

Melissa Larkin//Darkspark
613.503.0055
mel@darkspark.ca

First Permanent Downie-Wenjack Legacy Room in Canada to be launched in Picton
Sophiasburgh students play pivotal role in act of reconciliation

Picton, ON: The work of a grade 7/8 class at Sophiasburgh Central School has inspired the creation of the first permanent Downie-Wenjack Legacy Room. Last month the students participated in a transformative arts-education project. Their goal? To write and record songs in response to Canada's colonial history. Students took part in The Four Directions Project, led by local not-for-profit Darkspark, an arts education organization that uses songwriting, recording and pop culture as engagement tools in schools across Canada. The Four Directions Project was conceptualized in collaboration with a Grade 8 class from the Quinte Mohawk School in Tyendinaga Mohawk Territory. Participating youth discover how colonial prejudices and stereotypes are created and maintained – and may be broken. It also encourages youth to believe their voices can create change in their communities and world. It appears their work may have done just that by inspiring the creation of the first permanent Downie-Wenjack Legacy Room.

In spirit of Gord's call to action, "*Do Something*", the Legacy Room initiative aims to create physical places where acts of and discussion about reconciliation can thrive. Professional musicians and Darkspark founders Melissa Larkin and D'Ari Lisle approached David Sweet & Isy Patten of Picton's Books & Company to host a public presentation of the students work. That meeting resulted in the decision to take the support of this work one step further: to create a Downie-Wenjack Legacy Room in Books & Company's café Miss Lily's.

"For a community to be healthy and to thrive, its people need to feel at ease to communicate openly with one another. People of differing cultures and backgrounds learn about each other through their stories. The Legacy Room will provide a place within the community where Indigenous and Non-Indigenous people may meet to share stories, art, and music. We hope sharing brings reconciliation. Reconciliation is needed to bring healing, and we are proud to be able to work with the Downie Wenjack Fund to take steps towards this goal." Says David Sweet, Books & Company Owner

The Legacy Room initiative, is the brainchild of Assembly of First Nations regional Chief Morley Googoo, who represents Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador. The Mi'kmaq leader's plan is to encourage companies, particularly those in the hospitality sector, to designate special rooms where Indigenous issues can be discussed and reconciliation can become a reality. The Legacy Room Initiative is supported by The Downie Wenjack Fund. The fund was created by Gord and Mike Downie as well as the family of Chanie Wenjack – a young boy killed by the residential school system - and is focused on creating new relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Seeing this work come full circle is a testament to this community. According to D'Ari Lisle, Darkspark co-founder/producer, "Darkspark teaches students about how popular music has and can have social impact and generate social change – something that Gord Downie has proven again and again. The student's heartfelt songs dig into the dark, yet let the light shine through. The fact that our students' work has contributed to making a difference in the community with the creation of a Downie Wenjack Legacy Room here is a truly beautiful thing.

Thanks to our community and Books & Company for catching the vision and making this happen.”

The community presentation of this work was made possible with support from The County Foundation and the Canada 150 fund.

Darkspark, Books & Company and the Downie Wenjack Fund invite you to attend the launch of the first Legacy Room in Canada, alongside a presentation of the songs created through the Four Directions Project on June 13th, at 7pm in the upstairs of Books & Company.

###



The Gord Downie
& CHANIE WENJACK FUND

DARKSPARK
Transformative Arts Education



BOOKS & COMPANY
books • music • life



THE
COUNTY
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS
OF CANADA
all for community.

FONDATEIONS COMMUNAUTAIRES
DU CANADA
ensemble pour tous.



CANADA 150

Canada