

SHARK TRUTH ANNUAL REPORT FEB 2011

A FEW WORDS FROM THE FOUNDER

In less than two years since its inception, Shark Truth has become a key voice in the movement to protect shark populations from dropping, as a result of the demand for shark fin soup.

The International Union of Conservation for Nature (IUCN) Shark Specialist Group identifies that half of oceanic pelagic sharks are facing an elevated risk of extinction primarily due to the consumption of shark fin. Most popularly served at Chinese-style wedding banquets, shark fin soup fuels the demand for the shark finning industry, which is a cruel, wasteful and ecologically damaging practice.

A Vancouver-based non-profit organization, we use grassroots initiatives and a culturally informed approach to promote education, awareness and action around shark fin soup.

A major part of our success in 2010 was the Happy Hearts Love Sharks Wedding Contest. Shark Truth launched the Wedding Contest to encourage wedding couples to protect sharks by not serving shark fin soup at their wedding banquet. The Wedding Contest secured commitments from over 38 couples, totaling over 4,300 bowls of shark fin soup diverted from consumption. The contest was such a success we have decided to make it an annual event.

Our initiative and the contest have made big splashes across the globe, securing pledges from wedding couples in Canada, Hong Kong, Malaysia and the United States, connecting with conservation allies from around the world and receiving media coverage from the United States and Canada for our unique, effective approach. Our organization's effectiveness stems from our human resources policy - it requires at least half of the volunteer team to be of Chinese descent and that our strategy, tactics and voice come from within the community.

We are excited to report back on the year ending February 2011 and look forward to strengthening and expanding our organization's mission to protect sharks from the cruel and wasteful consumption of shark fin soup.

Sincerely,



Claudia LI, Founder

SHARK TRUTH ANNUAL REPORT

2010 - FEB 2011

Major Activities and Achievements

SECURING PLEDGES TO STOP SHARK FIN SOUP CONSUMPTION

HAPPY HEARTS LOVE SHARKS WEDDING CONTEST 2010

A popular item at wedding banquets, Shark Truth's Happy Hearts Love Sharks wedding contest of 2010 rewarded wedding couples who pledged to protect sharks and Stop the Soup at their wedding banquet. Couples sent in a photo or video entry that was posted to our Facebook page and the entry with the most votes won a honeymoon getaway.

RESULTS: Our winning couple, Tai and Julianna, earned 223 votes and won the grand prize trip to Mexico, where they swam with over 100 whale sharks – an experience of a lifetime.

- The contest attracted over **1,500** viewers, **880** votes and **38*** couples from around the globe.
- A total of **4,300*** bowls of shark fin soup were diverted from consumption and the same number of banquet guests heard Shark Truth's message to protect sharks and "Stop the Soup".
- Shark Truth's innovative wedding contest has already inspired other international conservation groups to launch similar initiatives in Asia.
- **500** posters with were plastered around the city of Vancouver. **200** flyers and brochures were handed out to couples. Our online banner was circulated through email and social media networks.
- The grand prize winners have been actively supporting Shark Truth's mission to Stop the Soup by becoming advocates in media and events, as well as educating and empowering other wedding couples.

The contest was so effective in raising awareness and promoting action around shark fin soup that we have decided to make it an annual event. This year, we hope to send the winning couple to **Hawaii**. We chose this destination to bring attention to the excellent example Hawaii is setting for passing legislation against shark fin. In July 2010, it passed the Shark Fin Bill, which bans possession and consumption of shark fin.

*The total includes General Wedding Pledges, which were couples that pledged to Stop the Soup at their wedding banquet but did not want to enter the wedding contest or publicize their pledge.

16 couples and 3,600 bowls were from the wedding contest and the remaining 22 couples and 700 bowls were General Wedding Pledges.

STORYTELLING TO RAISE THE PROFILE OF SHARK FIN

MEDIA COVERAGE

Shark Truth's spokespeople have leveraged our unique wedding contest and outreach events to dramatically raise the public profile of the shark fin issue across Canada and beyond.

RESULTS: Our organization's spokespeople are becoming a leading authority on cross-cultural issues involving shark fin consumption within the Chinese community.

- Our work has been featured in over [45 earned media pieces in Chinese and English](#) outlets between March, 2010 and February, 2011, including radio, television, newsprint, magazine, online news and blogs.

