

Residential Schools and the Road to Reconciliation – Why should we care?

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On October 22, 1966, 12-year-old Chanie Wenjack died alone in the wilderness in an attempt to escape from Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ontario, and reunite with his family living over 400 miles away.

The Presbyterian Church ran the Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School.

That is why we should care.

Like many Canadians, I am a fan of the Tragically Hip. Like many, I mourned when lead singer Gord Downie succumbed to glioblastoma on October 17, 2017.

While his music is a legacy, perhaps a greater one was his quest to use his celebrity status to tell Chanie Wenjack's story, and bring the history of Residential Schools into the forefront of our Canadian conscious. Downie's *The Secret Path* project does just that. It is made up of a solo album, a graphic novel and an animated film. To quote from the project's website,

"*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."

CBC streamed the film, as well as footage of Gord Downie in conversation with the Wenjack family. After the film, CBC Arts hosted a panel discussion. That entire programme is available here:

<https://www.cbc.ca/arts/secretpath/gord-downie-s-secret-path-airs-on-cbc-october-23-1.3802197>

So that we may continue on the path of reconciliation with our own Indigenous neighbours, the Mission Team at St. Andrew's is asking for your participation in two upcoming reconciliation events:

On January 26, the Mission Team is hosting a hybrid in-person and Zoom congregational follow-up to the testimony we heard from Indigenous Elders on October 13, 2021.

On February 23, the Mission Team has invited Indigenous Elders to return for a conversation and a Healing Circle with our congregation.

Please mark these dates in your calendars. We look forward to learning and working together towards reconciliation.