



Percy Baxter School is now a legacy school under the Downie & Wenjack Fund.

Percy Baxter named legacy school through Downie-Wenjack Fund

BRIGETTE MOORE

Percy Baxter Middle School is now considered a legacy school with the Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund.

Amy Spink is the school's grade 7 social studies and language arts teacher. She is also the school lead for First Nations, Metis and Inuit education. She registered the school to be considered a legacy school.

The Gord Downie & Chanie Wenjack Fund is part of Canadian singer Downie's legacy and commitment to improving the lives of First Nations people in Canada. Downie was the lead singer of the Tragically Hip. He died in 2017.

The goal is to continue the conversation about reconciliation which started with Wenjack's residential school story. At the age of 9, Wenjack was sent to a residential school in Ontario. At the age of 12, he ran away to try and be reunited with his family who lived 600 kilometres away. A week after running away, his body was found next to railway tracks. He died from starvation and exposure.

Spink started talking to her students this year about residential schools on Sept. 30 which is Orange Shirt Day, a day to recognize the impact residential schools had on children and to stress the importance that every child matters.

As a legacy school, Spink is provided with novels for the students and teaching materials to help her educate the students about the issue. Downie wrote a graphic novel, illustrated by Jeff Lemire, called *The Secret Path*. It comes with four lessons teaching identity, acknowledgment, atonement and action.

"It's a lot of focus, yes on the history of residential schools, but more of how it's impacted ... the

intergenerational trauma," said Spink.

Spink said her students have been mesmerized by the subject matter.

"They enjoyed getting to know Gord Downie and the Tragically Hip and what he means to Canadians," said Spink.

"They were very open and wanting to learn and wanting to know more and also really taking it and thinking about how we take our past," she said.

"It has allowed a lot of conversation to happen."

There are still 80,000 people throughout Canada who went to a residential school or have been impacted by the intergenerational trauma that transpired due to the schools.

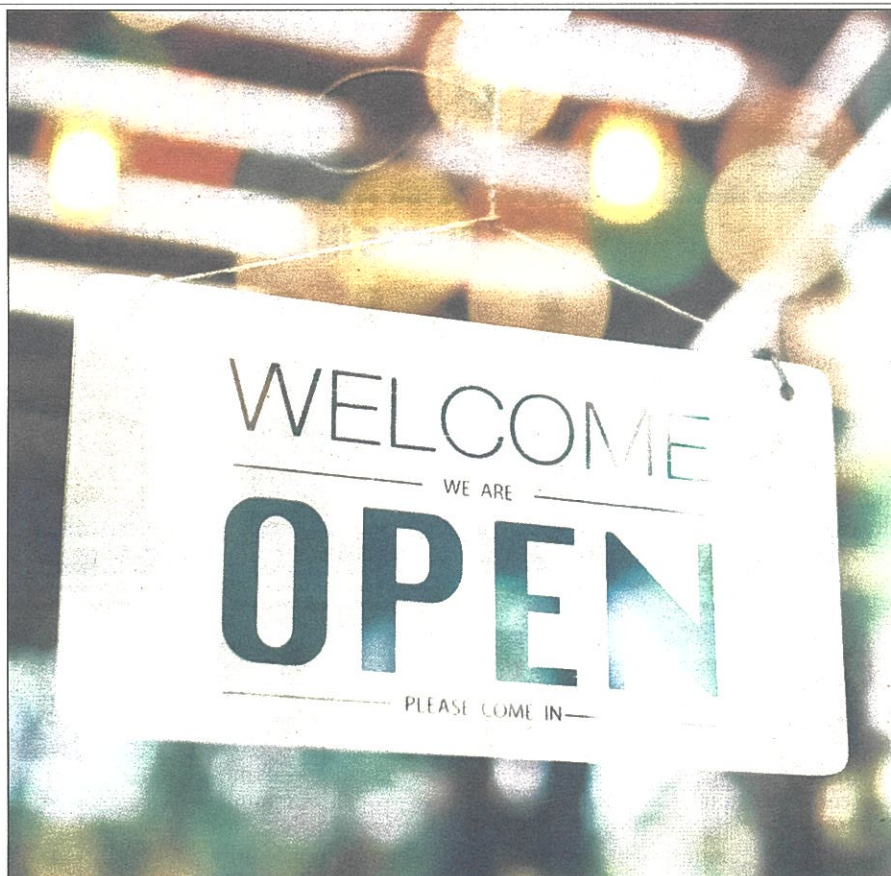
"We spent a few classes looking at the concept of what apologies mean and the value of them and moving forward from those apologies and that reconciliation and what we can do to better Canada," said Spink.

On Oct. 22 last week, the students participated in the Walk for Wenjack. The walk is held on the day Wenjack's body was found in 1966. Volunteers and staff from Pembina Pipeline, joined the students in a socially-distanced walk outside Percy Baxter. Pembina also made a \$1,000 donation on the school's behalf to the Downie Wenjack Fund.

On the walk, everyone picked garbage to clean up the school yard, not only for the students but the community members who use their playground. Cleaning garbage is also a way to honour Mother Earth.

"I'm proud of the school embracing this and the division," said Spink.

For more information visit downiewenjack.ca.



HAS YOUR BUSINESS RE-OPENED?

WE CAN HELP LET PEOPLE KNOW.

IF YOU'RE A BUSINESS, WE WANT TO INFORM THE COMMUNITY IF:

- You are now open or about to re-open to the public
- You offer services such as takeout or delivery
- You changed your capacity or hours of operation

To add your FREE business listing and connect with local businesses visit:

Whitecourtstar.com/connectwhitecourt

The
Whitecourt Star