Notable Media Coverage:

- A [30-minute radio interview and call-in with Chinese consumers](#) on 1470 AM Fairchild Radio (July 16, 2010).
- [Two interviews on CKNW](#) – the most listened-to radio station in Vancouver (June 12, 2010).
- Radio interview with CBC's Early Edition. CBC is Canada's National Public Broadcaster.
- Coverage in [OMNI Cantonese News TV, CBC News TV](#)
- 30-minute interview on [Fairchild TV's Leisure Talk Show](#).
- Blog features on Green Heroes and the Ugly Chinese-Canadian.

[Green Heroes 'Stopping the Soup'](#): *"We used to say that a bride marrying into a family without shark fin at the banquet table was marrying into a poor family. Not only is this simply a fable, but we need to recognize that this fable is threatening sharks populations around the world with extinction. We need to remove shark fin from the menu for the unsustainable and cruel dish that it is."*

- [Full page spreads](#) in the Langara Voice, Vancouver Sun and Ming Pao Weekly.

[Vancouver Sun 'The dangerous allure of shark-fin soup and the grassroots movement to combat it'](#): *"Tai Cheng's father Derick, a prominent Chinatown businessman, was okay with not serving shark-fin soup at his son's wedding. But Cheng's mother, Roxy, had her doubts. Shark-fin soup is traditional at such banquets. Failure to serve it could send the wrong message to the 680 guests assembling at the Floata Seafood Restaurant on Keefer Street. 'She was worried about the backlash, the stigma, the talk in the community,' Cheng explained. As it turns out, nobody complained and everyone was forced to take a fresh look at the ecological impact of their culture -- in this case, the global decline in shark populations."*

- Coverage in the Province, Montreal Gazette, Calgary Herald, Times Colonist, Georgia Straight, Vancouver Courier and Sing Tao Daily, Ming Pao Daily, and Voice of America.

[Georgia Straight 'New awareness grows around shark-fin soup'](#): *"Nowadays, though, many Chinese Canadian couples are choosing to forgo the controversial dish in response to a growing awareness of the harm it's causing to ocean ecosystems. 'Every culture has their problem, right? It just so happens that this one is of a species that's very close to being pushed to extinction,' Claudia Li, founder of Shark Truth, told the Georgia Straight. 'The majority of shark-fin soup is served at wedding banquets, and that's where I feel the biggest impact can be made,' Li said. Meanwhile, Li isn't convinced that people who defend their food choices by calling them traditions are unable to change. She believes in strength in numbers and creating a community that supports change. 'Foot-binding was a part of Chinese culture, and that doesn't make sense anymore. Polygamy was part of the Emperor's culture way back when,' she said. 'Cultures change. We're dynamic, and we can adapt to what's needed of the moment.'*

- [Two opinion pieces](#) published in the Georgia Straight and the Solutions.

[Solutions 'Stopping the Soup'](#): *"Like others, I used to argue that the removal of shark fin soup from Chinese cuisine would mean the loss of an important part of Chinese heritage. But I consider myself no less Chinese now that I've stopped drinking the soup. If anything, taking shark fin off the menu can help preserve Chinese culture and communities by helping our oceans to thrive."*

- Featured in the Community Section of [The Complete Wedding Directory](#) magazine and featured in [realWeddings Magazine](#).

EDUCATING AND BUILDING COMMUNITY

OUTREACH EVENTS & PUBLIC AWARENESS

To increase the public presence of the shark fin issue and educate consumers, Shark Truth organized outreach at [14 community, cultural, educational and wedding events](#).

CHINESE COMMUNITY

- [Chinatown Chinese New Year Parade](#) (February 7, 2010 and February 6, 2011) – One of the three largest non-commercial annual parades in Vancouver. The parade features an assembly of community groups and brings over 50,000 spectators each year where we gave out 'Shark Hugs'.
- [Dragon Boat Fest](#) (June 19-20, 2010) – The Rio Tinto Alcan Dragon Boat Festival is the largest dragon boating festival in North America, attracting over 100,000 audience members.
- [Shark Week Shark Chalk](#) (August 14, 2010) – A promotional event where artists chalked up the streets with shark art to raise awareness about the misconception of shark attacks near Chinatown, Vancouver.

