



# News Release

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

December 21, 2009

**Media Contacts:**

Roger Germann, Sr. Director, Public Affairs  
312/692-3265; [rgermann@sheddaquarium.org](mailto:rgermann@sheddaquarium.org)

Melissa Kruth, Public Relations Manager  
312/692-3330; [mkruth@sheddaquarium.org](mailto:mkruth@sheddaquarium.org)

## **SECOND BELUGA WHALE CALF BORN AT SHEDD AQUARIUM**

*Shedd's animal health and animal care experts offer rare assist in birthing process*

CHICAGO – At 2:25 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 20, one of Shedd Aquarium's beluga whales, Naya (NI-yah) successfully gave birth to a calf, with physical assistance from Shedd's animal health and animal care experts. It is the first time a beluga whale calf has been successfully birthed with human assistance at Shedd, and only the fourth known in the zoo and aquarium community.

"This assisted birth put all of our research, knowledge and experience of beluga births to the test, and we are pleased at the successful outcome. Without our physical intervention, this calf might not be with us today," said Ken Ramirez, senior vice president of animal collections and training. "Animal care is our top priority at Shedd and once again our expert animal care and animal health staff proved our commitment to do whatever it takes in providing the best care for our amazing animals. I'm extremely proud of our team."

This is the second successful beluga birth within a week at Shedd, as Puiji (poo-EE-jee) gave birth to a male calf last Monday. Over the past 24 hours, Shedd animal care and animal health experts have been closely monitoring both Naya and the new calf, along with Puiji and her calf.

According to Ramirez, the newborn calf was separated briefly from Naya for observations, but has been reunited with her this morning. There are still several milestones the calf must reach in its first days and months, including bonding with mom and nursing. "Because of the unique nature of the birth and the milestones ahead, we continue to remain cautiously optimistic as the next few days are extremely critical in the calf's life," said Ramirez. "Now that mom and calf are together again, we are watching closely for bonding and nursing to take place. We are doing everything possible to care for both calf and mom."

"The rarity of an assisted beluga birth being successful makes this birth that much more special to all of us and to the zoo and aquarium community," said Caryn Poll, DVM, Section Chief, Medicine at Shedd Aquarium. "We aren't out of the woods yet, but we are pleased to report that calf and mom appear to be doing well. We will continue to provide 24-hour care for several more months."

Dr. Poll led the animal health team's efforts in assisting with the birth and was personally instrumental in the successful outcome. Because this was an assisted birth, Dr. Poll and her team conducted a physical on the calf. During the physical, Shedd animal health staff determined the calf is a male, is 5 feet 6 inches in length, and weighs 152 pounds.

-more-

Animal care is Shedd's top priority, thus Naya and the newborn calf along with Puiji and her calf, are currently off exhibit where they will continue to receive the very best care. In addition, the majority of the beluga whales are currently off exhibit, except for those appearing in Shedd's newest marine mammal show, *Fantasea*.

Shedd Aquarium is one of six North American aquariums and zoos committed to public display and breeding of beluga whales, and will continue to share this vital knowledge with the marine mammal community in order to provide the best care in zoos and aquariums and the wild.

Naya (NI-yah)

20-year old Naya came to Shedd in 1991. This is the second time Naya has given birth. Naya, which means "*little sister of a male*" in Inuit, weighs approximately 1,800 pounds and is 10 feet, 5 inches in length. Shedd's animal care experts continue to monitor her and the calf.

Naluark (nah-LOO-ark) is the father of the calf. He also fathered three other calves as Puiji gave birth to Bella in 2006 and her second calf on Dec 14, 2009, and Miki was born to Mauyauk in 2007. Naluark, which means "*whitened skin*" in Inuit, weighs approximately 2,200 pounds and is 13 feet long.

Puiji (poo-EE-jee) successfully gave birth for the third time on Dec 14, 2009. Both Puiji and her male calf are doing well and continue to receive the best care possible. Puiji, which means "*those who show their noses*" in Inuit, weighs about 1,500 pounds and is approximately 11 feet in length.

The John G. Shedd Aquarium, a nonprofit organization dedicated to public education and conservation, is one of the world's largest indoor aquariums. The facility houses over 32,000 aquatic animals, representing some 1,500 species of fishes, reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, birds and marine mammals from waters around the world. Since its opening in 1930, the Aquarium's mission has been to enhance public understanding of aquatic life and connect guests to the natural world, inspiring them to protect and preserve the planet.

# # #

**Special Note: Photos and video of the new calf are available to the media upon request. Please contact Melissa Kruth or Roger Germann for more information.**

*Shedd Aquarium is supported by the people of Chicago and the State of Illinois.  
Shedd Aquarium is an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA) and the  
Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums.*