

Frequently Asked Questions

1 of 2

Who is Lummi Nation and why are they doing this?

Answer: Lummi is a Native Sovereign Nation whose traditional territories include many of the islands and coast of the Salish Sea. Our Reservation is located between Vancouver, BC and Seattle, WA. Signatories to the Point Elliott Treaty of 1855, Lummi has been a fierce protector of treaty rights. Our most recent victories include stopping a proposal for what would have been North America's largest coal export facility and forcing a moratorium on Atlantic salmon fish farms. It is our sacred duty to protect the lands, waters, and communities of the Salish Sea. Families are sacred to us, and blackfish are our kin. We have been called to bring Tokitae home. We realize that Tokitae's story is important, but she is even more important as an ambassador for the Salish Sea.

Blackfish are apex predators, and thus are key indicators of their ecosystem's health. If we are to provide effectively for Tokitae and her family, we must restore the salmon runs and vitality of the Salish Sea. This means everything from reinvigorating salmon runs (hence our hatchery acquisitions) to working with the U.S. and Canadian governments to implement sound environmental policy, to urging the United Nations to designate the Salish Sea as a World Heritage site, thereby ensuring the ongoing protection and celebration of this extraordinary place. The peoples, cultures, and ecosystems of the Salish Sea are all connected, and they have long suffered the violences and stresses of colonialism. It is our task to work across cultures and borders, to heal the ecosystems, the economies, and communities of all those who now call this place home. We are committed to protecting the lifeways and culture of Lummi, and honoring the larger ecosystem of which we're all a part. Lummi Nation's Salish Sea Manifesto affirms the Cultural Significance of this place, and calls for its recognition as a cradle of life and civilization that needs to be preserved for the peoples who call it home, and for all peoples who call this earth home.

What exactly is your "comprehensive plan?"

Answer: We are working with scientists to develop a comprehensive plan, viewable on the Resources page of SacredSea.org or at OrcaNetwork.org. This plan includes provisions for safe transport of Tokitae to the Salish Sea, rehabilitation, and providing a secure home base from which she can venture if and when she chooses. As part of our plan, Lummi Nation is acquiring a piece of property on Orcas Island that includes both a protected cove for Tokitae's large seapen and a salmon hatchery: she will have both freedom and security. An old Lummi village site is also on this property. We will create a community resource and cultural center for the Salish Sea. Science, tradition, culture and community will come together to work on restoring the health of the Salish Sea and honoring the sacredness of this place.

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2 of 2

How long will this take?

Answer: Our immediate challenges are convincing Miami Seaquarium to do the right thing by freeing Tokitae, and raising sufficient funds. We have faith that we will succeed in both of these ventures. The Tokitae Totem Pole Journey will take place May 9-27, 2018, traveling from Lummi to Miami. We hope to create a community of caring all along the route (please see our Events page for information on details on the dozen or so Totem Pole Journey events; free and open to the public). We anticipate an approximately 12-18 month timeline for Tokitae's release and transport, followed by rehabilitation with her trainer in her new seapen. Tokitae has impressed trainers and other personnel with her intelligence and ability to learn. We anticipate that she will settle in quickly. Especially once she is reunited with her mother.

How much will it cost to safely transport Lolita to the Salish Sea, rehabilitate her, and provide for her in the Orcas Island seapen?

Answer: \$8.5 million. Part of ensuring Lolita's safety and vitality is ensuring the safety, sustainability, and vitality of her new home. The purchase of her seapen property and the salmon hatchery that will feed her are part of this cost, and part of the long-term plan to restore the Salish Sea. Concerned citizens are contributing resources as they are able to this cause. We are also seeking tribal, State, and Federal governmental grant monies and donations from philanthropic foundations.

Who is part of your strategic alliance?

Answer: Lummi Nation is committed to working across borders, and to a spirit of peace and collaboration. We regularly work with other Tribal and First Nations. We're also collaborating with a number of individuals and organizations, including the Sierra Club, The Orca Network, Stand.earth, and the Center for Whale Research. Actor Adam Beach, his filmmaker wife Summer Tiger, filmmakers Dennie Gordon and Geoff Schaaf, photo illustrator John Ritter, the Blackhawk Singers, master carver Jewell James and the House of Tears Carvers, and other artists are actively supporting this vision with their time, energy, and work. You, too, belong to our strategic alliance by your willingness to learn about Tokitae and to support our effort, whether by love, money, or simply spreading the word.