



News from the *Salish Current* for the week ending Jan. 15, 2021:

Dear Readers — Like many of you, we have been often staggered by the rush of events and the flood of news in the last 10 days. We don't cover national and state news but we are a community platform that is a forum for the thoughtful exchange of ideas and views. We think that benefits the health of our community. If you think there are others in your family, professional or social circles who would find original news reporting, curated news clipping and thoughtful community commentary of interest, share this newsletter and encourage them to subscribe to this newsletter. It doesn't require a [donation](#) but that's always a nice thing. All it takes is a name and email. We'd like to grow our community that way. Thanks for reading. — Amy Nelson, publisher, and Mike Sato, managing editor.

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[Local MLK Day events set the stage for new year of racial justice action](#)



“Out of the mountain of despair, a stone of hope,” reads a monument to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Observances over the anniversary weekend of the civil rights leader's birthday help bring focus to social justice issues. (Pixabay photo)

By Stella Harvey — In 2020, a surge of racial justice protests against police brutality and systemic racism swept the U.S. as the nation endured a global pandemic and economic recession. In Whatcom County, community members and organizers gathered at rallies and marches June through October and continued to show up as the City of Bellingham crafted its budget in the fall and winter. The combination of potent social and political turmoil made many people eager to close the book on 2020 and emerge into a fresh year. Organizers and elected officials agree there is much more work to be done and are approaching the year with a variety of plans and changes in the works. ([Read more here.](#))

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Business has been good — if not better — for some local enterprises, despite pandemic



Pet supply stores are among businesses that are seeing increased online sales; Vivian Boggs, assistant manager of Bellingham’s petStop, restocks shelves. (Amy Nelson photo © 2021)

By Matt Benoit — The COVID-19 pandemic has affected nearly every part of society by changing the way we interact, work, play and shop. The hard numbers on the economic effects on businesses aren’t all in yet but, according to Kevin Hoult of Western Washington University’s Small Business Development Center, “broad sales tax data available now seems to indicate that small businesses are losing ground at the rate of 15-25% where box stores and grocery [stores] are increasing by similar amounts.” ([Read more here](#))

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Community Voices: Democracy in America

- Floyd McKay: Nixon and Trump, 1974 and 2020
- Jennifer Sefzik: Uniting a House Divided Against Itself
- Tony Angell: Democracy Is Not a Spectator Sport

The views expressed in the essays, analyses and opinions as Community Voices are those of the authors exclusively and not those of Salish Current. ([Read more here.](#))

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Editor's Desk: Democracy in America

We live in tumultuous times. Last weekend I asked people of various political persuasions to write about the state of our country’s democracy in advance of the inauguration. Because the request was on short notice, some folks were not available, others did not respond. You can read the Community Voices commentaries of those who did respond. ([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 and Safety

- The Canada-U.S. border will remain closed until at least Feb. 21 in an effort to curb rising cases of the novel coronavirus, Justin Trudeau said on Tuesday. ([Global News](#)) Also: Poll finds most Canadians want borders closed to vacationers ([Vancouver Sun](#))
- Whatcom County's COVID-19 cases are higher now than at any other point during the pandemic. ([Western Front](#))
- An agreement for Family Care Network to purchase land from the City of Blaine for a new clinic was extended to summer by the Blaine City Council in response to the company's need to focus on vaccinations rather than a new clinic. ([The Northern Light](#))

Government

- The San Juan County Council voted unanimously [on Tuesday](#) to enact a six-month moratorium on vacation rental permits during which time no new applications will be taken and no pending applications acted upon. Also: Council hosts first meeting of 2021 ([San Juan Journal](#))
- City of Bellingham
 - City council members Gene Knutson and Pinky Vargas announced that they will not seek re-election ([KPUG](#))
- Whatcom County
 - The Whatcom County Council met [on Jan. 12](#) and took the following actions:
- Nominated and appointed to the Climate Advisory Committee Katherine Kissinger, Ellen Murphy, Eddy Ury, William Bethel, Imran Sheikh, and Ginny Broadhurst. [AB2021-032]
- Nominated and appointed to the Planning Commission Atul Deshmane. [AB2021-037]

Nature

- To protect threatened and endangered species, NOAA Fisheries will require compensation for environmental damage calculated over the life of a shoreline structure, including its maintenance and reconstruction. ([Puget Sound Institute](#))
- The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed Dec. 1 listing the whitebark pine, found in high-elevation areas of east Skagit County, as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, while conservation groups filed several lawsuits against the agency in December over the threatened Canada lynx, the wolverine and the grizzly bear. ([Skagit Valley Herald/paywall](#))

Business

- McClatchy Corp., owners of *The Bellingham Herald*, the *News Tribune of Tacoma*, *The Olympian* and the *Tri-Cities Herald*, has filed a petition with the National Labor Relations Board requesting that the proposed union for newsroom staff be divided into four separate bargaining units, one at each newspaper. ([NW Citizen](#))
- Ridership aboard Washington State Ferries (WSF) last year fell to its lowest level since 1975. Nearly 14 million passengers sailed with WSF in 2020, down by 41% — about 10 million — from 2019. ([Seattle Times](#))
- Port of Bellingham commissioners increased Blaine Harbor's initial bulkhead repair budget from \$51,000 to \$115,000. The total project is expected to cost \$2.4 to \$2.6 million. ([The Northern Light](#))
- Two vessels broke from their mooring at Lovric's Sea-Craft Marina in Anacortes during Tuesday's windstorm, and one of the vessels — a 100-foot scallop tender — drifted into the Guemes Island ferry dock and sank west of the slip. A second vessel, the former U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Acushnet*, 213 feet, was secured at the Port of Anacortes. ([Anacortes American/paywall](#))

Community

- Jan. 14-16 and 18: Whatcom Human Rights Task Force (WHRTF) holds its 23rd annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. [Human Rights Conference](#). Participants meet virtually in a variety of workshops to discuss and learn more about issues raised at local protests over the summer.
- Jan. 18: City of Bellingham hosts a [virtual celebration](#) from Noon to 1 p.m. featuring music by Kulshan Chorus, blessing by Lummi tribal member Darrell Hillaire and Children of the Setting Sun, and remarks by Bellingham author and celebration founder Clyde Ford.
- Jan. 18: Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College and Bellingham Technical College host a Martin Luther King Jr. Day Special Event [Awakening the Legacy](#) at 1 p.m. The event features keynote speaker Ijeoma Oluo, WWU alumna and New York Times bestselling author of "So You Want to Talk About Race."
- Jan. 18: Racial Unity Now Lynden will host Pastor Charles Presley at [Race, Faith, and Reconciliation: an MLK-Day Zoom Event](#) at 7 p.m.

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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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