



SECRET PATH

CURRICULUM RESOURCE

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Foundation

CURRICULUM BY

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IB Biology HL
Biology 11/12
Food Science 12

TEACHER'S GUIDE

This curriculum resource will guide teachers and students to enrich their viewing experience of the 2016 animated film *Secret Path*. This resource is designed to help teachers frame discussions with their class, with classroom viewing activities for the film as well as assignments relating to the themes of the film that can be completed after viewing.

ABOUT THE FILM

Gord Downie began *Secret Path* as ten poems incited by the story of Chanie Wenjack, a twelve year-old boy who died fifty years ago on October 22, 1966, in flight from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School near Kenora, Ontario, walking home to the family he was taken from over 400 miles away.

Secret Path is an animated film adaptation of Gord Downie's album and Jeff Lemire's graphic novel. Working with Downie's poetry and music, Lemire has created a powerful visual representation of the life of Chanie Wenjack. The film is divided into ten chapters, each a song from Downie's musical retelling of Chanie's story – from his escape from the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School, to his subsequent and heartbreaking death from hunger and exposure to the harsh weather. The final product is a uniquely immersive emotional experience - an insight into the life of a little boy who, as Gord has said, he never knew, "but will always love."

Secret Path was created, written, and directed by Gord Downie, composed by Gord Downie with Kevin Drew and Dave Hamelin, and illustrated by author Jeff Lemire.

Source: <https://secretpath.ca/>

ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Gordon Downie was a Canadian rock singer-songwriter, musician, writer and activist. He was the lead singer and lyricist for the Canadian rock band The Tragically Hip, which he fronted from its formation in 1984 until his death in 2017. On October 13, 2016, Downie and his brother Mike, along with the Wenjack family, announced the founding of the Gord Downie and Chanie Wenjack Fund to support reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gord_Downie

Jeff Lemire is a Canadian comic book writer and artist. In 2014, Gord and Mike brought the recently finished music to Jeff for his help illustrating Chanie's story, bringing him and the many children like him to life.

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeff_Lemire



SOCIAL STUDIES 7

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
Learners will reflect on the impact of government policies and the denial of treaty rights on Mi'kmaw communities and individuals in Mi'kma'ki	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question how the Indian Act and other government decisions impacted geographic conditions for Mi'kmaw people (CZ, COM, CT) • Analyse how the Indian Act and other government decisions impacted civic conditions for Mi'kmaw people (CZ, COM, CT) • Investigate how the Indian Act and other government decisions impacted economic conditions for Mi'kmaw people (CZ, COM, CT) • Investigate the resilience of the Mi'kmaq in response to discriminatory government policies and the denial of treaty rights (CZ, COM, CT)
Learners will reflect on historical opportunities and challenges in the Maritimes, inclusive of the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians, and the Gaels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the impacts of government attempts at assimilation and segregation on the Mi'kmaq, Acadians, African Nova Scotians and Gaels (CZ, COM, CT, TF)

SOCIAL STUDIES 8

OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
Learners will reflect on the 20th and 21st century Indigenous experiences in Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the purpose and intent of assimilation on Indigenous cultures in Canada (CZ, COM, CT, TF) • Reflect on the impacts of residential schools on Indigenous peoples of Canada (CZ, COM, CT) • Analyse how Indigenous peoples have advocated for their rights in Canada (CZ, COM, CT, TF)
Learners will evaluate the impact of equity and inequity in a changing Canadian society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse factors that influence equity and inequity (CZ, COM, CT, TF) • Investigate experiences of inequity and resistance from various perspectives (CZ, COM, CT) • Investigate how first voice can lead to an informed understanding of equity and inequity (CZ, COM, CT) • Evaluate how social justice movements have contributed to social change in Canada (CZ, COM, CT)
Learners will plan an advocacy action in response to an issue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyse how a current issue impacts a community (CZ, COM, CT, CI, PCD, TF)

EXPLORE MUSIC 8

OUTCOMES
Learners will evaluate how composers and performers synthesize the elements of music to communicate meaning
Learners will create original musical works reflecting personal, social, and cultural contexts

PRIOR TO VIEWING THE FILM**GUIDING QUESTIONS (FROM THE SOCIAL STUDIES 7 AND 8 RENEWED CURRICULUM GUIDES)**

- *How are people impacted by inequitable access to education and educational resources?*
- *How does geographic location create opportunities and challenges?*
- *Why did the government pursue policies and practices of assimilation and segregation?*
- *What were the intentions behind the construction of the residential school system?*
- *How have residential schools impacted and continue to impact Indigenous peoples and communities?*
- *How can we contribute to a just society?*
- *How can social justice movements help create a more equitable society?*
- *How can you determine the impact of social justice movements?*

POST-VIEWING RESOURCES

1. *"The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack,"* published by Maclean's in February 1967. This article may help to provide more information for the teacher as a lead in into the story of Chanie Wenjack.

PRIOR TO WATCHING THE FILM: Use this space to brainstorm your initial thoughts.
How are people impacted by inequitable access to education and educational resources?

Why did the government pursue policies and practices of assimilation and segregation?

What were the intentions behind the construction of the residential school system?

VIEWING ACTIVITY 1: During the film, answer the following questions.

1a) Why was Gord Downie inspired to create The Secret Path?

1b) What is the power of music in telling Chanie's story?

1c) What is the impact of listening about residential schools through song and art?

1d) How does this film impact your understanding of residential schools in Canada?

1e) How can we create music to nurture our communities?



2) The film opens with the song "The Stranger". It is filled with symbolism and imagery that is at times difficult. As you listen to Gord sing and watch the song jot down the images or the lyrics that you hear that seem to stick out. How do these images tell the story of a residential school student?

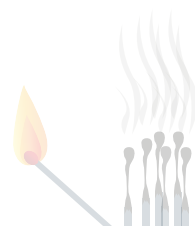


3) Chanie Wenjack was a residential school attendee for 3 years prior to running away. As you listen to the song "Swing Set", what do you think the swing represents?

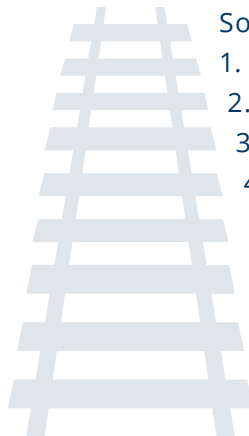


4) *On October 16th, 1966 Chanie Wenjack and two of his friends ran away from the Cecilia Jeffrey Residential School playground. It was the first and the last time that Chanie attempted to run away. On the day that Chanie ran away, nine additional children also ran away from Cecilia Jeffery School. Chanie followed his two friends to their Uncle Charles Kelly's cabin which was an 8 hour walk away. Determined to find his father, Chanie was provided a sealed jar with matches in it as he started out on his journey.*

As Gord sings the song "Matches" - what do you think the matches/fire symbolize?



5) The song titles of the movie each tell a story on their own. Select two titles and on loose leaf outline the impact of the songs in telling Chanie's story. What message is Gord trying to tell you with his lyrics? What images provoke emotions within you from the animations?



Song titles:

1. The Stranger
2. Swing Set
3. Seven Matches
4. I Will Not be Struck
5. Son
6. Secret Path
7. Don't Let This Touch You
8. Haunt Them, Haunt Them, Haunt Them
9. The Only Place to Be
10. Here, Here and Here



6) In the last fifteen minutes of the film, we are re-introduced to Chanie's sisters. The Wenjack Sisters state: *"As big as the world is, we are all connected in some way."*

How are you connected to Chanie's story?

POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 1: After viewing the film, answer the following questions.

1) How have residential schools impacted and continue to impact Indigenous peoples and communities?

2) What is the "Secret Path"? What symbols are used in the illustrations for this song? How are these symbols meaningful to Indigenous people?



POST-VIEWING ACTIVITY 2: Chanie's sister requests that as citizens "*we see what happened with residential schools and that we do everything we can to heal.*" After the film is finished, visit the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack website and read about the youth ambassador program, Secret Path Week and the Walk for Wenjack.

Link: <https://downiewenjack.ca/our-story/>

Are you interested in any of these social justice programs? How can you get involved in your local area?



Shubenacadie Indian Residential School by Elsie Charles Basque. Original publication: 1930

Source: <https://novascotia.ca/museum/mikmaq/?section=image&page=&id=818®ion=&period=&keywords=>

PART 1: MUSIC TO NURTURE COMMUNITIES



Chanie Wenjack by Papa Wenjack.

Original publication: 1959

Source:

<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/charlie-wenjack/>

1a) At the end of *Secret Path*, Gord Downie and his band The Tragically Hip replay the song "The Stranger". As you listen to the song for the second time, what distinguishing features of Gord's voice and the song's volume do you hear?

1b) How are the elements of music (the melody, tempo, form, instrumentation, dynamics, timbre, intent, meaning) in *The Secret Path* organized?

1c) How does the music enhance the truth telling of Residential School victims?

1d) How does *The Stranger* "speak" to you personally?



PART 2: MAP CHANIE'S JOURNEY

Learn more about Chanie's Life Journey through this informative Story Map. On loose leaf, **map Chanie's life journey**.

Link: <https://mbed.maps.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=9c1620612f7243f89c2ae74512945a06>

PART 3: WRITE A LETTER CAMPAIGN

After viewing the film, you likely think differently about residential schools and their impact on Canada's children. Take a moment to brainstorm the central themes from the story. **Draft a letter** that you would like to send to Chanie's sisters. What would you like to tell them about what you are learning about residential schools in Nova Scotia? What questions do you have for them? What initiatives do you think are important to carry out so that Chanie's legacy lives on?