



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

News of the week: April 1, 2022

Dear Reader —

Today, on April Fool's Day, we may have been fooled by tricksters; tomorrow we're taking the day to celebrate [International Fact-Checking Day](#).

Promoted by the International Fact-Checking Network, Fact-Checking Day is a rallying cry for more truth in public health, journalism and everyday life.

Nobody can be against that, can they?

The trouble is, some people seem to choose their own facts about elections, COVID vaccines, history, education, climate and such.

Facts are the foundation of a news story. Any real news organization has at least one editor checking facts; otherwise it isn't journalism. At *Salish Current*, we rely on multiple levels of edit for each article and lean heavily into the expertise and experience of ace copyeditor Lane Morgan.

Does it matter? We know it does. Without an agreed-upon universe of facts from which to engage in discussion and debate, you don't have much of a discussion.

Trust in our process of discussion and decision-making relies on an agreed-upon universe of facts. If you can't agree on the facts, how can you trust the process of decision-making — or the resulting decisions?

We have seen the serious problems created these last few years when we don't agree on the facts, and discussions generate heat, not light.

Salish Current will stand with Sgt. Joe Friday of "Dragnet" every day and say, "All we want are the facts, ma'am."

As Walter Cronkite might say, "That's the way it is."

Thank you for reading. If you can, please support *Salish Current* with a donation. We're free to read and free from advertising.

And, if you'd like more news, here you are:

[Salish Sea News Week in Review 4/1/22](#): Spaghetti tree, Electron Dam, Woodfibre LNG, listening to orcas, sea lice, Taylor's checkered butterfly, financing fossil fuels, California carbon cut, freshwater mussels, Howard Hanson Dam, restoring water quality standards.

— Amy Nelson, Publisher

News from the *Salish Current*

[Refugee resettlement group works to meet growing needs](#)



Busy from Day One: The Afghan refugee crisis followed soon after by displacement of Ukrainians greeted the founding of World Relief Western Washington in Whatcom County; from left, local WRWW staff members church and community

organizer Zahra Maxwell, resettlement manager Steven Shetterly and resettlement specialist Charity Garza.

By Kenneth Duncan — In barely six months of existence, the Whatcom County office of World Relief Western Washington has assisted 30 Afghan refugees in building new lives — and its staff expect to resettle 75 more refugees by September. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / A second chance](#)



Gary, currently the house manager for the Light House Mission but previously homeless for many years, stands on the entry steps of the mission, at the corner of F and West Holly streets in Bellingham.

By John Dunne — Sharing the story: A rough road from abuse during an upper-middle-class childhood to an adult life of "camping out," estrangement from loved ones and time in prison have led one man to the Light House Mission, a new sense of purpose and a better time of life. ([Read more.](#))

[Community Voices / Making community whole again during a time of plagues](#)



"And that's the way it is...." Too young to remember mid-20th-century broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite and his trademark nightly sign-off phrase? Much that Cronkite, often noted as one of the most trusted people in the nation in his time, had to

say is still relevant; notably, "Journalism is what we need to make democracy work."

By Derek Moscato — Salish Current's recent Trust 2022 forum on media and democracy highlighted ongoing challenges the news industry faces — but also charted a pathway for how local newsrooms can potentially revitalize our civic life and institutions, notes Community Voices contributor Derek Moscato. ([Read more.](#))

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

News from around the region

Health and Safety

As of April 1, eligible travelers no longer need a PCR or antigen COVID-19 test to enter Canada. [\(CBC\)](#)

The Center for Communicable Diseases says that the BA.2 subvariant now accounts for 58.9% of infections in Washington, Oregon and Idaho and is about 30% more transmissible than omicron. [\(KGMI\)](#)

COVID-19 testing patterns are changing as many individuals are choosing over-the-counter (OTC) COVID-19 tests across the county. The results from these OTC tests remain largely underreported, and therefore estimates of confirmed case counts and rates should be interpreted with caution. [\(Whatcom County Health Department\)](#)

Nevertheless, infection and vaccination rates for Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit counties [are found here.](#)

Education

The Lynden School District Board unanimously selected assistant superintendent David VanderYacht to serve as the district's superintendent. [\(Lynden Tribune/paywall\)](#)

Government

San Juan County

The county council will meet on April 5. [Agenda items](#) include:

- Approve a Resolution to dispose of surplus county personal property (the sheriff's boat) by direct sale. (Continuation of public hearing from March 22.)
- Discuss 2022 Point in Time homeless count results
- Approve Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee membership and planning process

City of Bellingham

The city council met on March 28. [Agenda items](#) included:

- Mayor Fleetwood reported on his field trip to the Anderson Creek [cleanup and restoration project](#) at the Lake Whatcom Reservoir.
- [Park repair](#). The council unanimously approved (Hammill excused) a resolution to apply for a \$500,000 Boulevard Park Shoreline Improvements Grant from the State Recreation and Conservation Office. The total cost of repair and restoration of the southern end of the park would total a million dollars, half of which would come from the city's property tax supported Greenways program. ([CDN](#))
- [Climate](#). The Climate Action Committee discussed ways the city could reduce its carbon pollution from 2000 levels by 40% and by 85% by 2050. To finance that effort with a property tax, Forrest Longman, the city's deputy finance director, told the council that a property tax would cost the owner of a \$500,000 home between \$186 and \$248 a year and raise \$6 million to \$8 million annually for climate change initiatives. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

The council will meet again on April 11.

Whatcom County

The council will meet again on April 12.

Port of Bellingham

The commission has postponed its meeting of April 5.

