

**THEATRE  
DIRECT**

**ANIMACY**  
theatre collective

***FINDING HOME:  
A SALMON JOURNEY UPSTREAM***

A Theatre Direct Production  
Created by Animacy Theatre Collective

**Study Guide  
Grades K to 6**



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All materials and resources included in this package are subject to your use. If you have any questions or comments, contact Brian Postalian at [brian@theatredirect.ca](mailto:brian@theatredirect.ca)

## **PLOT SUMMARY**

*Finding Home: A Salmon Journey Upstream* is the story of two best friends, Sojo and Beagle, who also happen to be salmon from Lake Ontario. These two little salmon do everything together as true best friends always do! But then one day Beagle starts to change and gets the strong urge to set off on an adventure upstream. As a true best friend, Sojo knows she must join her even if she doesn't have the same urge as Beagle.

It's tough to swim against the current of the Humber River and the two face all kinds of challenges together: fishermen, pollution, sharp rocks, and rapids. Along the way they learn about friendship, what it means to "reach maturity", how beautiful it is to complete your life cycle, what home means, and why salmon really are the Rockstars of the Fish World!

## **SHOW DESCRIPTION**

*Finding Home* is a touring play, originally performed right beside the Humber River, which is a part of the Great Lakes Basin and is a tributary of Lake Ontario. Not only that, but the Humber River also is home to migrating salmon making their way upstream to spawn just like Sojo and Beagle. Before or after the show, you can go see salmon making the journey!

The show also includes live music, puppetry, and masks. It is performed in a clown style which means Sojo and Beagle have the ability to interact with audiences (and have a lot of fun doing it!).



## MEET THE CHARACTERS



Sojo

Sojo is a young female Chinook salmon currently living in the best place in the whole world: Lake Ontario! She loves games, dances, songs, food, and basically anything involving her best friend in the world, Beagle. She is playful, clumsy, mischievous and a very loyal friend. Living in the lake is the best and Sojo can't imagine ever going anywhere else, unless of course, her best friend Beagle needs her. In which case, let the adventure begin!



Beagle

Beagle is a slightly older female Chinook salmon from Lake Ontario and Sojo's BEST FRIEND. Beagle loves doing impressive water somersaults and swishing her tail around; she's got a dancer background. Her favorite food is herring. Speaking of which, she's been feeling VERY hungry lately (there's not enough herring in all of Lake Ontario to keep her satisfied) and a little moody! Things are starting to change for Beagle, but the one thing she knows is that her best friend Sojo is the best and that desire for adventure pulsing through her fins is getting stronger.



Rock

Rock is a wise, good humoured and caring old rock. He has been around for forever and has seen (and been part of) the changing landscape around him for thousands of years. As a patient and kind, deep thinker with excellent observation skills there is not much that gets by him! He helps Sojo and Beagle ask and figure out those BIG questions about friendship and the salmon life cycle!



Salmon Rockstar Band

Salmon Rockstar Band. This show also has a live band playing music throughout the performance. We have a drummer and a guitar player. You'll notice that some of the band members double as other characters in the show. There's the Fisherman who loves to fish of course and only takes the best, and freshest fish home to eat. When the Fisherman catches Beagle, she is not at her best after such a long journey so he throws her back into the river. The band also transforms into male salmon. You'll notice that unlike Sojo and Beagle, the male salmon have black noses, that's because when male chinook salmon reach maturity their noses turn black and hooked and their teeth more jagged. This is why some people call them Black Mouths!



Fisherman

## THEMES

- Ecosystems
- Urban Ecology
- Friendship
- Life Cycles: Maturity, Death, and Birth

## VOCABULARY

**Chinook Salmon (King Salmon, Black Hooks):** Chinook Salmon are the largest Pacific Salmon species (that's why they're called the King Salmon), and they are the biggest type of salmon in Lake Ontario! Most reach approximately 30 pounds. However some Chinook have been as big as 110 pounds! Some Chinook salmon go from saltwater to freshwater to spawn while others, like Sojo and Beagle, stay in fresh water for their whole lives. Young Chinook salmon like to eat insects and small crustaceans, particularly amphipods. Adult salmon eat mostly other fish.

**Decompose:** When something breaks down into simpler parts such as carbon dioxide, water, simple sugars and mineral salts. The word "compost" is similar to "decompose" - you might notice organic matter (like fruit and veggie scraps) start to decompose if you have a compost bin at home. Decomposing is crucial to regeneration and supports a healthy ecosystem!

