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Deceased Endangered Southern Resident Killer Whale (“s-tálashen”) Recovered in shíshálh Nation Territory

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Sechelt, BC - The shíshálh Nation was saddened to learn a deceased killer whale, or a “s-tálashen”, now known as J-34 or “DoubleStuf” a member of the

endangered southern resident killer whale population had been spotted floating off the Trail Islands within our territory on Tuesday evening, December 20th, 2016.

Photo caption: From Left to right: Ben Rahier (FOC), Dwayne Paul (sN), Sid Quinn (sN), Chief Calvin Craigan and Paul Cottrell (FOC)

A call was made from Paul Cottrell, A/Marine Mammals Coordinator, Pacific Region of Fisheries and Oceans Canada ("FOC") to our Resource Management Department to assist in the recovery of the whale.

Immediately, shíshálh Nation member Vern Joe on his gillnet vessel "Sechelt Renegade" sprang into action to try to recover the whale however, was unable to locate the mammal in darkness. Paul Cottrell arrived at the shíshálh Nation offices the following morning, December 21st, 2016 and travelled with Resource Management Director Sid Quinn and Fisheries Technician Dwayne Paul to search the last known location. Despite challenging sea conditions, the 26-foot aluminum crew vessel owned by the Nation was able to assist in the recovery of the whale. The whale had been spotted during our search by a passing tug at approximately 11:00AM, two nautical miles off the southern most Trail Island.

Coast guard vessel, Cape Cockburn, towed the whale into the breakwater area located in Selma Park after it had been secured with a rope from the FOC zodiac operated by Fisheries Officers out of Powell River, BC.

Chief Calvin Craigan and Councillor Robert Joe were on site as well as many Nation members and the public to observe the whale's arrival. With this quick recovery, a team of specialists from the Vancouver Aquarium were able to mobilize, thereby expediting the necropsy and collection of biometrics.

In shíshálh culture, the whale is considered family and has great strength and spiritual power. It can be found on many of our totems, carvings, paintings and regalia as well as used in our ceremonies. We are very honoured to have worked collaboratively with FOC and all parties, extending our appreciation to the following for their assistance in the recovery; the Vancouver Aquarium, Michael deRoos from Cetacea Contracting Ltd, Vern Joe, Canadian Coast Guard, Halfmoon Bay RCM SAR 12, Harbour Air, Suncoast Air, Jervis Inlet Air, Sechelt Volunteer Fire Department, Salish Soils, local Fisheries Officers, RCMP and Conservation Officers. Lastly, we would like to thank our staff from the Public Works and Resource Management departments for the long hours during this process.

The shíshálh Nation has taken possession of the orca remains for potential skeletal reconstruction.

J-34 will be sadly missed.



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