Legacy Schools ReconciliACTION Guide
A Message from the Families

Chi miigwetch, thank you, to everyone who has supported the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund.

When our families embarked upon this journey, we never imagined the potential for Gord’s telling of Chanie’s story to create a national movement that could further reconciliation and help to build a better Canada.

We truly believe it’s so important for all Canadians to understand the true history of Indigenous people in Canada; including the horrific truths of what happened in the residential school system, and the strength and resilience of Indigenous culture and peoples.

It’s incredible to reflect upon the beautiful gifts both Chanie & Gord were able to leave us with.

On behalf of both the Downie & Wenjack families -- Chi miigwetch, thank you for joining us on this path.

We are stronger together.

In Unity,

MIKE DOWNIE & HARRIET VISITOR
Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund
INTRODUCTION

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) is part of Gord Downie’s legacy and embodies his commitment, and that of his family, to improving the lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada.

In collaboration with the Wenjack family, the goal of the Fund is to continue the conversation that began with Chanie Wenjack’s residential school story, and to aid our collective reconciliation journey through a combination of awareness, education and connection.

Our Mission

Inspired by Chanie’s story and Gord’s call to action to build a better Canada, the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) aims to build cultural understanding and create a path toward reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Our Vision

Improving the lives of Indigenous people by building awareness, education, and connections between all people in Canada.

* Please note, throughout this document we include the term ‘Indian’ only for historical accuracy when referencing official names of schools and government documents. The term ‘Indian’ is no longer used and can be considered offensive depending on who is using the term. Aboriginal, has also been replaced with the internationally accepted term “Indigenous”. The term Indigenous includes First Nations, Métis and Inuit (FNMI).
Thank you for participating in the DWF Legacy Schools program and making the commitment to champion reconciliation through learning and actions in your school and community. Together through education, awareness and connection we can continue the path towards reconciliation to build a better, more inclusive Canada.

The Legacy Schools program is a national initiative to engage, empower and connect students and educators to further reconciliation. We provide educational resources and program development for Legacy Schools to help ensure that the unique interests, rights and perspectives of Indigenous peoples are recognized and implemented in schools and communities throughout Canada.

Legacy Schools offer educators and students the opportunity to start or continue one’s path of reconciliation and learning. By providing resources and reading materials, each Legacy School plays an integral role on this collective journey.

To further learning and impact, each Legacy School will organize reconciliACTIONs. ReconciliACTIONs will be unique to each school and community; they may incorporate fundraising, events, cultural activities, new policies, learning opportunities, and/or professional development to support awareness and appreciation of Indigenous culture and traditions. Although reconciliACTIONs may take place at any time during the year, DWF encourages Legacy Schools to join in a national movement of awareness and understanding by organizing a reconciliACTION during Secret Path Week, which takes place annually from October 17-22.

ReconciliACTIONs will be shared with other Legacy Schools on our website and social media accounts to celebrate the work being done and to inspire others to “Do Something”.

The Legacy Schools toolkit provides a baseline to start schools on their way. Educational resources are developed on an ongoing basis and shared with schools and students.

Resources can be viewed at: downiewenjack.ca/our-work/legacy-schools-programs/legacy-schools-resources.
Legacy Schools Commitment

In becoming a Legacy School, educators are committed to:

- Inspiring students, staff and the school community to engage in acts of reconciliation through continued awareness and education.

- Using both Gord and Chanie’s story and the Secret Path as a tool to further reconciliation within your classroom and throughout the school community.

- Participating in reconciliACTIONs, ideally taking place annually during Secret Path Week (October 17-22), but can include a variety of events throughout the year.

- Participating in follow up engagements with DWF to share information about the impact of the Legacy Schools toolkit and reconciliACTIONS.

- Engage in DWF Legacy Schools contests, events and activities which may include Artist Ambassador visits, guest speakers, Wenjack and Downie family visits, Walk for Wenjack and various events that arise.

Education Resources

This guide is meant to provide school communities with the resources necessary to support education and awareness of Canada’s residential school system. It introduces and offers ideas on creating and organizing reconciliACTION activities and events, and suggests ways to make connections with other schools and organizations.

If you have resources that may be useful in working towards reconciliation, please consider sharing them with DWF so we can make them accessible to other educators. Resources can be sent to legacyschools@downiewenjack.ca. Resources can be viewed at: downiewenjack.ca/our-work/legacy-schools-programs/legacy-schools-resources.

Explicit Lyrical Content

Please be sure to read the provided materials thoroughly before introducing content to your students. The “Secret Path” song does contain an explicit lyric. It is up to the individual teacher to ensure they have a good understanding of the material before teaching any lessons and to determine what is appropriate for their classroom and/or school community.
BACKGROUND

Chanie Wenjack

Chanie Wenjack was an Anishinaabe boy who was born in Ogoki Post on the Marten Falls Reserve on January 19th, 1954. In 1963, at the age of nine, Chanie was sent to the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential school in Kenora, Ontario.

In 1966, at 12-years old, Chanie ran away from Cecilia Jeffrey, attempting to reunite with his family who were 600 kilometers away in Ogoki Post. Nine other children ran away that same day but all were caught within 24 hours.

Unfortunately, Chanie's body was found beside the railway tracks on October 22, 1966, a week after he fled. He succumbed to starvation and exposure. In his pocket was nothing but a little glass jar with seven wooden matches. Chanie fell victim to Canada's attempts to colonize Indigenous Peoples.

Chanie's story, tragically, is like so many stories of Indigenous children in this country.

Gord Downie

Gord Downie was the lead singer, songwriter and driving creative force behind The Tragically Hip, who brought their energetic, live performances to audiences around the world for over three decades. The group released their first album, The Tragically Hip, in 1987 and have released thirteen studio albums, including their last, Man Machine Poem in 2016.

Gord also enjoyed a career as a solo artist. Gord's Secret Path release which included an album, graphic novel and film tells the story of Chanie Wenjack, an Ojibwe boy who died running away from a residential school.

In August of 2016, Gord asked all Canadians to look at the state of Indigenous-settler relations in this country and to “Do Something” to change them for the better. In December of 2016, Gord was incredibly honoured to be presented with an eagle feather and be given the Lakota spirit name Wicapi Omani, which can be roughly translated as “Man who walks among the stars”.

In October of 2017, Gord Downie passed away with his children and family close by. His messages of hope and powerful calls to action live on. Gord’s legacy to create lasting, positive change in Canada lives on through you.

* DWF uses Ojibwe language, practices and traditions occasionally in our materials to honour Chanie and the Wenjack family’s culture. The Ojibwe are an Indigenous People who are part of a larger group known as the Anishinaabe.
The Secret Path

Mike Downie introduced Gord to Chanie Wenjack when he gave Gord the story “The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack” to read by Ian Adam. The story appeared in Maclean’s magazine dating back to February 6, 1967 (Gord Downie’s birthday also happens to be Feb. 6).

After hearing about Chanie Wenjack, Gord Downie began a personal project to tell Chanie’s story and share it with others. The project began as ten poems written by Gord as he imagined what it would have been like to be Chanie. These poems later became the lyrics to the Juno award winning album Secret Path.

In 2014, Gord and his brother Mike Downie brought Secret Path to comic artist Jeff Lemire for his help bringing Chanie and the many children sent to residential schools to life through illustration. Despite his busy schedule, Jeff saw the merit in committing time to this project and together with Gord created the Secret Path illustrated book.

The Secret Path graphics later formed the basis of the documentary, The Secret Path, co-produced by Mike Downie and Stuart Coxe, animating Chanie’s story and threading in footage of Gord’s northern Ontario visit to the Wenjack sisters. The animated film was broadcast by the CBC across Canada in an hour-long commercial-free television special on Sunday, October 23, 2016.

Secret Path acknowledges a dark part of Canada’s history—the long-suppressed mistreatment of Indigenous children and families by the residential school system—with the hope of starting our country on a road to reconciliation.

Canada’s Indian Residential School System*

For over 100 years, from 1831-1996, Aboriginal children were removed from their families and sent to institutions called residential schools. The government-funded, church-run schools were located across Canada and established with the purpose to eliminating parental involvement in the spiritual, cultural and intellectual development of Indigenous children. The last residential schools closed in the mid-1990s. More than 150,000 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit children were forced to attend these schools, some of which were hundreds of miles from their home. The cumulative impact of residential schools is a legacy of unresolved trauma passed from generation to generation and has had a profound effect on the relationship between Aboriginal Peoples and other Canadians. (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Canada, 2015)
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)

Indigenous people in Canada have undergone years of mistreatment from the Canadian government which, in turn, led to inter-generational trauma and systemic barriers that will take seven generations to repair. Reconciliation aims to build a harmonious relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to repair the harm that has been done. There is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can work towards a stronger and healthier future. The truth-telling and reconciliation process as part of an overall holistic and comprehensive response to the residential school legacy is a sincere indication and acknowledgement of the injustices and harms experienced by Aboriginal people and the need for continued healing. This is a profound commitment to establishing new relationships embedded in mutual recognition and respect that will forge a brighter future. The truth of our common experiences will help set our spirits free and pave the way to reconciliation. In June 2015, the TRC released an Executive Summary of its findings along with 94 “calls to action” regarding reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. *(Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015)*

Questions for consideration:

1. Why is it important to know the truth about Canada’s history and the residential school system? Why does the truth matter?
2. What does truth and reconciliation mean?
3. Why is reconciliation important?
4. What does reconciliation mean to me?
5. What does reconciliation look like? What does it involve?
6. Who does reconciliation involve?
7. What is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC)?
Support

Some of the topics and materials used in educating people about the residential school system and reconciliation can include highly sensitive subject matter and be triggering; causing a negative emotional response. The impact and effects of residential schools still exist today, and are experienced by many Indigenous people, families, and communities. For this reason, some subjects and material may be even more difficult and triggering for Indigenous students, teachers, staff and those directly affected by residential schools.

Be aware that emotional stories may be shared, strong feelings may present themselves and uncomfortable questions may be asked. Always review material and be familiar with the content prior to beginning any presentations relating to this subject matter. Be certain that staff know how to access support if they need it. Provide the information for your employee assistance program and/or local and provincial help lines.

Health Canada provides a free 24-hour crisis line for those affected by residential schools (available in French). The 24-HOUR CRISIS LINE is 1-866-925-4419.

Mental health assistance is available for everyone, please visit: canada.ca/en/public-health/services/mental-health-services/mental-health-get-help.html. Students should also be encouraged to take advantage of counselling services through Kids Help Phone kidselpphone.ca or call: 1-800-668-6868.
RECONCILIATIONS

A reconciliACTION is a meaningful action that moves reconciliation forward. ReconciliACTIONs aim to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples together in the spirit of reconciliation to create awareness, to share and to learn. It is the answer to Gord’s call to “do something”—do something to raise further awareness, do something that improves the lives of Indigenous peoples, do something that improves the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Legacy Schools commit to acts of reconciliation, being the catalyst for important conversations and meaningful change. Students and educators recognize that change starts with every single one of us and that everybody can make an impact.

To engage in acts of reconciliation, students, staff and your community should first determine what reconciliACTION means to them and how they’d like to make an impact.

Questions for consideration:
1. What do you think reconciliACTION means?
2. Why is important to do more than talk about reconciliation?
3. What are “meaningful actions” regarding reconciliation?
4. What role can you play in creating and implementing a reconciliACTION?
5. What actions can you take in your organization/home/community to support the reconciliation movement?

A reconciliACTION is a meaningful action that moves reconciliation forward. ReconciliACTIONs aim to bring Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples together in the spirit of reconciliation to create awareness, to share and to learn.
ReconciliACTION Ideas

Educators and students may wonder what their roles are, what next steps to take and how to make an impact. Many actions can be taken in the journey of reconciliation. Below is a short list of possible actions; yours could be one big action involving the whole school community or several small actions making daily change, one step at a time.

1. Learn the land acknowledgement in your region, or develop one of your own. In doing so, be sure to carefully consider your relationship to the land that you live on, the treaties that govern it, and the Indigenous peoples who have lived on this land for 1000’s of years. Have your school give a daily land acknowledgement as part of the morning routine, as well as to open assemblies and important events.

2. Find out if there was a residential school in your area or where the closest one is located. To learn more visit cbc.ca/news2/interactives/beyond-94-residential-school-map/.

3. Visit a commemorative exhibit that honours the survivors and victims of residential schools at projectofheart.ca.

4. Invite an Indigenous speaker or elder into your classroom to learn about local Indigenous communities and to share their stories and knowledge. Be sure to budget for these visits, as your guests should be paid for their time at your school. Work with your school board’s Indigenous education department to find the best speakers, and organizations to connect with.*

6. Research Indigenous charitable organizations, and choose one to support by holding a fundraising event to create awareness.

7. Participate in Orange Shirt Day at the end of September by wearing an orange shirt and/or hosting a reconciliACTION event for the day. To learn more, visit orangeshirtday.org.

8. Visit a local Indigenous organization; friendship centre, community group, or museum.

9. Create a presentation for your classroom, school, or community. Share your knowledge to spread the word and engage others in conversation.

10. Attend Indigenous cultural events taking place in your community.

11. Research the contributions that Indigenous people from your community and/or surrounding communities have made to the world.

12. Engage in meaningful reconciliation activities to ensure that Indigenous young people have the same opportunities as others. You can participate in: Bear Witness Day on May 10 in support of Jordan’s Principle; Have a Heart Day on February 14; and School is a Time for Dreams to learn about and support Shannen’s Dream. Visit: fncairingsociety.com (available in French).

13. Start a club or extracurricular activity to empower Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and staff to get involved outside of the classroom and lead in the journey of reconciliation. It could be a student-led Reconciliation Club or Indigenous Leadership Circle that helps empower students to participate and inspire others to take action.

14. Study an Indigenous language—especially one that is spoken in your region. Learn some common words and why it’s important to appreciate and protect Indigenous languages. Make it a class project with a local elder. Try translating Secret Path into a local Indigenous language.

15. Take the Indian Horse #Next150 Challenge https://next150.indianhorse.ca/.

16. Invite a local Indigenous artist to visit your class. Study, learn about and display a variety of Indigenous art with your students. This may also be a good time to learn about appropriation with your students to ensure Indigenous art and culture is respected and valued.

17. Participate in the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund’s spring poster contest!

18. Listen to and study music made by Indigenous artists, such as Buffy Sainte-Marie, Tanya Tagaq, Midnight Shine and Jeremy Dutcher.

19. Organize a movie night screening for your school and community of Gord Downie’s Secret Path, Tasha Hubbard’s ‘nîpawistamâsowin: We Will Stand Up, Michelle Latimer’s RISE, or Chrisann Hessing’s Turning Tables. Find other Indigenous movies to watch or book an imagineNATIVE Film + VR Tour (imagineNATIVE.org).


22. Invite an elder to begin your graduation ceremony at the end of the school year.*

23. Ask Indigenous singers, dancers and/or drummers to perform at commencement/graduation ceremonies.*

* Please consider the cost associated with school visits (honorariums are commonly accepted).
SECRET PATH WEEK

Secret Path Week is an annual campaign which takes place from October 17-22. The week raises awareness of the history and legacy of residential schools. This is a special week as October 17th and 22nd respectively mark the anniversaries of the death of Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack.

During Secret Path Week, DWF invites all Legacy Schools, Legacy Spaces, organizations and individuals to host and/or celebrate their own reconciliACTIONs and fundraising events. We invite you to share your photos, videos, posts and stories via social media and with DWF. Send your photos to: legacyschools@downiewenjack.ca.

Walk for Wenjack

Walk for Wenjack was started by a group of dedicated volunteers, and inspired by the Secret Path story and Gord Downie’s determination to make Canadians aware of residential schools and the on-going traumatic effects that they continue to have on our society. Walk for Wenjack was organized to honour Chanie Wenjack and the 150,000+ Indigenous children like him, who were forced to leave their families to attend residential schools.

The first Walk for Wenjack set out on November 20, 2016, and retraced the steps of Chanie Wenjack. It started at the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, and continued to Redditt for a ceremony representing Chanie’s final resting spot near Farlane, Ontario. The next walk took place on October 21, 2018, during Secret Path Week at Evergreen Brick Works in Toronto. It was a full-day event and an experience that touched the hearts of many. All donations from Walk for Wenjack support the work of the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund.

Walk for Wenjack encourages Legacy Schools to walk for Chanie Wenjack on October 22, the day Chanie died trying to get home. Walks can also be organized on other dates during Secret Path Week (Oct. 17-22) or throughout the school year.

Let’s come together as a nation and walk the over 600 kilometers Chanie Wenjack needed to get home. Information about how to enroll your school will be sent to all registered Legacy Schools and can also be provided upon request. Additional information can be found at www.downiewenjack.ca.

Walk for Wenjack was organized to honour Chanie Wenjack and the 150,000+ Indigenous children like him, who were forced to leave their families to attend residential schools.
Thank you for your commitment as a Legacy School to take action by supporting DWF in fundraising events. Funds raised help support the development of program resources and the expansion of the Legacy Schools program.

**Fundraising events can be reconciliACTIONS too!**

Hosting a fundraising event that brings people together, shines a light on reconciliation and empowers others to make a difference is considered a reconciliACTION. One of the keys to a successful fundraiser is to involve and engage students, staff, volunteers and community. If a student feels passionate about an issue and understands they have the power to effect change, it sparks enthusiasm and motivation.

### Possible fundraising ideas are:

1. Walk for Wenjack during Secret Path week Oct. 17-22
2. Host an evening of music with Indigenous musicians
3. Community Bingo
4. Pancake Breakfast
5. Pizza Day/Hot Dog Day/Indigenous Foods Day
6. Create and sell a cookbook with students’ family recipes
7. Sell student-created art
8. Host a raffle or silent auction
9. Sell awareness bracelets
10. Have a BBQ or school picnic
11. Have a garage sale/flea market/green market selling used clothing and unwanted household items
12. Put on a production of a *Secret Path* play, student concert or theatrical event
13. Dance-a-thon
14. Read as many Indigenous books as you can-a-thon
15. Host an Indigenous trivia competition at lunch or after school
16. Organize a video game competition
17. Host an open mic night for student musicians
18. Have a board game bonanza!
Personal Fundraising Pages

Legacy Schools will have access to online, personal fundraising pages that can be used to collect donations with ease. Donors are then provided with a tax receipt directly from DWF making your fundraising efforts simple and easy to activate. This feature will be made available throughout the school year and directions will be emailed directly to the school.

Legacy Schools Fundraising Policy

Legacy School fundraising initiatives are recognized as DWF third-party fundraising activities wherein the school assumes all responsibility for the event or initiative. DWF assumes no responsibility for the event or initiative and we are unable to provide any additional administrative, marketing or fundraising support. Legacy Schools are welcome to solicit sponsors, community partners and individual donations to support their activity. Schools shall ensure sponsors demonstrate values that are consistent to that of DWF and of the school. Sponsorships do not require DWF approval.

Event Promotion

DWF will provide the use of an official logo for promotion with the understanding that the logo is being used in good faith. Legacy Schools shall ensure that the event or initiative is being carried out by the school and that the net proceeds will be donated to DWF when our logo is used. DWF should be referenced as the beneficiary of the event, not an event partner or organizer (e.g. Walk for Chanie in support of the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund).

Reporting and Donating

DWF greatly appreciates the efforts and activities of all our participating schools. Part of our mandate is to spread awareness and to educate about the true history of Indigenous people in Canada and of reconciliation. A good measure of this is to determine the reach of third-party fundraising events and initiatives. DWF requests that schools report on the approximate number of those who participated in, attended, or were impacted by your event at the time of the final donation.

Donations from the school can be made online or by cheque. Cheques can be made payable to The Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund and mailed to PO BOX 749, Osweken ON, N0A 1M0. A gift acknowledgement will be issued to the school upon receipt of the donation. Tax receipts are issued in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA). DWF will issue official charitable tax receipts for all donations of $10 or more made by individuals directly to DWF.
MEDIA AND SOCIAL MEDIA

With reconciliACTIONs occurring in Legacy Schools & Legacy Spaces nationwide, DWF would like to celebrate and showcase the reconciliACTIONs created and organized by all Legacy Schools. We invite you to post the amazing events and actions on social media using posts, photos, videos and tweets.

* Please note if you are posting photos of students on social media, you must have the consent of the parents or/and guardians of students, and of any individuals who are over 18. By sharing your photos and video with us you agree to allow us to use the photos and videos on our website and on social media sites. You also agree that you own the photos and/or videos that you submit and grant us the permission to use them on our website and on social media sites.
Thank You

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund gratefully acknowledges Northland Power and the T. R. Meighen Family Foundation for their generous support of the Legacy Schools program. The Legacy Schools program and the contents of the accompanying resource kit are made possible because of their support.

DWF would also like to recognize the Nuclear Waste Management Organization for their contribution to the 2019-2020 Legacy Schools program.

We thank our sponsors for their commitment to the work of reconciliation.

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