



Animals in Society Research Initiative

University of Victoria, BC
website: oac.uvic.ca/asri/

PRESS RELEASE

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By Holly Cecil

Vancouver Aquarium Uncovered, “Canada's Blackfish,” Screening in Victoria

Feb. 22, 2018, 7:00 p.m.

Cinecenta, Student Union Building, University of Victoria.

Panel discussion to follow, including the filmmaker Gary Charbonneau.

Tickets \$5.75 - \$7.75

VICTORIA, BC – Victoria audiences following the debate on cetacean captivity will want to attend the February 22nd screening of *Vancouver Aquarium Uncovered* at Cinecenta on the University of Victoria campus.

The screening comes at a pivotal time, with the recent announcement by the Vancouver Aquarium (January 18th) that they will finally end captivity of whales and dolphins.¹ The aquarium's decision came as the result of sustained public opposition to aquarium practices and ongoing legal cases, the documentary having figured prominently in both.²

Vancouver Aquarium Uncovered has been described as Canada's *Blackfish*, the 2013 documentary that revealed the darker side of cetacean capture and confinement at entertainment parks like SeaWorld.³ Vancouver Filmmaker Gary Charbonneau was compelled to make his film after Vancouver Park Board meetings raised concerns about the lack of research and conservation at the aquarium. In 2016, the Vancouver Aquarium's two belugas, Aurora and her daughter Qila, died within nine days of each other.⁴ Their deaths reignited concerns by the Vancouver Park Board, under whose jurisdiction the aquarium operates.

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- 1 Bethany Lindsay, “Vancouver Aquarium will no longer keep whales, dolphins in captivity,” *CBC News*, Jan. 18, 2018. Accessed online: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/vancouver-aquarium-will-no-longer-keep-whales-dolphins-in-captivity-1.4492316>
 - 2 “Filmmaker Wins Bid to appeal aquarium injunction ordering removal of whale footage,” *CBC News*, Nov. 15, 2017. Accessed online: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/whale-doc-film-appeal-charbonneau-vancouver-aquarium-1.4403438>
 - 3 Katie Sykes, “Opinion: Aqua-gag — How the Vancouver Aquarium abuses copyright law to silence criticism,” *Vancouver Sun*, Apr. 27, 2016. Accessed online: <http://vancouversun.com/opinion/aquagag-how-the-vancouver-aquarium-abuses-copyright-law-to-silence-criticism>
 - 4 “2nd beluga whale dies at Vancouver Aquarium in less than two weeks,” *CBC News*, Nov. 25, 2016. Accessed online: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/aurora-beluga-vancouver-aquarium-dies-1.3869241>

Charbonneau confirms that after his film's release, "The response was so powerful, it drew a lawsuit from the aquarium." After winning his appeal in the courts last November, Charbonneau's film now screens with reinstated footage that the aquarium sought to block from public view.

Featuring interviews with Vancouver Aquarium staff, cetacean researchers and animal behaviourists, *Vancouver Aquarium Uncovered* asks whether it is ethical to capture and confine such intelligent marine mammals. These interviews reveal that the infant death rate of the aquarium's belugas are four times those in the wild. The documentary also questions whether some of the aquarium's dolphins originated in Japan's annual dolphin hunt, subject of the 2009 documentary, *The Cove*. At the federal level, Bill S-203 is currently before the senate to end cetacean captivity in Canada.

The screening will be followed by a panel discussion, including the filmmaker Gary Charbonneau and Arden Beddoes, lawyer at Arvay Finlay LLP, and counsel in two recent cases involving the Aquarium. Also speaking on the panel from the University of Victoria will be Rianna Burnham, doctoral fellow at the Whale Research Lab, and History professor Dr. Jason Colby, author of *Orca: How We Came to Know and Love the Ocean's Greatest Predator*. The event is co-sponsored by Cinecenta and the Animals & Society Research Initiative at the University of Victoria.

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Press Kit: <https://oac.uvic.ca/asri/events/press-kit-vancouver-aquarium-uncovered/>

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* Mr. Charbonneau is available for interviews by phone

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