

Prominent and Recurring Topics and Action Items on the 2017/2018 Vermont Commission on Native American Affairs Agenda

- *Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project* – The Abenaki Cultural Regeneration Project is an initiative to teach Abenaki traditional skills, practices and knowledge. This program has been held several times at the Northwoods Stewardship Center in East Charleston and VCNAA is constantly looking for ways to expand its programming, reach, and funding.
- *Inter-Tribal Communication* – VCNAA consistently works to foster communication, understanding, and shared goals between the State’s four recognized tribes. There has in the past been reluctance or apathy among one or more of the tribes to participate in common initiatives, but recently there have been significant moves to bridge these divides.
- *Native Traditions Conference* – This VCNAA-cosponsored conference is held annually. It aims to bring together members of the four tribes, unaffiliated Abenaki, and other indigenous people to discuss topics pertinent to them and to participate in communal activities, workshops, etc. It is generally not open to non-indigenous people. It has consistently faced funding obstacles, and it is unclear if it will happen this year.
- *CT River Hydro Re-Licensing and Vermont Yankee Decommissioning* – Over the past several years, the El Nu and Missisquoi tribes have been recognized as interested parties in the relicensure process of various dams along the Connecticut River, and in the decommissioning of Vermont Yankee. Although VCNAA has left the consultation to representatives of the individual tribes, they get status reports at every meeting and occasionally discuss ways to support the Native position in these negotiations.
- *Indigenous People’s Day* – A major initiative of the VCNAA over the past year has been the promotion of Indigenous Peoples’ Day as an official Vermont State holiday. Most commissioners are also in favor of this holiday officially replacing Columbus Day. They have worked to gain legislative partners in both the House and Senate to introduce this legislation, but it didn’t leave the committee process in either chamber during the last biennium. They are planning to make a renewed push for this legislation during the upcoming session.
- *Abenaki Specialty License Plates and Scholarships* – VCNAA plans to advocate for legislation that would permit the purchase of Vermont specialty license plates that recognize or signal the Abenaki in some way. The proceeds of the specialty plates would be dedicated for scholarships for Abenaki students to attend college or related higher education programs. VCNAA also plans to advocate for the passage of this legislation in the upcoming session.
- *New Hampshire and Vermont Joint Commission Meeting* – VCNAA worked last year to hold a joint meeting with the New Hampshire Native Affairs Commission, which took place in the

early 2018 and was considered a success. The VCNAA is planning for another meeting sometime in 2018/2019.

- *Native American Mascot Position* – VCNAA discussed the adoption and continued use of mascots that evoke Native Americans in some way. After considerable discussion, they agreed on a statement that reflects their position and that of the tribes they represent.
- *Elected official* – VCNAA discussed on several occasions the idea of advocating for an official that would work on behalf of the Abenaki in the state legislature. The idea sprang from a similar officer that works on behalf of the Federally recognized Native tribes in the Maine legislature. VCNAA decided to put this initiative aside for the 2018/2019 session.
- *Native Cultural Center* – In the spring, several commissioners stated that the primary goal of their respective tribes was the establishment of Native cultural center that would function as a museum/exhibition space, archive, community center, etc. Although VCNAA recognized the serious logistical and inter-tribal challenges, they discussed it through the spring. At the initial meeting of the 2018/2019 session, however, they agreed that their efforts would be better spent advocating for a digital archive and for the collection of primary archival materials as a first step.
- *Sacred Site Protection* – VCNAA regularly discusses how to protect Abenaki sacred sites.