WEDDING COMMUNITY

- [Why Shark Fin Soup is so 80s Wedding Seminars](#) (November 4, 2010) – Organized by Shark Truth and hosted at Amara Wedding, this event brought together consumers who were having difficulty convincing their family members to not drink shark fin soup. Through this event, Shark Truth offered educational resources for consumers and encouraged dialogue within the Chinese community.
- [Annual Wedding Fair](#) (January 8-9, 2011) – The largest retail wedding show of the year in Vancouver, drawing over 3,000 brides and grooms.
- [Vancouver Wedding Show](#) (October 17, 2010) – A wedding show that invites Vancouver couples to learn about unique retail offerings.
- [Bling Wedding Fair](#) (November 13, 2010) – A wedding fair hosted to showcase products and services for couples-to-be in Burnaby.

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY

- Simon Fraser University (SFU) Civic Engagement and [Volunteer Fairs](#) (September 22, 29, 2010) – One of the two largest universities in Vancouver. Our ambassadors educated the SFU community on shark fin issues and connected with student clubs.
- SFU [Campus Movie Screening](#) (May 31, 2010) – In partnership with SFU Society Advocating for Marine Animals, we hosted a screening of the movie *Sharkwater* to promote awareness about shark fin soup within the student body.
- Presentation on environmental entrepreneurship for the Ocean Environmental Science Undergraduate class for postdoctoral research fellow Jennifer Jacquet, Western Washington University (October 26, 2010).

DIVING COMMUNITY

- EDGE Dive Shop Presentation (February, 2010)
- Vancouver Aquarium [Divers Weekend](#) show (January 22-23, 2011)
- [Vancouver Aquarium Super Saturday](#) (July 24, 2010)

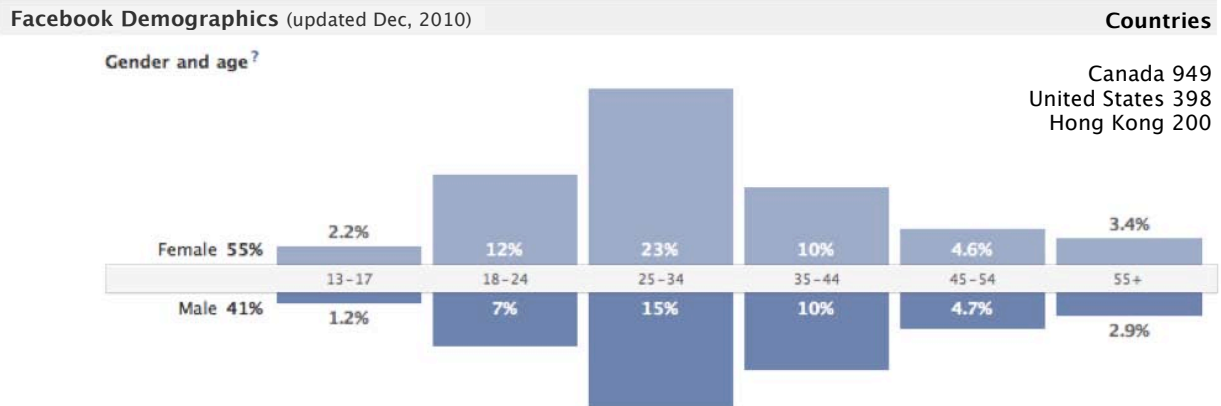
BECOMING A RESOURCE FOR SHARK CONSERVATION

WEB PRESENCE & SOCIAL MEDIA

Shark Truth's website has become a starting point for shark fin soup education for consumers and professionals alike. Our web presence and Google ranking has been enhanced by the strong search engine optimization strategies we implemented that includes: creating and maintaining active social media relationships on Facebook and Twitter, link exchanges with related organizations and businesses, and recruiting a website consultant for maximizing keyword phrases and header tags.

RESULTS: We currently have 3,500 supporters through Facebook, Twitter and our monthly online newsletter.

2,300 Facebook fans with a 50% Monthly Active Users rate
 600 Twitter followers
 500 online supporters



FOSTERING COLLABORATION AND DIALOGUE

ENGAGEMENT WITH CONSERVATION GROUPS

Shark Truth has been reaching out to conservation groups working on related initiatives and building informal collaborative networks. We have connected with Save Our Seas Foundation, Shark Savers, Hong Kong Shark Foundation, Shark Rescue, Clement Yui-wah Lee and the “Cut gift money for shark fin banquets” campaign, The Humane Society, Bloom Association, and WWF TRAFFIC.

