

Holy Family students learn about Tour for Humanity

By Bill Rea

The Tour of Humanity, presented by Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies, is making the rounds of Ontario, and recently stopped in Bolton.

The program is contained as a mobile classroom on a bus. Education Associate Daniella Lurion said it's been running about a year-and-a-half, travelling to various communities throughout Ontario. They have been to about 160 places so far, and about 60,000 people have been through the program, "which is kind of exciting," she said.

Lurion explained there are three different presentations on the tour.

The one they put on for Grade 4 students at Holy Family Elementary School is called The Happy Experience, which deals with things like prejudice. Lurion said the results are two-fold, as the students learn how to productively do something about discrimination, bullying, etc. They also learn about what has happened and how it happened., and how such events tie in with their lives.

Students in higher grades are presented with The Canadian Experience, and it focusses on historical events, such as the history of Aboriginal residential schools, the treatment of Japanese Canadians during the Second World War and cyber bullying. The aim is to draw a comparison between bullying and what's gone on in the past.

Lurion also said there's a stress on asking the youngsters what they can do to address these situations, also urging them to find something they believe in and "do something."

As well, she said she encourages things like simple acts of kindness, which can make a difference.

The Global Experience is the presentation made to high school students, and Lurion said it's somewhat more graphic, dealing with such things as the Holocaust, genocide, etc.

"We do cover it in a very age-appropriate manner," she said.

Simon Wiesenthal, who died in 2005, was Holocaust survivor, who after the war devoted much of his energies to helping to track down Nazi war criminals.

Lurion said they take the tour where they're invited, adding it was Holy Family who contacted them. They usually get to one school per day, and this was the first time the tour had stopped in Bolton.

The tour currently has just the one bus. She said there are hopes they can add more, but that's expensive.

The tour is funded by donations. "We have very generous donators," she commented.

"It's the only one of its kind right now," she added.

Lurion is a teacher who also has a masters degree in Holocaust studies. She added these subjects are not always easy to teach. "The topic is difficult to take for some students," she said, adding she sometimes finds herself talking to high school students who don't realize what went on during the Holocaust. And young people don't always appreciate what went on in Canada's past, with issues like residential schools.

"Canada was not immune," she said, pointing out people were turned away trying to escape the Holocaust. "Canada was not particularly welcoming to a lot of Jews. It's part of our history."



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