

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Wisconsin Women's Council – June 1, 2022
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
Ze Yang, Acting Chair**

Present: Ze Yang (Acting Chair), Dr. Jolene Bowman, Representative Jody Emerson, Denise Gaumer Hutchison, Nerissa Nelson, Carrie Richard, Amanda Roddy (a quorum was not present).

Also Attending: Christine Lidbury (Executive Director), Caitlyn Klostermann (WWC Intern), Bonnie MacRitchie, LaFollette School of Public Affairs

1. Welcome by the Executive Director and introductions.
2. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Awareness Day Event Recap-
The event coincided with National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) Awareness Day, May 5, 2022. The event was co-presented by the Wisconsin Women's Council, Maeqtekuahkihkiw Metaemohsak Inc. (Woodland Women), and the Wisconsin Department of Justice's Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women Task Force.
A speaker program and rally were held from 11 AM to 3 PM outside the Capitol (on the terrace and steps leading down to State Street), including speaker and emcee: Rachel Fernandez (Menominee) Maeqtekuahkihkiw Metaemohsak Inc. (Woodland Women); keynote speaker: Shannon Holsey, President, Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohican Indians; testimonials from families of missing and murdered women; drum circle; and Ribbon Skirt dancers; along with displays of Ribbon Skirts, red dresses, and signs.

Attending the event were Women's Council members Rachel Fernandez, Denise Gaumer Hutchison, Nerissa Nelson, Carrie Richard, Amanda Roddy, Senator Ringhand, Representative Emerson, Representative Cabral-Guevara, as well as past Member Nicky Bowman (Stockbridge Munsee). WWC Intern Caitlyn Klostermann assisted with event management.

The idea for the event was proposed by Board Members Rachel Fernandez and Dr. Jolene Bowman for an awareness day at the Capitol similar to Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault's event on "Denim Day."

Rachel developed and organized the program format and speakers, served as emcee, and media spokesperson. Christine organized the logistics (permitting, AV, seating, registration) and media outreach.

Christine thanked and recognized Madison Pro Audio for donating the audio (mics and speakers), press hook-ups, and related equipment, and an audio technician to run the system. Christine noted that

when she was contacting companies for AV quotes, the owner reached out and offered to donate the services because of the critical importance of the issue.

Rachel brought out a large group of attendees from northern Wisconsin. There was a good turnout from the Madison area. Speakers were livestreamed by Wisconsin Eye, which also has the benefit of creating a permanent video in their archive. TV news, print and radio, including Native media were all represented – a complete list was sent out to the Board. A professional photographer was hired by the Council to document the program.

Maeqtekuahkihkiw Metaemohsak Inc. (Woodland Women) and local Indigenous art collective *giige* hosted a candlelight vigil in the evening.

Denise offered that the event was very powerful. She said she was honored that the Women's Council participated in the event, as well part of honoring and better understanding what is going on with missing and murdered indigenous women. She noted that the event highlighted the role that the Council has to play in helping to keep this message out there, and to get support and action. Denise said that she would never be the same after hearing some of the speakers, the loss and pain and anguish – and having that pain and anguish ignored within our government system is a reminder of what we still have to fight for.

The Council provided a sponsorship to Maeqtekuahkihkiw Metaemohsak Inc. (Woodland Women) for a project to create traditional ribbon skirts for the event, including the purchase of supplies and materials, both for women to wear and for display.

It was requested that the Council receive a follow up from the DOJ Task Force on the next steps and timeline for Task Force recommendations.

3. Approval of the Minutes of March 4, 2022. A quorum was not present to vote.
4. Executive Director Recruitment Update-
The job notice was publicly released this week by the Department of Administration (DOA) and distributed to Council Members, who are urged to widely distribute the notice. Christine reported that she had the opportunity to comment on a draft and make recommendations. Applications will be reviewed by DOA Human Resources to create a short list for interviews. The Board will be kept posted as the process progresses.

Discussion ensued and several questions were raised by Board members:

- Will any Women's Council Members be able to participate in the interviews? It would be valuable to have the input of the Council on the Executive Director hire. Christine will share this request with DOA.
- Regarding office location. At the top of the notice, the position location is listed as Madison, but later in the text it is said work can be done remotely. Can the position be carried out remotely or is the person required to work out of the Madison office? Christine will get clarification and report back to the Board.

