

**NATIVE AMERICAN COMMISSION
MINUTES
February 12, 2009**

Members Present: Scott Satermo, Sandi Berlin, Sharon White Bear, Guy Fox, Gus Claymore, Don Martin

Members not present: Dan Fremling, Dr. Tim Mahoney, Jaclynn Davis Walette

Others present: Willard Yellow Bird, Jeff Brochert, Prairie Rose, Jan Eliassen, Christie Goulet, Officer Cristie Jacobsen, other members of the community

Item 1. Opening and Introductions - Scott opened the meeting at 5:04 p.m. and introductions were conducted.

Items 2. and 3. Approval of Agenda and January Minutes – Don motioned to approve the agenda and minutes. Gus seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously.

Item 4. Curricula on American Indian Culture and Society – Prairie Rose Seminole – Prairie provided a “bare bones” copy of the outline of the presentation she has prepared for law enforcement in ND. It is a 4 hour presentation that covers four areas: 1) historical overview 2) culture and lifestyle 3) what is sacred and 4) insight to understand American Indians. She explained that her goal is to provide information that will help law enforcement understand Native American traditions, beliefs and practices so they are able to provide services in a manner that is sensitive to Native Americans in the community. . Prairie utilized books, courses she has taken and her own experiences to put together her presentation. She acknowledges to the groups she presents to that she speaks of personal experience and therefore the information she provides does not address every individual or tribe. She further acknowledges that the amount of information that would have to be provided to address all concerns would be too extensive to address in a four hour presentation. Specifically, the officers have been interested in fairly general information like knowing what they may encounter on an individual or in a home that would be unusual to them and sacred to the individual or family, such as eagle feathers, pipes, tobacco. The presentation has been given to the Fargo Police Department. If it is approved by the ND Post Board, it can then be made available to any interested ND law enforcement agency. So far, the feedback she has received has been positive. Prairie received feedback and input from the commission. She will provide a complete copy of her presentation to the NAC once it is approved, for feedback and for use at will. Sharon suggested it could possibly be placed on the NAC website. Scott asked if Prairie Rose would agree to have the colleges review her presentation because if they support it, it would add to the value of the presentation. Prairie Rose agrees.

Item 5. New Native American Liaison, Fargo Police Department – Officer Cristie Jacobsen – Cristie introduced herself to the commission. She has previously served as the Cultural Liaison Officer for the Fargo Police Department. Because Officer Brad

Baer, who was serving as the Native American Liaison, changed positions, she has recently taken on this additional responsibility. Her goal is to educate herself and the department about the tribes and culture of Native Americans in this community. She states that she has a lot to learn because her background, which includes growing up in Buffalo, NY, an educational minor in cross cultural communications and military service in linguistics serving overseas, has not included education specific to Native American issues. Her goal is to build relationships and trust with elders and leaders in the community in hopes that she can learn from them and they can then turn to her when issues with law enforcement arise. She would like to understand the communities perception of what is positive and negative regarding law enforcement so the negative may be addressed and the positive can be held onto. She asks the NAC to assist her in establishing relationships with the Native American community. Gus suggested she could visit with the BIA and tribal police and that the NAC could help by identifying who could come into this community to help educate her. She asks the NAC to provide her a list of contacts and provide support in opening communications with them. Sandi asked if there are any statistics showing the number of law enforcement stops that involve Native Americans. Cristie responded that she is almost completely sure the city does not keep track but she can look into having this done if it is wanted. Cristie handed out her business card encouraging people to contact her with information or concerns.

Item 6. Update on Gladys Ray Shelter – Jan Eliassen – Jan reported that as of last month 450+ individuals have been served since the shelter opened 03/10/2008. Stays vary from one or two nights to most nights in the last ten months, she doesn't feel they have enough experience yet to set limits on stay so this has not been done. She said about 38-45% of the individuals identify themselves as Native American. This information comes from the required intake form they complete for each person. The data is used to help end homelessness by understanding the needs of the homeless. She said it is a 35 bed facility but often they have more than 35 people stay the night. They have not had to turn anyone away, but, when they are full and have someone who could stay at another community shelter they may encourage them to go there instead. They have provided taxis on some occasions to get people to other shelters. She feels the first year has gone well and they have learned a lot, especially from the shelter residents. The community, even the neighborhood that was skeptical of the shelter at first, has become educated about who they are and what they do and has become very supportive. They currently have two full time employees, herself and an Assistant Director. There are 11 part time workers and one full time social worker intern. There are two employees working at all times. Volunteering has gone up. The goals of the shelter, addressing chronic homelessness and providing a safe place where everyone feels respected are being met. An open house celebrating the first year is being planned by shelter residents for sometime in March. Jan introduced the shelter's Assistant Director, Natasha Braseth and Feather Ledelow, Shelter Social Worker Intern from MSUM. Sandi asked what the primary reasons for homelessness are, Jan responded that she sees people with alcohol and drug addiction issues who relapse, serious mental health issues that are often not receiving any services, and individuals who have been homeless for many years who have lost faith in the systems designed to help them and have stopped trying to get help.

The staff at the shelter works on developing relationships and trust with residents so they may be able to encourage them toward the services that are available.

