

**ENRICHMENT GUIDE**

# **AMPLIFY FESTIVAL**

**BIG CITY HARMONY**

**BY TY DEFOE**

**&**

**THE BARREN GROUNDS**

**BY SHARON MCCUNE & JEFF FRANK**



# CONTENT ADVISORY

**Recommended for families with young people ages 8 and up and storytellers of all ages!**

**Every young person is different and may or may not be ready for certain elements of each production. Read more about this show's age recommendation below.**

Audiences will be riveted by these new plays exploring family, friendship and belonging.

Both pieces contain moments of peril, loss and fighting; audiences may feel anxious as the characters experience these difficult situations, but they will learn how to rely on family and friends to get through challenges.

There will be moving lights, and loud music and sounds that may be overwhelming for those with sensory sensitivities.



# Theatre Etiquette

## DOs



### Stay present

Lean in and engage with the story. Observe and listen without distraction to the story being told on stage



### Oohs and Aahs

Reacting is encouraged! Please feel free to laugh, cry, clap, or ooh at appropriate moments.



### Respect the space

Please sit nicely in the audience chairs, refrain from eating or drinking, and pick up after yourself.

## DON'Ts



### Be on your phone

Use of phones is prohibited and is distracting to the actors and audience around you. Recording any portion of the show is strictly prohibited.



### Talk over the story

Please refrain from talking over the play. It is distracting to the actors and other audience members, and you'll miss the story!



### Be disrespectful

Practice the CampsiteRule - leave the theatre better than you find it!



## BIG CITY HARMONY - PLOT SUMMARY

The story begins in the forest, where howls of Ma'iingan (wolves) can be heard. Harmony, a young Anishinaabe girl, has just seen a Ma'iingan! Her father, Ray, and her grandmother, Nokomis Hazel, are packing boxes for their big move. Nokomis Hazel begins to tell Harmony the story of the Anishinaabe and the Ma'iingan. Harmony's brother, Forrest, interrupts and the family continues to pack. It is revealed that Harmony's mother passed away, and Ray believes that the family could use a change. They are leaving the reservation to head to the city where Harmony and Forrest will start at a new school. Nokomis Hazel reminds Harmony, "what happens to the Anishinaabe happens to Ma'iingan, and what happens to Ma'iingan happens to the Anishinaabe." The family begins the drive to the city, when suddenly they hear the whimper of an injured Ma'iingan. The family takes the injured wolf into their moving truck and continues their journey. They arrive safely in Milwaukee and begin to unload their boxes. Harmony asks father about the injured Ma'iingan. Ray replies he will make sure that the wolf is rehabilitated. Harmony expresses that she is nervous that no one will like her at her new school, and Ray reassures her. Mac, their new neighbor, enters. They are about the same age as Harmony. Mac and Harmony get to know each other and learn that they are in the same class at school.

Nokomis Hazel enters and begins to pray to the spirits for their adjustment to the city. Nokomis Hazel reminds Harmony that she is enough just as she is and not to let the city change her.

At her new school, Harmony is sharing a story with her class about the Ma'iingan, when she is interrupted by the school bell. As they pack up for the end of the day, Ms. Claws, her teacher, reminds the class that there will be a Science and Engineering Fair at the end of the month. The students talk about fossils found in Wisconsin and Harmony shares that her community practices Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Her classmate, Ash, asks Harmony if she is Indigenous and Harmony replies that she is Anishinaabe. Ash says that she doesn't "look Native." A student named Colonization calls Harmony a weirdo and Song, another student, calls her Pocahontas. Harmony retorts back and Ash says that Harmony should leave or they'll cut Harmony's hair. This nearly causes a fight amongst the students as the lights shift and a forest appears. A pack of Ma'iingan come running and howling. Ash and Song fall to the floor screaming. The lights shift back as Ms. Claws shows up. Ash and Song are visibly shaken. Ms. Claws says that they look like they've seen a ghost monster and calls Harmony over to talk to her. Ms. Claws checks in with Harmony about how she is adjusting to her new school and tells her that her culture is very beautiful and wonderful. She hopes that Harmony can teach the class some things about what it means to be Indigenous.



