

Duluth Indigenous Commission  
Monday, December 18, 2023  
St. Louis County Government Services Center  
Lake Superior Room

**Commissioners present:** Moira Villiard, Lenelle Hrabik, Phoebe Davis, Max Bowman, Amber Lightfeather (called in)

**Commissioner interim:** Ryan Clark

**Commissioners absent:** Rene Ann Goodrich, and Rebecca Graves

**Staff present:** Kathy Wilson, Suzanne Kelley, and Hannah Figgins

**Guest Speaker:** Cheryl Edwards, Constitution Reform Delegate

*Note: per the request of the Indigenous Commission members, Ojibwe language words are used in the meeting minutes. Gegit is used to indicate that the Commission has come to a consensus in support of the motion.*

**1. Call to Order and Introductions**

- Commissioner Villiard called the meeting to order at 5:38 PM, introductions were made.

**2. Approval of September 18, 2023 Meeting Minutes**

- September 18, 2023 minutes were approved  
**Motion passed: Gegit - All.**

**3. Public Comment**

- No public comment

**4. City Reports and Updates**

- Law Enforcement Accountability Network: Commissioner Max Bowman
  - Commissioner Bowman reported a lack of BIPOC representation at the recent meeting, following the community members having described feeling underrepresented by the survey at the presentation of findings meeting at the Family Freedom Center. He felt the audit was a means to uphold the status quo. He interpreted the audit as reporting superficial issues within the DPD, but if substantial issues were identified in the future, the DPD would require more funding and resources to address those concerns. Max recommends organizing Racial Bias Audit consideration/response meetings without police present, because he believes this decreases turnout and the feeling of freedom for community members to share their honest opinions. He would like to reach out to and coordinate with the NAACP moving forward. Chair Villiard mentioned the story of officer Adam Huot, whom could be used as a positive example for change within the minds of officers and community members. The commissioners expressed a desire to have a police officer present at an IC meeting, or at least invite an officer for a conversation about the racial bias audit. Staff member Kathy Wilson let the commissioners know this could be achieved, but perhaps after a couple months given the impending change in city administration.

- Duluth Public Arts Commission
  - No one in attendance representing the commission
  - DPAC still holds some funding for the IC, and because there will not be a powwow in 2023 the commissioners wonder if using the funds for signage would be best. The commission is also planning a pronunciation guide associated with the signs to be displayed in city hall. A QR code will take the user to a link with recorded pronunciations by a regional native.
  - The upcoming grant report will need general information

## 5. New Business

- **Annual Meeting in January:**
  - **Begin planning Indigenous People's Day** at June meeting. Move October meeting to October 7<sup>th</sup>, so it's before IDP on October 18<sup>th</sup>
  - **Powwow 2024** – The commission would love to host a powwow if possible. First-time attendee, Ryan Clark, expressed his passion for Powwows and opportunities for sharing culture. He has a lot of connections with knowledgeable elders and others who have participated in and hosted Powwows. Bowman said he would love to help plan the event as well.
  - **Ryan Clark** took this opportunity to formally express his interest in becoming a commissioner on the Indigenous Commission, and believes he would be a good fit because of the connections he has in the community with elders and others who have a lot of knowledge of the regional Indigenous culture. The Commissioners shared their desire to have Clark join the commission. Staff member Wilson mentioned the potential delay in an official Mayoral appointment due to the upcoming change in administration. In the meantime, Clark can attend the IC meetings as an "Interim Commissioner", but won't be able to vote on any actions until he is appointed.
  - **MMIWR** (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Relatives) Event - There will be a march in February. More details to come.
  - **Potluck** – The Commission would like to continue the tradition of an annual meeting potluck. Staff member Wilson has sent out a Google Doc to sign up for a dish to bring. The commission would also like to invite Mayor Reinert.

## 6. Action Items

- No action items

## 7. Subcommittees

- **Art in Gichi-ode' Akiing** – Chair Villiard is trying to ensure the City stays involved to help protect the paintings. Eventually there will be a 501(c)3 for this (Chief Buffalo Mural), and other art, to be able to get funds directly to the people who do the work. Currently, it is difficult to get funding directly/quickly to the people that want to do good work in the community, even though funds exist.
- **American Indian Education** – Commissioner Lightfeather reported the Education Coordinator resigned, and applications are being accepted for the position.
- **Housing** -- no updates
- **Ojibwe Language Pronunciation Guide and Signs in City Hall** – Chair Villiard reported reaching out to DPAC is the next step

- **Sobriety Feast** – Commissioners discussed the idea of going to these events as IC commissioners. The event is held on Thursdays.

## 8. Ongoing Business

- **Full Moon Ceremony** – Chair Villiard reported that AICHO will fund this again in March. Organizing that within the next couple months. Fond Du Lac also has ceremonies monthly.
- **Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR)** – No updates
- **Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (MCT) Constitution Updates** – Constitution Reform Delegate Cheryl Edwards addressed the commission as an MCT delegate since 2018. Delegates meet once per month to discuss issues and re-write the constitution. Currently on draft 10 after 5 years. It is written in English but the goal is to have it translated eventually. They are working on an “Alliance draft” because the “Minnesota Chippewa Tribe” is not a tribe, but is a name of an organization created by the bands of the region to make it easier for the US government to make payments to the local tribes. The new version of the constitution will not be called the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe. This draft is being written so each band can make amendments to meet their individual needs and have their own constitution. The delegation consulted with Red Lake on how they re-wrote their constitution but they still need people to read the draft, pick it apart, and provide feedback. Edwards also believes in the importance of removing blood quantum to achieve higher enrollment in tribes. Enrollment is decreasing right now, for example, Grand Portage only has 40 children enrolled today. Each reservation decides how their delegates are chosen. Cathy Chavers would know how the Bois Forte delegate is elected. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, delegate meetings were held over two-days, in person. Today, they attempt hybrid meetings which can be difficult. Chair Villiard offered assistance in finding finances for the delegation with her various connections. Commissioner Bowman asked how descendants can be helpful, to which Edwards responded that Fond du Lac allows descendants to be delegates, but she doesn’t know what other tribes allow. The Commissioners offered their gratitude for the work of the Delegation.
- **Indigenous Commission Projects and Achievements website:** City staff will send the draft document out to all Commissioners again.
- **New Member Recruitment** – Ryan Clark, the newest applicant, is here. There are now officially 7 members. There can be 11 total.
- **Decolonization and Visibility ideas** – no updates

## 9. Announcements

- CHUM Homelessness Vigil – December 20, 2023, for those who have been lost. Since last Christmas Eve we have lost 78 people, most were Indigenous, most were from overdoses. Starting at CHUM at 5pm, walking to city hall.

## 10. Next Meeting: January 22, 2024 Annual Meeting

**Meeting Adjourned at 7:34 pm**