Conservation Significance

Shark Truth is one of the first shark conservation groups with an intrinsic understanding of the Chinese community. Our innovative approach to market-based campaigning – starting with the consumers – has resulted in tangible, effective results and international praise from world-renowned scientists, nonprofits and Chinese community leaders.

CREATING A FOUNDATION FOR CHANGE BY BUILDING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Our unique strategy stems from our organization’s strict human resources policy that requires a minimum of 50% of our volunteers to be of Chinese descent. This ensures that our vision, strategy and tactics come from within the Chinese community. Our organization and approach have been well-received by the Chinese community, as the high participation in our HHLS wedding contest and Chinese media coverage illustrates.

Shark Truth's positive communications strategy and outreach events are building a foundation for change within the Chinese community. We provide a community of support for consumers that decide to take a stand against shark fin soup. These consumers are often going against the wishes of their family elders, their network of friends and the Chinese community at large.

The Happy Hearts Love Sharks wedding contest is a strong example of how Shark Truth's organizational approach and communications strategy created tangible, positive change. Our contest (1) encouraged consumer change itself with incentives such as the grand prize; (2) rewarded this behavior through positive reinforcement (e.g. media attention for the contest); and (3) further promoted user-generated education and awareness (i.e. couples had to educate friends and family on the issue of shark fin if they wanted votes to win the grand prize).

By using a culturally informed approach, Shark Truth has been effective in engaging the Chinese community. Our achievements offer a slice of optimism for marine conservation, as our model can be adapted and applied to other cross-cultural issues.

BRIDGING AUDIENCES FOR CHANGE

In addition to bringing awareness about the impact of shark fin soup, our work bridges multiple businesses and consumer and community groups as it fosters collaboration between wedding retailers, restaurateurs, Chinese community leaders, marine scientists, and environmental activists.

Bringing together these groups builds a unique foundation for change in the Chinese community. It also allows Shark Truth to extend its reach through multiple social, academic and business networks.

Challenges This Year

Shark Truth is a non-profit in its infancy, but even at this early stage it has experienced incredible success. As a fully volunteer-run organization, it has been effective in adapting to dynamic environments and has made a tangible impact on shark fin consumption.

Shark Truth's internal capacity barrier is due to our organization being entirely volunteer-run. While our team of volunteers are incredibly resourceful and contribute a wide variety of skills, we realized we have reached a limit in capacity. Moving forward, the organization will need to invest more in core operations, including staffing, materials, meeting space and translators. Directing a portion of our future resources towards these areas will allow Shark Truth to build on its momentum and expand and strengthen our work in protecting sharks and stopping the consumption of shark fin soup in the Chinese community.

SHARK TRUTH | We are going to Stop the Soup. One bowl at a time.

Shark Truth is a grassroots nonprofit dedicated to protecting sharks by promoting awareness, education and action about shark fin soup in the Chinese community.

