

Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission

Whatcom County Council
Committee of the Whole
September 27th, 2022





Photos Courtesy of Sattva Photo

“...belonging is an action word.”

“I think for me, belonging is an action word. It's not something that you see that's hung-up front of a business as part of a mission statement or a value statement, but it's about the actions of people and what you do.

...So belonging is actionable, and being able to invite people in, not specifically to your home, but just into whatever circle or wherever they are at that point. So, hearing people and treating people with respect and making people feel comfortable.”

-Law Enforcement Officer

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together. The hands are of a darker skin tone. The hand on the right is wearing a ring with a large, oval, light blue gemstone set in a silver band. The background is a mix of dark and light tones, suggesting an outdoor setting. The image is partially obscured by a white geometric shape on the left and a yellow and green geometric shape on the right.

Of the people By the people For the people

*Following the
Stakeholders' Leadership*



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.

Whatcom County



Survey & Events
641 participants



Stakeholder
35 participants



Focus Group
104 participants

District 1 & 2



Survey & Events
383 participants



Stakeholder
20 participants



Focus Group
62 participants

District 3



Survey & Events
95 participants



Stakeholder
7 participants



Focus Group
20 participants

District 4



Survey & Events
35 participants



Stakeholder
4 participants



Focus Group
7 participants

District 5



Survey & Events
57 participants



Stakeholder
4 participants



Focus Group
15 participants

Isabel Meeker (she/her) Heather Flaherty Aaron Ball (he/him) Mala Varjo (she/her) Chief Mario Orallo (he/him) Jason McGill (he/him/Hid)

Amanda Robins (She/Her) Sasha Savolan (she/her) Vernon "Damari" Johnson Matthew Niemi Minda Rae Amiran (she/her) Steve

Deb Anderson Eukia Lemaster (She/Her) Devyn Nason Erika Lautenbach (she/her) Gueva Jordan (she/her) Stephen Godfrey (he/him)

Sensia (she, Her) Pamela (she/her) CJ Seltz (She/Her) Small Bu Daja Heyward (She/They) Guy Occhiogrosso (he/him) Kristina Michele (She/Her)

Ramona (she, her) Cindy (she/her) Shu-Ling Zhao (she/her) Mike Wallace (he/him) Elie-She, Her D Tank (he/him)

Anya Milton (she/her/hers) Amy Rydel, she/her Tealay Morris (he/they) John Moon, (he/him) Turmy McAville Vinson Latimore

Batool Abdi Jenny Mwaonda, He/Him KOMALPREET K BRAR Blanca McCrear...

Home Stop Video Security Participants 40 Chat Share Screen Record Breakout Rooms Reactions Leave

Cultivating Community Voice

*Learnings from the
Focus Group Participants*

“We have the power to continue to bring out things that are positive, not trying to put things down and people but **let them blossom,** let them speak their piece, that we do have a voice.”



