stated that she will be staffing a table at the Vermont Care Partners conference. Because portions of the conference are aimed at racial equity, Mrs. Crawford stated that she will give out information about the VCNAA and the tribes.

**5. Seventh Generation proposal on partnership - Jeff Benay**

Former VCNAA commissioner Jeff Benay came to the meeting to propose that the VCNAA potentially partner with Seventh Generation to organize a weekend celebration of Indigenous children. Mr. Benay stated that it is one of the first times a business has proactively approached the Abenaki about a collaboration and potentially offered the financial resources to facilitate it. Mr. Benay stated that while the Missisquoi non-profit organization could facilitate the donations and grant logistics should the funds be formally offered, the VCNAA should take the lead in organizing the celebration itself. Rich Holschuh made a motion to have Carol Irons take the lead in exploring the idea further and to continue the conversation with Mr. Benay and Seventh Generation. Carol McGranaghan seconded the motion. All present commissioners voted in the affirmative. The motion passed.

**6. Announcements**

- a. Carol McGranaghan cautioned that commissioners should ensure that they do not present themselves as acting on behalf of the VCNAA if they have not been formally asked to by the commissioners during a public meeting. In a related note, she stated that commissioners should not denigrate other commissioners behind their backs. She

requested that if there is a commissioner has issues or problems with a fellow commissioner's beliefs or actions, they should raise it with the commissioner directly.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:49 PM.**