**Downstream:** When a river goes with the current or the way that a river flows. Sojo and Beagle went downstream after they hatched to get to Lake Ontario. If you've ever tried to swim with water that has a current you will know it's much easier to go downstream than upstream! That's why salmon swim downstream when they are little and wait until they are big and strong to go upstream.

**Ecosystem:** An ecosystem is a web of different elements (for example, animals, insects, plants, water, humans and so much more!) that all work together to grow and thrive. Changing one part of an ecosystem will affect other parts too - this is why a salmon dying will help other parts of the ecosystem grow, but it is also why things like pollution from humans can hurt many different parts of an ecosystem.

**Fertilization:** Fertilization is required to make baby salmon. For salmon, fertilization is when the male salmon sprays the female salmon's eggs with sperm. Salmon use *external fertilization* which means the male salmon fertilizes the eggs when they are in the salmon redd (salmon nest), after they've left the female salmon's body.

**Humber River:** A river in Southern Ontario, Canada, in the Great Lakes Basin. It is a tributary of Lake Ontario and is one of two major rivers on either side of the city of Toronto. Sojo and Beagle swim up this river from Lake Ontario to get to their spawning grounds.

**Instincts:** Instincts are a pattern of behavior that help a species to survive, love, build relationships, know when they're hungry, and when they're safe or in danger. Every species has instincts that are unique and important to them, even us humans!

**Lake Ontario:** Lake Ontario is a beautiful lake that lies to the south of the City of Toronto. It is one of the 5 Great Lakes - the 14th biggest Lake in the WORLD, yet the smallest (and one of the deepest) of the Great Lakes. It is home to 122 species of fish - including several different types of salmon!

**Maturity:** For salmon, maturity is the life stage when they are fully grown and ready to spawn. For humans and other animals, reaching maturity might mean different things such as puberty or the ability to mate. Reaching maturity can come at many different stages of a life cycle, depending on the species.

**Navigation:** Navigation is how we find our way from place to place. For example, when you use a map to get somewhere you are navigating. Salmon are expert navigators and have an internal compass in each one of their cells that tells them where to go. Humans use a compass to help with directions and knowing where we are in the world. A salmon's compass is in their DNA.

**Pollution:** Pollution happens when something goes into the environment that shouldn't be there and can create negative effects within that environment. Common types of water pollution are plastics, industrial spills, farm run off, trash, and/or bacterias. We have to be very careful about what we put in the environment so that it can stay healthy and support the organisms that rely on it! Humans have caused a lot of pollution in the past few centuries and unfortunately we have a lot of pollution in Toronto and the GTA, including in Lake Ontario and its tributary rivers. In the play, Sojo and Beagle encounter pollution through litter (a COVID-19 mask).

**Redd (salmon nest):** A redd is a salmon nest! It is created by the movement of the female salmon's body and tail through the water, which makes little waves so that it moves around gravel and rocks at the bottom of the river (in the play there are human actors playing salmon so they have to use their hands to move the rocks - in real life salmon would use their whole bodies). The female salmon digs a number of redds,

depositing a few hundred eggs in each during the one or two days she is spawning. The redds help protect the eggs until they are ready to hatch.

**Roe (eggs):** Female salmon lay roe, which are tiny reddish eggs grown inside their bodies that are fertilized by male salmon during spawning. Roe are really small, about 1-5 mm (measure that with a ruler and see how small that really is!)

**Salmon Run:** The time of year when salmon swim upstream against the current to spawn. Some salmon species swim from the ocean to a freshwater river. Other salmon, like Sojo and Beagle, swim from a lake to quiet spawning grounds where they were first born (this means they always stay in freshwater and never go to the ocean).

**Spawn:** When salmon reach maturity, they swim upstream to where they were born. The female salmon lay eggs and the male salmon fertilize them.

**Spawning Grounds:** The special place upriver where the salmon were born. They know how to get there instinctively and need no map. It is a safe, calm place where, when the salmon eggs are ready, they can hatch and grow strong enough to make the trip to Lake Ontario!

**Tributary Rivers:** Rivers that run into a big lake or river. The Humber river is a tributary river of Lake Ontario.

**Upstream:** When a river flows down into a larger body of water (like a lake or ocean), creating a current. Salmon swim against the current (upstream) to get back to their spawning grounds.