Cultivating a Community Framework

Identified Areas of Interest



Wrote Questions



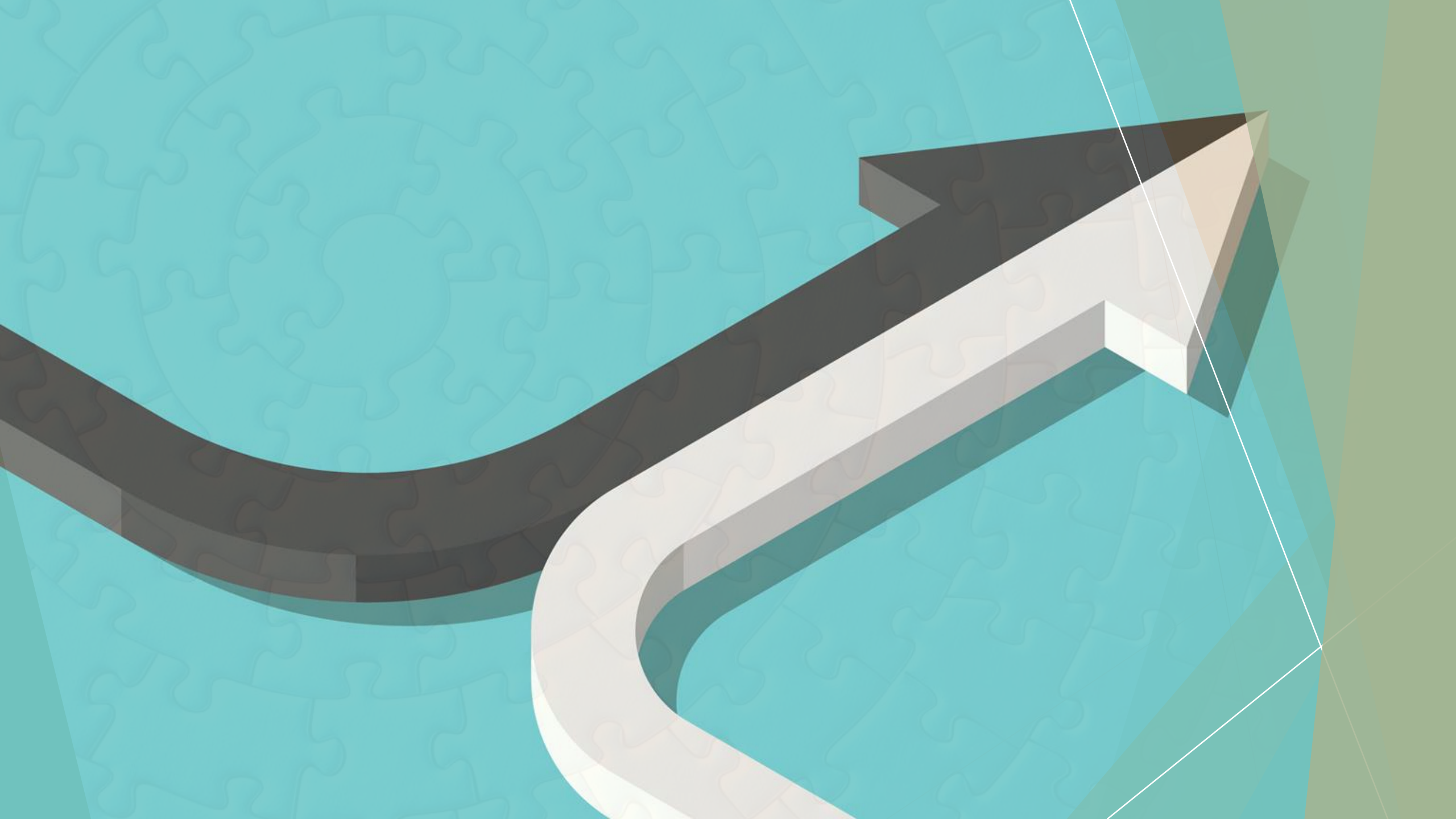
Identified Key Demographics



Engaged in Outreach



Facilitated Sessions







Centering on Story

*“...I think our worst enemy is ignorance.
If we don't educate people,
and if we don't share these stories.*

*I think racism is learned. And if it's learned
it could be relearned a different way.”
-Ferndale Community Member of Color*

Stories from Schools

- ▶ *“It was entire school systems within Whatcom County ... I was told by my bus driver, ‘you could wear your article of faith. [But], don't talk about it. Don't show it’. And that was it. And I was in fifth grade ...”*
- ▶ *“The most egregious stories I've ever heard about racism in this town in this county have come from kids I coached, and my own children telling me what happens in their classrooms, what things are said by teachers, by parent educators, by adults, and by other children.”*
- ▶ *“...my daughter was called a racial slur at recess by a little boy. And I knew that this day was going to come, but I didn't know it was going to come this quick ...”*

Stories from Health Care

- ▶ ***“People of color, and people in rural areas are feeling there's no health care north of Bellingham. When I had a major incident, I had to bandage myself up and drive to Bellingham to get to the hospital”***
- ▶ ***“I went to the hospital for two weeks...doctors were basically saying, ‘Oh, you're overreacting’, like ‘nothing's wrong with you.’ And I was actually very sick. ...And some doctor who was BIPOC actually listened to me. And they said, ‘Oh, this is your health issue.’”***
- ▶ ***“... some of my clients actually didn't even want to be involved with me as a counselor because they just completely lost trust in the system and were really traumatized by the experience of trying to better their health.”***
- ▶ ***“It's just a different demographic...I see white patients in clinic and black patients in the hospital.”***

