



**POPULATION
HEALTH TRUST**
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Skagit County Board of Health

Peter Browning, Chair
Lisa Janicki, Commissioner
Ron Wesen, Commissioner

PHT Meeting Minutes February 2, 2023/8:30am Swinomish Casino and Lodge

Members: Thomas Boucher, Patty Codd, Sonia Garza, Bill Henkel, Leon John, Chris Johnston, , Kenneth Lawson, Maddy Mackenzie, Kevin Murphy, Maureen Pettitt, Margaret Rojas, Mandi Rothman, Lyndie Simmonds, Dean Snider, John Sternlicht

Community Stakeholders: Kristen Ekstran, Jennifer Sass-Walton, Chris Baldwin, Marci Bloomquist, Polly Dubbel, Keith Higman, KaSandra Church

Ex-Officio: Peter Browning

Guests: Anna Cook, Bev Keyes, Brian Wilbur, Jeremy Wilbur, Kelli Baker, Dan Berard, Cheryl Rasar, Michelle Skidmore, Jennifer LaPointe

Thank you for participating in the election. For 2023, Mo Pettit will serve as PHT Chair and Margaret Rojas will serve at PHT Vice Chair.

Opening:

Vice Chairman of the Senate, Jeremy “JJ” Wilbur, opened the meeting welcoming PHT members to tribal lands. He provided an overview of the tribe, land, and a brief history of the Treaty of Port Elliot.

Chairman of the Swinomish Development Authority, Brian Wilbur, provided information regarding the scope of health services available on tribal lands. Current services include a medical and dental clinic, behavioral health care, a wellness program, and fitness center.

Jennifer LaPointe, General Manager, welcomed members and reinforced the tribe’s commitment to partnering with Skagit County.

Food Sovereignty:

Anna Cook of Health, Education and Social Services shared the 13 Moons curriculum and other food sovereignty programs of the tribe and a recent linkage with Didgwalic.

13 Moons – series of programs developed in alignment with the 13 moons of the Coast Salish lunar calendar. Initiatives include educational videos on YouTube, a market featuring a variety of vegetables, some indigenous, produce delivery service to elders, harvesting of plants for plant medicines (tinctures and teas), and the creation of a clam garden at Kukutali Preserve.

Anna has expanded her work into a new role at the Didgwalic Wellness Center where she focuses on healing arts, native teachings, and wellness programs for staff. She shared that one of the biggest challenges to her work with food sovereignty is gaining access to land to harvest traditional plants. Treaty rights were not as explicit with rights to harvesting plants, so this is an area where education is needed.

Other Health Topics:

Sarah Wilborn, Chief Public Health Officer, shared about the tribal response to COVID. Testing and contact tracing were key components to their strategy. Additionally, individuals were compensated to stay in quarantine, tents were set up to provide outdoor instruction for students, telehealth was utilized, and improvements were made to air quality. Moving forward, the tribe would like to build out a public health program, including a better data collection system, emergency management and community connections about future health events.

Dr. Monica Carillo, Chief Medical Officer, provided information about current mental health supports for tribal members. The tribe has a clinical pharmacist but realizes the need for a psychiatrist. It has been a challenging role to fill, especially to find someone that can do the work with cultural humility. Currently, there are mental health counselors available in the elementary, middle, and high schools. There has been an increased focus on destigmatizing mental health through a program with the Boys and Girls Club. While the commitment to mental health is strong, challenges are in high case loads for therapists and difficulty recruiting new counselors.

Jessica Ortiz, Office Manager at the Swinomish Dental Clinic, updated the group about increases in staffing at the clinic. She highlighted the importance of addressing trauma in dental care. Before the clinic opened, pulling teeth was standard practice for dental ailments. Today there is more focus on restorative dental practices. Jessica also shared about current efforts to increase the number of dental therapists through a partnership with Skagit Valley College.

Bev Keyes provided an overview of services provided at the didgwalic Wellness Center. When providing treatment for substance abuse, staff take a holistic approach to care. Examples of this approach include considerations for transportation, child care, treatment of other health concerns, and support from a care team. The center is open to all individuals seeking treatment for substance abuse disorder. About 30% of clients are tribal and approximately 25% of staff are tribal. Bev also discussed efforts to increase partnerships with Skagit Valley College, Seattle University, and Fire District 13.

Cheryl Rasar, Community Relations Director at didgwalic, shared about prevention and outreach efforts. There has been a focus on distributing naloxone in the community and to educating the public on the Good Samaritan Law.

Closing:

Kristen closed the meeting thanking the Swinomish for their hospitality and time. The next PHT meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2nd.