



Truth and Reconciliation Commission FINAL Minutes – Committee Member Public Meeting November 7, 2024

Attendance: Melody Mackin, Mia Schultz, Faith Yacubian, Mariessa Dobrick and Ann Miller.

Members of the Committee included: Aurora Berger, Margaret (Peg) Powers, Dan Coutu, Winnie Wilkinson, Faye Longo, Lydia Diamond, Sister Sankofa and late arrival Krista Coombs. Absent: Matthew LeFluer, Brenda Gagne and Mary Gerisch.

Commissioner Schultz opened the meeting at 5:00 PM and started by discussing accessibility and various aspects of how we can provide accessibility to anyone that needs it as well as closed captioning on Zoom. If someone sends a request email to vtrc@vermont.gov, we will do our very best to accommodate needs. If press wants to be in attendance, they can always be notified of our meetings in advance, please let us know of press needs. We ask that the public please request access to any assistance needed in language translation or ASL via our email at least 72 hours in advance of any public meeting the VTRC holds.

Commissioner Schultz shared our land acknowledgement which is found here on our website: [Land Acknowledgement.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#).

The Working Pledge was read by Commissioner Schultz: [Mission Statement and Pledge | Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#).

Opening **prompt** by Commissioner Mackin : a recent prompt shared by Brenda Reynolds, a TRC Care Specialist: Consider things that help you to be your best self, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. What are those things? Commissioner Mackin shared a calming method for her is painting walls, watching Lord of the Rings, or jumping in mud puddles with her daughters. Sister Sankofa, singing, and removing herself from Social Media at times. Winnie Wilkinson “pounding fufu” and went into more detail on what fufu is (African food) and how to pound it. Faye Longo explained how important sleep is, spiritually being in sync with nature, being barefoot outside or surrounded by trees, feeling the world around. Mariessa Dobrick said taking care of herself physically, laying down if necessary, resting the body.

Administrative Update: As we move into the next phase of Committee Members, there will be a break in December with no Committee Member meeting. In the new year, a survey will go out for a Committee Member meeting selecting ideal date and time for next session. Going forward, a certain date will be selected for each month’s meeting

rather than random dates and times. We will have something more permanent that people can know will be consistent. Also, reminder for invoices. Now is the time for any invoices to be put forward for processing past meeting's stipends.

Old Business: Committee Surveys regarding commitment from committee members. Overlap of work and committee work. Attached is the document shared out to the Committee Members.

The VTRC has recently met with a consultant from the Canadian TRC. One of the questions was about structuring committees as we move into implementation phase and start taking peoples stories. Consultant Brenda Reynolds went into details about the process.

New Business: Commissioner Schultz explained how they would like to proceed with the Committee. The process will be to select a total of 30 Committee Members that represent diverse identities, experiences and regions of the State. The criteria is to have geographic diversity from all parts of Vermont to represent and guide the Mission. Thinking about intersectionality, key pieces to representation where the criteria for a committee member looks at individuals with a commitment to the principles of truth and reconciliation and ultimately justice and healing, not limited to restorative justice, education, healing and research.

Commissioner Mackin went over the nomination process and roles. The Committee Members will act as honorary witnesses during key events hosted by the VTRC. The Committee Members will be committed to being there (physically) at least 3 events. Ensuring that each truth-telling process is observed and respected. The events will include many ways for people to tell their stories; private office hours, intimate spaces where individuals can share experiences with the Commission, one-on-one conversations, or big truth-telling days where everyone that wants to share their truth will be broadcast and recorded. There will be virtual sessions for people of the public unable to be in person.

5:45: 10-minute Break

Commissioner Schultz returned to review what has been discussed and received individual confirmation from each Committee Member in attendance, vocalizing their willingness to continue their commitment to the VTRC. There will be a sign-up sheet (coming in 2025) where they will be able to select at least 3 events to be the honorary witness (more can be signed up for, but minimum is 3 events). Come to the space without judgment or bringing condemnation. Confidentiality is of utmost importance. If you feel the need to recuse yourself from anything that you are not comfortable with, we trust in each of you to do so. Discussions to review stipends for meeting participation and potential reimbursement of fuel costs to get to the events.

Outreach Committee member updates shared regarding community outreach. **Sister Sankofa** shared event November 8th the All Access Café is opening in downtown Montpelier. A co-working wife safe space. In January there will be an MLK celebration with Lost Nation Theater. Keep an eye out for that.

