

This is KPTZ 91.9 FM in Port Townsend. I'm Jim Burke, with your local news and commentary for Friday, December 22, 2023.

KPTZ News received a press release yesterday from the Lummi Nation that said in part that on December 15, the Lummi Nation and Rep. Debra Lekanoff of the 40th Legislative District, held a listening session with Tribal Nation representatives and Washington state legislators to address the state's ongoing fentanyl crisis. The session provided an opportunity for legislators to hear virtually from Tribal elected officials on the impact of fentanyl and opioids on their people. Other speakers shared the blend of western and Indigenous approaches being combined to heal substance use disorder and mental health challenges in Tribally-owned treatment centers which are open to all Washingtonians. Everyone who testified agreed that the crisis must be treated with more urgency, and that all governments – Tribal, state, federal and local – must work both quickly, and in concert, to save lives.

Lummi Chairman Anthony Hillaire, said, "The fentanyl crisis has hit Tribal Nations especially hard. The impact is magnified by historical trauma. And yet, our people also have the strength to care for each other in ways that are informed by our historical resilience. But to do that with the urgency required, we need to engage with partners at the state, local, and federal levels." Representatives from the Lummi, Colville, Snoqualmie, Jamestown S'kallam, Kalispel, Tulalip, Suquamish, and Swinomish Tribal Nations spoke during the session. A representative for Governor Inslee participated as well, as did several urban and Indian health organizations, including Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations, RISE Above, American Indian Health Commission, Seattle Indian Health Board, and Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board.

Chairman Hillarie also recently spoke at hearings hosted by the White House and Senate on the crisis. He has stressed the need for both resources and an easing of jurisdictional barriers to support new treatment centers and law enforcement efforts. Rep. Lekanoff said, "For well over 200 years in the Northwest, Native American people have been trying to recover from the historical trauma that has taken generations of bloodlines. Just when we think our Nations will heal, just when we think we've reclaimed our culture, our history, and our values, we're faced with yet another crisis that wasn't made by us. The listening session was a moment where Tribal Nations reached our hands out to other governing bodies and said, 'We cannot heal alone. Together, our people are dying – so we have to stand together, fight together, heal together.'"

Wednesday, the Senate unanimously passed the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Weather Radio Modernization Act and the National Weather Service Communications Improvement Act, bipartisan bills aimed at modernizing the nation's weather communication and radio service as the country faces more frequent and intense weather events. U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Chair of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, introduced both bills. The two bills would upgrade U.S. weather radio stations, including 17 across Washington State, and expand coverage in rural areas. In 2023, the U.S. experienced 25 weather and climate-related disasters exceeding \$1 billion dollars in damages each, resulting in nearly 500 deaths.

A reminder that one week from today, at noon, December 29 is the deadline to ask Dr. Allison Berry a question for the BOCC health report on Tuesday, January 2. Of course there is no County business on New Year's Day. So, send your pressing public health questions to contactus@kptz.org by next Friday at noon.

One more reminder. This time of year can be a trying time for many people due to family obligations, loneliness, isolation, illness, and other ways a person can be under greater stress emotionally. It can also be a time of great joy and warm feelings with friends and family. If you find that you are in that first group of people, be sure to reach out to someone. If you are doing okay and you think someone you know might be isolated or lonely, take a minute to reach out with a text, an email, a phone call, or in person.

If anyone who is listening right now is experiencing a mental health or emotional crisis, or is contemplating suicide, dial 988, the national suicide prevention hotline. You do not need to be at the point of harming yourself to call. Operators on the hotline will be able to connect you with people and resources in your area to get you the help you need. All of us at KPTZ Radio Port Townsend want to wish you a Merry Christmas, Kwanzaa, Festivus! and a happy, safe, and prosperous new year. Thanks so much for being part of this community that we love.

KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news Monday through Friday at noon and 5pm and at noon on Saturday. You can contact us at news@kptz.org. This is Jim Burke. Thanks for listening.