## BIG CITY HARMONY - PLOT SUMMARY

The scene changes to nighttime. Harmony is taking a photo while looking out at the city as she shares with Mac a story about a dream that her mother had. Mac asks about the injured Ma'iingan living in their house and Harmony reveals that her dad has been very protective over it ever since they rescued it; she hasn't seen it since the night of the rescue. Mac moves to go inside to take a look at the injured wolf and Harmony growls like a wolf and claws at Mac. Mac falls to the ground and is shaken. Harmony is surprised at what just happens and gives Mac's backpack back to them as two howls are heard from inside the house.

The scene shifts to Harmony on her way to school. She runs into a group of students named Colonization, very bright and shiny students with the best sneakers and accessories. Colonization stops Harmony and says that they know about her secret, her powers, and her mother. They reveal that they know about the Ma'iingan in her house and that they have been keeping track of all the Ma'iingan. They entice Harmony by saying that she can have everything she wants and more - winning the science fair, becoming popular, and seeing her mother one last time. All Harmony has to do to bring Colonization the injured Ma'iingan. Harmony considers this as Colonization calls her "Big City Harmony." Inside Harmony's house, she tries to approach the Ma'iingan. A big growl comes from the wolf and Harmony falls to the floor. More wolves continue to howl around Harmony.

Shadows shift and Nokomis Hazel howls to the moon as Harmony realizes that she has transformed into a Ma'iingan.

Harmony realizes that Nokomis Hazel is a Ma'iingan too. Nokomis Hazel tells Harmony that there is a change that happened to her, her mother, and now to Harmony. Harmony rejects the change and just wants to be "regular," but Nokomis shares that she will never be "regular." Harmony howls and runs away to the water in the city and looks at her reflection. She speaks to her mother in her reflection and says that she will never let others take her.

The scene shifts to Harmony and Mac reconciling. Harmony reveals to Mac that she is a Ma'iingan. They arrive at school and Ms. Claws empowers the students to raise funds so they can attend the Science and Engineering Fair. Colonization intercepts Harmony and asks for the Ma'iingan. Harmony says that she is Ma'iingan and Colonization says that if she had brought the injured Ma'iingan that they would have brought her mom back to life. Colonization reveals that the injured Ma'iingan was her mother. Harmony runs home to her family and confronts them.

Now, at the Science and Engineering Fair, each of the students share their projects, from narwals, to electrical pickles, to dinosaurs. Harmony did her project on the Traditional Ecological Knowledge learned from wolves in their migration and endangerment. Her family has been listening to the Ma'iingan in their care for the last month and she was able to complete her project!



## BARREN GROUNDS - PLOT SUMMARY

Morgan, a 13-year-old girl from the Cree Nation is asleep and dreaming. In her dream she hears a voice say "Kiskisitotaso". Suddenly, Morgan is awakened by Katie, her foster mom. At breakfast with her foster parents, Katie and James, and her foster brother Eli, Katie and James explain that they are new to fostering, and that they want Morgan to feel at home, and happy. Morgan yells at Katie and James, shouting that she and Eli are not happy, that Katie and James are not her parents, and that their home isn't her home.

Later, Eli and Morgan walk to school. Eli shows Morgan her sketchpad, which includes drawing of her, and of Eli's life on the reservation, and the stories of his community. Morgan tells Eli that her secret hiding place, in the attic that is under renovation, might be a good place for him to draw.

Back at James and Katie's house, they give Morgan a gift; moccasins, saying they don't want her to feel disconnected from her culture. Morgan is upset; she hasn't been connected to her indigenous roots since she was a toddler. Morgan retreats to the attic, followed by Eli. She tells Eli about her last foster family, how they told her she was a part of their family, but they still left her in respite care every other weekend to visit family. They'd take the dog, but leave Morgan. Eli shows Morgan his latest drawing; a fisher, or bear. Morgan hangs the drawing on the wall, but as she does, a cold blast of wind blows from the paper. The picture seems to come to life, and the ochek (fisher) seems to be moving towards them. Eli and Morgan decided that the drawing must have somehow opened a portal to another world, and they debate if they should go through the portal or not.

