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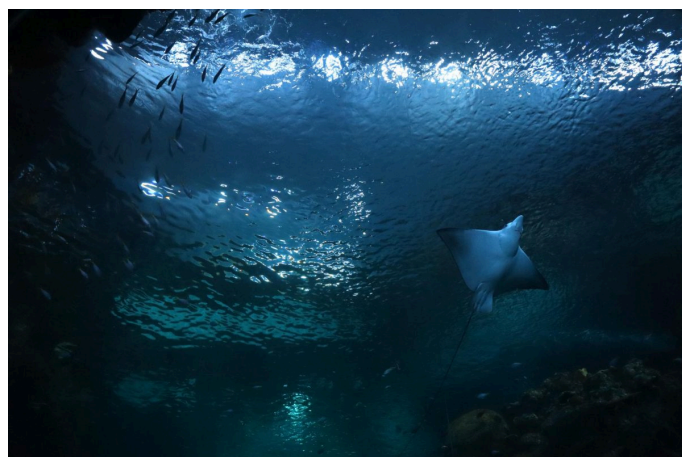
# Seattle Aquarium's Ocean Pavilion Seeks to Connect History with Discovery

Leila Bunker, News Editor

Connecting Pike Place Market to the waterfront park promenade, the Seattle Aquarium's opening of the Ocean Pavilion on Piers 59 and 60 has marked a major completion of downtown construction. It will be home to marine life from the Indo-Pacific waters while greatly improving accessibility along the waterfront.

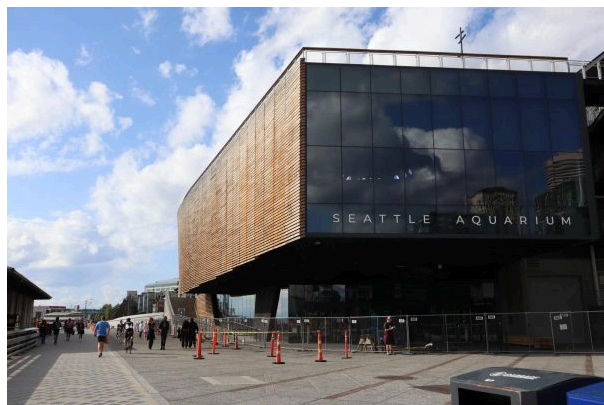
Featuring ecosystems from the Coral Triangle, visitors have the opportunity to come face-to-face with spotted eagle rays, goatfish, as well as an Indo-Pacific leopard shark that is a part of "ReShark," a breeding program dedicated to increasing the population of endangered sharks.

The three main habitats include "The Reef," an underwater



Leila Bunker

Spotted eagle ray swimming in The Reef.



The Seattle Aquarium's Ocean Pavilion

canyon home to various species of fish and coral, "The Archipelago," an Indonesian mangrove forest surrounded by small pools of starfish, and "At Home in the Ocean," a set of habitats designed for younger visitors that contain clownfish, garden eels and more.

If one finds themselves without the extra pennies to spare on admission, passersby can gaze up at an oculus located above the entrance to the Pavilion. Surrounded by an ornate, sandblasted pattern that hovers over a dark ellipse of concrete, the oculus gives one the chance to witness fish swim by in a vast coral canyon at no cost.

Interpretation Coordinator, Nicole Killebrew, highlighted that the Ocean Pavilion is not only centered on the communities of the Coral Triangle, but that their exhibit, in contrast to the ecosystem of the Puget Sound, reflects a larger significance.

"One of the main threads of the program that you'll hear is about the interconnectedness of our one world ocean," Killebrew said. "Even though the coral triangle and Indonesia may be 8,000 miles away, what we do here in the Salish Sea has an influence on what happens there and vice versa."

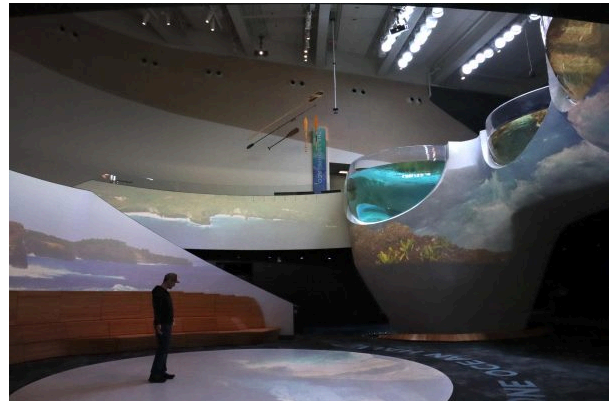
A prominent space in the Pavilion embodying the idea of connection is “One Ocean Hall” which is a central atrium space with 360-degree interactive displays showing different marine ecosystems worldwide. Its location organically connects all of the habitats and is intended to give visitors the feeling that they are immersed in an underwater world while serving as a communal space.

With a focus on education, the various spaces throughout the Pavilion will be accompanied by volunteer interpreters giving presentations about the process of running an aquarium. From divers in The Reef to scheduled feeding times, interpreters will be found throughout the building providing insight to visitors about the efforts to care for the numerous animals and the required upkeep of the habitats.

Additionally, with their jelly nursery and veterinary clinic visible on the second floor of the Pavilion, the hope is that once they are in the rhythm of things they will start doing presentations there as well.

“That process and being transparent about what it takes for an aquarium to have the animals they do have in our care is an important part of our story and is a part of our daily life. We want that to be a part of our guest’s experience as well,” Killebrew said as she reflected on how aquariums are shifting from novelty attractions to agents of conservation.

The addition of the Pavilion on the waterfront is part of a larger multi-year program that the City of Seattle has invested \$806 million in, with 54 million going towards the Seattle Aquarium, called “Waterfront Seattle.” Several renovation projects have been underway since the removal of the Alaskan Way Viaduct.



