

This downloadable press kit contains:

- a sample press release for the 2018 Tokitae Totem Pole Journey
- an overview of Lolita/Tokitae's story, and her importance to Lummi Nation
- answers to Frequently Asked Questions about Lummi's plan to repatriate Tokitae
- a few photos which you are free to use (others can be found on the Resources page of SacredSea.org)

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SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE:

Statement: Hundreds Stand with Lummi Nation in Call to Bring Captured Orca Home

CITY, STATE -- Today, hundreds gathered at **LOCATION** to protest the Miami Seaquarium's display of the killer whale Tokitae, who is native to the Salish Sea and sacred to the Lummi Nation. **LOCATION** was just one stop on the Lummi's Totem Pole Journey – a 23-day trip across the country from the Lummi Nation in Bellingham, Washington to Miami, Florida to raise awareness about Tokitae's return and the importance of restoring the Salish Sea. Tokitae is the only Salish killer whale still alive from the violent capture of over 40 killer whales in these waters years ago. The Lummi Nation is calling on the Miami Seaquarium to release Tokitae so she can return to the wild and the comfort of her native habitat and family.

Jay Julius, Chairman of the Lummi Nation has released the following statement:

"Tokitae's story is more than a story of a whale. Her story is the story of the Native peoples of this country who have been subjected to bad policies. Because of the failure of policymakers to protect our wildlife, she was stolen from her family 47 years ago and taken to the Miami Seaquarium. Because she is a relative of the Lummi people, it is our sacred obligation to bring her safely home to the Salish Sea.

"Tokitae's abduction from her home should serve as a warning to all of us about the failure of policy to protect the marine life of the Salish Sea. She is a part of our precious ecosystem and a member of our Salish family. There are constant assaults on our lands and waters, whether it's from the fossil fuel industry that puts profits over the health of people, animals and our environment, or from invasive species introduced to our waters that threaten the health of native species of salmon.

"Strong policy and respect for the nation-to-nation relationship between tribes and government is essential if we are to create a healthy future for the Salish Sea and prevent this from happening again. We don't have to look further than our relative, Tokitae, to see what happens when policymakers fail to protect our lands, waters and marine life."

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Why one blackfish matters to us all

In 1970, a number of baby blackfish were captured from the [Salish Sea](#), the islanded body of water nestled into the coastlines of southern British Columbia and much of Washington State. Blackfish have language, tools, complex social organization, emotions, and memory. As the babies were lifted by helicopter out of the water, their families keened. To this day, the resident blackfish avoid Penn Cove because that's where their children were stolen.

One [blackfish](#) stolen from L-pod in Penn Cove is still alive. She has been held in a tiny swimming pool at the Miami Seaquarium for the past 47 years. She is a revenue stream for her owner, performing twice daily for the public. Her stage name is [Lolita](#), though her trainers call her Toki, short for the Chinook name she was originally given: [Tokitae](#). Lolita/Tokitae is not only alive, she is strong and healthy. [Lummi Nation](#) has been called to bring her home.

Blackfish, along with salmon, are an iconic species of the Salish Sea. In the Lummi language, the word for blackfish (also orca, killer whale), is [qw'e lh'ol mènchen](#). A literal translation of this is “our relations who live underwater.” Lummi tradition acknowledges blackfish as kin.

[We are family.](#)

Lolita/Tokitae belongs to L-pod, she belongs to the Salish Sea, she belongs to our larger sense of family here. She belongs to herself: she has the inherent right to be home and to be free. Repatriating Tokitae is Lummi Nation's [sacred duty](#).

Some think that one reason Lolita/Tokitae is such a survivor is because her tank is a stone's throw from the ocean. She can hear the waves, and smell the ripe ocean life. She remembers where she came from. [Tokitae still sings the L-pod clan song](#). Like a person –or a community– that's seen hard times, she has survived because she knows who she is and she has hope.

We recognize that humans and governmental policy allowed blackfish families to be ripped apart, just as humans and governmental policy have allowed human families to be ripped apart. We realize that we must understand the truth and the past, and we must tell those stories, in order to create a healthy future. In celebrating Tokitae's resilience, we celebrate our own.

[Tokitae is an ambassador of the Salish Sea](#), and of our efforts to revitalize this sacred sea. By tradition and by treaty, Lummi is a rightful protector of this place and the life of this place. Our effort is about more than a single blackfish, more than a single blackfish family. It's about healing in different ways.

On a practical level, our work includes restoring [salmon runs](#) and the Salish Sea so that all of us, as well as Tokitae and her kin, can live in an abundant and vibrant ecosystem. 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 has formally affirmed the Cultural Significance of the Salish Sea, 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.

Some of our valued allies in our effort to bring Tokitae home include other Tribes, the Orca Network, the Sierra Club, the Center for Whale Research, Stand.earth, other non-profit organizations, governmental agencies, philanthropists and concerned citizens. Please join us! Your donations will directly fund a comprehensive plan for Tokitae's transport, rehabilitation, and safe home back in her natal waters. Your love will help spread our message. Hy'shqe! www.SacredSea.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

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.

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.

Lummi Nation Chairman Jay Julius at the March 2018 press conference in Miami, in which Lummi Nation declared its intention to bring Lolita/Tokitae home to the Salish Sea.



Actor Adam Beach, wife Summer Tiger, and daughter Phoenix, will participate in the Tokitae Totem Pole Journey events in Los Angeles and in Miami, May 2018. Here they are pictured with Dennie Gordon, who, along with husband Geoff Schaaf, is making a feature-length documentary film about Lummi Nation's work to free Tokitae.



Master carver Jewell James and Lummi Nation's House of Tears Carvers have created this 2018 totem pole in honor of Tokitae. The 16' Killer Whale totem pole is supported by two 8' Seal Poles. Photo courtesy of Paul Anderson.

