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EDUCATION: Tour for Humanity bus visits St. John's College



By Heather Ibbotson, Brantford Expositor

It was the kind of presentation not soon forgotten -- and one that shouldn't be.

Arresting images of the Holocaust and other genocidal horrors were part of a teaching video and presentation shown to students at St. John's College Thursday courtesy of the Tour for Humanity.

Throughout the day, groups of Grade 11 students boarded the custom-built touring bus from the Toronto-based Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies to view a moving 40-minute presentation detailing the atrocities of the Holocaust during the Second World War, as well as other mass genocides.

"This is a unique and memorable learning experience for 21st century students," said St. John's College world religion teacher Derek McEachen.

Tour for Humanity is a 30-seat mobile education centre that instructs people on the consequences of hate and intolerance, as well as the importance of human rights in our society.

Launched in late 2013, the bus has travelled to more than 100 schools and communities across the province, providing workshops highlighting the importance of freedom, democracy and human rights to more than 50,000 students.

The tour is designed to teach young people about the tragic consequences of hate and inspire them to make positive changes in their own schools and communities.

Tour instructor Daniella Lurion welcomed students and provided an information-packed presentation to accompany the videos.

"The Holocaust was 70 years ago. Within the next 10 to 15 years, there will be no survivors alive," said Lurion, adding that there soon will be a time when the only connection to that dark place in history will be video and recordings.

The sobering topic ended with an uplifting video depicting a diverse range of people, such as Harriett Tubman, Anne Frank, Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi. whose experiences, actions or spirit made a positive difference within their societies and on the wider world stage.

"It is our hope that students leave with the understanding that these things have happened in history and it's up to us to make things better by doing good in the world," Lurion said.

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center is a non-profit human rights organization representing more than 30,000 Canadian members. It is committed to countering racism and antisemitism and to promoting the principles of tolerance, social justice and Canadian democratic values through advocacy and education. It is affiliated with the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, named after the concentration camp survivor who made it his life's work to bring Nazi war criminals to justice.

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