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CANUCKS' "BIGGEST" FAN HOPES TO BRING A LITTLE LUCK

VANCOUVER, B.C. - As the Vancouver Canucks prepare for game two of the Stanley Cup finals, the Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre is showing its support by offering the team a five-ton good luck charm. T-123A, an eleven-year-old transient male killer whale, is part of the Aquarium's B.C. Wild Killer Whale Adoption Program and will now be named "Stanley."

Killer whales, or orcas, are found in all the world's oceans, but nowhere are they more accessible for viewing and study than in British Columbia's coastal waters. The Vancouver Aquarium has a long tradition of research on cetaceans. "For nearly 40 years, we have been conducting intensive field research to learn more about these fascinating animals – leading to groundbreaking discoveries and extensive collaborations with various research groups," explains Dr. John Nightingale, president and CEO of the Vancouver Aquarium. "While the expertise of our world-renowned Cetacean Lab is called upon internationally in the scientific community, Vancouver is where we are firmly anchored. With hockey fever taking over the city, there wasn't a better way for us to demonstrate our support and express how proud we are of the team."

While decades of study have provided many insights into the lives of killer whales, they have also illustrated how much remains to be learned. "Over the years – and among various topics – research work has led us to discover that killer whales are picky eaters. For instance, offshore killer whales, just like the Canucks, proved recently that they had a real appetite for sharks," says Dr. Lance Barrett-Lennard, senior researcher. "We know as well that orcas travel in close-knit family units, which we feel describe the Canucks team spirit perfectly."

Behavioral research has also demonstrated that killer whales are highly social. "When a small group of killer whales paid Vancouver a visit two weeks ago, we immediately joked about the fact that they were coming to cheer on the team," adds Barrett-Lennard. "They passed by the seawall in Stanley Park, so it seemed doubly fitting to call one of them Stanley." Thanks to the identification program in place, where physical characteristics such as nicks, scars and the shape of dorsal fins are used to identify individual whales, the Vancouver Aquarium's scientist noticed that T-123A was part of the group. "They are one of the most powerful animals in the ocean and known for their famous tail slapping. They certainly know how to make a splash – one we hope will catch the Boston Bruins by surprise."

B.C. Wild Killer Whale Adoption Program

The Vancouver Aquarium's B.C. Wild Killer Whale Adoption Program raises funds to support groundbreaking conservation-oriented research on wild killer whales in Canada and around the world. To adopt a wild killer whale and directly support the research efforts to protect these magnificent animals and their habitat log on to www.killerwhale.org.

About the Vancouver Aquarium

The Vancouver Aquarium is a global leader in connecting people to our natural world, and a self-supporting, non-profit association dedicated to effecting the conservation of aquatic life through display and interpretation, research and direct action. Learn more at www.vanaqua.org.

Note: Stills are available to media.

Media Contact:

Roxanne St-Pierre

604-659-3752

publicrelations@vanaqua.org