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

NEXT Public Educational Series Meeting: Immigrants of Vermont is SCHEDULED for Thursday, November 21st at 5PM

NEXT regularly scheduled PUBLIC MEETING is Tuesday, December 3rd at 5PM

SP/ Documents/Committee Member Info/Public Meeting November 7, 2024

Process for Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission (VTRC) Committee Members

Selection of Committee Members

Objective: Select 30 committee members representing diverse identities, experiences, and regions across Vermont.

Criteria:

- Geographic diversity from all parts of the state.
- Representation:
 - Individuals who identify as Native American or Indigenous.
 - Individuals with physical, psychiatric, or mental conditions or disability, and the families of individuals with the physical, psychiatric or mental health condition or disability;
 - Black individuals and other individuals of color;
 - Individuals with French Canadian, French- Indian or other mixed ethnic or racial heritage;
 - Other populations and communities at the discretion of the Commissioners.
- Individuals with a commitment to the principles of truth, reconciliation, and justice.
- Professionals or community members involved in areas such as restorative justice, education, research, and healing.

Nomination Process:

- Open call for nominations from community organizations, advocacy groups, and public entities.
- Nominees must submit a short biography, detailing their connection to the community and motivation to serve.
- Building and Planning from the VTRC will review applications and make final decisions, ensuring a balance of perspectives.

Role of Committee Members

Honorary Witnesses:

Committee members will act as honorary witnesses during key events hosted by the VTRC, ensuring that each truth-telling process is observed and respected. These events will include:

Private Office Hours: Intimate spaces where individuals can share their experiences with the commission.

Public Truth-Telling Statements: Events where community members openly share their stories.

Virtual Sessions: Online spaces for those who cannot attend in person to participate in the truth-telling process.

Scheduling and Participation

- Committee members will be given the freedom to choose the dates and locations they would like to attend as witnesses.
- Members should express their availability and preferences on a sign-up sheet
- If necessary, we may ask members to attend additional events (in-person, virtual, public, private) to ensure that all types of sessions are properly supported.
- A minimum attendance requirement for at least 3 events

- The Commission is looking into providing gift cards in the amount \$25/events to offset any barriers or expenses to get to events.

Responsibilities After Witnessing

- After attending an event as a witness, committee members are required to:
- Attend the next public committee meeting (scheduled at regular intervals, such as monthly).
- Present a synopsis of the statements or stories they witnessed. This synopsis should:
- Summarize the key themes or issues raised.
- Reflect on the emotional and societal impact of the statements.
- Provide insights on how the statements relate to the broader mission of the VTRC.
- Offer recommendations based on their observations. Recommendations can be made in the following categories:
 - Research: Suggestions on areas of further investigation or study based on the stories heard.
 - Education: Ideas for how to educate the public or specific communities on the historical or contemporary issues raised.
 - Restorative Justice: Proposals for actions that can be taken to repair harm or foster healing in individuals or communities.
 - Healing: Recommendations for programs or initiatives that can promote healing, both for individuals who gave statements and for the larger community.

Review and Incorporation of Feedback

- The VTRC will collect the synopses and recommendations from committee members'
- A follow-up process will be in place, ensuring that all suggestions are:
- Documented in official VTRC records.
- Considered when shaping future VTRC actions, research efforts, or outreach programs.
- Integrated into any public reports or recommendations the VTRC produces for state agencies or the public.

Ongoing Engagement

Committee members will remain actively engaged throughout the VTRC's tenure. Beyond their role as witnesses, they will:

- Serve as ambassadors for the VTRC's mission, helping to promote the importance of truth and reconciliation throughout their communities.
- Participate in training sessions to deepen their understanding of the issues surrounding truth-telling, reconciliation, and justice.
- Be invited to contribute to the final report and recommendations that the VTRC will produce, offering their unique perspectives on how Vermont can heal and move forward.

Accountability and Commitment

All committee members must commit to the process with integrity and sensitivity. They will:

- Respect the confidentiality of individuals who provide private statements.
- Approach their role with a spirit of compassion and empathy, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued.
- Be held accountable to attend the sessions they commit to and provide thorough feedback.
- Be willing to recuse themselves if they have personal conflicts of interest with any statements or individuals involved.