“One Ocean Hall,” a hall centrally located in the Ocean Pavilion. (Leila Bunker)

With part of the roof serving as an elevated public park and walkway over Alaskan Way, the Overlook Walk, set to open Oct. 4, improves accessibility between the market and piers while providing a panorama of Seattle’s landscape.

Building on a waterfront comes with sustainability concerns. Ensuring that the exterior materials are not going to have detrimental effects needs to be taken into account, and with Elliott Bay in particular, accounting for the salmon population is an additional factor to consider. LMN Architects, in collaboration with Thinc Design and partnered with the Seattle Aquarium, brought on several indigenous consultants from various tribes in the larger Coast Salish community to ensure that the construction of the Pavilion would be as ethical and environmentally sound as it could be.

“It’s not thinking of tribes as just a stakeholder, but as partners. [It’s] leveraging their sovereignty to be engaged with the Ocean Pavilion [and] being enmeshed [in that process]...We’re doing this for the Ocean Pavilion, for the city of Seattle, for the Seattle Aquarium, but we’re also doing this for our people,” Director of Arts and Culture at Headwater People Owen Oliver said.

A Native-owned consulting firm that seeks to represent and create opportunities for historically excluded communities, Headwater People is another partner of the Seattle Aquarium. Oliver (Quinault and Isleta Pueblo) is one of the many Indigenous folks who were brought on as consultants.

A question that was centered for all involved partners was how they could transform the Ocean Pavilion into something more than a land acknowledgment. The hope was to have meaningful conversations from and by Indigenous folks rather than checking a box of mere involvement.

The consistent meetings that took place between the Seattle Aquarium, partners and local tribes are reflected in several elements of the building design; Alaskan Yellow Cedar wood, both salmon safe and Forest Stewardship Council certified, was used for the exterior of the Pavilion and came from tribal forests, colorful. Glass blown salmon created by Lummi artist Dan Friday greet visitors as they walk in, guiding them to the hallway that leads to One Ocean Hall. Additionally, the rooftop is made up of several native plants, requiring less irrigation.

Inspired by native food forests, Muckleshoot botanist and native plant specialist, Valerie Segrest, had the concept of curating a plant palette that looks at what grows at the top of Mount Rainier to the shoreline of the Salish Sea. According to Osama Quotah, partner at LMN Architects, she calls this concept “the white caps to the white caps,” and as one ascends the steps leading up to the Overlook Walk, the plants change.



“The Reef,” an underwater canyon that homes spotted eagle rays, goatfish, an Indo-Pacific leopard shark and a sixteen year old pufferfish. (Leila Bunker)

Yet, The Seattle Times found that the Seattle Aquarium is one of the more energy-intensive commercial complexes and that the Ocean Pavilion “will increase its physical footprint by about 40% and boost its carbon footprint by nearly a third.”

While this may generate concern, the goal is to ultimately have an environmentally positive impact by becoming the world’s first “regenerative” aquarium by 2030. Though firm commitments have yet to be made, a few goals have been outlined such as becoming a zero-waste facility and reducing seawater consumption.

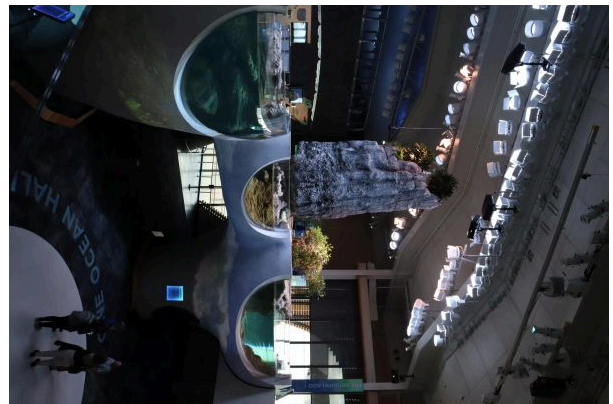
To many Seattle residents, the waterfront may represent a less welcoming part of the city that can often feel as if it’s overrun by tourists and cruise ships. However, with the recent enhancements and intention-fueled projects, the waterfront is becoming less of a point to sail away from and more of a community to come home to.

“It’s an important part of our city that historically we lost touch with... [and] it’s so important that it becomes a central part for everybody in the city,” Quotah said. “And then so what does that mean to have the Ocean Pavilion there? It’s at the most prominent location in that area. It’s at this knuckle that takes you to the market. It connects you to the Salish Sea. It connects the north and south along the waterfront. It’s a living room in a sense, but it’s about conservation. It’s about sustainability,” Quotah said.

Renovating the waterfront is motivated by the desire to improve the experience of navigating and visiting the waterfront. With that, hopefully, Seattleites and visitors will feel more connected to the city’s history and enticed to explore. The Ocean Pavilion could potentially be a starting point for reconnecting.

Oliver also helped with the rooftop design, particularly with the sandblasting pattern. He reflected on how rich shellfish beds were intentionally filled when Seattle was being settled as to create more land and sought to use a pattern to tell the story of the historical tide flats that used to home an abundance of creatures and exist where the waterfront does. He did so with a pattern that resembles the process of basket weaving, the idea being that instead of gathering fibrous materials one gathers the gooey crustaceans.

In addition to the materials used for the Pavilion’s exterior, other sustainable decisions include the carpeting being made from abandoned fishing nets and used water bottles, an all-electric-building design to minimize the amount of released carbon, heat and moisture from the building exhaust air is recycled into the heating water system, and a semi-closed seawater loop that recirculates 96% of seawater in the building daily.



“The Archipelago,” a habitat with Indonesian mangroves that are surrounded by a coral reef and mangrove lagoon. (Leila Bunker)