



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Sept. 4, 2020:

**Students, teachers step up to remote-learning challenges**  
**— with help — as school year begins**



Online lessons in locations remote from the classroom are this fall's challenging new reality for most students and teachers in Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties. (Image source: TechNotes).

*By Matt Benoit* — The beginning of the 2020-2021 school year is unlike any that students, parents, teachers or administrators have ever seen — or perhaps even imagined. Many classrooms sit empty, while their anticipated occupants take on the new experiences of teaching and learning in a fully remote fashion.

In the spring, schools were abruptly thrown into virtual learning by the COVID-19 pandemic, and many lacked resources to provide enough devices and internet connectivity to enable successful across-the-board remote learning.

Since then, school districts have worked to ensure they're adequately prepared. Many, including here in Whatcom County, are receiving local, state and federal funding to help build infrastructure for remote learning. [Read more here...](#)

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Salish Current *affirms its commitment to work for truth, justice, equality and healing for all people.*  
*#SayTheirNames #BlackLivesMatter #NoJusticeNoPeace*

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## News from around the region...

### Health & Safety

- The Whatcom County Public Health Advisory Board voted unanimously at its Thursday morning meeting to send a resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis to the Whatcom County Council, which sits as the Whatcom County Health Board. ([Bellingham Herald](#))

### Education

- The Anacortes School District and the Samish Nation will begin introducing a curriculum called "Since Time Immemorial: Tribal Sovereignty in Washington State" to teach students about the history of the area and the native peoples who have called it home for thousands of years. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

### Government

- U.S. representatives Suzan DelBene (WA-01) and Collin Peterson (MN-07), her counterpart from Minnesota, have written to the Honorable Bill Blair, the Canadian Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, asking the Canadian government to provide more advance notice of border policy changes and an exemption allowing travel from the exclave communities of Point Roberts and the Northwest Angle in Minnesota through Canada to access the rest of the U.S. ([The Northern Light](#))
- The U.S. Navy has agreed to pay legal fees and provide requested documents to settle a public access lawsuit filed by Citizens of Ebey's Reserve that claimed the Navy delayed or withheld production of several documents pertaining to the Navy's EA-18G "Growler" aircraft sought by the group as part of its effort to win an injunction to limit Growler training on Whidbey Island. ([Anacortes American](#))
- City of Bellingham
  - Councilmembers Gene Knutson and Daniel Hammill moved to request the mayor's office to bring forth a report on how the Administration handles complaints. The motion carried 7-0 on Aug. 24.
  - Councilmember Daniel Hammill reported on Aug. 24 that the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion Program from Whatcom County Prosecutor's Office will begin in September. This program will help to divert people out of the criminal justice system and into care that is appropriate for their individual situations.
  - Councilmember Pinky Vargas reported to the council that the city faces an 8% revenue shortfall due to the pandemic which will require cuts in the city budget. ([Bellingham Herald](#))
  - The next meeting of the Bellingham City Council is scheduled for Sept. 14, 7 pm.

- Whatcom County
  - The next meeting of the Whatcom County Council is scheduled for Sept. 15, 7 pm.
- Port of Bellingham
  - The Sept. 1 meeting of the Port Commission can be viewed on [YouTube](#).
  - The next meeting of the Port of Bellingham commissioners is scheduled for Sept. 15.
- City of Mount Vernon finance director Doug Volesky reported that while sales tax revenues did not drop as much as expected, they will be 25% less than originally forecasted by the end of the year. ([Skagit Valley Herald/playwall](#))
- Local elected officials Rep. Debra Lekanoff (D-40), Sen. Liz Lovelett (D-40), Friday Harbor mayor Farhad Ghatan and San Juan County commissioner Jamie Stephens discussed a slew of state and local issues on a mid-September Zoom forum sponsored by the Orcas Women's Coalition. ([Islands Weekly](#))

## Nature

- Invasive European green crabs have invaded Samish Bay in Skagit County. After a few were found in 2019 at Taylor Shellfish Farm, this year 88 have been found. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#)) Four green crabs were found this week in neighboring Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- Asian giant hornet sightings continue in Birch Bay as workers start appearing for the fall. The two most recent sightings occurred Aug. 18 and 19, bringing the total count of confirmed hornet detections in Washington state to nine. ([The Northern Light](#))

## Community

- A free, first-come first-served passenger ferry funded by the Port of Bellingham to provide transport from Point Roberts to Blaine has proven so popular that a larger boat will be used on a twice-a-week schedule. ([NW News Network](#)) See also: "'I Am Stuck Until That Border Opens': Marooned in Paradise" ([NY Times](#))
- Swinomish fisherman Michael Smith Jr. spent three days adrift on a stranded boat that floated into Canadian waters in mid-August and was held for six days in BC until being allowed to return home. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))
- The Whatcom County Public Utility District No. 1 Board met in mid-August with the representatives of the Skagit Utility District, Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham and a local citizen advocate to discuss local broadband internet access and what attempts have been made to improve it. ([My Ferndale News](#)) See also: "Students, teachers step up to remote-learning challenges — with help — as school year begins" ([Salish Current](#))
- Twenty-six childcare providers in the county will receive grants totaling \$670,316 from CARES Act funds pooled by Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham as the Whatcom ReStart grant program. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

- The San Juan County LTC Care Coordination Network has received a \$750,000 three-year grant from the federal Health Resources and Services Administration to carry out a suite of solutions for long-term care in San Juan County. ([San Juan Journal](#))

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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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