

The Vancouver Aquarium's Four Great Myths

1. Education
2. Research and Conservation
3. Captive Breeding
4. Struggling Non-profit

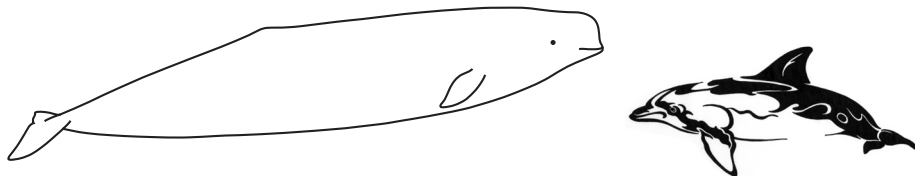
an important part of an ecosystem with their own intrinsic value and dignity. The medium is the message.

MYTH #2 RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION

Whales in captivity neither live nor behave as they do in the ocean. All legitimate whale research is done in the wild. Studying whales in captivity only teaches a dolphinarium how to better keep and breed captive cetaceans, which include whales, dolphins and porpoises. So-called research under such conditions neither expands knowledge of life in the wild nor supports animals in their natural habitat. At the aquarium, research is conducted in service to profit. For example, part of the aquarium's aquaculture lab is dedicated to breeding four species of sea horses that are not for public display, but to sell as aphrodisiacs in Asia. The aquarium calls this commercial enterprise "conservation research". The lab's research also benefits the fish farming industry; coincidentally, at least two aquarium directors are in the aquaculture business.

MYTH #1 EDUCATION

While it may be thrilling for children to see a captive whale or dolphin at close quarters, the experience does not justify the suffering inflicted on the highly intelligent marine mammal. The Vancouver Aquarium misrepresents itself as an "educational" institution to appeal to well-meaning people who believe that any educational display has a higher value than the physical and emotional well being of the animals who provide it. There is, however, no justification for the inhumane exploitation of animals. Information that the aquarium typically provides is inaccurate, incomplete and misleading at best. The fact is that children are witnessing the suffering of intelligent beings that have either been kidnapped from their families at a young age, or have been bred for a lifetime of imprisonment. Exposure to performing wildlife encourages people to see animals as objects and servants to human needs and desires, rather than



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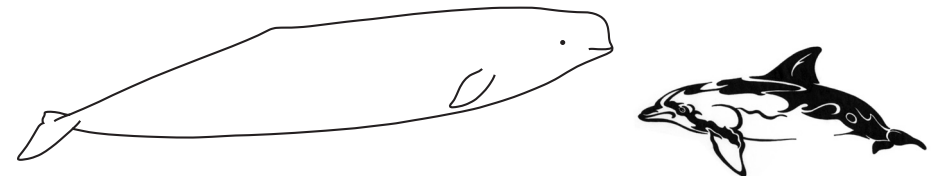
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MYTH #3 CAPTIVE BREEDING

The aquarium is not a modern day “Noah’s Ark” that seeks to save endangered species. Whales and dolphins are bred in captivity, not to replenish depleted wild cetacean populations, but to keep the aquarium’s whale pools full. Six out of seven baby whales have died at the aquarium, but even the grisly spectacle of a dead baby whale is a huge draw for visitors. Instead of closing the aquarium doors after the baby beluga whale died during the morning whale show, the aquarium’s well-oiled media machine quickly generated a huge Sunday crowd that came to see a dead baby whale lifted out of the tank at day’s end. That same day removal was an improvement over the aquarium’s previous performance in a macabre exploitation of the dead. When Bjossa gave birth to her third baby orca – delivered to the screams of excited schoolchildren bused in for the event – the infant died eight minutes later. He was left dead on the bottom of the tank for 5 days, while aquarium visitors lined up all the way to the parking lot to gawk at the “new”

dead baby whale. Successful captive breeding is a myth. The aquarium bought three new dolphins in 2005 to refill their tanks. The aquarium is a “consumer”, not a “conserver” of whales and dolphins.

MYTH #4 STRUGGLING NON-PROFIT

The reason the aquarium keeps whales in captivity is for profit. The aquarium brings in more than \$22 million a year in revenues, and that’s just the “non-profit” society. The “for-profit” businesses all contain a Vancouver Aquarium cover followed by a more corporate description. They include Vancouver Aquarium Ltd., Vancouver Aquarium Marketing Ltd., Vancouver Aquarium Consulting Ltd, etc. The same name is used for their businesses operating in the U.S. Most of the directors of these companies are people who are now or have before, served as directors of the Executive Board of the Vancouver Public Aquarium Association, the “non-profit” society. This may very well be legal. But the real question is, is this ethical?

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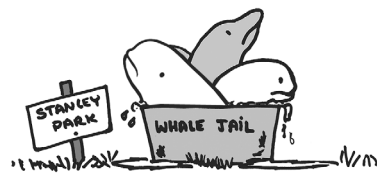
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Help Stop the Cruelty!

Write to the Park Board Commissioners and ask them to stop the importation of whales and dolphins into Stanley Park. pbcomment@vancouver.ca



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