THE SECRET PATH

GORD DOWNIE & CHANIE WENJACK FUND

The Secret Path

Screening & Discussion Guide

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Miigwetch, thank you for your interest in screening *The Secret Path.*

This guide is intended to support organizations, schools, workplaces, and communities that are hosting events that bring this important story to new audiences.

About the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF)

Inspired by Chanie's story and Gord's call 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 goal is to improve the lives of Indigenous people by building awareness, education, and connections between all peoples in Canada.

Learn more about our programs, campaigns, and events at **downiewenjack.ca**

About *The Secret Path*

The Secret Path is an animated film adaptation of Gord Downie's album *Secret Path* and Jeff Lemire's graphic novel. Through music, poetry, and visual storytelling, the film shares the story of Chanie Wenjack, a 12-year-old Anishinaabe boy who died while trying to return home after fleeing Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in 1966. *The Secret Path* encourages audiences to learn about the history and ongoing impacts of the residential school system and other colonial policies, and to consider their role in reconciliation.

The Secret Path may be screened for educational, community, and fundraising purposes. Screenings must not be used for private profit or commercial gain. If fundraising is involved, proceeds should support the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund and/or a local Indigenous community initiative or organization.

If you are raising funds in support of DWF, you can sign up as a third-party fundraiser to gain access to the ReconciliACTION Toolkit, which includes resources and assets to support your fundraising efforts and promote reconciliation in your community. You can start by completing this **form**.

SECRET PATH

10TH ANNIVERSARY

In October 2026, the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund (DWF) will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the release of the album and graphic novel *Secret Path*, and the animated film *The Secret Path*.

For the past decade, *Secret Path* has helped audiences throughout Canada and beyond learn about the story of Chanie Wenjack and the ongoing impacts of residential schools. Through music, art, and storytelling, it has encouraged people to listen, learn, reflect, and take action toward reconciliation.

Gord learned about the true history of residential schools later in life, and that knowledge inspired him to act. His journey is a reminder that reconciliation is ongoing and that it is never too late to begin learning and taking meaningful action. Ten years later, his work continues to inspire learning, reflection, and reconciliACTION in classrooms, workplaces, and communities throughout Canada.

Ten years ago, Secret Path began our journey. Today, DWF invites you to continue with us on the path toward reconciliation. **Do Something.**

Before Your Screening

We encourage all hosts to:

- Recognize that *The Secret Path* may bring forward difficult emotions for viewers
- Share a content warning – you can use **this set of slides**
- Play **this video** at the start of the screening to help those who may be looking for the next step on their journey toward reconciliation
- Share our **mental health supports** and **general resources** as a follow-up
- Connect with a local Indigenous organization to see if there are any additional local supports available
- Create space for reflection and discussion following the screening

Disclaimer: Please note that this screening addresses residential schools, intergenerational trauma, and the abuse of Indigenous children in Canada. These topics may be difficult for some audience members. We encourage you to honour your own needs as you watch and reflect on the film.

Discussion Questions

Depending on your audience, you may wish to discuss:

Before the Film

- What do you already know about Chanie Wenjack and the residential school system?
- How does it feel to engage with a story that is difficult but necessary to hear?
- What do you hope to take away from the screening?

Discussion Questions

Depending on your audience, you may wish to discuss:

After the Film

Personal Reflection

- What moment in the film stayed with you most and why?
- What emotions came up for you while watching the film?
- What is one thing you learned or will continue to reflect on?

Discussion Questions

History & Understanding

- How did Chanie's story deepen or change your understanding of the residential school system and its ongoing impacts?
- The film uses music and visual art to tell this story. How did that shape the way you experienced it?
- What is the difference between hearing a story and truly listening to it?

Reconciliation & Action

- Gord Downie and Jeff Lemire, as non-Indigenous creators, had to figure out whether Chanie's story was theirs to tell. How do non-Indigenous Canadians engage with Indigenous stories responsibly?
- What does reconciliation look like in your own community, workplace, classroom, or home?
- Gord Downie often encouraged people to "Do Something." What might that look like for you?
- What is one concrete action you can commit today?

Not every question needs to be answered. Participants should feel free to reflect silently, share openly, or step away if needed.

Questions

For questions about screenings or fundraising initiatives, please contact Angela Reid, Director, Development, at **angela@downiewenjack.ca**.

Are you or someone you know an educator? The Legacy Schools program is FREE for all educators in Canada. Register here to receive more resources like this, and a copy of Gord Downie's *Secret Path* graphic novel. If you have any questions or need additional support, please contact the DWF Education Team at **legacyschools@downiewenjack.ca**.

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