



Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission

Whatcom County Council

Public Hearing: AB2022-521

An Ordinance Adding A New Chapter 2.107 To The Whatcom
County Code To Create A Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

October 11th, 2022



Jul/ Aug 2020: City of Bellingham, Whatcom Count, & Prosecutor Eric Richey Conduct Listening Sessions

Oct. 2020: PHAB Drafts Resolution Affirming Racism as a Public Health Crisis. Referred to Committee by Health Board

Nov. 2020: Whatcom County/ Health Board pass Resolution Affirming Racism as a Public Health Crisis (6:1)

Mar. 2021: Whatcom County initiates RFP for the development of a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission

Apr. 2021: County Council UNANIMOUSLY approves contract with Chuckanut Health Foundation for the development of a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission (7:0)

May 2021: COMMUNITY VISIONING SUMMIT hosted. Hundreds attend.

Jun. 2021: First Stakeholder Meeting Convened. 35 community members engaged.

Aug. 2021: First Ask Me Anything hosted virtually.

Sept. 2021: Focus Group Process Designed by Stakeholders

Oct. 2021: First Focus Group Hosted

Dec. 2021: Council presented with an update on development process

Mar. 2022: 32nd Focus Group Conducted. Process included more than 100 community members.

Jun. 2022: 12th & Final Stakeholder meeting conducted.

Jul. 2022: Broad Community Survey Launched. Will engage more than 500 community members.

Jul. 2022: Council presented with an update on process including high-level recommendations from Stakeholders.

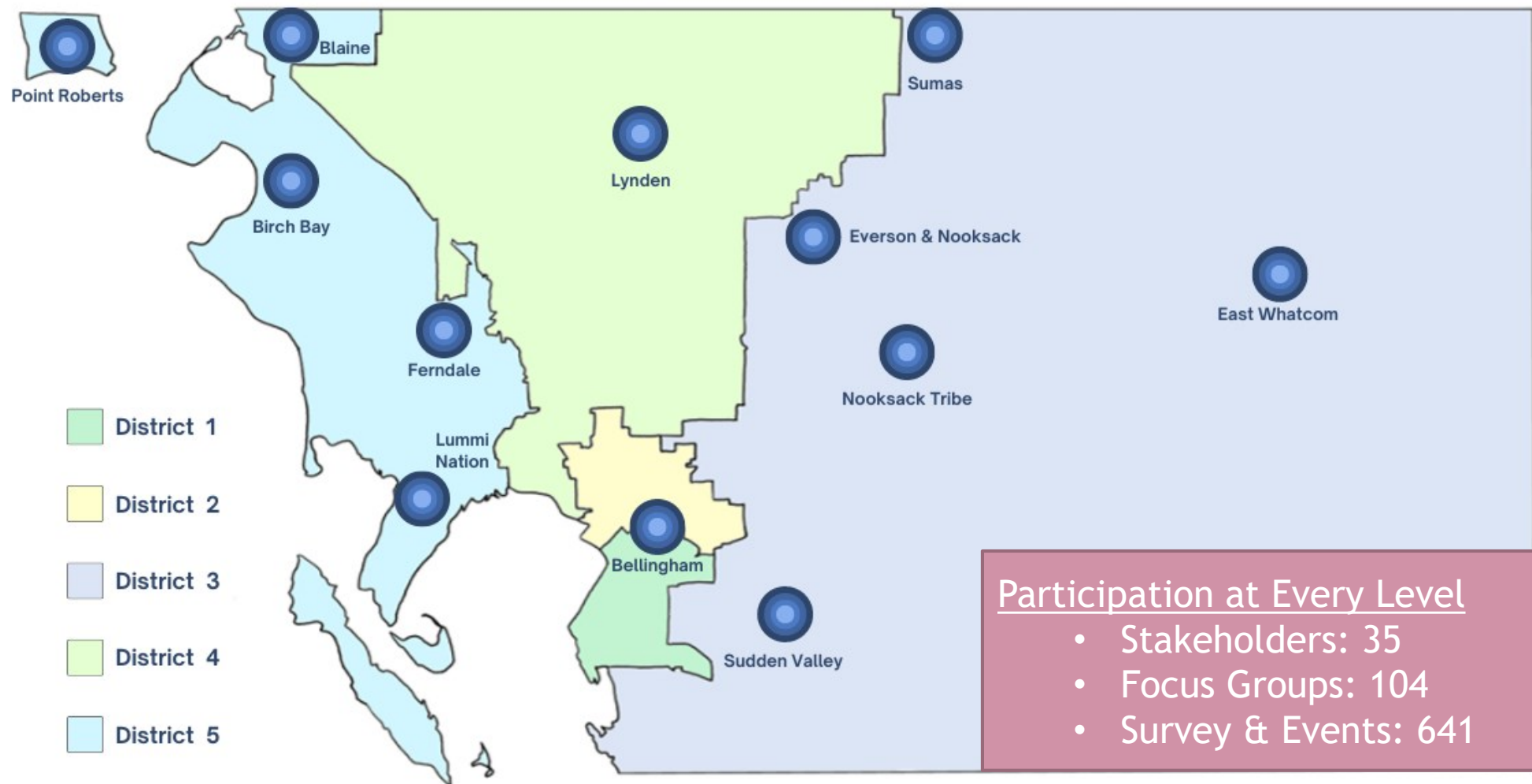
Aug. 2022: County Legal worked with CHF & Stakeholders to vet & revise establishing ordinance

Sept. 2022: Establishing Ordinance presented to & Introduced by County Council.

Oct. 2022: Final Ask Me Anything hosted

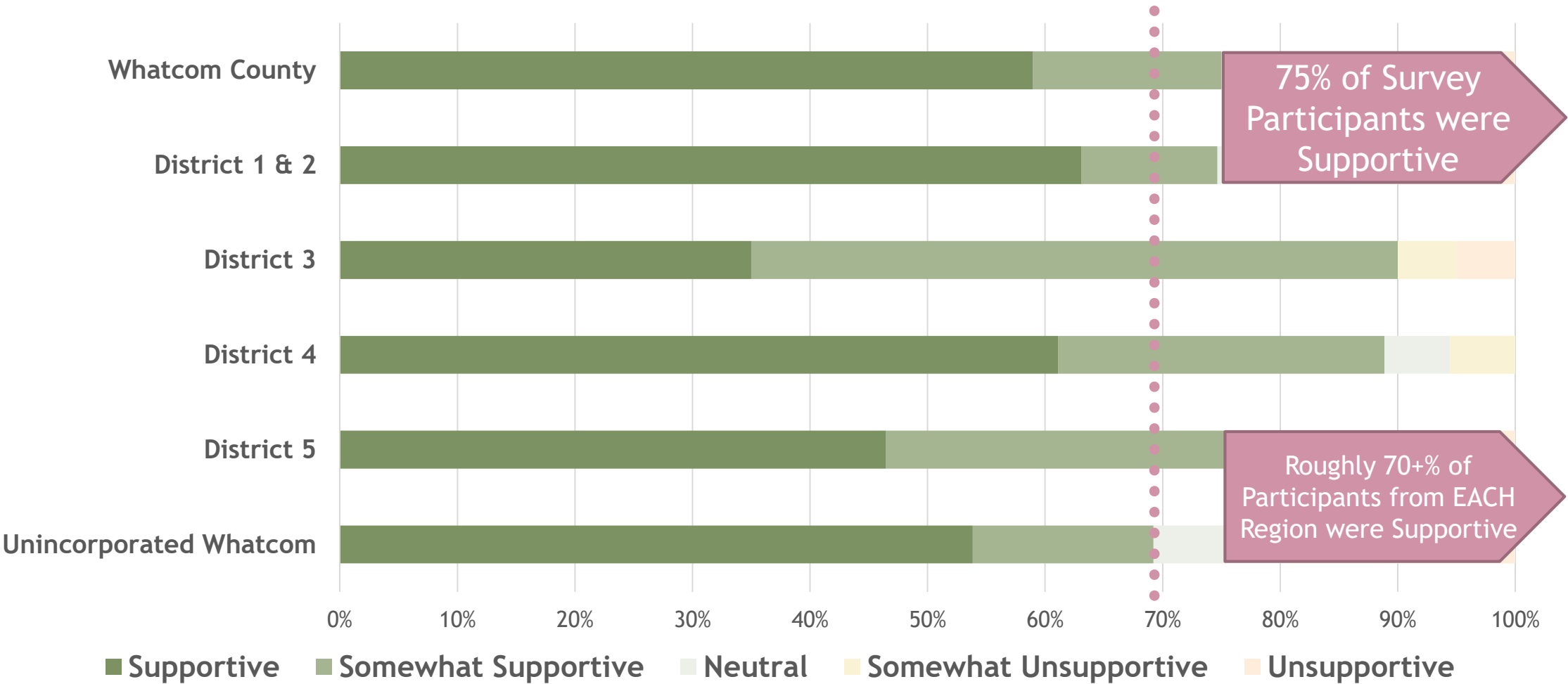
Oct. 11, 2022: Public Hearing on Establishing Ordinance

Participation from County Districts



There were participants in the process who identified that they were from areas of Unincorporated Whatcom County. Additionally, some participants lived Outside of the County, and have interests in the area which may include but are not limited to working or attending school.

How supportive are you of the formation of a Whatcom Racial Equity Commission?



Scope of Recommendations Developed by & with Community Members

Recommendations for the creating of a WREC that “will work to identify sources of racial inequity and advise County & City governments on strategies for addressing these inequities”

- Recommendations potentially including:
 - Founding docs/ Proposed legislative action
 - Appointment Process
 - Mission & Vision
 - Organizational & Fiscal Sustainability

The development process involve community outreach

- Engage Community Stakeholders
- Focus Groups & Public Surveys
- Broad Outreach Through Media

Work Identified in Health Board Resolution Affirming Racism as Public Health Crisis (section 4)

- ▶ **Implementing training** on the following topics for all elected officials, County staff and members of boards, commissions and committees: implicit bias, trauma informed practices, and review of health disparities.
- ▶ **Assessing and revising** County department policies, procedures, and ordinances to ensure racial equity and transparency are core elements.
- ▶ **Ensuring that hiring practices provide equitable opportunities** for people of color to be employed to help ensure the diversity in our workforce represents the diversity in our community.
- ▶ **Promote diversity of race within county boards and commissions.**
- ▶ Supporting community efforts to alleviate issues of racism and bias and **engaging actively and authentically with communities of color** wherever they live.
- ▶ **Building and strengthening alliances with other organizations** that are confronting racism and encouraging other agencies to recognize racism as a crisis, including considering County membership in the Government Alliance on Race and Equity (GARE), which is a national network of local government agencies working to achieve racial equity and advance opportunities for all. **Additionally, involve community representation and input in matters of historic and continued racial injustice.**

Incorporated into FUNCTION .040 of the Ordinance

Government Alliance on Race & Equity (GARE) criteria for race equity tools

A Racial Equity Tool:

- ▶ Proactively seeks to eliminate racial inequities and advance equity;
- ▶ Identifies clear goals, objectives and measurable outcomes;
- ▶ **Engages community in decision-making processes;**
- ▶ Identifies who will benefit or be burdened by a given decision, examines potential unintended consequences of a decision, and develops strategies to advance racial equity and mitigate unintended negative consequences; and,
- ▶ Develops mechanisms for successful implementation and evaluation of impact

Purpose of Racial Equity Tools:

- ▶ “... to integrate explicit consideration of racial equity in decisions, including policies, practices, programs, and budgets. It is both a product and a process. Use of a racial equity tool can help to develop strategies and actions that reduce racial inequities and improve success for all groups.”

Purpose .020

As a conduit for ongoing community collaboration, engagement, and education, within the broader context of diversity and inclusion, the purpose of the Whatcom Racial Equity Commission is to gather, review, and evaluate data and to make recommendations on eliminating racial inequities, in all its forms, throughout Whatcom County.

Function .040 (work of the Commission)

1. Serve as an advisory board to local government agencies, other organizations committed to the aims of the Commission, and the community with regard to racial equity.
2. Serve as a community forum on racial equity and create mechanisms to identify issues, concerns, needs, and resources.



Relationship Community & Government

3. Gather and analyze disaggregated qualitative and quantitative data to identify racial disparities and disproportionalities in the areas of concern.
4. Develop and propose to local government a coordinated and comprehensive plan to address racial inequity in Whatcom County. This plan shall include measurable objectives and indicators by which progress toward racial equity in all its aspects is to be measured. The Commission shall review and update the plan as necessary.
5. Develop strategies for implementing the plan, including a proposed timeline to achieve each equity objective, together with recommendations for shared governmental and community accountability for addressing racial disparities in Whatcom County.



Using Disaggregated Data to Drive Advisory Work

Function .040 (work of the Commission)

6. Provide recommendations to the Whatcom County Council and the Executive, to the Bellingham City Council and Mayor, and to relevant entities and jurisdictions concerning:
 - a) Revisions to organizational policies, procedures, and ordinances as may needed to promote transparency and diminish racial inequities that may exist.
 - b) Budget priorities that may be necessary to mitigate and prevent the impacts of racial inequities in local government.
 - c) Other policies that promote racial equity in response to emerging needs that may require new policies and flexibility in revising earlier proposals.



Scope of Recommending Capacity

Function .040 (work of the Commission)

7. Seek to increase community awareness of current and historical racial inequity, serving as a resource and conduit for education and public information.
8. Review and advise on strategies for reducing barriers to public participation in commissions, boards, task forces, committees, or similar groups established to participate in County government which function primarily as an advisory, coordinating, or planning capacity.

Bridging Community & Government

Accountability


9. Report work and progress to the community, Whatcom County and its jurisdictions, and the City of Bellingham on an annual basis.
10. Seek grants and other funds to support Commission work, in addition to the funds it receives from Whatcom County and City of Bellingham.

Resourced Through Public-Private Partnership



Quasi-Governmental Entities

Leaning into Public-Private Partnership

- Answering a public mandate or charge
 - Convening the work in a private sector entity
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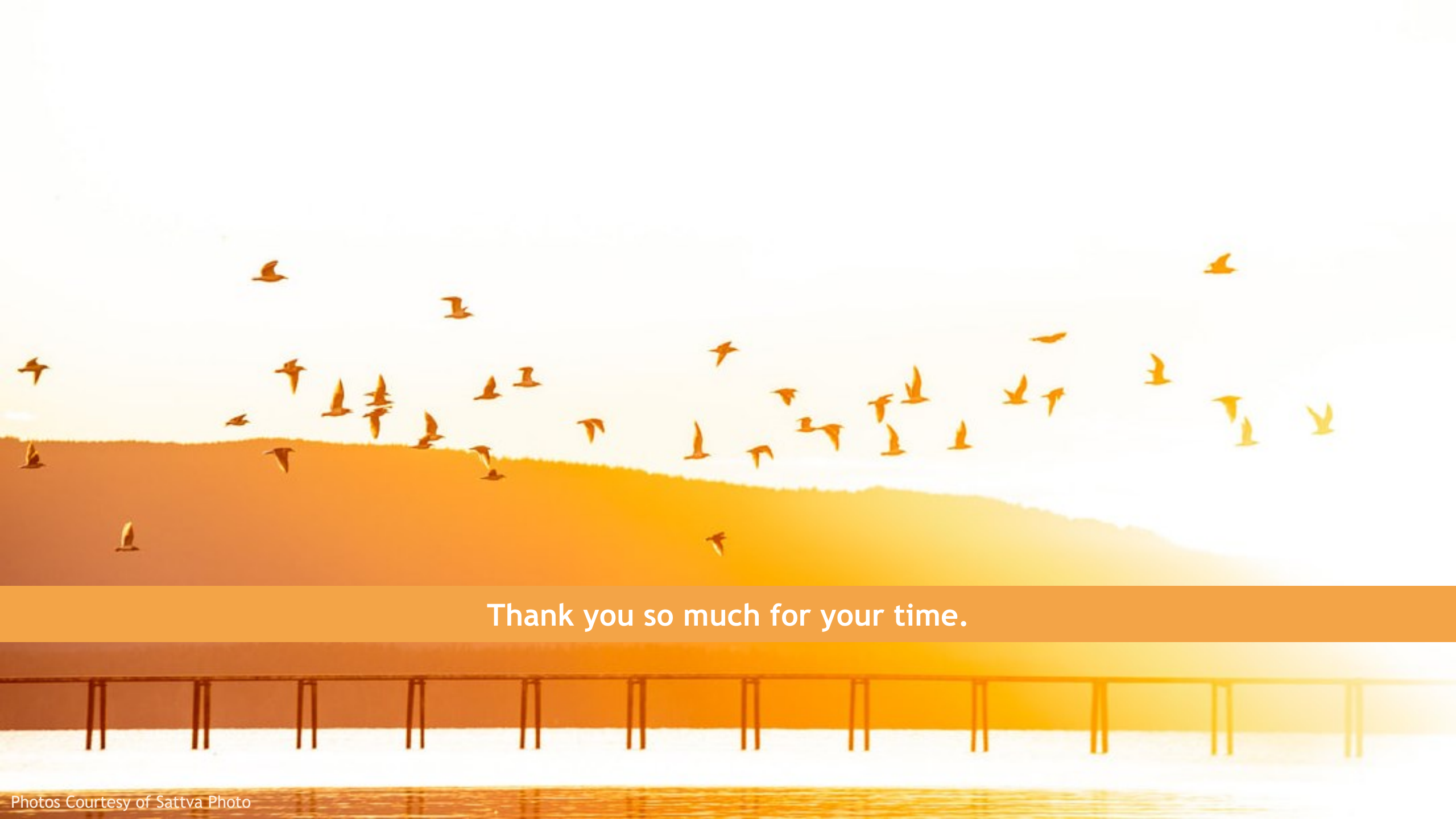
Our VISION Statement:

What do we hope for our neighbors?

People of all races in Whatcom County live, thrive, and belong for who they are, as they are.

Without fear. Every day.





Thank you so much for your time.