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NEWS RELEASE

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Fisherman's Group Leads Efforts To Protect Remaining Endangered Southern Resident Orcas

*Wave Warriors Project Invites Participants To Join In The Fight To Save The Last Orcas Of The Salish
Sea Through Art, Creativity, Community, And Storytelling*

Lummi Island, WA - On the brink of extinction, the last 74 Southern Resident Orcas (SRO's) are getting help from a traditionally unlikely ally, a resident fisherman's (501c3) group called The Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods, via their "Wave Warriors" initiative. The project, launching August 17th, aims to rewrite the orcas' fate by empowering the next generation through the "adopt an orca" program featuring original artwork, storytelling, and a membership club-like model.

In 2018, commercial fisherman Riley Starks met [Larry Mellum](#), founder of the iconic [Pike Place Chowder](#), at a James Beard event. They both were deeply moved by a recent story that made national headlines. [Tahlequah](#), a mother orca, was recorded carrying her deceased calf for 17 days. The calf likely died from starvation because her mother hadn't enough milk to support her nursing. Due to habitat degradation and destructive fishing practices in the Salish Sea, they'd been deprived of their primary food source, the Chinook Salmon.

United by their concern for the orcas, Starks and Mellum established The Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods. Mellum understood restoring the Salish Sea would be a "\$100 Million problem" but recognized both the need and urgency of the endeavor. They began with an effort to raise \$1 Million and educate 10,000 families, empowering the next generation to become ecological stewards.

Starks, a Salish Sea fisherman for over five decades, says he's seen "***positive growth in Dungeness crab and halibut populations from the direct result of strong political will. These same forces can change the future for our orca population.***"

(more)

The group knew that colorful imagery and strong storytelling could help build interest in the orcas' salvation with children. To actualize their vision, they partnered with local artist A.C. Hart who created artworks representing the 74 remaining SROs through her hand-made watercolor portraits, noting ***“I tried to capture the spirit of each orca through demonstrating their individuality based on their names, so that we preserve the population as a whole.”***

Complementing these intricate original artworks are short fictional stories that bring each orca to life, providing a unique and fanciful window into their world. Designed to spark curiosity and respect, each story is tailored to resonate with children and adults, fostering a lasting connection and responsibility towards these crucial remaining orcas.

Enrollment in the Wave Warrior Odyssey features a tax-deductible “adoption” of one of 6 SRO’s for \$49 each month, with 6 new orcas premiering for adoption monthly. Participants receive a personalized certificate upon enrollment, a digital copy of the orca’s portrait art and their story, a subscription to the monthly publication *Orca Times*, as well as an orca ID card detailing their lineage and key identifiers.

Marking the remembrance of Tahlequah's 17-day journey, August 17th, 2023 heralds the launch of the Wave Warriors membership program and celebrates The Salish Center’s ongoing campaign for responsible fishing practices.

Take Action: Support these efforts by adopting an orca now at AdoptOrca.org. Celebrate the Wave Warriors' unveiling on August 18th at [Pike Place Chowder](#) and [Sunset Supper](#) in Seattle and the grand festivities with food and fun on August 19th at The Reefnet Festival on Lummi Island. Tickets are available at Salishcenter.org.

About The Salish Center for Sustainable Fishing Methods (501c3): Through habitat protection and restoration work, we encourage the viability and expansion of the proven centuries-old technique of reefnet fishing, including all other selective and sustainable fishing practices – in tandem with robust educational outreach and initiatives. Recognizing that by strengthening our wild salmon runs, we help aid the survival of our southern resident orcas and all other interdependent species in support of a thriving ecological footprint.

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