



Lummi tribal members Squil-le-he-le (Raynell Morris) and Tah-Mahs (Ellie Kinley) announce partnership with Earth Law Center for legal representation.

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Earth Law Center joins the fight to free orca from 50 year captivity and bring her home.

The two Lummi Nation tribal members working for the release and return of the captive orca Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut (also known as Tokitae or her stage name, Lolita) announced today that they will be legally represented by Earth Law Center. The virtual press conference will be live streamed, and available at <http://facebook.com/pg/OurSacredSea>.

"Our Lummi term for orca is qwe'lhol'mechen, which means our relations under the water," explained Squil-le-he-le (Raynell Morris), one of the Lummi women involved.

"Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut is part of our community, our family. It's our Xa xalh Xechnging (sacred obligation) to bring our relation out of captivity at Miami Seaquarium, to bring her safely home to Xw'ullemmy (the Salish Sea)."

Last July, Squil-le-he-le and Tah-Mahs (Ellie Kinley) announced their intent to sue Miami Seaquarium. Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut is a member of Sk'aliCh'elh, which is the Lummi family name for the Southern Resident Killer Whale population. The Lummi people are bound by culture and kinship ties to Sk'aliCh'elh, and have been in a reciprocal relationship with them since time immemorial.

"She was taken from her family and her culture when she was just a child, like so many of our children were taken from us and placed in Indian boarding schools. Reuniting her with her family, reuniting her with us, helps make us all whole," explained Tah-Mahs.

"We are humbled with the trust that's been placed in us." said Michelle Bender, Ocean Rights Manager at the Earth Law Center. "At the foundation of Earth law and the Rights of Nature movement is the Indigenous worldview that we are a part of, not separate from, Nature and all of its species and elements. By legally representing our sisters and brothers, we hope to shed light on this truth that has been lost from Western society."

Dr. Kurt Russo, who has spent decades working to Indigenize policy frameworks, said, "This is a game changer. We're meeting Miami Seaquarium where they are, in the Western legal sphere. Earth Law Center is perfectly positioned to represent Tah-Mahs and Squil-le-he-le in their efforts to repatriate their relation."



"We're at a time when we all need healing," Tah-Mas added. "We're all family, qwe'lhol'mechen and Lummi people. What happens to them, happens to us."

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Earth Law Center (www.earthlawcenter.org) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit environmental law organization working around the world to transform the law to recognize, honor and protect nature's inherent rights to exist, thrive and evolve. ELC partners with frontline indigenous people and communities to challenge the overarching legal and economic systems that reward environmental harm, and advance governance systems that maximize social and ecological well-being.

For more information on Sk'aliCh'elh-tenaut, go to www.sacredsea.org