For the people

[Transportation](#). Gov. Jay Inslee last week signed a \$17 billion, 16-year transportation revenue bill that will pay

for projects statewide and build four hybrid electric ferries. ([Associated Press](#))

MMIWC. [HB 1725](#) was signed into law by Gov. Jay Inslee and creates an alert system for murdered and missing Indigenous people. The legislation was sponsored by Rep. Debra Lekanoff [D-40] and passed both houses unanimously. ([Bellingham Herald/paywall](#))

Sea grass. [SB 5619](#), the Kelp Forest and Eelgrass Meadow Conservation Initiative sponsored by Sen. Liz Lovelett [D-40], was signed into law by Gov. Inslee. The law will allow the Washington [Department of Natural Resources](#) to conserve or restore 10,000 acres of sea grass and kelp forests and meadows by 2040. ([Orcsonian](#))

Elections

San Juan County deputy Eric Peter announced his candidacy for county sheriff. ([Orcsonian](#))

[Public Disclosure Commission](#) Campaign Contributions as of March 31, 2022:

LD 42 Senate Campaign

Ben Elenbaas (R): Raised \$68,286, Spent \$7,133
Russ Działo (Other): Raised \$0.00, Spent \$0.00
Sharon Shewmake (D): Raised \$69,920, Spent \$6,272
Simon Sefzik (R): Raised \$51,241, Spent \$0.00

LD 42 House Campaign Position 1

Alicia Rule (D): Raised \$49,302, Spent \$12,851
Kamal Bhachu (R): Raised \$3,150, Spent \$299
Tawsha Dykstra Dawson (R): Raised \$8,070, Spent \$528

LD 42 House Campaign Position 2

Dan Johnson (R): Raised \$19,173, Spent \$1,048
Joe Timmons(D): Raised \$31,894, Spent \$3,893
Kyle Christensen (R): Raised \$5,911, Spent \$1,847
Richard May (D): Raised \$44,316, Spent \$7,329

LD 40 House Campaign Position 1

Debra Lekanoff (D): Raised \$20,405, Spent \$17,957,
Debt \$1,000

LD 40 House Campaign Position 2

Alex Ramel (D): Raised \$44,110, Spent \$7,178
Trevor Smith (D): Raised \$0.00, Spent \$0.00

Nature

Frog. Whatcom County is home to some of the few remaining populations in Washington state of the Oregon spotted frog which has lost more than 78% of its original range. Listed in 201r under the ESA, its decline has been linked to the invasive bullfrog and reed canary grass, as well as loss and degradation of breeding habitat due to human impacts. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Heronry. The City of Bellingham will purchase for \$768,000 about 1.75 acres of forest near the Post Point Sewage Plant to protect the nesting site of resident Great Blue Herons. ([City of Bellingham](#))

Business

Semiahmoo. A proposed development called Semiahmoo Highlands would include up to 500 residential units and retail and commercial services on 353 acres southwest of the Semiahmoo Golf and Country Club. ([CDN](#))

Semiahmoo, too. The Blaine City Council unanimously gave final plat approval for the Muirfield subdivision in Semiahmoo which will begin building 10 luxury custom-designed homes in April in a gated community in the Semiahmoo uplands, across from the Turnberry Wood neighborhood. ([The Northern Light](#))

Housing. As of February, the median closed sale price of homes and condos in the Anacortes listing region was \$652,000 compared to \$619,350 a year ago, still significantly higher than most of Skagit County. ([Anacortes American](#)) See also: "Affordable housing—however defined—is in short supply in Skagit County" March 24, 2022 ([Salish Current](#))

Money. This month's Bellingham City Club presentation, "Crypto and NFTs 101: Currency of the Future or High-Risk Investment?" is now available for [viewing](#).

Development. The City of Blaine had collected six months of building permit fees by the end of February in large part due to policy decision in code amendments that support growth. ([The Northern Light](#))

Railroad. The BNSF Railway international rail line through Sumas is back in service after three months of repair and cleanup work after November's flooding. ([Lynden Tribune/paywall](#))

Community

Tulips. Skagit Valley Tulip Festival begins today, April 1, and runs through April 30. ([Skagit Valley Tulip Festival](#))

Tulips, too. A century ago, Whatcom County was the main draw for Western Washington tulip-seekers. Beginning in 1920 and ending in 1929, Bellingham's annual Tulip Festival celebrated the dawning of spring with parades, pageantry and other festivities. ([Whatcom Talk](#))

Water. Episode 3 of the Department of Ecology's Water Law 101 podcast addresses the complexity of balancing the supply and demands of various interests on our water. [Learn here.](#)

Houseless. The 2022 San Juan County "Point-In Time" Homeless Count identified 146 people who have no stable place to live, an increase from the 2020 count of 133. ([San Juan County/San Juan Journal](#)) See also: "Risk of homelessness high for many in the San Juan Islands" March 18, 2022 ([Salish Current](#))

Arts and Leisure

RARE: Recycled Arts Resource Expo. Opening April 1, 6-9 p.m., 1418 Cornwall Ave. RARE highlights creative reuse in the form of art through an exhibit at the Allied Arts Gallery and at its [virtual gallery](#) April 1-30.

[Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival](#) and the Pickford Film Center partner to present the films: "Inhabitants" (April 14), "First Time Home" (April 16), and "Youth v Gov" (April 21). Attendance by donation.

Jump in!

Check out the [program schedule](#) for the three-day virtual Salish Sea Ecosystem Conference conference April 26, 27, 28. Registration [deadline](#) is April 20.

**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, Managing Editor**

Salish Current is a nonprofit online newsroom serving Whatcom, San Juan and Skagit Counties. Founded in 2020, *Salish Current* exists to protect and improve democratic governance by reporting and curating local news — freely accessible to all — with independence and strict journalistic integrity.

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