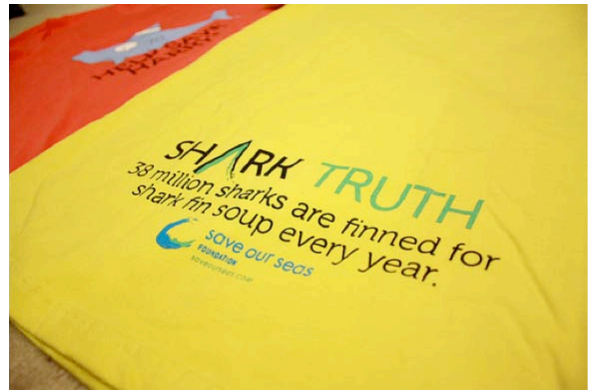


*Chinatown Chinese New Year
February 6, 2011*





*Divers Weekend, Vancouver Aquarium
January 22, 2011*



*Our 'Help Save Harry'
T-shirts*



*Annual Wedding Fair
January 9, 2011*



*'Why Shark Fin Soup is so 80's' Wedding Seminar
November 4, 2010*



*Chinese and English Poster on
Why we need to Stop the Soup*



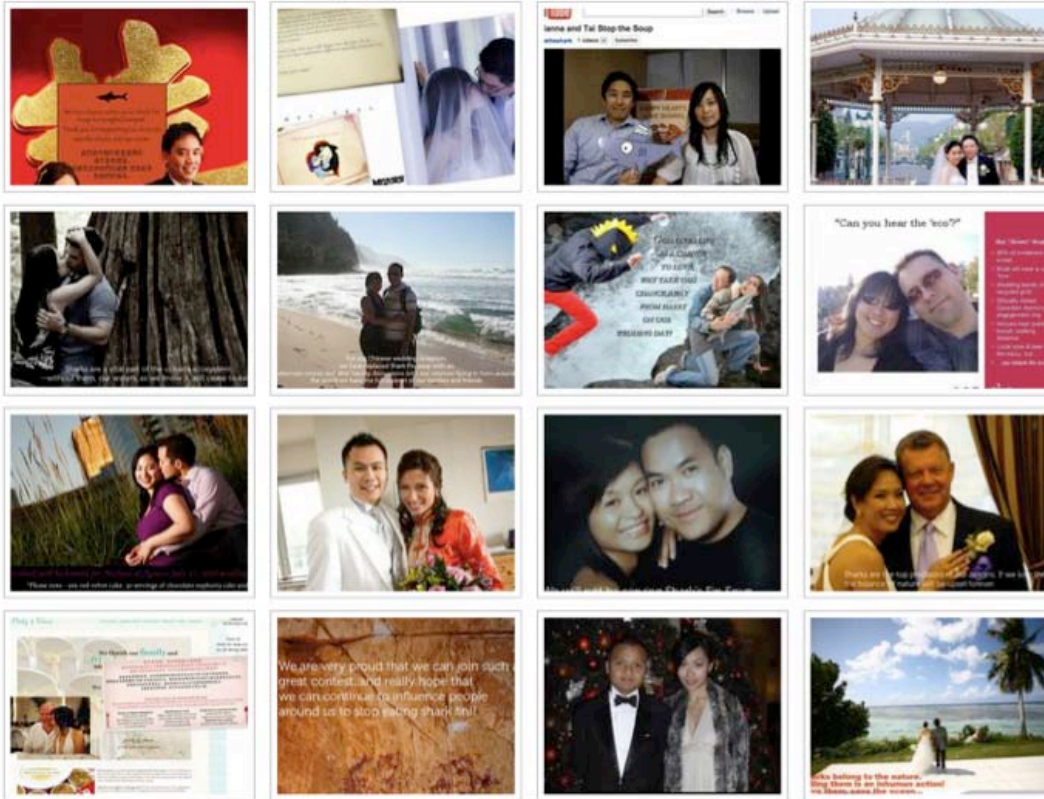
*Annual Wedding Fair
January 9, 2011*

Happy Hearts Love Sharks Wedding Contest 2010

By Shark Truth · View photos

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Location
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about 11 months ago

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Contest Results

Vancouver (GVRD) Pool
 • Grand Prize: Tai & Julianna with 223 votes
 • Runner Up Prize: Jennifer & Colin with 64 votes

International Pool
 • Grand Prize: Holly & Quyen with 94 votes

Congratulations to all our contestants!
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37 people like this.

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Brian Lo We are tototally in favour of your decision and be friended with sharks. You have our full support! Hurrah and Go Go...
27 April 2010 at 11:07 · Like · Report

Mark Thorpe Congratulations, and well done for taking this bold initiative.
05 May 2010 at 17:51 · Like · Flag

Tammy Rodrigues they ALL look like beautiful couples, it was a very hard decision. But i would like to wish them all every happiness and best luck in their futures and many healthy happy kiddies who will grow up in a world of abundant marine life with than... See more
09 May 2010 at 03:56 · Like · Flag

Dave Wits For Chinese couples especially there is a lot of pressure from relatives to serve the standard 'face' fare at a wedding banquet and so to those who have made a stand and boycotted Shark's Fin soup, I salute you. I hope that your influence will see other young Chinese couples make the right decision
08 June 2010 at 01:48 · Like · Flag

Ka Yee Virginia Wong yes, i agree, it's difficult to persuade my family also..... but lastly we did!!!!
08 June 2010 at 04:48 · Like · Flag

Write a comment...