## **COOL SALMON FACTS**

- Salmon is a healthy food! It is rich in protein, healthy fats, and various essential vitamins and minerals.
- Salmon are a keystone species. This means they are a critical part of maintaining a healthy ecosystem and significantly contribute to the wellbeing and survival of many other plants, animals and humans they live with.
- In the show you'll notice that our male salmon have black noses. That's because when male Chinook salmon mature, their mouths and noses turn black and they have a hooked like shape.
- Salmon play with gender! A beta male salmon, which is a male salmon that is not as big as other male salmon, will disguise itself as a female salmon during spawning to help outbeat the competition and to fertilize a female's eggs. If they didn't have this ability to disguise themselves, they may not be able to spawn as the bigger male salmon would push them aside.
- Salmon are such good navigators, scientists describe them as having a sort of built-in compass in each of their cells. That means instead of just remembering where to go using their brains (like humans do), they know how to navigate using their bodies!



## PRE-SHOW ACTIVITIES

### Activity 1: Group Discussion About Change, Friendship, Salmon and More

**Materials per Student:** n/a

**Instructions:**

1. As a class, in small groups, or as pairs, consider and discuss the following questions:
  - a. What does home mean to you? What kind of things make your home a home to you (ex. people, food, feelings, a structure, a climate, etc)?
  - b. How do you deal with change? What is good about change and what is scary?
  - c. Have you ever been lost? How did you find your way?
  - d. What makes a good friend?
  - e. Have you ever been to Lake Ontario? What did you notice about it?
  - f. Can you find Lake Ontario and three of its tributary rivers (i.e., the rivers that connect to it) on a map? Where are you in relation to Lake Ontario?
  - g. How long have humans lived by rivers? Why do you think they did that?
  - h. What do you know about salmon?
  - i. What animals live in the city alongside humans?
  - j. In the show there will be human actors pretending to be salmon, but salmon bodies and human bodies move through the world so differently. How would you move your body if you had to pretend to be a salmon?



## **POST-SHOW ACTIVITIES**

### **Activity 1: The Life Cycle**

#### **1a. A Salmon's Life Cycle**

**Materials per Student:** salmon life cycle template (see Appendix), scissors, glue, blank piece of paper, crayons or pencil crayons (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Using the salmon life cycle template provided, cut out each of the salmon life cycles stages. You can color them in too!
2. Put the stages in the right order, creating a circle. Remember, a salmon life cycle is cyclical: once a salmon decomposes they contribute to new life!
3. Once you've figured out the right order, glue the stages down onto a new piece of paper.

#### **1b. Follow-Up Activity: My Favourite Animal's Life Cycle**

**Materials per Student:** blank piece of paper, pencil, crayons or pencil crayons (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Pick another species and research their life cycle.
2. Draw the life cycle of this species out and present it to the class, maybe answering the following questions:
  - a. What does this creature offer to the ecosystem/world when it's born?
  - b. What about when it dies?
  - c. What do you think defines home for this creature (is it a place, a food, another animal, a parent or family, etc)?

#### **1c. Follow-Up Activity: My Favourite Sojo and Beagle Moment**

**Materials per Student:** scissors, glue, blank piece of paper, pencil, crayons or pencil crayons (optional)

**Instructions:**

1. Draw your favourite moment of the show and say what it means to you! Try giving a title. Where on the Sojo and Beagle's life cycle did this moment occur?
2. Cut out your drawing and place it along the salmon life cycle you made.

## **Activity 2: Exploring Animal Bodies**

### **2a. Make a Mask**

**Materials per Student:** mask template (see Appendix), scissors, string/elastic, pencil crayons, anything you want to use to make your mask such as leaves, paints, and buttons, etc., cardboard (optional)

#### **Instructions:**

1. Pick your favourite animal, bird, or insect who shares the city with you.
2. Using the mask template, make a mask that looks like the animal you chose! (In the show, two human actors played salmon, and used a small mask to help them look like the species they were trying to be.)
3. Optional: You can draw and cut out the template provided on cardboard to make a stronger mask. Fold the mask in half vertically down the middle to make it wearable.

