

**Truth and Reconciliation Commission
Final Minutes – Public Meeting #5
January 2, 2024**

Meeting opened at 5:00 PM by Ann Miller

Attendance: Melody Mackin, Mia Schultz, Faith Yacubian, Adam Kersch and Ann Miller.

Absent: Michele Olevera

Members of the public included: Sarah Mell, Matthew LeFluer, Mercedes de Guardiola, Patricia Fontaine, Charlene Galarneau, WCAX News, Rich Holschuh, Richard Witting, Lexi Krupp, Wayne Maceyka, Jules and Mabrouka .

Commissioner Mackin facilitated the meeting and started by sharing the agenda then explained accessibility and language needs. Please contact us at least 48 hours in advance of a meeting if someone from the public needs any interpretation. If notified, we will do our very best to accommodate. If anyone would like notifications of upcoming events, please place your email address in the chat so that you can be added to our contact list.

Land Acknowledgement read.

Staff introductions were made.

Working Agreement/Pledge was read (attached at end).

Previous meeting minutes voted on as approved and final by Commissioners Mackin and Schultz – 12/5/23 public meeting minutes and 12/7/2023 Emblematic meeting minutes.

Executive Director Yacubian reviewed the budget and expenditures to date. Namely, phone expenses, new software package for Researcher Kersch, travel expenses, etc. Nothing out of the ordinary.

Executive Director Yacubian reviewed team updates and what we have been doing this past month. What the TRC has been up-to:

- 2nd Emblematic Case Meeting
- met with an international Truth & Reconciliation organization to prepare for an upcoming operations retreat
- held an in-person team collaborative in which we finished assigning tasks within our Project Management system (in which our Strategic Plan is housed) and created interpersonal communication guidelines.
- continue to engage with community-partners, such as Brain Injury Alliance researched and consolidated accessibility and disability resources, guidelines, and best practices for in-person and online meetings/gatherings. We will create VTRC accessibility guidelines and procedures.
- we drafted our interim report to the legislators, which is due on January 15th

Commissioner Mackin explained the Mission Statement. It is on our website and has not changed with the exception of format.

Researcher Kersch reviewed the 2nd emblematic case meeting. Approved meeting minutes can be found on our website: [Meetings | Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#). Discussed on that date was cases of discrimination, safety and hate crimes, healthcare, emergency medical services for disabled, non-binary black teen and COVID19 neurodiversity and disability. And finally, housing discrimination against immigrants, people of color and disabled.

Our next emblematic case meeting is going to be on January 25th, and we are planning to discuss emblematic cases related to public accommodations for disabled people, memory, and how historical events are remembered in Vermont and disparities in sentencing and race in Vermont.

Researcher Kersch next shared slides which helped represent how they go about doing the research of these cases (see attached).

Commissioner Schultz thanked Researcher Kersch for the time and explanation of his work. Also emphasized the VTRC's discrimination examination specifically by the State and how the State enacted policies and laws that have proliferated

discrimination. We are doing this research and getting to stories of those that have been invisible. In truth-telling we find those that have been impacted as part of our work. At the end, Commissioner Schultz clarified that VTRC is not in charge of reparations. We are here to investigate the discrimination that has been proliferated by the State and the stories that have not been heard.

Commissioner Mackin opened the floor to the public and those that would like to speak.

Jules (public) posted a question in chat, asking what specific questions the VTRC has landed on as they speak with people wanting to share their stories. Adam shared his email address in the chat but explained that the questions vary as time goes forward.

Matthew LeFluer (he/him) spoke: [VTRC] work is very important across the State. It's been a long time since somebody [shakes] the State up. One cannot just "say" we are diverse, and it becomes so. I like what [VTRC] says about this process. Researcher Kersch briefly mentioned that it is a remote culture, and they say what is Vermont's tradition. It is white culture, and we don't want that system. A new system for us all so we can collaborate together. I am very excited about where it is now heading. Speak the truth. Be your authentic self when you're doing this type of work because that will speak true to yourself as an individual. Thank you very much.

Commissioner Schultz reminded all of the January 25th emblematic meeting at 1pm. Commissioner Mackin closed the meeting at 5:42 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ann Miller, Administrative Assist
Faith Yacubian, Executive Director

NEXT EMBLEMATIC MEETING is SCHEDULED for THURSDAY, JANUARY 25th at 1:00 PM

NEXT PUBLIC MEETING is SCHEDULED for TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6th at 5:00 PM

Working Pledge

Purpose:

This sets the tone of the meeting for a mutual understanding of how to treat one another. The structure established by this pledge allows for shared language, shared expectations, and shared understanding.

Where:

Internal, Public Meetings, Public Hearings ,Group Discussion, and any place where we work together.

Pledge:

As we explore complex and challenging topics such as race, disability, oppression, and discrimination, we collectively pledge to approach these discussions with a commitment to extend grace, humility, and empathy with each other. We recognize that we are all on both an individual and collective journey to dismantle oppression and discrimination from our culture and systems. Therefore, we pledge to cultivate dignity and respect even in moments of disagreement and discomfort. We expect and accept non-closure and with that we engage in courageous conversations with curiosity and an open mind. We dedicate ourselves to refrain from judgement, embrace active listening, and use “I” statements to foster open communication. In this space, we understand the “Platinum Rule” where we pledge to abide by each other's unique preferences thereby building better relationships and collaboration. We come into this with good intentions but also recognize that even when we do not intend to do harm there is an impact. We commit to prioritizing Act 128 Communities and acknowledge that there is no such thing as a single-issue struggle, our lives are interconnected. We vow to treat each other, our stories, our dreams and struggles with sacred care. We honor vulnerability. We embrace the spirit of co-creation; we affirm that we are the active agents of change, and we are committed to doing the work to create understanding amongst and with each other.

The journey to collective liberation is filled with discomfort and painful truths but the final destination is community where everyone can thrive together. This is a shared space, grounded in the principles of this pledge.