



News Release

For Immediate Release
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University of Victoria Professor launches new book on the history of British Columbia's relationship with orcas at the Maritime Museum of BC

Since the release of the documentary *Blackfish* in 2013, millions around the world have focused on the plight of the orca, the most profitable and controversial display animal in history. Yet, until Jason M. Colby's new book "*Orca: How We Came to Know and Love the Ocean's Greatest Predator*" (Oxford, 2018), no historical account has explained how we came to care about killer whales in the first place. On June 20th (4:00 PM – 6:00 PM), Colby is scheduled to speak about his new book "Orca" at the Maritime Museum of BC and will discuss the interviews, official records, private archives, and his own family history that tell the exhilarating and often heartbreaking story of how people came to love the ocean's greatest predator.

Historically reviled as dangerous pests, killer whales were dying by the hundreds, even thousands, by the 1950s--the victims of whalers, fishermen, and even the US military. In the Pacific Northwest, fishermen shot them, scientists harpooned them, and the Canadian government mounted a machine gun to eliminate them. But that all changed in 1965, when Seattle entrepreneur Ted Griffin became the first person to swim and perform with a captive killer whale. The show proved wildly popular, and he began capturing and selling others, including Sea World's first Shamu.

Over the following decade, live display transformed views of *Orcinus orca*. The public embraced killer whales as charismatic and friendly, while scientists enjoyed their first access to live orcas. In the Pacific Northwest, these captive encounters reshaped regional values and helped drive environmental activism, including Greenpeace's anti-whaling campaigns. Yet even as Northwesterners taught the world to love whales, they came to oppose their captivity and to fight for the freedom of a marine predator that had become a regional icon.

The event will be hosted at the Maritime Museum of BC and admission is by donation. Exhibits, including their featured summer exhibit, "*A Whale's Tale: The Incredible Story of British Columbia's Changing Relationship with the Giants of the Deep*".

About Jason:

Jason was born in Victoria and grew up in the Seattle area of Washington State. During his high school and undergraduate years, he worked as a commercial fisherman in Alaska and on fish farms in Puget Sound. He also studied overseas in Central America. Before entering graduate school, he taught history and English in Taiwan, worked at a land-use law firm in Seattle, and



travelled throughout the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East. He earned his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 2005 and taught at the University of Texas at El Paso before coming to the University of Victoria in 2007. He teaches and writes on modern U.S. history, with particular interests in international relations and environmental history. His first book explores race, U.S. imperial expansion, and corporate power in Central America. His second book examines the transformation of human relations with killer whales from the 1960s to the present, and its impact on environmental politics in the Pacific Northwest and beyond.

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For further information about the event please contact:

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