

JUNE 8, 2009

BELUGA WHALE AURORA & NEW CALF BONDING BEAUTIFULLY

Less than day old beluga calf introduced to one-year old Tiqa

Vancouver Aquarium's amazing footage of introduction of new calf to Beluga family now available

Vancouver, BC – Following yesterday's birth at 3:39pm on June 7 of a new beluga calf, the Vancouver Aquarium's marine mammal care and veterinary teams are pleased to report that bonding between mother Aurora and her new baby is strong.

Ongoing observation of Mom and baby during the first 18 hours showed continued positive behaviours of strong interaction with the calf continuing to swim alongside and be guided by mother Aurora. Nursing is underway and all signs to date are showing good development and interaction.

At 9:24 am today on World Oceans Day, Qila and 1-year old Tiqa were introduced for the first time. This is the first occasion for two beluga calves to share a habitat at the Vancouver Aquarium. The two mothers and daughters swam in pairs for the first minute, and then Tiqa became increasingly curious about the new baby, following Aurora and the calf continuously and swimming alongside her new niece and playmate.

The calf and mother will continue to remain under 24-hour observation by the Aquarium's veterinary and marine mammal care teams.

"This is an exciting time for everyone – Aurora, her calf, our other belugas and certainly for Aquarium visitors. Aurora and her calf are coming along nicely together. There are several critical milestones for the calf to reach over the next few days and weeks," said Dr. Marty Haulena, Staff Veterinarian, Vancouver Aquarium. "Aurora has proven herself to be a great mother in the past and we continue to see her maternal instincts come to the fore. She's doing just a great job so far."

Vancouver Aquarium visitors will be able to view Aurora and her yet-to-be-named calf from 5 or 6 metres away on the upper deck of the Beluga habitat. Marine mammal care staff and researchers will observe behaviours and interactions, while interpretive staff will present what is learned to visitors providing an engaging and rare educational opportunity.

Aurora's calf was sired by Imaq, the sole male beluga whale at the Vancouver Aquarium. Aurora's daughter Qila (pronounced: KEE-lah) age 13/14 and granddaughter Tiqa (pronounced: TEE-kah) age 1 are also part of the beluga family at the Vancouver Aquarium, as are the Aquarium's other two beluga whales, Imaq 21 and Kavna 39, who are being cared for a behind-the-scenes habitat.

SPECIAL NOTE FOR MEDIA: HD B-roll available of the birth and introduction of the two beluga calves upon request via ftp as: Quicktime DVCPRO HD, Quicktime h.254

and Quicktime DV Standard Definition. Copies can be provided on data DVD's. Still images also available upon request.

- Interviews w/ veterinary and marine mammal care team spokespersons are available.

The Vancouver Aquarium is a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, conservation practices, education, research, and direct action. Please visit www.vanaqua.org to find out more about Vancouver Aquarium.

-30-

Media Contact:

Public Relations Coordinator
publicrelations@vanaqua.org
604.659.3752