

Duluth Indigenous Commission  
Monday, March 20, 2023  
411 W 1<sup>st</sup> St, Room 155, City Hall

**Commissioners present:** Babette Sandman, Lenelle Hrabik, Amber Lightfeather, Moira Villiard, Rene Ann Goodrich, Max Bowman

**Commissioners absent:** Phoebe Davis

**Staff present:** Kathy Wilson, Phillis Webb

*Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes. Bezhig (“one”) indicates who made the motion and niizho (“two”) indicates who seconded the motion. Gegit is used to indicate that the motion passed with majority support.*

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

- Chair Villiard called the meeting to order at 5:37 PM, introductions were made.

**2. Approval of January 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

- January 20, 2023 minutes. **Motion passed: Gegit - All.**

**3. Public Comment**

- Discussion of Round Dance events at the Washington Center Gym. Chair Villiard will contact the community member who helps run these events, Brian, to make the connection with the new Commission leadership.

**4. City Reports and Updates**

- **Duluth Citizen Review Board/Police Bias Audit-** Commissioner Bowman discussed some of the history and criticisms of how DPD's initial internal Racial Bias Audit was handled and how that should inform the current Racial Bias Audit, as they were involved in the community report from LEAN Duluth.
- **Duluth Public Arts Commission-** Amanda Hunter from DPAC was unable to attend the meeting, but sent an email about collaboration opportunities between the IC and DPAC. The Commission decided to start a subcommittee to work with DPAC on Ojibwe language signage in City facilities.
- **Other Updates/Comments from City Councilors or City Staff**  
Commissioner Goodrich asked about an Indian center. She stated that the Duluth Indigenous community has been partnering with the Superior Indigenous community because they currently do not have a center either. Possibly have one around the Twin Ports.
- Several Commissioners responded to the invitation to participate in the City RFP review process for DEI strategic planning.

**5. New Business**

- **Hartley Nature Center Land Acknowledgement**  
Erica Backstrom from the Hartley Nature Center shared with the commission their land acknowledgement. She also thanked the commission for doing the work, and continually revisit their action steps. The nature center wanted to show the work they've done so far. Erica stated she would like talk of the acknowledgement to stay

active and alive. The commission talked over some points within the acknowledgment. The commissioners stated that if the nature center would like an elder to talk on the history of nature throughout the area, instead of compensation, possibly just bringing a gift. Hartley continues to reach out to the indigenous community, and Erica stated that if there are any additional comments or concerns, the commission can email. Commissioner Goodrich stated that possibly bringing in an Indigenous person to help with some of the connections their making within the community would help. Possibly a younger person and do a scholarship and/or internship for a high school or college. Something tangible. Also decolonize the process to hire someone Indigenous.

- **Ojibwe Language Pronunciation Guide project DLEF grant funds**

Commissioner Sandman will make the introduction between new Chair Villiard and Rick DeFoe. As a community elder and Ojibwe language speaker/teacher, DeFoe is the appropriate person to go to first to discuss the project.

- **Indigenous Commission Projects and achievements**

Commissioner Sandman brought in all of the paperwork and documentation showing all of the achievements that the commission has completed throughout the years. This included the language pronunciation list, ethnographic studies, sobriety feast, renaming the park just to name a few. These documents will be put with the other important documents for the commission and city staff will assist in creating a website highlighting the Commission's work.

- **The Generations Project**

The commission would like this project to go along with their portfolio.

- **2023 Work Plan (Executive Committee)**

The commission would like to visit this throughout the year to stay aligned with scheduling events, and goals.

## 6. Action Items

- None at this time

## 7. Subcommittees

- **Sobriety Feast**-the commission has permission from the fire Chief for sweat lodges.
- **Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing** -Chair Villiard discussed looming grant deadlines and needing assistance with next steps for the sign/plaque to explain Chief Buffalo's story and the murals. Chair Villiard and Commissioner Sand mand will work on next steps and meeting with community stakeholders to discuss options.
- **Education**- There will be a family feast from 9a-2p at the library. Families who bring kids get a \$10 gift card for Super One per child.
- **Housing**- HRA has now been approved to advertise vouchers at housing authority. Approval from HUD to help with affordability.
- **Spirit Mountain**- Commissioner Sandman announced that after more than a decade of service on the Indigenous Commission, she will be stepping down when her current term expires so this will be her last meeting. Commissioner Sandman stated that she will continue to help with the Commission when she can. She also stated she wants the history of the area to stay alive. Chair Villiard stated that one of the grants she has could be used to show historical art ( ex. A traveling art piece), to show the history and memories. A possible name could be "A walk through Ni Mi Win Pow Wow".

## **8. Ongoing Business**

- Decolonization- Commissioner Sandman stated “what would our ancestors say?” which were the people who fought for these lands. She continued by insisting that there be continued visibility. Commissioner Goodrich stated that visibility needs to be smooth and in the forefront through art and music. Commissioner Bowman stated that there could be more medicine gardens for people around the city. Possibly connected to the lake walk.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm