GORD DOWNIE & CHANIE WENJACK FUND

Lesson Plan

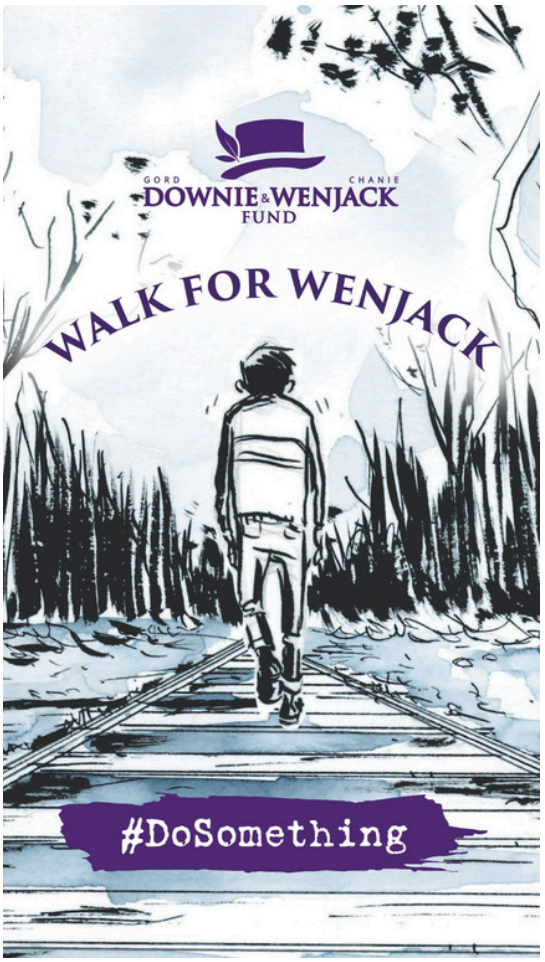
DWF LESSON PLAN: WALK FOR WENJACK

Anytime, Anywhere

SUGGESTED AGES: Grades 4–12+

SUGGESTED SUBJECT AREAS:

Social Studies, Indigenous Studies, History, Civics, Language Arts, Physical Education, Art



DURATION:

- **Day 1:** 75 minutes – DWF LIVE and discussion
- **Day 2 and 3:** 60 minutes – walk planning, artwork, pledges
- **Day 4:** 45-60 minutes – Walk for Wenjack Event Day
- **Day 5**: 30 minutes – follow-up discussion and sharing

Disclaimer: Educators and group leaders are responsible for ensuring lessons and materials presented in their classrooms or groups are appropriate for their unique students.

OBJECTIVES:

- Learn about the life and legacy of Chanie Wenjack
- Understand the history and impact of residential schools throughout Canada
- Take reconciliACTION by participating in a student-led Walk for Wenjack
- Inspire community awareness and personal commitment to reconciliACTION

MATERIALS:

- **Planning Your Walk for Wenjack Webinar**
- Projector, speakers, screen
- Internet access
- Legacy Schools Toolkit (*Secret Path* graphic novel)
- Walk for Wenjack Resources (**Resources Page**)
  - Event Poster
  - Social Media Graphics
  - Registration Guide for Schools
  - "Why I Walk for Wenjack" Printable
  - Pledge Sheet
- **W4W Toolkit** (while supplies last)
- Art supplies (paint, paper, posterboard, markers, etc.)
- Outdoor route plan (track, schoolyard, or local path)
- Optional: Purple ribbons, water bottles, school announcement to invite parents/guests

DAY 1 – DWF LIVE & GROUP DISCUSSION (75 MINUTES)

Introduction (15 minutes):

- Introduce students to the story of Chanie Wenjack from *Secret Path*
- Share why Walk for Wenjack is a national event tied to Truth and Reconciliation
- Show the official DWF Walk for Wenjack event poster and explain how students throughout Canada can participate

DWF LIVE Viewing (30 minutes):

- Watch the first twenty (20) minutes of **Planning Your Walk for Wenjack Webinar** (you do not need to register with Raisley as part of your walk planning)
- Encourage students to take notes or jot down emotions, ideas, and questions that arise

Group Discussion (30 minutes):

Ask students:

- What did you learn about Chanie or residential schools?
- How did Walk for Wenjack start with Rob Ferreria?
- What did Gord Downie mean by “Secret Path”? See the “Secret Path” song and poem for reference.
- How do you think walking 600 KMs would have felt for Chanie?
- How have other schools and clubs organized their own Walk for Wenjacks?

DAY 2 – PLANNING THE WALK (60 MINUTES)

Organize the Walk:

Brainstorm ideas with your class or group:

- Who will participate? (class, grade, whole school?)
- Where will the walk take place? (track, park, school grounds?)
- Will there be educational stations, signs, drinking water, rest stations, or artwork displays?
- Who do we want to invite? (Parents/guardians, principal, community members?) **Protocols for Engaging with Indigenous Peoples & Community** can guide you if you would like to invite an Elder or Knowledge Keeper in a good way.

Assign Roles:

Students or small groups can take responsibility for:

- Designing posters or route signs
- Creating “Why I Walk” messages
- Preparing the pledge wall or table
- Making announcements or inviting guests
- Mapping the route (with teacher support)

DAY 3 – ART & AWARENESS CREATION (60 MINUTES, OPTIONAL)

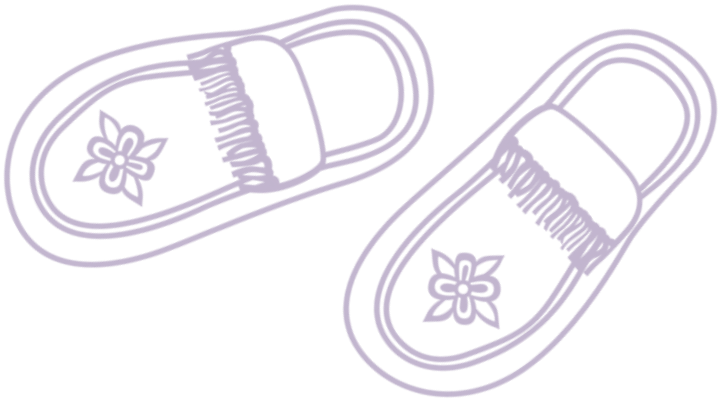
Creative Activity Options:

- Explore resources from the **Walk for Wenjack resource page**
- Use the "**Why I Walk for Wenjack**" printable to display messages around your school or along the walking route
- Complete the pledge sheets, where students can commit to an action toward reconciliation
- Create posters, poems, chalk messages, or social media posts using official W4W graphics
- Optional: Invite another class to join or have students present their learning

DAY 4 - WALK FOR WENJACK EVENT (45–60 MINUTES OR ONGOING)

Host the Walk:

- Gather participants and explain the purpose of the walk
- You may choose to play music from DWF's Artist Ambassadors playlist on **Spotify** or Gord Downie's *Secret Path* album (download available at the back of the *Secret Path* novel, or online at **Secretpath.ca**)
- Alternatively, you can walk in silence, or add reflection stations or guided prompts throughout your chosen route
- End your walk with a meaningful group moment, such as a group photo or reading Chanie's story



DAY 5 - FOLLOW-UP & REFLECTION (30–45 MINUTES)

Debrief with a discussion or journal reflection:

- What did walking make you feel or think?
- Did your perception of reconciliation change?
- What can we do after today to continue learning or supporting others?

Optional Sharing:

- Create a class display, digital slideshow, or write a reflection piece for the school newsletter or website
- **Submit your W4W reconciliACTION** with DWF's Legacy Schools team
- Share your photos or experience on social media and tag DWF's social channels (optional with school/media consent)

ASSESSMENT:

- Participation in planning and walking
- Quality and thoughtfulness of "Why I Walk" responses
- Reflection discussion or written piece
- Teamwork and engagement in event organization
- Assessment can be based on students' participation in discussions, engagement with the material, and the quality of their reflections during the activity

EXTENSIONS:

- Continue your Walk for Wenjack momentum by hosting a student-led assembly or community event
- Create a permanent memory space, such as a mural, outdoor bench, or garden
- Start a reconciliation book club featuring works by Indigenous authors
- Watch *The Secret Path* animated film and reflect on its meaning

Please complete this short **feedback form.** Your thoughts help DWF improve resources and support reconciliation-focused learning throughout Canada. Plus, each submission enters you into our monthly draw for classroom resources!

LEGACY SCHOOLS EDUCATOR REFLECTION AND IMPACT QUESTIONS:

1. Students demonstrated an understanding of the purpose of Walk for Wenjack.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

2. Students were respectful and engaged during our school or group's Walk for Wenjack.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree

3. Students were willing to take action and get involved with the planning and leadup to the Walk for Wenjack event.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree