Veteran’s Committee Meeting

April 16, 2019

In attendance:

Debbie Jones, Samish Tribe

Harvey Moses, Colville Tribes

Libby Cope, Makah Tribe

Jim Steinruck, Tulalip Tribe

Barbara, NWWIHB

Stephanie Birdwell, VA

Terry Bentley, VA

*Sarah Sullivan, NPAIHB*

*Don Head, NPAIHB*

The minutes from the January meeting were read.

Stephanie Birdwell started the meeting with a question about Transition Assistance Programs, and whether the contractors running this acknowledged the diversity of the soldiers leaving the service. In a discussion of the transition programs, Terry Bentley suggested getting the tribes to write their senators and representatives to request funding for a transition program while the soldier is still in the service.

Sarah Sullivan agreed to step up the advocacy efforts for better transitions for soldiers leaving the service, and Jim added that it would be nice for veterans to be assisted by other veterans, because of the rapport involved with having served in the military. He also talked about Heroes Café, a program run by Verdant Health Commission in Lynwood, WA, where veterans are encouraged to stop by, and meet other veterans, and possibly get recommendations or assistance in applying for VA services.

The discussion turned to best practices for connecting with veterans, and Terry described the veteran summits and claims events that the Office of Tribal Government Relations can host in tribal communities. If tribes reach out to Terry Bentley, she can work with them to host these events, and they usually plan these in December for the following year.

The White House created a VA Task Force to develop a strategy to bring private health systems and other providers to address the veteran suicide rate. We need to have tribes involved with this task force, because they will be providing funding through states and local grants. Tribes should not be forced to go through the states in order to receive funding for preventing veteran suicide.

The meeting was adjourned.