

## *Superpods*

A superpod is when all of the pods from the Southern Resident Distinct Population Segment come together in one spot to breed and intercept migrating salmon. This behavior is unique to the three Southern Resident pods, J,K, and L. This behavior is important because it helps prevent inbreeding within the three pods. Due to the fact that the Southern Residents stay with their maternal lines for their entire lives, there needs to be some mechanism to avoid inbreeding. That mechanism is the superpod.

While visiting the San Juan Islands, I had a very close encounter with wild orcas. After seeing the orcas come so close, my art piece felt more important and I felt like I had a strong connection to it. Seeing the orcas so close also made everything that we learned feel much more real. It helped really show me how big they are, how social and friendly they are, and how horrible being captured must have been for them. The reason that I wanted to paint an orca superpod was that I found it incredible that the killer whales were smart, and social enough to come together in that way.

Ella

