

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



VCNAA May 9, 2018
Meeting Minutes



vcnaa.vermont.gov

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

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

Members Absent: Eugene Rich

Guests: Philip Brett, Jess Robinson

The meeting was brought to order by Melody Brook at 1:07 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

1. Changes to Agenda

Melody Brook suggested two changes to the agenda. She requested that any birthing status update be added to New Business, and that the Indigenous Peoples' Day discussion be moved to the Status Report portion of the meeting. These changes were agreed by consensus.

2. Approve April 11, 2018 Minutes

Rich Holschuh agreed to approve the previous meeting's minutes as written. Paul Fassler seconded. The full commission agreed by consensus.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Action Plan

a. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project

Carol Irons stated that additional funding for the Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project has not been forthcoming, although she suggested that the Lake Champlain Basin Program may once again be offering grants. Mrs. Irons also stated that the GoFundMe page that was set up to accept donations for the event has not generated a significant amount of money Mrs. Irons stated that they currently have enough funds to offer a one or two-day workshop on medicinal herbs. Mrs. Irons also stated that Lucy Cannon-Neel is still working to secure funding for an Abenaki Conference.

b. Tribal Inter-Communication

Melody Brook stated that Nulhegan Chief Don Stevens suggested to her that the VCNAA hold at least some of their meetings in the evenings so that people that work during the

day have an opportunity to attend. Chief Stevens also suggested that VCNAA occasionally hold a meeting in another part of Vermont so that people that have difficulty travelling significant distances also have the opportunity to attend.

The commissioners considered these suggestions for several minutes. After an inquiry from Melody Brook, Jess Robinson stated that an administrator from VDHP did not need to be at a VCNAA meeting for it to occur if one was not available. As long as the meeting is open to the public, accessible to members of the public, and a commissioner takes the minutes, a meeting could conceivably be held off-site. After additional discussion, it was decided that scheduling evening or off-site meetings should be made in September during the first meeting of the 2018/2019 year.

Several commissioners stated that there is still a lack of communication between the tribal chiefs and VCNAA. Although VCNAA has made numerous overtures to the tribes, and particularly to the tribal chiefs, several commissioners stated that there are still a lot of initiatives that seem to be led by the chiefs themselves without any intra-tribal or extra-tribal input.

c. Elected Official

Commissioners did not engage in any significant discussion on this topic.

d. NH Commission Follow-Up

Melody Brook stated that the New Hampshire Native American Commission were interested in having another joint meeting in September. Mrs. Brook stated they were particularly interested in discussing ceremonial stone landscapes. Commissioners stated that sacred site protection more broadly should also be discussed at that meeting.

e. Endangered Alphabets Project

Melody Brook stated that Tim Brooks is looking into the possibility of making playing cards with Abenaki terms printed on them. He is looking for proper spelling and punctuation, particularly for those words or stresses that have been written or accented in various ways.

f. Signage

Commissioners did not engage in any significant discussion on this topic. Rich Holschuh quickly stated that he would like to pursue a Vermont Roadside Historic marker honoring an Abenaki person, historical event, or place important to the Abenaki at some time in the future.

2. Status Report

a. CT River Hydro Re-Licensing

Rich Holschuh stated that there was nothing new to report regarding the dam Re-Licensing projects currently underway.

b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee

Rich Holschuh stated that almost all of the stakeholders have converged on an agreement that would result in VT Yankee's sale to NorthStar. Mr. Holschuh stated that Natives are still involved in the process.

c. Commission Priorities and Next Step Strategies

Moved to New Business

NEW BUSINESS

1. Native American Heritage Center

Melody Brook stated that it has become increasingly apparent to her that there needs to be a Native American Cultural Center established in Vermont. She envisions it as a place where all indigenous people would be welcome. Other commissioners noted that if people are potentially going to donate time, money, and/or property, there should be a solid plan in place, and that VCNAA should potentially flesh this plan out.

As an interim step, it was noted that the Barre Socialist Labor Hall is still looking for an organization to occupy the second story of the building, and that it might be a good, temporary fit.

2. Commission Projects

a. Report on Five Native Legislative Bills

Rich Holschuh stated VCNAA needs to closely monitor all bills affecting Native Americans moving through the legislature in the next session, and that commissioners should all be in agreement as to VCNAA's position on each of them.

Several commissioners agreed that Indigenous Peoples' Day legislation was the most likely to pass next year, and that there need to be concerted and coordinated pressure applied to legislators and constituents as it moves through the process.

b. Indigenous Peoples Day letter

It was suggested that VCNAA draft a letter to all Vermont colleges announcing an initiative to celebrate Indigenous Peoples' Day instead of Columbus Day.

- c. Melody Brook has started two Seven Sisters gardens at two elementary schools in Champlain Valley region. It has been a very positive experience for the children and the Abenaki facilitators.

3. Public Comment

Melody Brook stated that the Burlington Fletcher Free Library and the Lake Champlain Basin Program are offering presentations and panel discussions with and about the Abenaki later this summer.

4. Announcements

The September VCNAA meeting will be held in Montpelier on September 5th.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 P.M.