Item 7. Update on Mary John Reception – Olivia Melroe, Sharon White Bear, Sandi Berlin – Sharon reported that the committee has met. They are looking at holding the reception on March 19 from 1:00-2:00, but have not yet decided on a location. Once a location is determined they will release invitations. Mary would like it to be a small reception/luncheon with friends and elders invited to attend. Because Mary's award was given based on her work in the community, Sharon feels it is important that representatives from city government are also in attendance.

Item 8. Update on Sweat lodge – Jeff Borchert and Delvin Rogers – Jeff reported that a meeting was held and they discussed contacting facilities such as Centre Inc and other treatment facilities to let them know about the sweat lodge and that it is available, providing education regarding preparation for using the sweat lodge and discussing health concerns that may prohibit use. He stated that a waiver may need to be created regarding responsibility for medical concerns that may arise for people who participate in the sweats. He reported they have scheduled a sweat, open to anyone who is interested, for every third Sunday monthly since the other sweats are held more on an as needed basis and this provides an opportunity for those who are interested but not aware of the other sweats that are held because they have relied on word of mouth to let people know. It was suggested this scheduled sweat could be placed on the NAC website calendar for people to refer to. Guy asked if the sweat lodge committee was able to procure all of the items that the NAC approved purchase of at the last meeting. Jeff responded that they have been using some of Delvin Rodger's tarps and things for now and the rest has been purchased. A discussion was held regarding publicizing the sweat lodge. Guy raised a concern that the committee needs to be in a position to accommodate everyone if they get a lot of interest and that goals should be defined and a plan should be in place before making a large scale effort. The commission discussed starting with targeted locations like treatment centers and then evaluating going public through the media. Sandi brought up statistics she once saw many years ago that indicated 30% of Native Americans identify themselves as Christian, 30% identify themselves as practicing Native American spirituality and 30% report that they do not have any spirituality, she thinks it would be good to reach out to those who report that they do not practice any type of spirituality. Jeff reported that over the last seven months they have had about 200 participants in the sweats.

Item 9. National Native American Science Fair – Discussion on Funding – Jaclynn has submitted a request for \$1965 to fund this trip. The 2009 budget includes \$2000 set aside for this purpose. Sharon motioned to approve this expenditure, Sandi seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Item 10. Financial Report – Don provided the following financial report, he notes that there are some discrepancies. The 2009 budget includes \$540 to pay the NAC secretary, \$400 for public awareness, \$3000 for training, \$2000 for cultural projects (includes the tri-college pow-wow), \$2000 for youth and education (includes the science project),

\$1,000 for anti-racism and \$1,000 for special projects (i.e. Indian education picnic). The budget includes a roll over from 2008 of \$3,506 with a final balance of \$13,401.00.

Scott asked that a memorandum requesting funds for the Tri-College Pow-Wow be requested from the student group that is organizing it. Sharon asked about funding for expenses relating to a visit by Miss Indian Nations and suggested the funds may come from the public awareness category since she will be visiting schools as well as being present at the Pow-Wow. She said NDSU is willing to split the cost with the NAC and that it would be about \$300 each. Don asked when 2010 budget proposals are due to the city, Willard believes not until closer to the end of the year but he will let the NAC know in plenty of time to be prepared.

Item 11. Old Business – Willard provided an update regarding the satellite office. He has spoke with Pat and the city has space available now in the old GTC area. It is partially furnished and might cost about \$100 per month. It is large enough for expansion of programs, is handicapped accessible and includes five large offices and a reception area. Parking at the site was discussed as well as safety issues regarding the city buses that run in and out all day. The committee has met and has discussed the grant, the budget is done. Once the space is pin pointed they are ready to move forward. Scott is still working on a date for a meeting at Fort Berthold and expects to have this soon.

Item 12. New Business – Jeff has discussed with Dr. Mahoney the need to have information available to medical facilities on how to get Native American spiritual services for patients who request them. Sandi said she is the main contact for Meritcare. Sharon volunteered to contact Innovis to provide this service. Don said that usually the chaplains at the hospitals maintain a list of contacts and Sandi should contact them to make sure she is on the list.

Item 13. Public Comment – Christie Goulet approached the NAC regarding the need for a sign at the sweat lodge site. The sign should explain use of the sweat lodge and provide 24/7 contact information if people have questions. She feels this would help prevent any future misunderstanding such as happened when the lodge was recently dismantled. Scott asked that Christie find out how much a good metal, reflective, portable sign would cost and provide a request to the commission for funds. Christie said she will need help to determine exactly what the sign should say. The commission agreed that the sign should not be too specific on rules of use as they vary depending on who is running a sweat there. Christie agreed to get this information together and provide it to the commission.

Willard, Scott and Guy have met with the city regarding snow removal, wood for the sweats and marking the space with orange cones. The city has since complied with their requests.

Anthony Ariana came forward to thank the NAC for developing the sweat lodge and for the work with the science fair. He offers that he has songs to share that could be copied

to CDs and used for Indian education. He also believes it would be good to go out to the schools and share information about the sweat lodge in order to help the students become more familiar with their culture. He also shared some of his own experiences with encounters with law enforcement in reference to Officer Jacobsen's presentation.

Sharon motioned to adjourn the meeting, Sandi seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

The next meeting will be held on March 12, 2009 at 5:00 p.m., Fargo City Hall, Commission Room