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Students inspired by holocaust experience in Washington 🚗

CORNER BROOK
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Corner Brook Regional High students, from left, Debra Baker, Jill Burton, Jennifer Maddigan, and Emma Anderson speak to holocaust survivor Isaac Goldfarb. — Submitted photo

Although they don't necessarily perceive racism as a major problem in their own lives, some students from Corner Brook Regional High still feel enriched by their visit to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

A group of 23 students from Corner Brook Regional High, accompanied by four teachers, travelled to Washington, D.C. recently as part of the human rights and holocaust studies program offered through the Asper Foundation.

One of the most moving aspects of the trip is the holocaust museum, where people can actually see things like soldier uniforms alongside pajamas worn by prisoners in concentration camps.

Exhibits of hair from heads that were forcibly shaven is just one example of the reminders which still exist at the facility.

"Being at the museum, and seeing how badly (the prisoners) were treated, made me realize how lucky I am," 16-year-old Debra Baker said. "It made me think of stuff a lot differently."

The young girl had her moment of one-on-one to speak with holocaust survivor Isaac Goldfarb. She heard his stories of the experience and how he escaped from the concentration camps.

"It was really sad when we were talking to him," Baker said. "Again, it made me feel really lucky about how fair people are treated today."

"It was a really good experience to be able to speak with him. It's not something you will get to do everyday."

The experience was something life-altering for her.

"Aside from the racism part, it's just tolerance to other people and different religions," she said. "It teaches you to look at everything a different way, and you just treat people differently after it."

As part of the experience, students are required to volunteer in their communities on public projects of their choosing. Another Level 1 student, Christine Boone, said that is also significant in that it teaches you to give back to your community for all the rights and freedoms you have.

Students participating in the trip have volunteered through such organizations as Amnesty International and the 30-Hour Famine.

Boone also did things such as selling tickets to help raise money for the school sports teams and volunteering at a Christmas party for children.

"Once you go to the museum and you see things like the shoes that were left there and you see the carts and stuff, you just get a different feeling," she said.

"It kind of gives you a different outlook of how people look at other people."

Boone said the experience was much more than what she had learned in the classroom.

"When we were doing tutorials, we learned about a lot of different people's stories, but it was nothing like what you heard when you actually listened to the holocaust survivors themselves," she said.

"... It was a once in a lifetime thing. Something I will never forget."

The students also got to visit such landmarks as the Lincoln Memorial and Arlington Cemetery. They saw the world's largest museum complex and research organization — the Smithsonian Institution — and took in the National Museum of American History and Museum of Natural History.

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