

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

March 16, 2017

**CONTACT:**

Kate Moore, Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations  
616.929.1713; [kmoore@grpm.org](mailto:kmoore@grpm.org)

**Grand Rapids Public Museum Hosts Local Author for Special Book  
Signing Event in Conjunction with *Whales: Giants of the Deep* Exhibit**

Grand Rapids, MI - The Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) is partnering with local author and scientist, Christopher Kemp to bring his book *Floating Gold: A Natural (and Unnatural) History of Ambergris* to the Grand Rapids Public Museum's Curiosity Shop.

Christopher Kemp lives in Grand Rapids and works as a scientist. He has a personal connection to the *Whales: Giants of the Deep* exhibit, as the author of the book *Floating Gold: A Natural (and Unnatural) History of Ambergris*. His book explores the entertaining and lively history of ambergris, a rare secretion produced only by sperm whales, and its fascinating use in perfume. Kemp's book also contains images from the very same specimen of ambergris that is included in the exhibit.

Kemp's journey begins with an encounter on a New Zealand beach with a giant lump of faux ambergris—determined after much excitement to nothing more exotic than lard—that inspires a comprehensive quest to seek out ambergris and its story. He takes us from the wild, rocky New Zealand coastline to Stewart Island, a remote, windswept island in the southern seas, to Boston and Cape Cod, and back again. Along the way, he tracks down the secretive collectors and traders who populate the clandestine modern-day ambergris trade.

*Floating Gold* is a history that covers not only these precious gray lumps and those who covet them, but presents a highly informative account of the natural history of whales, squid, ocean ecology, and even a history of the perfume industry. Kemp's obsessive curiosity is infectious, and eager readers will feel as though they have stumbled upon a precious bounty of this intriguing substance.

Join author Christopher Kemp in the main foyer of the Museum in front of the Curiosity Shop on Tuesday, March 21 from 4 p.m. through 7 p.m. *Floating Gold: A Natural (and Unnatural) History of Ambergris* will be available for visitors to purchase and have signed by Kemp.

**The Exhibit**

In *Whales: Giants of the Deep* visitors interact with a life-size replica of the largest living creature's heart, the blue whale. While visiting you can tune into a range of whale sounds and discover how scientists and amateur trackers identify whales on their migration process.

The exhibit includes two fully-articulated sperm whale skeletons, including a 58-foot male. Visitors are able to see life-size and scale models of whales common to the South Pacific that include a beaked whale skull, as well as ancient and contemporary



whalebone treasures including weapons and chiefly adornments.

Tickets are currently on sale for the exhibition, which runs through April 15, 2017. Members will be \$2 per ticket, and non-member adults are \$13, non-member children are \$8. Admission to *Whales: Giants of the Deep* includes general admission to the Museum. Further discounts to Kent County residents. Tickets can be purchased by visiting [grpm.org/Whales](http://grpm.org/Whales) or calling 616.929.1700.

*Whales: Giants of the Deep* is sponsored by Meijer, The Steve and Amy Van Andel Foundation, David & Carol Van Andel Family Foundation, Williams Kitchen & Bath, WoodTV 8 and STAR 105.7.

### **The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa**

The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), one of the largest national museums in the world, has attracted over 14.4 million visitors since it opened in 1998. Te Papa is recognised as a world leader in the new wave of innovative and interactive museum experiences and has quickly achieved an international reputation for excellence.

Te Papa, the largest cultural project in New Zealand's history, tells the stories of this young Pacific nation; its history, art and natural environment. It also regularly features a range of international touring exhibitions.

Te Papa is a bi-cultural museum operated in partnership between Māori and Pakeha (non-Māori, mainly of European descent). It includes a range of magnificent exhibitions featuring a number of New Zealand's most significant Māori treasures as well as a unique 21st century carved marae (gathering place), and a stunning historical whareniui (meeting house).

Visit [www.tepapa.govt.nz](http://www.tepapa.govt.nz) for more information.

### **Grand Rapids Public Museum**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an invaluable, publicly-owned institution that is home to more than 250,000 unique artifacts that tell the history of Kent County and beyond, houses the only planetarium in the region, and is responsible for protecting the Norton Indian Mounds, a national historic landmark. The Grand Rapids Public Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with its main location in downtown Grand Rapids, MI at 272 Pearl Street, NW. For additional information including hours of operation, admission fees and exhibit/event listings, please visit [www.grpm.org](http://www.grpm.org).