- Why is the job listed as an hourly position? Is this the case currently? It was noted that because the expectation is for working as needed which may include evening or weekends, the position would not seem to be appropriate for an hourly salary system.

Christine explained that all state staff positions are listed as hourly positions, which is largely for budget purposes and consistency in reporting. The Executive Director is an executive management position, and like many management and executive jobs, the position holder is expected to work the hours needed to carry out the job effectively. In this job class, by default, the employee works 40 hours per week at the hourly rate, which is effectively a salaried rate. The position does not keep a timesheet, except by exception (e.g., sick, vacation, personal), and is not eligible for overtime.

5. Fiscal Year End Update-

The fiscal year ends June 30, 2022. Any unspent budget funds at that time would lapse, but there should not be significant remaining funds at year end. The budget starting July 1st is the second year of the current Biennial Budget and the Council funded at the same level as this year.

At this time, the next biennial budget proposal is being created. Christine provided that she requested that the budget initiative for new program funds that was submitted for that last biennial budget request be included again, even if just a placeholder for an opportunity for the incoming Executive Director.

Typically by September, the DOA agency budget, which includes the Women's Council budget, is submitted to the Governor's Office for review. Last year, the Council proposal for new funds was removed from the DOA budget request and added instead as a Governor's initiative outside the agency but proposed directly by the Governor. That will, presumably, be a consideration again for the upcoming budget proposal. Christine noted that she does not expect to have additional information on this before her last day in July.

6. New Publication and Resources-

Christine introduced Caitlyn Klostermann, who had been the Council's Spring intern from the UW Madison Gender and Women's Studies program, now UW grad, to report on some of her work and the publication she conceptualized and completed. She completed two main projects:

- Women's Funds collaboration. For more than a decade, the Council has worked with a group of Women's Funds in northeast Wisconsin on creating local reports on the status of women. The group reached out earlier this year about the possibility of a 5-year update to their 2017 report. The COVID-19 pandemic created disruptions in the data collection sources used for those reports. Christine and Caitlyn met with Fund representatives to discuss the current issues with data. With Christine recommending a new report would be problematic. The Fund reps agreed and suggested what would be useful at this point, particularly with Christine retiring, would be a compilation of information about the issues around the current state of available data, as well as a user-friendly "manual" with links to the datasets and sources that had been used in past status of women reports.

Initially, Caitlyn put together a manual looking at both current issues of data quality to help inform with current and future research planning, as well as a compendium of the datasets by topic area (demographics, health, education, etc.) to assist with future status of women research.

Subsequently, the Funds asked if this information could be made more generally available on the Council's website. Caitlyn created a new user friendly "Find Data Resources" section to the website that is readily accessible to users who may not have a data background or even have past working knowledge of the regional status of women reports that have been created with the Council's assistance in recent years. It is essentially an annotated bibliography that provides a one-stop resource to the specific data points and sources used in analyzing and reporting on the status of women from official public databases such as the US Census Bureau and WI Department of Justice. Along with this, Caitlyn's created a new interactive tool for directly reporting data on topics such as gender wage gap and employment.

- Caitlyn updated and expanded on the Council's past factsheet on child and maternal health. Out of her discussions with public health partners, she researched and added new material on health equity and how to look at public health data through a health equity lens. The factsheet was peer reviewed by experts in public health, DHS, Foundation for Black Women's Health, and UW Population Health Institute. The final report provided a one-stop compilation of current public health data and research on maternal and child health, including infant mortality in Wisconsin. It will be shared with our public health partners, legislators, and available free for download on the Council website.

7. Hmong Quilt Project / COVID & Mental Health: Challenges & Resiliency-
Hmong Quilt Project is being conducted with The Hmong Institute (THI), Madison. THI suggested using the traditional Hmong art of the story quilt to allow women to talk about mental health challenges imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Culturally, it is not common or accepted to talk directly in the language of mental health and therapeutic practices. However, resiliency and moving from struggles to strategies is well known in the culture and community, including around the immigrant experience.

Women created quilt blocks using paint or traditional needlework. Three themes emerged: 1) gardening and nature to stay busy and support positive mental health; 2) faith and acts of faith such as prayer that could be carried out individually; and 3) getting creative about community, such as zoom calls, masking and distancing practices, and renewed joy once in-person gatherings could be more common, even if still limited.

