

THE SECRET PATH



Student Workbook

Name: _____

Lesson 1

Awareness and Identity

What does identity mean?

What makes up your identity? Can you list 5 aspects of your individual and collective identity?

Individual Identity	Collective Identity

How would you feel if all of the things you listed above were taken from you?



Lesson 2

Acknowledgement and Truth

Excerpt from “The Lonely Death of Charlie Wenjack”, Mclean's, 1967

CHARLIE WENJACK would have been 13 years old on January 19, and it's possible that during his short and disturbed life someone may have taken a snapshot of him — one of those laughing, open-faced, blurred little pictures one so often sees of children. But if a snap was taken, nobody knows where it is now. There are five police pictures of Charlie, though. They are large 8-by-10 prints, grey and underexposed, showing the thin, crumpled little body of a 12-year-old boy with a sharp-featured face. He is lying on his back and his thin cotton clothing is obviously soaked. His feet, encased in ankle-high leather boots, are oddly turned inward. In one of the photographs an Ontario Provincial Police sergeant is pointing down at Charlie's body, where it lies beside the CNR track. It is the exact spot where on the night of October 22 Charlie collapsed and died from exposure and hunger . . . just four-and-a-half feet from the trains that carry the white world by in warm and well-fed comfort. When they found Charlie he didn't have any identification. All they got out of his pockets was a little glass jar with a screw top. Inside were half a dozen wooden matches. They were all dry. And that's all he had.

Charlie Wenjack was an Ojibway Indian attending Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School in Kenora, Ont. He became lonely and ran away. He died trying to walk 400 miles home to his father, who lives and works on an isolated reservation in northern Ontario. It is unlikely that Charlie ever understood why he had to go to school and why it had to be such a long way from home. It is even doubtful if his father really understood either.

It's not so unusual that Indian children run away from the residential schools they are sent to. They do it all the time, and they lose their toes and their fingers to frostbite. Sometimes they lose a leg or an arm trying to climb aboard freight trains. Occasionally, one of them dies. And perhaps because they are Indians, no one seems to care very much. So this, then, is the story of how a little boy met a terrible and lonely death, of the handful of people who became involved, and of a town that hardly noticed.

Even before Charlie ran away he was already running hard just to keep pace with the bewildering white world he had suddenly been thrust into. He didn't start school until he was nine. The village he came from, Ogoki Post on the Martin Falls reservation, didn't have a day school. Charlie arrived at the Cecilia Jeffrey School, which is run by the Presbyterian Church and paid for by the federal government, in the fall of 1963. Some 150 Indian children live at the school but are integrated into the local school system. Consequently, Cecilia Jeffrey is, for 10 months in the year, really nothing more than an

enormous dormitory. And Charlie, who understood hardly any English, spent the first two years in grade one. He spent last year in what is called a junior opportunity class. That means he was a slow learner and had to be given special instruction in English and arithmetic. This fall he wasn't quite good enough to go back into the grade system, so he was placed in what is called a senior opportunity class. But there was nothing stupid about Charlie. His principal of last year, Velda MacMillan, believed she got to know him well. "The thing we remember most about him was his sense of humor. If the teacher in the class made a joke, a play on words, he was always the first to catch on."

Charlie wasn't a strong boy. In fact, he was thin and sickly. He carried an enormous, livid scar that ran in a loop from high on his right chest, down and up over his back. It meant that in early childhood his chest had been opened. Nobody knows exactly when. "Indian children's early medical records are practically impossible to track down," explains Kenora's public-health doctor, P. F. Playfair. The postmortem that was later performed on Charlie by Dr. Peter Pan. of Kenora, showed that his lungs were infected at the time of his death.

"Charlie Wenjack" by Willie Dunn

Walk on, little Charlie

Walk on through the snow.

Heading down the railway line,

Trying to make it home.

Well, he's made it forty miles,

Six hundred left to go.

It's a long old lonesome journey,

Shufflin' through the snow.

He's lonesome and he's hungry,

It's been a time since last he ate,

And as the night grows bolder,

He wonders at his fate.
For his legs are wracked with pain
As he staggers through the night.
And he sees through his troubled eyes,
That his hands are turning white.
Lonely as a single star,
In the skies above,
His father in a mining camp,
His mother in the ground,
And he's looking for his dad,
And he's looking out for love,
Just a lost little boy by the railroad track
Heading homeward bound.
Is that the great Wendigo
Come to look upon my face?
And are the skies exploding
Down the misty aisles of space?
Who's that coming down the track,
Walking up to me?
Her arms outstretched and waiting,
Waiting just for me.
Walk on, little Charlie,

Walk on through the snow.
Moving down the railway line,
Try to make it home.
And he's made it forty miles,
Six hundred left to go.
It's a long old lonesome journey,
Shufflin' through the snow.

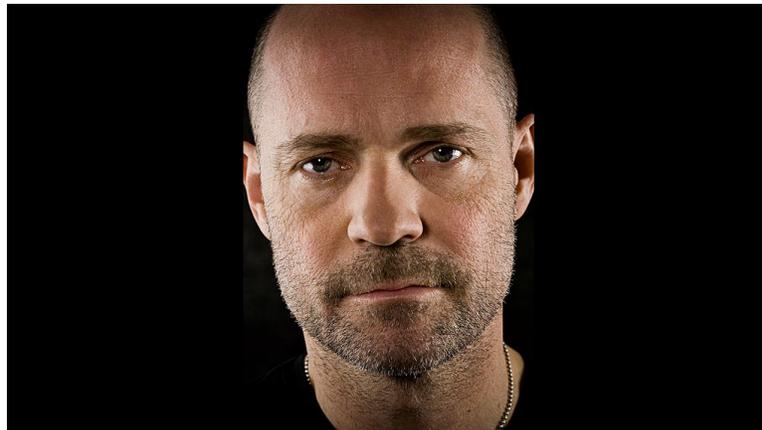
- Willie Dunn



Lesson 3

Atonement and Reconciliation

What defines Canada's Identity?	What makes Canada different from other countries?



What is Gord doing to contribute to reconciliation?	What could YOU do to contribute to reconciliation?

Lesson 4

Action and Commitment

How important to you is that people apologize to you when you've been wronged?

After watching the Statement of Apology:

How did the Statement of Apology make you feel? Was the apology sincere?

What are some of the Calls to Action?

What are some actions you and your classmates could take?

Actions I can take	Actions my class can take