Morgan dreams again. This time of wind and snow and the fisher. She rushes to the attic, where she finds the floor covered with snow. She fears that Eli has gone through the portal, so she follows him. Inside the portal, Morgan finds herself in a freezing snowstorm, and Eli is nowhere to be seen. The fisher picks Morgan up out of the snow, and brings her into a shelter. He calls her Iskwésis, and she tells him that she came through a drawing. He says she came through The Great Tree, and introduces himself as Ochek. Ochek explains that this place is the last surviving village in the north country, and that it is called Misewa.

Morgan falls asleep, but when she wakes, Eli is there. Morgan says they have to get home, but Eli reveals that he has been in Misewa for two weeks or so, even though for Morgan he was only gone for a few hours. Ochek explains to Morgan that years before a man came through the Great Tree. He lived in Misewa, and learned to hunt and snare and forage. But he was greedy, taking more and more until the creatures of Misewa began to starve, and the summer birds left, ending the Green Time. They banished the man from their village. The man was to be sent back to his own world through the Great Tree, but he and Tahtakiw, a crane from Misewa, disappeared. Morgan tells Eli they have to go home, but Eli wants to stay in Misewa to help. Finally, Morgan agrees that they can stay for one week.

The next day Ochek, Morgan and Eli set out to check the traps. They catch Arik, a squirrel, stealing from one of the traps. Ochek gets ready to capture Arik to be eaten, but Eli and Morgan protest. Arik reveals that she knows where the summer birds, and the man, are. Arik agrees to show Morgan, Eli and Ochek where the man and the summer birds are, if Ochek agrees to stop hunting and trapping talking animals like her.



## BARREN GROUNDS - PLOT SUMMARY

The four arrive at an ice bridge across a deep canyon, which Arik and Ochek easily cross. Morgan and Eli are scared, but they cross too, with more difficulty than Arik and Ochek. On the other side of the bridge they find wolf tracks, which alarms everyone. They rest for the night, and Morgan wakes from another dream. When she goes outside to get some air she is confronted by a wolf. The wolf speaks, telling the others that he gets to stay in the Green Time in exchange for keeping the two-legged out. Ochek demands that he releases the summer birds, but the wolf refuses, threatening to eat the others if they don't go back to Misewa.

Ochek, Arik, Eli, and Morgan climb a mountain. At the peak they can see the man and the summer birds. Ochek and Eli share stories of being out on the land with their fathers. Suddenly, the wolf reappears, and grabs Eli. A fight ensues and Ochek wounds the wolf. Eli stops Ochek from killing the wolf, and the wolf begs for forgiveness. Arik and Ochek relent, and dress the wolf's wounds. As the group continues to travel they enter into the Green Time. They hope that this means there will be more four-legged creatures, and more food, but there are none to be seen. They determine that the game must have been killed by the man. Ochek suggests that Morgan and Eli should leave; that there is nothing for them here. Morgan thinks about it, but Eli objects. Morgan yells that she's Eli's sister, and it's her job to keep him safe. They decide to stay and help. The group sneaks towards the man's cabin. Arik peeks in the window and sees the summer birds trapped in a sack, guarded by Tahtakiw. The man is sleeping. Together Ochek, Arik, Morgan, and Eli sneak into the cabin and grab the sack of summer birds.

They set off to return to Misewa, where they'll release the summer birds to bring the return of the Green Time. However, the man awakens, and begins shooting arrows at the group. Ochek is hit as they discover that the ice bridge has melted and they must make their way to the wood bridge to cross the canyon. Running out of time, Ochek climbs to the top of a tall tree to release the summer birds as high as possible. Ochek is shot again, but as he begins to fall from the tree he is transformed into the stars that make up the constellation of Ursa Major. We hear Kisemanitou, the Creator, explain that Ochek will remain in the sky as a reminder to all of what happened, and what could happen again.

