

VERMONT
COMMISSION
ON
NATIVE
AMERICAN
AFFAIRS



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Carol Irons, Vice Chair
Andrea Brett, Secretary
Rich Holschuh
Eugene Rich
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Joanne Crawford
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VERMONT

VCNAA October 9, 2019
Meeting Minutes

Members Present: Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Andrea Brett (Secretary), Joanne Crawford, Rich Holschuh, Beverly Little Thunder, Hillary Hoffmann, Jennifer Morton

Members Absent: Eugene Rich

Guests: Jess Robinson (VDHP), Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:15 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

1. Changes to Agenda

Because Joanne Crawford had to leave the meeting early, she requested that the discussion of birthing practices be moved forward on the agenda. Rich Holschuh also requested that Rep. Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4) be accommodated when he arrived due to his busy schedule.

2. Election of Officers

Carol Irons made a motion to nominate Carol McGranaghan for Chair again this year. Jennifer Morton second the motion. All commissioners voted in the affirmative.

Carol McGranaghan made a motion to nominate Carol Irons for Vice Chair again this year. Jennifer Morton second the motion. All commissioners voted in the affirmative.

Rich Holschuh nominated Andrea Brett for Secretary again this year. Joanne Crawford seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in the affirmative.

2. Recognition of Guests

Other than Jess Robinson, there were no guests at the opening of the meeting. The current and recently renewed commissioners heartily welcomed new commissioners Beverly Little Thunder and Hillary Hoffmann.

3. Approve June 12, 2019 Minutes

Rich Holschuh moved to accept the minutes as written. Carol McGranaghan seconded. All other commissioners concurred.

OLD BUSINESS

1. Joint Meeting with the New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs

Carol McGranaghan and Carol Irons attended the New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs meeting in September. They reported that the commissioners felt it was unlikely that they could advance an Indigenous Peoples' Day bill through the New Hampshire legislature any time in the near-future. They also discussed a dugout canoe that was donated to the Holderness Historical Society from the Shelburne Museum. Some NH Commission members were not happy with its destination and the limited viewing opportunities there.

2. Representative Brian Cina (Chittenden 6-4)

Representative Cina came to the commission meeting to discuss potential initiatives for the upcoming legislative session in January. Before Rep. Cina spoke, Carol stated that she wished to discuss a letter that was recently sent to her from the Department of Health related to the previous legislative session's tobacco use bill. She stated that despite stating clearly that she was not representing the VCNAA at a meeting she attended this summer, that was the way it was characterized in the letter recently sent to her and other stakeholders.

She also noted that the Department of Health stated that they are committed to disseminating information to law enforcement regarding the spiritual uses of tobacco by Native youth. She and other commissioners questioned how long that information would remain in the law enforcement curriculum or in the public consciousness, however.

Representative Cina raised the possibility of introducing a State Religious Freedom Act in the upcoming legislative session. The goal would be to have the legislation serve as a vehicle for ritual tobacco use, tax-free status on religious properties, and other related concerns the VCNAA and tribes have raised in recent years.

He also suggested that they might introduce separate land repatriation legislation that could potentially serve as a vehicle for donated lands to the Vermont Abenaki in general, or specific tribes in particular. Finally, Representative Cina suggested that the VCNAA and the tribes they represent consider introducing legislation that would require Abenaki place names to be listed with specific natural landmarks in Vermont.

Discussion about all these ideas followed thereafter. Ultimately, it was decided that Representative Cina should introduce three separate pieces of legislation to the legislative council so they can begin work on them. In the next several months, the commissioners

can decide in concert with Representative Cina if they want to move all three forward, or if technical, legal, or practical concerns might limit them to pursuing fewer initiatives.

3. Tribal Inter-Communication

Rich Holschuh stated that VCNAA Facebook page continues to gain followers and attention.

4. Indigenous Maternal Health

Joanne Crawford stated that she is hoping the recently awarded grant money will enable her to create baby bags for expectant Native mothers that are specific to their beliefs and practices. She also hopes to use grant resources to train home nurses to be culturally sensitive and competent regarding Native beliefs.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Permitting and Legislative Updates

a. Indigenous Peoples' Day

Rich Holschuh stated there are confirmed Indigenous Peoples' Day observances at the University of Vermont, the Ethan Allen Homestead (Alnóbiawi), a private observance at the Waterbury State Office Complex, Swanton Elementary School, and in Brattleboro. Mr. Holschuh also suggested that commissioners and tribes do what they can to observe the event in their own communities.

b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee

Rich Holschuh stated that is nothing new to report this month

c. Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Dam Re-Licensing

Rich Holschuh stated that is nothing new to report this month.

d. Vermont Land Trust West River Land Purchase

Rich Holschuh stated that after several years of negotiations, the Vermont Land Trust purchased a parcel of land in proximity to the West River petroglyphs in Brattleboro. While the ultimate owner of the parcel has not yet been identified, the land will be conserved, and there will be signage indicating the significance of the site. The sign will include Abenaki language.

2. Native American Support for Inmates

Carol McGranaghan wrote back to the inmate that inquired about getting access to Native American religious education. She conveyed to the inmate that she needed to know what Nation or tribe he was affiliated with, and what his specific needs were. She has yet to receive a response.

3. **Announcements**

- a. Jess Robinson stated that the Vermont Folklife Center has National Endowment for the Humanities grant funds for Native artists to pursue particular projects. Jess was asked by the Folklife Center to decimate this information to the VCNAA so that the commissioners might alert Native artists about these grant funds.
- b. Rich Holschuh stated that Ben and Jerry's internal publication is running an article about Indigenous Peoples' Day in an upcoming issue.
- c. Rich Holschuh stated that a new book called *Distorted Descent* by Darryl Leroux has been published the University of Manitoba Press. Although the book primarily investigates purported false claims of Métis status in Canada, it also examines Vermont Abenakis and paints them in a negative light.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 P.M.