

VERMONT  
COMMISSION  
ON  
NATIVE  
AMERICAN  
AFFAIRS



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VCNAA September 11, 2019  
Meeting Minutes

**Members Present:** Carol McGranaghan (Chair), Carol Irons (Vice Chair), Andrea Brett (Secretary), Joanne Crawford, Rich Holschuh, Eugene Rich

**Members Absent:** Jennifer Morton

**Guests:** Jess Robinson (VDHP), Chief Shirly Hook (Koasek Traditional Band of the Koas), Douglas Bent (White Pine Association), Xusana Davis (State of Vermont), Gary Nokes (Vermont French Canadian Genealogical Society), Aain Buchanan (Central Vermont Showing up for Racial Justice), Aly Johnson-Kurtz (Central Vermont Showing up for Racial Justice)

The meeting was brought to order by Carol McGranaghan at 1:06 pm at 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, in the Montpelier conference room.

### 1. Changes to Agenda

Carol McGranaghan asked that the recognition of guest be moved to the first item on the agenda.

### 2. Recognition of Guests

The guests and commissioners introduced themselves and were thereafter welcomed to the meeting by the chair.

### 3. Approve June 12, 2019 Minutes

Joanne Crawford requested that one change be made to May's meeting minutes. Carol McGranaghan moved to adopt the minutes with that amendment. All other commissioners concurred.

### 4. Brief Statement about Commissioner Appointments

At the request of the chair, Jess Robinson provided a brief summary of the current status of new commissioner appointments and reappointments. Because of several unforeseen circumstances, the summary memorandum about the applicants did not get sent to the Governor until the third week of August. Although the Division for Historic Preservation was hopeful that it would be

reviewed prior to the first meeting, it now appears that the review will take place sometime before the October meeting.

## **OLD BUSINESS**

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

Carol McGranaghan stated that the next New Hampshire Commission on Native American Affairs meeting will take place on September 24<sup>th</sup>. The commission has extended an invitation to the VCNAA to attend, but she needed to confirm their attendance. It was decided that four commissioners would likely be able to attend the meeting.

### **2. Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project**

Carol Irons stated that twelve people attended the three-day program in June. Storytelling, medicinal and plant lore, and food preparation were among the activities in which the attendees participated. Mrs. Irons stated that Abenaki traditions were taught throughout the program.

Mrs. Irons stated that the Cultural Regeneration Project is no longer affiliated with the VCNAA. All future grant monies and donations will be processed through the Northwoods Stewardship Center's non-profit entity (501C3). Mrs. Irons also noted that thus far, the Cultural Regeneration Project has received no money or other in-kind support from the VCNAA or from individual tribes. She noted that there are teachers available for additional, compelling programming, but there is currently a lack of money to pay them.

Finally, Mrs. Irons stated that there are two Title VII programs in the state. She is hoping to communicate with those programs to potentially generate more interest among Native youth in the project.

### **3. Tribal Inter-Communication**

Eugene Rich stated that he has been pursuing possible repairs to the wooden sculpture of a Native person in Burlington's Battery Park, but the original creator has neither the expertise or interest to execute repairs. Mr. Rich stated that without significant restoration work on the statue in the near future, it will likely need to be taken down. Discussion among the commissioners shifted to the creation of a new sculpture, but Mr. Rich noted that they would likely have to commission one from a new sculptor.

### **4. Permitting and Legislative Updates**

#### **a. Indigenous Peoples' Day**

Rich Holschuh stated that the first official Indigenous Peoples' Day will occur in October. He urges do what they can to publicize and celebrate the event in their own communities and/or tribes.

#### **b. VT Public Utilities Commission – Vermont Yankee**

Rich Holschuh stated that Northstar, Inc. carried out Native public sensitivity training with a number of their employees last week. Mr. Holschuh viewed this as a very positive development. Mr. Holschuh also stated that the archaeological consultant hired by Northstar, Inc. completed their review of the property recently, but he is awaiting the final report.

#### **c. Legislation**

Rich Holschuh is still discussing with Brian Cina the possibility of introducing a State Religious Freedom Act in the upcoming legislative session. The goal is 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.

#### **d. Health Department Tobacco Communication**

Carol McGranaghan stated that the Vermont Health Department contacted her over the summer to discuss ritual tobacco use exemptions to the recently adopted 21 year-old age limit imposed by the legislature. She stated that she offered several scenarios where tobacco would be ritually used by minors, including after a successful hunt. The Department of Health stated that while they did not have a hand in writing the law, they do have a part in the interpretation of the statute and its regulations. Mrs. McGranaghan stated that they seemed to be amenable to the VCNAA's requested exemptions.

### **5. Native American Support for Inmates**

Commissioners still need to follow up on this item.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **1. Land Repatriation**

A woman residing in Alaska contacted the VCNAA to say that she would like to donate two acres of land she owns in Warren, Vermont, or the money from its sale, to the Abenaki. While the commissioners recognized that this was an extremely generous offer, the logistics surrounding taxes on the land or the receipt of money and its equitable distribution to the tribes make it a complex proposition. After some discussion, it was agreed that Carol McGranaghan would contact the woman and thank her for her generous offer and state that they were researching the best way to pursue her offer.

### **2. Indigenous Maternal Health**

Joanne Crawford stated that there is a state grant for maternal health available and she would like to have an indigenous-tailored program become part of the products produced with the grant monies.

### **3. Announcements**

- a. Rich Holschuh stated that the Rubenstein school is now working on a project to research the indigenous implications of the land-grant college system, and the particular effects of UVM's land grants.
- b. Guest Gary Nokes (Vermont French Canadian Genealogical Society) stated that his organization understands that many people of French-Canadian descent also have Native Ancestry. He stated that his organization would be happy to help Abenaki or other interested individuals trace their ancestry with the resources at the Society's disposal.
- c. Guests Aain Buchanan and Aly Johnson-Kurtz (Central Vermont Showing up for Racial Justice) introduced themselves and stated that they recently noticed that there was no indigenous representation in their events, workshops and related anti-racism work. They invited VCNAA and the tribes they represent to participate in these programs.
- d. Xusana Davis (Vermont Director of Racial Equality) introduced herself to the commissioners. Thereafter, she stated that that she has been in her position for 30 days now and wanted to offer to help the VCNAA and the tribes they represent however she can.

**The meeting was adjourned at 3:06 PM.**