

ASPER FOUNDATION

Holocaust left grandma hoarding food

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WASHINGTON - Growing up in Calgary, Aviva Fialkow, 14, was only vaguely aware of her grandparents' history as Holocaust survivors.

She noticed her grandmother Faye would sometimes stuff food in her pocket and always seemed to rush to complete her to-do list.

Finally she learned her grandmother's behaviour stemmed from a life lived in fear of not knowing when her next meal would come or not knowing if she'd be alive to do the things she wanted.

Fialkow's grandmother, who survived a Nazi concentration camp in Poland, lost five of eight family members in the Holocaust.

"My grandma was a survivor and she wouldn't even talk about it because she was so scared," Fialkow, a student at Calgary's John Ware Junior High School, said yesterday as she toured the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. "She lost her entire family."

She and about 200 other Canadian teens spent several hours at the Holocaust museum.

The visit capped 18 hours of study in The Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program, designed to raise awareness of the Holocaust and why it's vital for individuals to take personal action to combat intolerance today.

The students saw a tragic abundance of personal effects from Holocaust victims - from family photographs to stacks of shoes the Nazis confiscated from victims before sending them into the gas chambers.

Keegan Yang, a Toronto student, said he became "really angry" walking through the museum as he wondered "how could someone do these things to other human beings."

This year, about 1,200 students from across Canada are taking part in the Asper Foundation program, which was launched in 1997 by the late Israel Asper as a way to use history to teach students about tolerance.

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