



Media Release

For Immediate Release
December 14, 2016

REPORT CHALLENGES CLAIMS THAT KEEPING WHALES AND DOLPHINS CAPTIVE IS JUSTIFIABLE

The recent deaths of beluga whales Qila and Aurora have thrust the issue of captive display of cetaceans (whales, dolphins and porpoises) in Vancouver back into the spotlight. The Vancouver Humane Society and Zoocheck Canada are holding a media conference to discuss captive cetacean issues and release a new report, *A Crumbling Case for Cetacean Captivity?* that specifically examines the kind of cetacean information provided to the general public and the impact of captive cetacean-associated research, and challenges some of the industry's claims.

"Whale advocates, experts and members of the public have long been skeptical of the industry's publicly-stated reasons for keeping cetaceans captive," states Debra Probert, Executive Director of the Vancouver Humane Society. "Many of those arguments are now being vigorously challenged. We decided to look into a couple of key aspects of education and research at two captive cetacean facilities to see if they are really making a difference in the lives of wild cetaceans."

"Given that the biological and behavioural needs of whales and dolphins cannot be met in an aquarium and there is little, if any, value in the education or conservation programs associated with keeping cetaceans on exhibition, it is time to empty the tanks," said Zoocheck Campaigns Director Julie Woodyer.

According to marine mammal scientist Dr. Naomi Rose, "Society's attitude toward whale and dolphin captivity is changing rapidly. Recently, Ontario banned the possession of orcas, the National Aquarium announced plans to retire its dolphins to a seaside sanctuary, SeaWorld pledged to end the breeding of its captive orcas, the State of California codified this corporate policy in law, the Whale Sanctuary Project was formed to establish the first cold water cetacean sanctuary in the world and the US government designated the Sakhalin-Amur population of belugas in Russia's Sea of Okhotsk as depleted, meaning the import of these animals is prohibited. The times they are a'changin' and Vancouver needs to evolve and change as well."

Speakers include Debra Probert, Executive Director, Vancouver Humane Society; Julie Woodyer, Campaigns Director, Zoocheck Inc.; Dr. Rebecca Ledger, animal behaviourist; Dr. Sara Dubois, Chief Science Officer, British Columbia SPCA, and; Dr. Naomi Rose, Marine Mammal Scientist, Animal Welfare Institute.

When: Wednesday, December 14, 2016, 11:00 AM
Where: 1430 Segal Centre, SFU Harbour Centre, 515 West Hastings St., Vancouver
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