The next step will be assembling the quilt blocks into quilt panels. Mai Zong Vue, President, THI, collected video of each woman talking about her quilt block and what the images reflected about her experience, which we hope to compile as an accompaniment to the quilt project. In future, the hope is to display the works at the State Capitol.

8. Special Guest Secretary-designee Kathy Blumenfeld WI Dept. of Administration-
Secretary-designee Blumenfeld was a member of the Women's Council in the 1990s, appointed by Senator Fred Risser, and has remained a dedicated supporter of the Council.

Secretary-designee Blumenfeld was appointed by Governor Tony Evers to lead the Department of Administration in January 2022. As secretary, she is committed to developing caring and diverse teams that are passionate about their jobs, and delivering effective, secure, and innovative services for other Wisconsin state agencies and the public. In this role, Secretary-designee Blumenfeld serves on

the Boards of the State of Wisconsin Investment Board (SWIB), the Wisconsin Center District, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

From 2019 to 2021, Secretary-designee Blumenfeld led the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, where her priorities included financial literacy and protecting consumers from financial fraud. In this role, Secretary-designee Blumenfeld served on the board of the Wisconsin College Savings Program, the Governor's Council on Financial Literacy and Capability, and chaired Governor Evers' Task Force on Student Debt.

Secretary-designee Blumenfeld thanked Council members for their service on the Council and their excellent work, and thanked Christine for her leadership.

In reflecting on her approach to leadership, Secretary-designee Blumenfeld said she asks herself *how I can help be an advocate for women in the organization that I am in?* What brings her the most fulfillment and joy is mentoring, coaching, and sponsoring to help build confidence in people - trying to build a future generation of leaders. She regards this as free fuel for how she enjoys spending the time.

Secretary-designee Blumenfeld spoke of coming from a long line of women who worked, raised families, and were engaged in their community. She learned early it is always important to help make your community better and give back to those less fortunate. The Secretary noted how grateful she is for the great role models her life and highlighted her mother who just retired at age 84!

Secretary-designee Blumenfeld highlighted several important issues for women:

- Women have made a lot of progress, including on issues such as pay equity, representation of women, women starting their own businesses, growing female representation in the legislature, and growing parity and diversity in our judicial appointments.
- This Administration is committed to supporting and advancing women in leadership. Governor Evers has the most diverse and female led Cabinet ever in the history of the state. Ten of the 17 Cabinet secretaries are women, and they meet together regularly and talk about how we can advance agendas for women.
- Governor Evers and this Administration are fully committed to supporting a woman's right to choose. Recognizing that people have strong feelings about this issue, and we may not all feel the same way; however, likely none of us would be here if we didn't support women leading full and meaningful lives. Making sure women feel seen, heard, and are treated with respect in the workplace is essential to build a stronger workforce and a stronger economy.
- We need women's participation not just in the future Wisconsin workforce, but for all our state's wellbeing overall. We have come a long way, but we have a long way to go until there is equality and equity.

Secretary-designee Blumenfeld's message to Council Members is to leverage your spot on this Council and identify issues and opportunities to bring organization together to leverage the combined spheres of influence that you have. To take time to mentor, amplify, and lift the work of other women. And to remind each other that our work really does matter. She closed her remarks noting that we have the responsibility to build up that next generation of leaders to make progress on all the issues still unfinished.

Discussion ensued that in order to keep women in the workforce, there must be access to quality childcare, quality healthcare, and family sustaining salaries.

9a. Board Announcements-

Nerissa Nelson moved for a Statement of Appreciation to Christine on the occasion of her departure, seconded by Denise Gaumer Hutchison.

The Wisconsin Women's Council Board expresses its gratitude and appreciate to Christine for her leadership and distinguished career as the Executive Director. We honor her role in empowering and championing women in the State of Wisconsin. We are grateful for her service, advocacy, and dedication to the Wisconsin Women's Council and wish her the very best in her retirement. The motion was supported by all Members present (a voting quorum was not present).

9b. Public Comments – none

10. Motion to adjourn by Denise Gaumer Hutchison, second by Nerissa Nelson. Unanimous support.

Respectfully submitted,
Christine Lidbury