



**NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE
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News release

**NATIONAL ARTS CENTRE MOURNS THE LOSS OF GORD
DOWNIE**

October 18, 2017 – OTTAWA (Canada) – The National Arts Centre mourns the loss of Gord Downie, the lead singer of the iconic Canadian band The Tragically Hip.

The NAC partnered with Gord Downie one year ago today, when he performed the world premiere of his *Secret Path* project in Southam Hall. The powerful multimedia performance was about the true story of Chanie Wenjack, a young boy who died of exposure as he fled from residential school near Kenora, Ontario. At the performance that night, Gord Downie spoke about his hope for better lives for Indigenous people over the next 150 years. His example inspired Canadians to do better on our path to reconciliation.

The Tragically Hip also received the National Arts Centre Award as part of the *Governor General's Performing Arts Awards* in 2008. The band played four songs, and their electrifying performance lives on as one of the most memorable moments in the history of the Awards. The Hip returned to the NAC for three performances in September 2009.

"Gord Downie helped define Canadian music, because our country and our stories figured so largely in his music," said NAC President and CEO Peter Herrndorf. "As the leader of the Tragically Hip, he was loved for his music, for the poetry of his lyrics, and for his inimitable stage presence. But he was perhaps loved most of all because we could see ourselves – and where we live – in their music. Through the *Secret Path* project, he helped bring to light the struggles and injustices facing Indigenous people. Canada will miss him dearly."

The NAC sends its condolences to Gord Downie's family. The NAC's flags, already at half-mast for the actor Cathy Elliott, will stay lowered for another three days for Gord Downie.

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