



Truth and Reconciliation Commission DRAFT Minutes – Committee Member Public Meeting October 2, 2024

The meeting opened at 5:00 PM by Commissioner Schultz.

Attendance: Melody Mackin, Mia Schultz, Faith Yacubian, and Ann Miller. **Members of the Committee included:** Aurora Berger, Margaret (Peg) Powers, Mary Gerisch, Krista Coombs, Dan Coutu, Winnie Wilkinson and Matthew LeFluer. Members of the public included: Tom Proctor and Mariessa Dobrick.

Commissioner Schultz opened the meeting 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 Mackin shared our land acknowledgement which is found here on our website: [Land Acknowledgement.pdf \(vermont.gov\)](#). Thought for the day: If you could change anything, other than land, what would you honor?

The meeting agenda was shared in the chat for all to have access. The Working Pledge was read by Commissioner Mackin: [Mission Statement and Pledge | Vermont Truth and Reconciliation Commission](#).

Opening prompt by Commissioner Schultz : if we were starting over, and we didn't have the systems we currently have in place, what system would you do differently? It could be healthcare, criminal justice, housing, or anything you want to consider that could use a complete re-boot.

Mary Gerisch started us off by discussing healthcare which would ideally have nothing to do with insurance or money. One would be able to get the care you need for whatever we need regardless of funds.

Winnie Wilkinson would like to rework the court system if she could. A clean sweep of the criminal court. The documentation that takes place, the culture of those charged

should be considered, paying keen attention to the public servants to be held accountable to their positions.

Matthew LeFluer would love a magic wand to change education and justice for all. People of color, people with disabilities, starting with education, we can do better, starting from the bottom up. We all learn differently.

Commissioner Schultz mentioned schools being potentially modeled after prisons.

Krista Coombs discussed public health and decoupling it from politics. As an example, the CDC – it should not be political. Consider global health, not just the US, but a global entity.

Dan Coutu would like to consider shelter and housing for change as well as the legal system. Humans have 3 basic needs, water, food and shelter. We are not doing very well with that right now. How about communal space? There are things we could do better.

Mariessa Dobrick (the soon to be new VTRC Lead Researcher) shared her thoughts. Housing is a big need; it is a foundation of our being. You cannot be healthy without a roof over your head.

Commissioner Mackin shared the survey that went out to the Committee Members last week. A quick break took place in order for all to complete at this time.

One of the questions was about structuring committees as we move into implementation phase and start taking peoples stories. Top 3 choices Truth Telling Committee, Community Engagement Committee and Reparative Justice. Perhaps incorporate elders and youth. Research would be another consideration.

Thoughts on setting up the Committees: **Mary Gerisch** suggested that the research is a critical component, as compared to how other TRCs are doing reparations. Research should be woven into the purpose. **Peg Powers** felt it is systemic to all that we have discussed. Research is imperative for each group to articulate to the public and understand more fully where people came from.

Commissioner Schultz asked if we should create a job description for that Committee. Are elders more important to this process because they are the memories? Mary Gerisch feels that healing should be part of the reparations process. Healing could probably be something integrated even in community engagement. Commissioner Mackin suggested a care plan for before, during and after the truth telling sessions.

Responses in survey:

- Respect, understanding, belonging, plain language,
- documentation and people to understand each other,
- Marginalized backgrounds or voices that we have not yet heard,

- hold meetings and send emails where members can inform each other of their work, hold meetings to discuss events,
- Envision at least 2 members of each committee linking back to the main one in our meetings before committee report goes out.
- State definitions of the outcome in plain language.
- Keep this committee? Obtain additional 3 Committees that come back to this particular committee?
- All work collaboratively divided labor synchronized with one another to gain synergies of common effort.
- Keep each other apprised of various commonalities of interest and strategy.
- Can build off what others have done before us.
- Elder Advisory and the healing were incorporated in the Truth Telling Sessions in Maine.
- **Dan Couto:** try to figure out where the overlap is.
- **Winnie Wilkinson:** woman's perspective on things is needed. Women's experiences are different and should be considered. Culture as well.
- **Mariessa Dobrick:** historic research for individuals. People finding out who they really are, their histories.

Learning from marginalized communities:

- Can learn from our own
- Cultures
- Disability, senior citizens, veterans
- Focus on honor and the participants needs and safety
- Trauma informed
- Create multiple avenues and structures from sharing is safe ways
- Have the people leading the group be consistent,
- Set up each event similarly at repeat events
- Find supportive ways to bring people together
- Like making the setting and including food, drink
- Set expectations about what can happen in terms of reparations and healing in VT
- Actionable afterwards
- Write recommendations based on truth, including research
- For historical harm, tell VT how they have done harm in ways to never do it again, how they can help people.
- Sociocracy, the theory of growing governance that seeks to create psychological safe environments and productive organization. Organizations draws on the use of consent rather than majority voting.
- Decision making by the people that have a shared goal or purpose

When we have 3 different committees would people meet separately, one committee for each topic each month, then all would come together for the next month? Best way to make that work? Or potentially two meetings per month? Must consider people's time. For the year, consider approximately 8 meetings.

Administrative Update by Ann Miller: October 11, 2024 Event on the State House Lawn: **Truth & Healing: In Search of a Common Memory**. This catered event will take place 1-4 PM in Montpelier. We hope the Committee can join, it will be hybrid and all VTRC protocols will be in place for safety and inclusion. Speakers and events still being worked on. Hoping to see that Committee Members in person on October 11th if they can be there – please bring a chair for your own comfort and dress for the weather.

Outreach Committee member updates shared regarding community outreach. **Mary Gerisch** shared Bennington expanding civil practice. October 10th there will be a community engagement session, St. Peter's Parish Hall. Mary will share via email. **Matthew LeFluer** shared the local child care-Alburg Family Clubhouse. Wonderful new center looking for capital funds to break ground. **Winnie Wilkinson** talked about Civil Rights Movement in the US and South Africa. Winnie was invited to attend the session for the 40th anniversary featuring Colin Powell as the highest ranking American. **Dan Coutu** shared the Land Access Opportunity Board, which is actively pursuing those unhoused conditions.

Commissioner Schultz opened the floor to the public and those that would like to speak. With no questions or comments, Commissioner Schultz closed the meeting at 6:20 PM.

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

NEXT Public Educational Series Meeting: Immigrants of Vermont is SCHEDULED for Wednesday, October 30th at 5PM

NEXT regularly scheduled PUBLIC MEETING is Tuesday, November 5th at 5PM

SP/ Documents/Committee Member Info/Public Meeting September 12, 2024