



**GOVERNOR GENERAL'S
PERFORMING ARTS AWARDS FOUNDATION
FONDATION DES PRIX DU GOUVERNEUR GÉNÉRAL
POUR LES ARTS DU SPECTACLE**

Gord Downie: Ahead by a Century

Gord Downie, musician, singer, songwriter, environmentalist and native rights activist, left his mark on generations of Canadians. His lyrics for The Tragically Hip, quirky and clever as they are, have become a part of the Canadian soundtrack. Songs such as *Blow at High Dough*, *Courage*, *Wheat Kings* and *Bobcaygeon*, are now sung at campfires and hockey games, but also analyzed for PhD papers.

Their songs explored Canadian geography and history, the themes of the water and the land, creating a sense of pride of place, but also referenced Canadian authors (Hugh MacLennan, for one) and the work of William Shakespeare. Taking pride in their Canadian roots (at a time when it was not cool in music), touring the nation relentlessly in the early days, and consistently evolving, over 13 studio albums and through four decades, the Hip maintained a distinct sound and a strong position in the hearts of English Canada.

In the wake of an untreatable brain cancer diagnosis in 2016, Downie chose to go on the road with the Hip, to engage with fans, to conduct a national celebration. Fans raised money for cancer charities. The Tragically Hip's final concert, held in their hometown of Kingston, ON, on August 20, 2016, was broadcast nationally and viewed in parks across Canada, hitting record viewer numbers of over 11 million.

Downie chose to use his final days to highlight causes close to his heart. *Secret Path: The Story of Chanie Wenjack*, highlighted the legacy of the residential school system and its impact on First Nations. The Tragically Hip have received numerous honours in Canada, including induction in to Canada's Walk of Fame and Canada's Music Hall of Fame, honorary fellowship at the Royal Conservatory of Music, some 16 JUNO awards, and Membership in the order of Canada. In 2008, they received the National Arts Centre Award, a companion award of the Governor General's Performing Arts Awards. Downie's final solo album, "Introduce Yourself" is due to be released on October 27.

