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Learning about Holocaust horror

MUSEUM: Canadian students taught about the consequences of racism

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WASHINGTON — For Halina Peabody, 80, the Holocaust began when she was nine years old and German SS troops came to her Polish village, marched about 800 young Jews into the woods and shot them.

They had been told they were going to the forest to cover the trunks of young trees with burlap to protect them from the winter cold. Instead, the forest became their grave.

One victim was only wounded and managed to dig himself out. He escaped back to the village to warn the remaining Jews. That's when Peabody's harrowing story of survival began.

She told her story Monday at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington where more than 100 high school students from across Canada came to learn about one of the greatest tragedies in the history of mankind.

They are taking part in the Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program, which since 1997 has brought about 11,000 high school students from 118 schools across Canada to the Holocaust museum. The visit is part of a program to teach Canadian high school students about human rights and the consequences of racism



A visitor to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum looks at photographs by Bosnian photographer Tarik Samarah. — GETTY IMAGES FILES

and intolerance.

This year the program has 1,100 participants from 36 schools in 16 cities and six provinces.

After touring the museum, they listened for an hour as Peabody described her life as a little girl hiding from Nazi killers.

After Russia invaded Poland in 1939, her father, a dentist, was arrested as a suspected spy and sent to Siberia. Peabody, her baby sister and her mother

were left to fend for themselves.

Two years later, after the German Nazis murdered the young Jews in her village, Peabody's mother secured papers from a local Catholic priest identifying her and her daughters as Catholics. She found work in a German military kitchen where she was able to obtain a German identity card, which would offer greater safety for her and her daughters.