

Salish Current

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

Dear Readers:

It's been quite a week: We were among several hundred guests at the visit this week by the House of Tears Carvers on their Red Road to D.C. journey to present their totem pole to President Biden, and we hope we've captured in our photos and text some of the inspiration we felt. Despite legislative and gubernatorial twists and turns, we're also happy to share a detailed and very readable story by writer **Jacqueline Allison** about major state legislation and funding to bring broadband connections to underserved rural areas. We've published a letter from The Willows Inn on Lummi Island responding to the less-than-flattering *New York Times* article in April, and we've linked below in the "Commentary" section to columns about the primary election and to the need for broadband connectivity. The sum of this effort is to provide you with real news and informed commentary that help build a strong and vibrant community. Thanks for being part of that community. Please invite others to read [Salish Current](#) (it's free to read) and [support us](#) to the extent you can. Thank you.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher, and Mike Sato, Managing Editor

News from the Salish Current, week of May 28, 2021

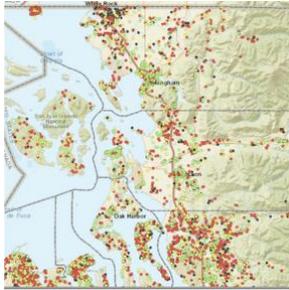
[House of Tears Carvers visit Bellingham with totem pole bound for DC](#)



An eagle in the House of Tears Carvers totem pole to be delivered to the Biden administration in Washington, D.C., this summer represents a particular style of leadership: led by the people. Inlays of copper, a potlatch symbol, from Canada demonstrate cross-border relationships.

By Amy Nelson — Several hundred people took part in an opportunity in Bellingham to view a totem pole created by Lummi carvers — the latest stop in the [Red Road to D.C.](#) tour of the Pacific Northwest and across the U.S. [Read more.](#)

Major funding, new policies aim to provide ‘basic necessity’ of broadband



Dots on the [Washington Broadband Access and Speed Survey map](#) indicate download speeds reported in various localities: green indicates high speed (more than 500 Mbps) or medium (25-500 Mbps); yellow indicates low (10-25 Mbps); red, very low (0-10 Mbps); and black, no service.

By *Jacqueline Allison* — State legislators approved a record \$411 million in the capital budget this session to expand high-speed internet across the state, in particular in communities with limited or zero connectivity. [Read more.](#)

Letter to the Editor / The Willows Inn responds to the New York Times article

Salish Current reprints a letter sent by the restaurant to a past patron about incidents and allegations reported in the newspaper's article in April. [Read the letter here.](#)

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

Officials in British Columbia have announced a gradual easing of COVID-19 restrictions in four steps, now that 60% of B.C.'s adult population has been vaccinated with at least one dose. ([KNKX](#)) According to editor Pat Grubb of *The Northern Light*, "While there has been no official word, a highly placed source in the Blaine port of entry told local immigration attorney Len Saunders on May 25 that the U.S. intends to unilaterally open the land border without restrictions between the U.S. and Canada on June 22." ([The Northern Light](#))

A family with property in Florida and on Vancouver Island purchased video advertising in border towns across the U.S.-Canada border this week pushing politicians to reopen the border. The 30-second ads are expected to begin running in Canadian border towns next week. ([Whatcom News](#))

The Whatcom County Health Department says the federal Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) does not prevent them from asking about your health information, nor does it prevent them from requiring vaccinations or masking. ([KGMI](#))

Whatcom County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) High risk; 13.5/100K; 50.6% vaccinated
San Juan County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 2.4/100K; 68.8% vaccinated
Skagit County 5/21/21 [COVID ActNow](#) Medium risk; 9.7/100K; 49.0% vaccinated

Education

Western Washington University's Legacy Review Task Force has until May 31 to submit their recommendations to the Board of Trustees and university president Sabah Randhawa for renaming of the University's Huxley College of the Environment building. ([Western Front](#))

