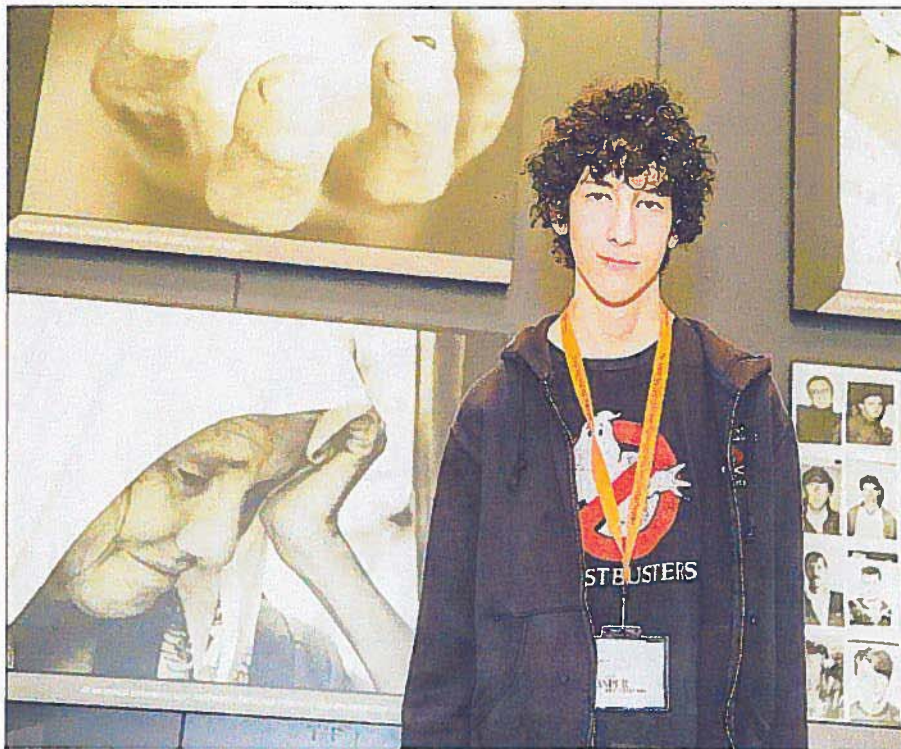


Vancouver teens tour U.S. site after Obama President and students moved by experience

BY SHELDON ALBERTS, POSTMEDIA NEWS APRIL 24, 2012



Isaac Pেকেles, a student at Vancouver's King David high school, is at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, where visitors learn about the genocide.
Photograph by: Brendan Hoffman, Getty Images, For The Asper Foundation, Postmedia News

After touring the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum early on Monday morning, President Barack Obama described the "searing experience" of bearing witness to the artifacts of genocide. It was, for him, a teachable moment.

"We must tell our children about a crime unique in human history," he said. "We must tell our children. But more than that, we must teach them. Because remembrance without resolve is a hollow gesture."

A few hours later, and with much less fanfare, 14-year-old Isaac Pেকেles of Vancouver emerged from the museum similarly moved.

"History has its blemishes like the Holocaust," said Pেকেles. "I think there is a big importance in teaching our youth about what has happened in the past so it doesn't happen in the future. We need to teach good values like tolerance and to be fair and not discriminatory."

The ninth grader was among hundreds of Canadian students who arrived at the storied museum - making their first visit on the day Obama was making his second - to complete a months-long study program on human rights and the Holocaust.

They came to the U.S. capital as part of the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program, a 15-year-old initiative aimed at raising awareness among Canadian kids about genocide and discrimination.

The students walked through a cattle car that had, some 70 years earlier, been used to transport Jews to a concentration camp. They witnessed an exhibit on the medical experiments the Nazis performed on Jews. And they listened quietly as a Holocaust survivor, Louisa Lawrence-Israels, described a childhood spent hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam.

None left unaffected.

"Seeing this, it makes you realize what you have," said 14-year-old Mia Kaye, who like Pেকেles attends King David high school in Vancouver. "It was scary for me, looking at it, and it was sad to see what happened."