

June 10, 2015



SHDHS students challenged to make the world a better place



Dave MacLeod's grade 12 class listens while on the Tour for Humanity bus at South Huron High School. (Photo contributed by SHDHS)

It is often said that what separates humans from animals is our humanity.

However, humans have been responsible for a number of atrocities against their fellow man including the Holocaust, Canada's Aboriginal residential school system and Japanese internment camps during the Second World War.

On Thursday, June 4, the Tour of Humanity bus from Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Toronto was at South Huron District Secondary School educating students about these events and the impact they had.

The center has a focus on human rights and is named after a Holocaust survivor who spent his life after the Second World War bringing Nazi war criminals to justice.

According to Avi Benlolo, president of Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, The Tour of Humanity was conceived seven years ago as a “method to take the classroom and our educational programs out into the world.”

“Essentially we found it difficult for students to come into our own centre,” Benlolo said. “We thought how we could mobilize this.”

Benlolo said The Tour of Humanity is in essence, a “mobile tolerance centre on wheels.” Daniella Lurion, an education associate, hosted the students on the bus.

She provided information on events such as the Holocaust and the residential school system.

She told the students that Canada has not always embraced multiculturalism, speaking about the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923, which effectively closed off Chinese immigration to Canada.

There was also a story about 900 Jewish refugees who had escaped from Nazi Germany.

Travelling by ship, the refugees were turned away by both Canada and the U.S., having to return to Germany, where more than 300 of them eventually died in concentration camps.

Lurion also discussed more modern issues such as cyber bullying. She informed students that almost 60 per cent of hate crimes in Canada are performed by those ages 12 to 24.

“Those are your peers,” Lurion said.

However, Lurion said there is always hope, and referred to “heroes” such as Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr., Harriet Tubman and Malala Yousafzai.

Lurion said these were “ordinary people who did extraordinary things”.

She said the purpose of the Tour of Humanity is to inspire students to ask themselves, “How can I, as an individual, do something to make the world a better place.”

Benlolo said the tour has been very successful, visiting 150 schools and reaching 65,000 students in the past year-and-a-half.

Both Lurion and Benlolo said the reception they have received for the tour has been “phenomenal” so far.