Opportunities That Come From Equity

- ▶ *“When people don't have equitable access, then we're losing out as a community, because we're losing potential... And it's just such a loss of humanity when we don't give everybody equal value in terms of what they have to contribute.”*
- ▶ *“I certainly believe that all people should live free of fear ... I think that my vision is to provide as many platforms as possible for people to be successful, regardless of where they come from. And that means that they'll have opportunities to thrive in the community, in the county, and in our state and in the world that they live ...”*
- ▶ *“you think about the voice of all of us and all of our different ethnic backgrounds. And if we're all working together, we could be so much stronger than we could if we weren't working together.”*



Ideas & Opportunity

*Transitioning Community Wisdom
into an Ordinance*



INFORM

- Promise to the Public: *We will keep you informed.*



CONSULT

- Promise to the Public: *We will keep you informed and seek your feedback, concerns, and input.*



INVOLVE

- Promise to the Public: *We will see that your feedback and concerns are reflected in the work and influence decisions.*



COLLABORATE

- Promise to the Public: *We will work together to create solutions, incorporate your advice into the decisions to the extent possible.*



LEAD

- Promise to the Public: *We will implement what you decide.*

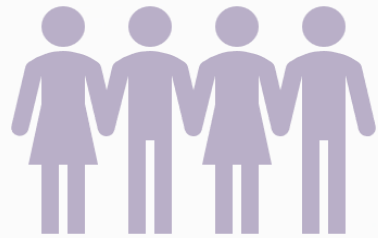


Our VISION Statement:

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.



Community Outreach

Qualitative Research
Increasing Community Voice



HR/Culture

Commission Composition
& Appointment
Leadership Structure



Functions

Commission Functions
& Meeting Structure
Whereas & Therefore
Statement of Purpose



Photos Courtesy of Sattva Photo

Final Review Committee

*Ongoing Accountability
to Community Stakeholders*





Bright Spots

*Key Recommendations
In Ordinance*

The background features a gold-colored left side with three 3D stars, the rightmost of which is glowing. The right side is white with abstract geometric shapes in shades of orange and green.

Guiding Principles

[.030]

- ***Unique to Ordinance***
- ***Formalizing the Commission as a Racial Equity Lens***

The background features a purple and pink gradient on the left with three stars, one of which is glowing. On the right, there are overlapping geometric shapes in shades of orange, green, and white.

Community in the DNA

- *Purpose*
- *Guiding Principles*
- *Functions*
- *Composition*
- *Steering Committee*
- *Appointment Process & Committee*
- *Reports shared with Community*



Leaning into Data

- *Gathering Data*
- *Valuing Qualitative Data*
- *Planning with Indicators in Mind*



The Road Ahead

Next Steps

Next Process Steps

Ordinance

- Pending Introduction, would open to the public for comment
- Vote to follow

Interlocal Agreement

- Interlocal agreement prepared for both County Council's & Bellingham City Council's consideration

Seating the Commission

- Outreach to entities named for Liaison Members and Representative Members
- Outreach to Community for Appointment Members



Interlocal Agreement

Opportunities for Inclusion

Phases of Community Involvement & Decision-Making in building Commission Infrastructure






Photos Courtesy of Sattva Photo

“Where the Rubber hits the Road”

“...where the rubber hits the road is when you say, ‘Okay, we know all this stuff. What are we going to implement, that is going to change people to make them fair or to make the system compensate?’ There's the application that is actually the difficult part. We can all know what's going on. And, in fact, people have been pretty good about getting the word out about a number of issues in society in the last couple years, and we're still kind of struggling with implementation.”

-Member of our Criminal Justice System

A photograph showing the lower half of a person walking on a paved surface. They are wearing black cargo pants and bright red work boots with black laces and soles. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with a paved ground.

“...if the work that we do matters, then I think that is the bridge to belonging, and it's a lot easier to feel like you belong someplace when they say that your contribution is meaningful. And so when I think about belonging, it's my being able to understand my brand of what it means to love, and to serve with compassion, and to lead with compassion”

-Ferndale Business Leader



Thank you so much for your time.

For more information visit:
www.chuckanuthealthfoundation.org/

Or send an email:
Shu@ChuckanutHealthFoundation.org