Government

San Juan County

As of May 20, the San Juan County Charter Review Commission had approved 19 potential changes to the charter. ([San Juan Journal](#)) The commission will hold [online public meetings](#) from 4 to 6 p.m. on June 1 and 2. See also: "'Bold' ideas around equity, environment proposed as San Juan reviews its county charter" ([Salish Current](#))

City of Bellingham

The Bellingham City Council and its committees met on May 24. [Agenda items](#) included:

[22917] The Council authorized (6-0-1, Hammill excused) the Mayor to enter into an Inter-Agency Agreement with the Department of Ecology for National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Funding for the Little Squalicum Estuary Project.

[22999] The Council awarded (6-0-1, Hammill excused) a bid for Post Point Chlorine Gas Replacement to Hawk Mechanical and authorized the Mayor to enter into a contract with them for \$2,795,644.

[23000] The Council approved (6-0-1, Hammill excused) interim housing strategies (i.e., shelter) for those experiencing homelessness.

[22596] The Council adopted (6-0-1, Hammill excused) an ordinance to reduce single-use plastic waste in Bellingham and to encourage compostable or reusable alternatives.

The next meeting of the City Council and its committees is scheduled for June 7.

Whatcom County

The Whatcom County Council will meet on June 1. [Agenda items](#) include:

[[AB2021-261](#)] The Council will hold a public hearing on an ordinance granting Cellco Partnership d/b/a Verizon Wireless, a non-exclusive franchise for the provision of wireless telecommunications services.

[[AB2021-278](#)] & [[AB2021-279](#)] The Council will hold public hearings on proposed ordinances to be placed on the November ballot amending petition-gathering requirements to be based on a percentage of the votes cast in the last county executive election rather than the gubernatorial election.

[[AB2021-316](#)] By Consent: Authorize the County Executive to purchase a Conservation and Public Access Easement from the Whatcom Land Trust for the Upper Skookum Creek property, in the amount of \$1,250,000.

CORRECTING LAST WEEK'S NOTICE OF COUNCIL ACTION:

Whatcom County Council voted 5-2 to table discussion on the Drayton Harbor no-shooting zone for two weeks. The decision, opposed by councilmembers Todd Donovan and Carol Frazey, followed councilmembers' debate that included extending the current 300-foot buffer zone, which doesn't allow shooting within 300 feet of the shoreline, to 1,000 feet. County councilmembers also voted 6-1, with Frazey opposed, for a two-week voting hold on the proposed Dearborn no-shooting zone, near Drayton Harbor and Dakota Creek. ([Northern Light](#))

Port of Bellingham

[Minutes and video](#) of the May 18 Port of Bellingham Commission meeting include:

The Commission authorized (3-0) the Executive Director to execute Amendment No. 21 to the Professional Services Agreement with Landau Associates for consulting support at the Blaine Marina Inc. cleanup site in the amount of \$155,200 for a total authorized budget of \$1,767,340.

Staff briefed the commissioners on the \$300,000 state Strategic Reserve Fund Grant used to provide Grande West Transportation a subsidy for locating locally their electric bus line which will bring about 20 new jobs to the county.

Staff presented state grant options to establish a launch-vessel dock and possible location in Fairhaven in association with the Community Boating Center.

The Commission amended (3-0) the 2021 capital budget to (1) appropriate \$1,891,837 for the Fairhaven Hand Launch Vessel Dock Project, (2) allocate (\$500,000) from the Aquatic Lands Enhancement Account (ALEA) grant, and (3) delete the 2023 Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program grant budget line item in the amount of (\$500,000) and other associated 2023 budget line items. The Commission authorized (3-0) the Executive Director to execute a grant agreement with Washington Recreation and Conservation Office to receive an ALEA Grant to support the Fairhaven Hand Launch Vessel Dock Project.

The Port Commission is next scheduled to meet on June 3 and June 18.

