



## Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Approved Minutes – Public Meeting #1

September 5, 2023

Meeting opened at 4:46 by Michele Olevera

Start Time: 5:00pm

A public meeting was held on September 5, 2023, starting at 5:00pm. Members of the Commission present were Melody Mackin, Mia Schultz, Patrick Standen, Faith Yacubian, Michele Olvera, Adam Kersch and Ann Miller

Members of the Public included: **Eric Darius** (ASL Interpreter), **Rhonda Besaw** (Whitefield, NH Representing tribal family), **Charlene Galarneau** (Newfane, faculty/researcher, Harvard Medical School), **David Savoie** (Radio Canada), **Rhy** (unceded Abenaki homelands, local), **John Garn** (Leicester, VT Maporium), **Addie Lentzner** (Bennington, VT Student Anti-Racism Network), **Mercedes de Guardiola** (historian, Vt Historical Society, will be publishing history of VT Eugenics), **John Hunt** (Chittenden County), **Representative Tom Stevens** (VT General Assembly, Chair, General and Housing Committee, Washington County), **DK**, **Marybeth Redmond** (Essex, Attending as local citizen), **Nina Lori Solbakken** (Burlington VT), **Elodie Reed**, NBC5, **Lucy Caile**, **Kasko** (unceded Abenaki Homelands, Public), **Matthew LeFluer** (Alburt VT Dept of Health Equity Ambassador), **Helen Linda** (Vt State Univ), **Jill Evens**, **Representative Kevin Christie**, **Jane Barber**, **Ishmael Ahmed**, **Virginie Ladisch** (Washington DC representing the ICTJ), **Rep Kevin Coach Christie**, **Marie Pratt**, **Ishmael Ahmed** (Burlington, ADA “The Mouth of Winooski”), **Maya Porter** (Burlington, reporting for Times Argus), **Jane Barber**.

Commissioner Mackin confirmed all Commissioners were present.

**Land Acknowledgement** was read by Commissioner Mackin (Vt is part of the homeland of the Western Abenaki People. We are all part of the circle of creation and with the help of our human communities, has an impact on human and non-human. Please take this moment to recognize the land itself, Mother Earth and the many blessings that we are given).

Commissioner Schultz requested that all guests place their names, pronouns, where from and what organizations representing in the chat for attendance purposes.

Commissioner Mackin discussed the vote for this first meeting, communication and how the organization will conduct business from this point forward. Mackin can share the links to the different types of Orders of Meetings. Commissioners to vote.

- **Robert's Rules**
- **Consensus Rules**
- **Martha's Rules**

Discussion: Commissioner Schultz thought Martha's Rules would work best for this Commission. Commissioner Mackin explained the thumbs system to vote. A vote was taken for proposed meeting rules of Martha's rules:

Commissioner Standen had no preference

Commissioner Schultz votes for Martha's Rules

Commissioner Mackin votes for Martha's Rules

VOTED on by all three Commissioners and unanimously passed Martha's Rules. Commissioner Mackin explained that there is apt to be a different facilitator for each public meeting. We will let people know each meeting who will be facilitating.

Commissioner Schultz discussed how we will be conducting meetings going forward. Since the beginning of the commission, we have developed some working agreements that we hope that we can use in public situations as well.

- Speak your Truth. Take Risks and be honest about your thoughts and opinions, not what you feel others want to hear from you.
- Experience discomfort, deal with the reality of race and disability in an honest and forthright way.
- Expect and accept non-closure. Engage in conversation. There is no quick fix or solutions to challenge our racial struggles as individuals or as a society. Commit to on-going dialog.
- Give grace with ourselves and others. Agree this work is difficult. Acknowledge we all approach from a different perspective.
- Intent vs impact.
- Treat one another with dignity and respect.
- Actively listen, be mindful of dismissal of others' ideas. Do not interrupt.
- Be open-minded with all suggestions. Please don't bring your judgment.
- Avoiding games and office politics.
- Always have an advanced agenda for a meeting. Encourage constructive silence, practice and develop self-awareness.
- Celebrate our accomplishments.

Email address to reach The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was provided in chat [vtrc@vermont.org](mailto:vtrc@vermont.org).

## VTRC Commissioner and Staff welcome and introduction

Melody Mackin, Commissioner, Barre, VT

Mia Schultz, Commissioner, Bennington, VT

Patrick Standen, Commissioner, Burlington, VT

Commissioner Mackin asked that the link to Act 128 be added to the chat and it was placed: [Act 128](#)

Commissioner Standen Introduced Executive Director Faith Yacubian, Shelburne, VT

Executive Director Yacubain introduced the remaining staff, Adam Kersch, Lead Researcher, Michele Olvera, Esq., and Ann Miller, Administrative Assistant.

Welcome Staff!

The VTRC website is currently being constructed. It should be up and running by the end of this week. Meeting minutes to be posted on our new site by end of this week. There will be public meetings held once per month. Any comments and you would like to speak, you have the floor, please keep the to two minutes per person. Questions can be emailed to [VTRC@vermont.gov](mailto:VTRC@vermont.gov)

Discussion occurred:

*Matthew LeFluer stated that a timer might be useful. He added that he is from Grand Isle County. Asked a question about Equity, inclusiveness and diversity, acceptance and understanding moving forward, how can the public be included? It is a big ask of the state.*

*Ishmale Ahmed is anxious and excited to be part of this work in whatever way it can be done. Interested in how the stories will be documented and recorded. Looking to be part of the process, this is where his children will grow up.*

*Rhy mentioned that only two people mentioned their race. White is not a default. Everyone should say who and what they are, it is important that we don't treat white as a default. Look at and think about what we will do with the facts and what we learn. Research and outcome. What to do with all that is brought up. Look for what we can get*

*better at and what we can learn. Can't be in community without bringing extraction. Bring extraction as a society.*

*Rep Kevin Christie is one of the three Representatives that sponsored this bill and created this commission. Very proud of that work. Representative Tom Stevens, Representative Hal Colston and Representative Kevin Christie were champions of this cause. Introducing the commission to the public is humbling and I am excited to see this commission through. Looking forward to the journey. Thank you.*

Commissioner Mackin: Public meetings will be held once per month. Now that we have a full team, we are super excited to see this through.

Commissioner Standen thanks Kevin, Tom, and Hal for their insight and their work to create this commission. Mia also thanked each of them. Beyond that, excited to be hearing stories not excited for the trauma but to move forward with this work. I look forward to meeting people of which all that is happening. We have been spending the last months building relationships.

*Thanks for bearing with us as we stumble through with what has not been done.*

Commissioners voted to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:39pm

Dated at Barre, Vermont on this 5<sup>th</sup> day of September 2023.

Minutes Taken: Ann Miller

Respectfully submitted:

/Faith Yacubain  
Executive Director