

Salish Current

Independent, fact-based news for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties

News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending April 10, 2020:

[Safe on a 'plague' ship in the time of COVID-19: Community Voices](#)



The cruise ship Seabourn Sojourn (off Mozambique, above) felt like a safer place to be than on land as the COVID-19 pandemic began to bloom across the globe, to writer Bill Dietrich. Surprising? Read on. (Bill Dietrich photo © 2020)

By Bill Dietrich — Our once-in-a-lifetime, 50th anniversary world cruise was sunk by a coronavirus somewhere in the Indian Ocean. Nobody had COVID-19, but our vessel was treated like a plague ship nonetheless. After we were allowed to disembark at Perth, Australia, we were confined to a special bus, shipped to an overnight hotel,

and warned we could be fined \$50,000 or given a year in jail if we left our room. From there we flew home. Were we afraid of catching the disease while aboard what critics persist in calling “floating petri dishes”? No, and [here’s why](#)...

[Business as usual not happening soon, per Whatcom’s Satpal Sidhu: Community Voices](#)

By Kimberly Cauvel — Family dairies, the annual Ski to Sea race and visitor and shopper traffic from Canada are just a few archetypal activities being disrupted in Whatcom County as the COVID-19 pandemic progresses. Business as usual is not due back in Whatcom County any time soon, said county executive Satpal Sidhu in an April 10 interview with Kimberly Cauvel for the *Salish Current*.

News from around the region...

EDITOR'S NOTE: Coronavirus news coverage in the [Bellingham Herald](#) and the [Lynden Tribune](#) can be accessed online without a subscription.

[Health & Safety](#)

[Feds seize coronavirus test kit materials bound for Bellingham hospital and Northwest](#)

A delivery of test kit materials that would have allowed Bellingham’s St. Joseph hospital and other PeaceHealth medical facilities in the Northwest to run COVID-19 tests quicker were seized and diverted by the federal government to the East Coast. (Bellingham Herald)

[Bellingham hospital confirms firing ER doctor who criticized its coronavirus response](#)

Escalating a global spat over workplace safety and the rights of health-care workers during the coronavirus crisis, a top official of PeaceHealth has now confirmed the company ousted emergency physician Ming Lin for allegedly inciting public fear by criticizing the hospital’s emergency precautions. (Seattle Times)

[Citing safety fear amid coronavirus outbreak, union files complaint against PeaceHealth](#)

The Washington State Nurses Association is accusing PeaceHealth of not giving

nurses the personal protective gear they need while working at its St. Joseph hospital in Bellingham and of other actions it said could harm them. (Bellingham Herald)

[Shuksan faced debt, improper care violations before coronavirus outbreak, records show](#)

A Bellingham skilled nursing facility now suffering from a severe COVID-19 outbreak was in a deep financial crisis last year that threatened to shutter the facility and faced numerous citations for improper care of its residents. (Bellingham Herald)

[Coronavirus spread to 163 long-term care facilities in Washington state, killing more than 200 people](#)

A list of facilities with COVID-19 cases, provided for the first time by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), includes 52 nursing homes, 53 assisted-living facilities, 23 adult family homes and nine other facilities. At least 52 of these facilities reported a total of 221 deaths from the disease so far. (Seattle Times)

[County Health Officer updates Council](#)

San Juan County Health Officer Dr. Frank James told the county commissioners this week that it is likely that economic activity in the County will be able to return to some level of normalcy by early July. (Orcas Issues)

[WTA to limit riders to 12 or fewer on buses](#)

15 passengers would be allowed in the event of couples or parents with children. WTA ridership as a whole is reported down 80%. (My Ferndale News)

[Increased outdoor burning affecting air quality in Whatcom County and beyond](#)

Air quality readings for Bellingham, Ferndale and Lynden/Custer were still good on the Northwest Clean Air Agency website Thursday, April 9. Ratings in Columbia Valley reached unhealthy in the last week. (Sacramento Bee)

Education

[Superintendents react to full closure](#)

Gov. Jay Inslee and Superintendent of Public Instruction Chris Reykdal announced that schools in Washington will remain closed through the end of this school year. (Lynden Tribune)

[School districts transition to online learning](#)

Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction issued a directive ordering districts

to carry out continuous learning plans to provide some sort of learning opportunities for their students during the shutdown. (Skagit Valley Herald)

[Ferndale School Board holds online meeting – gets closure updates](#)

The board unanimously granted the superintendent the power to make some decisions that required quick responses to COVID-19 mandates. (My Ferndale News)

[University Residences move thousands of students out](#)

About 3,200 students are expected to move out of the dorms. About 300 to 400 students will remain in the dorms through spring quarter. (Western Front)

Government

[Sedro-Woolley sets rules for accessory dwelling units](#)

The Sedro-Woolley City Council passed two ordinances to authorize accessory dwelling units — mother-in-law suites, converting garages to living quarters or isolating a portion of a home as a separate residence. The rules will take effect July 1. (Skagit Valley Herald)

Nature

[Bellingham purchases 29 acres for northern park, trails as part of Greenway program](#)

The \$2,310,000 sale announced Tuesday is for land in the Bakerview/Telegraph corridor, north of Interstate 5 and east of Meridian. (Bellingham Herald)

[Vancouver Fraser Port Authority calls panel findings on Terminal 2 'workable'](#)

The Vancouver Fraser Port Authority says the findings that the environmental impact of the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 project would cause significant adverse impact are "sensible and workable." (Business In Vancouver)

[Water quality sampling suspended during pandemic](#)

While the risk of person-to-person transmission of COVID-19 persists, the Skagit County Natural Resources Division is suspending its water quality sampling programs. (Skagit Valley Herald)

Business

[Area businesses struggle to adapt to new normal](#)

A ban on the normal activity that defines April in Skagit Valley, namely the

cancellation of the annual Tulip Festival which draws thousands of visitors to the valley, will be felt across the business community in Anacortes. (Anacortes American)

[Pandemic reflected in newspaper industry's struggles](#)

Across the country and around Washington, newspapers large and small are staggering under the loss of revenue as some of their regular advertisers evaporate. (Spokesman Review)

[Local newspaper, magazines forced to make cuts in light of pandemic](#)

The Magazine Association of B.C. estimates local publications could lose up to \$10 million in advertising revenue in six months if things continue the way they are. Many publications have made cuts or suspended operation altogether. (CBC)

Community

[Lopez Covid-19 health support group comes together](#)

The Enchanted Quilters will sew 5,000 cloth face masks for the islanders. (Islands Sounder)

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Salish Current is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, online local news organization serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Salish Current exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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