Elections

The filing period for the August 8 primary election closed at 5 p.m. on May 21. In some jurisdictions where there are offices scheduled for election and no candidates file during filing week, a special three-day filing period was extended. The August 8 primary election will only list those positions where more than two candidates filed.

Whatcom County: [Who Has Filed](#)

Skagit County: [Who Has Filed](#)

San Juan County: [Who Has Filed](#)

Nature

Western Washington University's Salish Sea Institute has released the [State of the Salish Sea](#) report, the first comprehensive, scientific overview of the health of the Salish Sea since the 1994 *Shared Waters Report*.

Entomologists at the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) said there was a likelihood giant "murder" hornets would be found in areas beyond Whatcom County. ([KIRO](#))

Local governments from La Conner to Hamilton dependent upon the Skagit River are joining in opposition to potential mining in the river's headwaters in British Columbia. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Elissa Claassen writes: "Portage and Eliza Islands retain more elements of a primitive nature in contrast to the hustle and bustle of nearby Bellingham. What do you know about the far-less-frequented islands in Bellingham Bay?" ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Business

President Joe Biden signed into law legislation allowing large cruise ships to sail directly from Washington state to Alaska without stopping in Canada. ([KNKX](#)) American Constellation, operated by American Cruise Lines, docked at the Port of Anacortes, one of seven stops along the company's eight-day Puget Sound and San Juan Islands cruise. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Amtrak begins rail service from Seattle eastward and southward but service north from Seattle to Everett, Mount Vernon and Bellingham remains suspended. ([Seattle Times](#))

Part of the Drayton Harbor Shellfish Growing Area at Blaine fails state health criteria to be an Approved classification. Other parts of Drayton Harbor and the Portage Bay growing areas at the mouth of the Nooksack River are threatened with downgrades in classification. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Commentary

Tim Johnson writes in Cascadia Weekly: "Filing week has concluded, and some seats for Bellingham City Council have been decided with no election at all. The candidates who have stepped forward, however, bring a welcome range of diversity (and passion for the city's most pressing and continuing issues of equity and social justice) to City Council." ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

The Seattle Times Editorial Board in a call to bring broadband to all homes writes: "The past year in pandemic has proved that broadband access is a necessity, not a luxury. Despite a flurry of federal, state, local and volunteer efforts, thousands of Washingtonians still don't have reliable access to high-speed internet service." ([Seattle Times](#))

Jump in!

Check out Ecology's storyboard "[Skagit Valley's Warming Waters](#)" and learn about keeping the Skagit wild and cool.

Community

RE Sources annually holds its Environmental Heroes Awards celebrating the accomplishments of individuals in Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan counties whose work has had significant, lasting impact. This year's honorees at the June 9 online event <https://www.re-sources.org/environmental-heroes> are Darrell Hillaire, Mary Ruth Holder and London Fletcher. ([Cascadia Weekly](#))

Lighthouse Mission plans to build a new 75,000-square-foot facility in the place of its existing buildings in the Old Town sections of Bellingham to create space for local service providers serving the homeless community and to relocate its emergency facility, Base Camp. ([KGMI](#))

Bellingham Public Library has received a Certificate of Substantial Completion for the Central Branch main floor remodel project. Bellingham Public Library plans to reopen the Central Library on June 7 for limited in-person services. ([Bellingham Library](#))

Reef-net fishing technology is unique to the Salish Sea, where it was devised at least 1,800 years ago as a way to intercept vast midsummer runs of sockeye salmon as they passed through the San Juans and southern Gulf Islands on their way to the Fraser River. (History Link [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#))

The signing of the Treaty of Washington on June 15, 1846, created Point Roberts and this June Point Roberts celebrates its 175th birthday. ([All Point Bulletin](#))

Arts & Leisure

The Bellingham Festival of Music invites you to a free virtual concert by the Calidore String Quartet, starting at noon May 30 and extending to June 27. [Click here](#) to view the concert and make a donation, too.

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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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