

FAREWELL TO A PROUD CANADIAN GORD DOWNIE

FAMOUS FANS REMEMBER THE TRAGICALLY HIP FRONTMAN
WHO WAS A BRAVE FIGHTER AND DEVOTED DAD



He was a national treasure, a patriotic and passionate singer and showman who drew inspiration from this country's rich landscape and those who live within it. So when news broke that Gord Downie, beloved lead singer of the Tragically Hip, had passed away the day before at 53 after a lengthy and public battle with brain cancer, fans from all walks of life unleashed their sorrow, remembering the man who'd rocked their world.

"Sorry rest of the world, Canada's closed today. There's been a death in the family," tweeted one fan as the news went viral, eloquently summing up the country's sentiments.

The band sent out a heartfelt and eloquent statement on behalf of the star's family, including his four children: "Gord knew this day was coming – his response was to spend this precious time as he always had – making music, making memories and expressing deep gratitude to his family and friends for a life well lived, often sealing it with a kiss."

In Ottawa, Parliament Hill's flag was lowered to half mast and the Peace Tower chimed The Hip's hit song "Bobcaygeon." Spontaneous gatherings sprang up in the band's hometown of Kingston, Ont., as well as in Bobcaygeon, Ont. In Toronto, Mayor John Tory ordered the iconic sign at City Hall to be lit up in red and white in Gord's memory. And the following week, thousands of fans formed a giant choir in Nathan Phillips Square and belted out several classic Hip tunes by candlelight.

CANADIAN PRIDE

Much like Leonard Cohen, John Candy and the illustrious Group of Seven painters, Gord was one of those people whose names will be forever synonymous with Canada. The Hip's songs have been described as the country's soundtrack, with frontman Gord taking listeners along on a tour of Canada's small towns and back roads while tackling topics like hockey and significant moments in our history.

"Gord was my friend but Gord was everyone's friend," said a visibly shaken Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his eyes welling with tears. "[He] loved this country with everything he had. And not just loved it in a nebulous 'Oh, I love Canada' way. He loved every hidden corner, every story, every aspect of this country that he celebrated his whole life. And he wanted to make it better."

As Justin pointed out, Gord also fought for issues that weighed on his heart and conscience. Among them was Canada's treatment of Indigenous peoples. During the closing show of the Hip's final tour last summer (watched by 11.7 million people and the

'Every musician just lost
their cooler older brother'
- BARENAKED LADIES



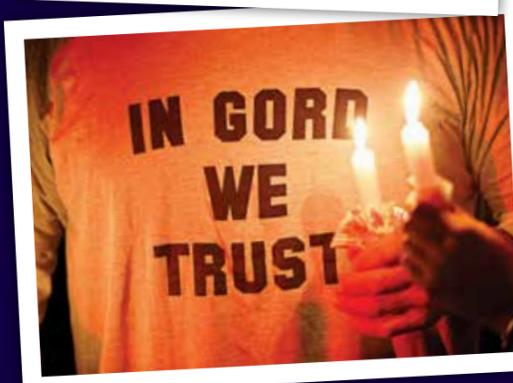
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: FRANS SCHELLEKENS/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES; ANDREW TOLSON; RON TURENNE/BAE/GETTY IMAGES

The father of four used his commanding stage presence to extol Canada's virtues and tackle important cultural topics. Opposite (from top): Gord circa 1993, and in 2007 with one of his beloved children at a Toronto Raptors game.





Royalty meets royalty! During the Queen's Golden Jubilee tour of Canada in 2002, she and husband Prince Philip took time to meet guitarist Rob Baker (above, right), Gord (right) and the rest of the Tragically Hip. In 2017, Gord was appointed a member of the Order of Canada. Drake (below right) was excited to meet Gord during a Toronto Raptors game earlier this year, posting the photo to Instagram. Below, Gord makes a cameo in the 2008 film *One Week* alongside actor Joshua Jackson.



basis of the documentary *Long Time Running*, he called on the Prime Minister – who was in the audience – to “figure it out” and take up the fight. After that, the devoted family man dedicated himself to reconciliation issues in a joint project with his brother, Mike, called *Secret Path*, which produced a Juno-winning album and animated film.

FELLOW MUSICIANS PAY TRIBUTE

Online tributes, particularly from Canadian musicians, summed up the nation's sorrow. “Every Canadian musician just lost their cooler older brother. We'll all be trying to live up to you forever, Gord. Love you,” the Barenaked Ladies tweeted. Added Sarah McLachlan: “It was a privilege to witness Gord Downie's creative genius, he was such a force in the Canadian music industry. Xo.”

Drake took to Instagram with a photo of his hands on Gord's shoulders with the caption, “Rest In Peace legend. So glad we got to meet and have this conversation. You will be forever treasured by this country and missed by the world.”

The public outpouring has been especially comforting to Gord's family, who are planning a public memorial to celebrate his life.

“It helps with the sadness because it's so uplifting, but it actually makes you a little sadder, too, because you realize there are a lot of people who are really hurting,” said Mike. “It also makes you feel like you're part of something. I think that's true for a lot of Canadians. I'm in good company.”

REPORT: SUZANNE WINTROB



'Gord loved every hidden corner, every story, every aspect of this country'
- JUSTIN TRUDEAU

Our buddy Gord: Prime Minister Justin Trudeau describes Gord as 'everyone's friend' during a tearful media address on Parliament Hill. As the sad news broke, Canadians remembered the star (pictured above in concert in July 2016) at candlelight vigils and impromptu singalongs.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: FRANK GUNN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES; RICK MADONIK/TORONTO STAR/GETTY IMAGES; INSTAGRAM; MONGREL MEDIA/EVERETT COLLECTION/CP; CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: ADRIAN WYLD/CP; PHILLIP CHIN/WIREIMAGE/GETTY IMAGES; CHRIS WATTIE/REUTERS