The man approaches, reaching for another arrow. He threatens Arik, but Morgan distracts him, asking the man what his name is. He answers her, saying his name is Mason, but continuing to threaten the group. Morgan doesn't back down, saying that the Green Time, that all of the seasons, are for everyone; Mason can't keep things for himself. Arik steps in front of Morgan to block her from Mason, and Eli does too. They stand together and prepare to be shot by Mason, but before he can shoot them the wolf appears. Mason expects the wolf to attack the other three, but instead he attacks Mason. Despite Arik, Morgan and Eli's efforts to save the wolf, he and Mason tumble over the edge of the cliff.

Arik, Morgan, and Eli return to the Great Tree. They bid farewell to Arik, promising to visit. Back at home, Eli and Morgan eat breakfast with James and Katie. James and Katie are delighted to see that Morgan and Eli are getting along, and they notice that Morgan is wearing her moccasins. James suggests that she could wear her moccasins to walk to school, and Morgan and Eli share a knowing smile.



# Nature Photo Scavenger Hunt: A STEM Activity

**The main characters of Big City Harmony and the Barren Grounds both are having a challenging time adjusting to new environments, routines, and people. When we find ourselves feeling lost, it can be helpful to connect with nature. In fact, in Big City Harmony, we see Harmony do just this throughout her play! She uses her camera to take pictures of the world around her.**

Let's get in touch with the world around us! Grab a camera, a pencil and paper, or other art supplies and a trusted adult, and plan a nature scavenger hunt. You can do this in the neighborhood, around your home, the area around your school, or at a park in your community! As you explore, take pictures or create drawings of the list below:

## Plant Life:

1. Find a plant that has colorful petals
2. Find a leafy plant that has long leaves
3. Find a plant that has an unexpected color
4. Find something that isn't a plant that is green

## Animal Life:

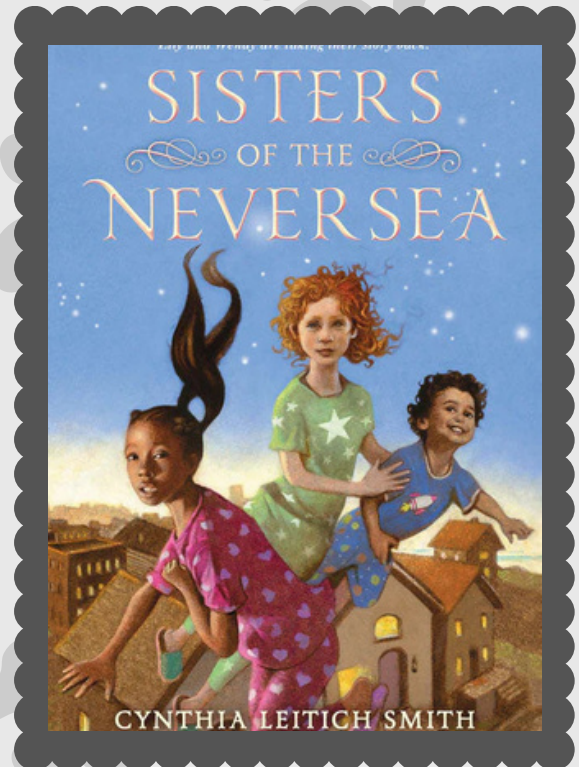
1. Find a critter that can fly
2. Find a place where an animal could take a nap
3. Find a place where an animal might take a snack
4. Find something that reminds you of an animal

## Weather:

1. Find a good puddle for splashing
2. Find a cloud in a beautiful shape
3. Find a delicate shadow
4. Find something that has changed over time

NOTE: Whenever you're exploring the outdoors, it's important to act like you are a guest in someone else's home—because you are! The outdoors is home to a variety of wild animals and plants. It's important to leave their home better than how you find it. We recommend bringing a trash bag along with you and, as you explore, picking up any trash and putting it into your bag to toss out when you get home.

# RECOMMENDED READING



# Thank you to our donors!

Philanthropy is giving (time, money, goods, or talents) to make the world a better place. At First Stage we are so thankful to our donors, sponsors, volunteers, families, students and staff who help transform lives through theater!

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