

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers — This week's featured stories are brought to you by a combination of "old hands" and "new hands": Heather Spaulding is a San Juan Islander who has written for the *Journal of the San Juan Islands* and penned an earlier story in these pages on local food banks during COVID. Our "new hand" is Rowan Forsythe, a journalism student at Western Washington University. Both Rowan's story on affordable housing and homelessness and Heather's story on opioid addiction are the kinds of timely, indepth looks *Salish Current* provides for our readers. Please share these stories with others to help build our readership and please make a [donation](#) to help pay our freelancers for their work. *Thank you* — Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor.

News from the *Salish Current*, April 16, 2021

[Caught in a web of causes: homelessness hits harder than ever](#)



Advocates for people living in a tent encampment on the front lawn at Bellingham City Hall earlier this winter rallied for housing as social justice.

By Rowan Forsythe — The growing presence of unhoused individuals and their expanding footprint into residential neighborhoods has shocked and bewildered others in the community, while the urgency of the problem threatens to distract from understanding the underlying realities perpetuating this crisis. ([read more](#))

[Pandemic job loss, quarantine, anxieties fuel opioid use surge](#)



Facilities for helping those with drug addictions have been greatly needed as use of some substances has surged during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Swinomish Indian Tribal Community's didgwálic Wellness Center, which offers counseling for substance abuse for tribe members and others, is among local options.

By Heather Spaulding — The physical and emotional toll wreaked by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown measures has been accompanied by an increase in opioid use and related deaths over the past year — after five years of decline — in Washington state. At the same time, use of even more dangerous synthetic opioids is becoming more prevalent, making the increased use even more hazardous. ([Read more.](#))

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

News from around the region:

Health & Safety

Whatcom County 4/16/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 11.0/100K
San Juan County 4/16/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 19.0/100K
Skagit County 4/16/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk 14.2/100K

Education

Bellingham School District on Thursday announced its schedule for grades 4-12 with accommodations made for full-time in-person attendance by high school and middle school students where space allows. ([Bellingham School District](#))

Government

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council met on April 12. [Agenda items](#) included:

[Ordinance] The council adopted an amended ordinance relating to hazard pay for grocery workers ([Whatcom News](#)) (4-2-1, Knutson and Vargas nay, Hammill excused)

[Report] Council Member Lilliquist reported that the Whatcom Transportation Authority is planning to resume fare collections, most likely starting in June.

[Report] Mayor Fleetwood reported that the administration is working with the County to establish a Racial Equity Commission led by the Chuckanut Health Foundation. An interlocal agreement is expected to be on the April 20 County Council's meeting agenda and come before the City Council for approval at the April 26 meeting.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council will meet on April 20. [Agenda items](#) include:

[Public Hearing] [Ordinance](#) granting Trans Mountain Pipeline (Puget Sound) LLC, a nonexclusive franchise for pipeline facilities

[Public Hearing] [Ordinance](#) imposing an interim moratorium on the acceptance and processing of permit applications for new or expanded recreational cannabis growing and/or processing facilities which are proposed to operate outdoors or in greenhouses

[Consent Agenda] Request [authorization](#) for the County Executive to enter into a contract between Whatcom County and Chuckanut Health Foundation to create recommendations on the establishment of a countywide Racial Equity Commission in the amount of \$90,000

[Consent Agenda] Request [authorization](#) for the County Executive to enter into an interlocal agreement with the City of Bellingham to support, develop and fund a process to create recommendations on the establishment of a countywide Racial Equity Commission in an amount not to exceed \$45,000

Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham will meet on April 20. [Agenda items](#) include:

[Consent Agenda] Approval of a motion to write off the [delinquent account balances](#) for Bellhaven Inc. in the amount of \$26,775.26 and Seafarms International in the amount of \$17,365.74.

[Presentations] Q1 Financial Update, Waterfront District Update; Port Security Budget Update

[Action Item] Appropriate \$75,738.51 that was donated to the Port to construct the [Peter Paulson Stage](#) near the digesters in the Waterfront District.

State Legislature

The Washington Legislature approved a measure to ban the use of Native American names, symbols and images as school mascots, logos and team names at most public schools in Washington. Rep. Debra Lekanoff (40-D) introduced HR1356. ([Associated Press](#))

\$1.25 million funding to adjudicate water issues in the Nooksack basin and Lake Roosevelt is included in legislation (ESSB 5092) that has passed both House and Senate and is in reconciliation. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Nature

Washington Department of Agriculture proposes that all hornets, including "murder hornets," be added to the list of quarantined pests under new rules. ([Associated Press](#))

Expect some traffic delays when culverts under Interstate 5 and State Route 11 in south Bellingham are replaced to allow salmon and other fish to travel upstream on Padden Creek. ([Washington State Department of Transportation](#))

The city of Anacortes is drafting a legal agreement between the city and the state that will initiate a series of steps leading to cleanup of the contamination in the city's old A Avenue landfill. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

The Skagit Land Trust has purchased 50 acres at the entrance to Samish Island and will manage it with 34 acres purchased previously as the Samish Island Conservation Area. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Fewer sick or dead birds across Washington and other Northwest states means backyard bird feeders can be put back up, according to the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. ([Seattle Times](#))

Business

Housing real estate inventory in San Juan County dropped to 55% over the previous year due to pandemic demand, while pending sales grew by 39%. ([San Juan Update](#))

Whatcom County Superior Court rejected a project application from the Phillips 66 Ferndale Refinery to install a 300,000-barrel crude oil storage tank and an 80,000-barrel floating storage tank for fuel oil in a tank farm within the refinery at Cherry Point. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

Community

A three-part series, "Divided Together," looks at the urban-rural divide in the United States through the lens of one town: Lynden, Washington. Divided Together: Welcome to Lynden, the Washington town where Trump visited in 2016 [Part 1](#); Divided Together: A 'March for Black Lives' comes to a small, conservative town [Part 2](#); Divided Together: Some rural residents turn to each other, not experts, for COVID-19 guidance [Part 3](#).

Lummi Nation carvers and allies will take a Red Road journey ending in June in Washington, D.C., and a presentation of a totem pole to President Biden. ([Seattle Times](#))

How has COVID-19 affected local nonprofit organization like Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Services, Bellingham Arts Academy for Youth, Whatcom Family Community Network, CASCADIA International Women's Film Festival, Lummi Island Heritage Trust, Lighthouse Mission Ministries and others? ([Western Front](#))

Jump In!

Join the more than 1 billion people worldwide who are celebrating this year's global Earth Day theme of "Restore Our Earth," by improving local wildlife habitat in the Bellingham community on April 22, 23 or 24. Check out the City of Bellingham's Parks Volunteer Program [here](#).

Like this newsletter? Share it. And it's easy to subscribe by reply mail. Your email address will never be shared and you can unsubscribe at any time. Mike Sato.

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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