### **2b. Follow-Up Activity: My Favourite Animal's Favourite things!**

**Materials per Student:** n/a (as a group discussion) or computer with internet access and/or related books (as a research or writing prompt)

#### **Instructions:**

1. As a class, in small groups, or as pairs, consider and discuss the following questions, or as a research or writing prompt, find out the answers to the following questions in the library or at home in relation to the animal, bird or insect that you chose in 2a:
  - a. What does your animal like to eat?
  - b. How do they move?
  - c. How is their body different than yours? Do they have claws, wings, hoofs, short legs, fur, etc.?
  - d. Are they fast or slow? Can they fly or swim?
  - e. How do they play?
  - f. What is their lifespan?
  - g. How do they sleep?
  - h. Do they like to be alone or in a group?
  - i. What does their home look like?
  - j. What are they good at?

## **2c. Follow-Up Activity: Move Like Your Animal**

**Materials per Student:** mask created in 2a

### **Instructions:**

1. Wearing your new mask, try to move around pretending to be the animal you chose. How do you think that animal uses its body?
2. Watch out for your other animal classmates as you move around the room! You may notice that when you wear your mask, your vision is slightly different, maybe even a little obstructed. Use this to help you discover what it's like to move in a different animal's body.
3. Go through each part of your body from your toes to your head and think about how your favourite animal might move those body parts—if they even have them! Try to make these movements really big! Then make them small. Play with the speed, size, mood, and quality of those movements.
4. Teachers: you can also use the list of questions in 2b as prompts for this movement activity and take them through a day in the life of that specific animal from waking up to going back to bed.

## **Activity 3: Group Discussion about *Finding Home***

**Materials per Student:** n/a

### **Instructions:**

1. As a class, in small groups, or as pairs, consider and discuss the following questions:
  - a. What about the show stood out to you? Why did you think this moment was important?
  - b. What kinds of things did this show make you feel? What moments in the show made you feel this way and why?
  - c. When making theatre shows, some things are pretend (in order to make a good story) and some things are real. In this show there were a lot of real facts about salmon and some things that were pretend. Which parts of the show do you think really happen to real salmon and what parts had to be made up to make the theatre show?
    - i. Example 1: Young salmon like Sojo would never swim upstream if they haven't reached maturity yet. In this show, Sojo is SUCH a good

- best friend that she had to follow Beagle. This was to make a good story, and not what a salmon would actually do.
- ii. Example 2: Male salmon do fertilize female salmon's eggs, but their fertilizer is in their bodies, not in a spray bottle like it was in the show!
  - iii. Example 3: In the show, the actors used their hands to pick up rocks and make Beagle's nest where she spawned. Salmon don't have hands, so in real life they would create little currents in the water with their bodies and those currents would move the rocks and gravel.
- d. In the show, Beagle has some really strong instincts to eat, swim upstream, find home and lay eggs. What strong instincts do other species have, including humans (and yourself)?
  - e. Describe what the performance area and park looked like. What history of that area is not visible? Why is it important to think about that?
  - f. In the show, Sojo and Beagle get into a big fight. Why do you think the fight happened and how did they resolve it?
  - g. How does Rock teach Sojo that death can be beautiful?
  - h. Why do you think salmon are the rockstars of the fish world?



## **FINDING HOME CREDITS**

### **Theatre Direct**

Now entering its 47th season, Theatre Direct Canada is one of the country's leading theatres for young audiences whose award-winning productions have reached audiences in schools and theatres across Canada and the world. Together, as a team of artists and producers, our company strives to innovate in form and style, experimenting with digitally-integrated, immersive, audience-driven and site-specific work that activates the imaginations and aspirations of young people by inviting them to join in!

[www.theatredirect.ca](http://www.theatredirect.ca)

### **Animacy Theatre Collective**

Animacy Theatre Collective (ATC) is focused on the creation of original, experimental and interdisciplinary theatre works. We tell stories that are driven by women. ATC uses humor and physical storytelling to raise social awareness and create characters who defy pre-existing borders (human, nonhuman, gender, sexuality).

Our work uses physical theatre (mask and clown), play writing and multimedia to create research-based and devised plays. By collaborating with communities, artists, and grassroots activism, we work to converge the artistic, social and environmental spheres, and to challenge interlocking structures of oppression in order to work towards social and environmental justice. [www.animacytheatrecollective.com](http://www.animacytheatrecollective.com)

### **Cast and Creative Team**

**Creators and Performers:** Alexandra Simpson and Morgan Brie Johnson

**Director and Dramaturge:** Rebecca Northan

**Remount Director:** Adam Paolozza

**Composers and Musicians:** Anders Azzopardi, Stefan Hegerat and Sabine Ndalamba

**Stage Managers:** Caitlin Farley and Annasofie Jakobsen

**Deaf Shadow Interpreter (Beagle):** Cassie-Hope Aubin

**Deaf Shadow Interpreter (Sojo):** Juan Jaramillo

**Rehearsal ASL-English Interpreters:** Eboni Ricketts and Amanda Hyde

**Puppet and Set Designers and Builders:** Alexandra Simpson, Morgan Johnson and Nina Keogh

**Promotional Photographer:** Kathryn Hanson (ShutteredEye)

## RESOURCES AND LINKS

### Related Groups and Organizations

**First Story Toronto:** an organization providing walking tours across Toronto that teach us about Indigenous histories of the area.

<https://firststoryblog.wordpress.com/>

**Toronto and Region Conservation Authority (TRCA):** an organization dedicated to conserving land and watersheds across multiple municipalities throughout the GTA.

<https://trca.ca/conservation/aquatic-habitat-toronto/projects/salmon-in-toronto-and-gta-waters/>

**Salmon Festival:** There are many salmon festivals across the GTA that celebrate Toronto's rivers and the salmon that migrate up them. These occur in the fall during the salmon run.

<https://events.trca.ca/event/trca-salmon-festival>

**Bring Back the Salmon:** *an organization dedicated to bringing Atlantic salmon back to Lake Ontario. Atlantic salmon went extinct in the late 19th century and since then the only salmon in Lake Ontario have been introduced species of Pacific salmon.*

<https://www.bringbackthesalmon.ca/>

### Youth Activism Opportunities

**Fridays for Futures:** <https://fridaysforfuture.org/>

**Climate Justice Toronto:** <https://climatejusticeto.com/>

### Additional Information about Salmon in the GTA

**"Chinook Salmon" (National Wildlife Federation):**

<https://www.nwf.org/Educational-Resources/Wildlife-Guide/Fish/Chinook-Salmon>

**"Salmon in Toronto and GTA Waters" (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority):**

[https://trca.ca/conservation/aquatic-habitat-toronto/projects/salmon-in-toronto-and-gta-waters/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwof6WBhD4ARIsAOi65ahCVnjHSwXoFGyo0cXpWllyL32bhF5PWRxfvfNV6Lys7SNWvcq1HaYaAuVuEALw\\_wcB](https://trca.ca/conservation/aquatic-habitat-toronto/projects/salmon-in-toronto-and-gta-waters/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwof6WBhD4ARIsAOi65ahCVnjHSwXoFGyo0cXpWllyL32bhF5PWRxfvfNV6Lys7SNWvcq1HaYaAuVuEALw_wcB)

**“The Atlantic Salmon: A brief Michi Saagiig oral history” by Gary Pritchard, Curve Lake First Nation (YouTube):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59vXVqLlhoA&t=9s>

**“Assessing seafood retailers’ progress helps consumers and industry” (David Suzuki Foundation):**  
[https://david Suzuki.org/story/assessing-seafood-retailers-progress-helps-consumers-and-industry/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwof6WBhD4ARIsAOi65aiLRos5WkIUjSo\\_Gtq8IDU-JiUJmzBR\\_T6QR5QmpFoIVagY1MH0LCAaAi\\_VEALw\\_wcB](https://david Suzuki.org/story/assessing-seafood-retailers-progress-helps-consumers-and-industry/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwof6WBhD4ARIsAOi65aiLRos5WkIUjSo_Gtq8IDU-JiUJmzBR_T6QR5QmpFoIVagY1MH0LCAaAi_VEALw_wcB)

Related Videos and Podcasts

**Chinook Salmon Mating (YouTube):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcF4EKh2wUI>

**Chinook Salmon Facts (YouTube):** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pGJnnFXZD38>

**“Get to Know: Our Local Species!” (Toronto and Region Conservation Authority):**  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=3674600325884721>

**“Deep dive: what happens when the salmon stop coming home” (CBC’s *Unreserved*):**  
<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/unreserved/deep-dive-what-happens-when-the-salmon-stop-coming-home-1.5827424>

Related Books

***Salmon Boy: A Legend of the Sechelt People* by Donna Joe**

***A Salmon for Simon* by Betty Waterton**

***Salmon Forest* by David Suzuki and Sarah Stickney Ellis**

