

Great trip with powerful memories

Trip to Washington makes lasting impression on Hartland students

By Liz Foster

It all comes down to the numbers. "We left with 25 kids," said Jason Smith, vice principal at Hartland Community School, "and we came back with 25."

Smith was discussing the success of the school's recent trip to Washington, D.C., but the success of the trip goes far beyond the return of every student.

"The highlight for me," Smith continued, "was to see the students take everything in and ask questions and see connections and really make sense of the world around them."

The students, along with chaperones, visited educational and historical sites such as the United States History Museum, the White House, and the Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Charlene Prosser, a parent who chaperoned the trip, agreed the visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum, which is the focal point of the trip, was "very powerful."

"Unless you go there and see it yourself you could never imagine how powerful it is," Prosser said. "You will never be the same after that."

Organizers Smith, Heidi Culberson and Julie Adams planned a public reunion for the students, parents and teachers who were involved with the trip.

The evening was organized in order to screen a PowerPoint exhibit of photos taken on the trip, as well as to present the students who participated with a memorandum for personal responsibility.

"It's really a very beautiful keepsake," Prosser said. "It encompasses everything we learned on this trip. We are all witnesses, messengers."

Students accepting the memorandums were given the opportunity to share their thoughts, feelings and personal experiences from the trip.

"The most memorable part of the trip for me," said student Sarah Craig, "was the Holocaust Museum. It really spoke to me."

Fellow student Kiersten Phillips was equally affected by the memorial museum.

"It really touched me," Phillips said.

While the trip was an educational and emotional experience for the students, many of whom were in Grade 9, the adventure also included a lot of fun with friends.

"It was a wonderful experience," said Smith. "We had a lot of fun. We took some of those kids farther from home than they'd ever been. It was exciting, and we have to thank the kids' parents for making it possible and for trusting us with your kids."

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On paper it may all come down to the numbers, but watching the students accept their memorandums and share their experiences, it is clear the trip comes down to the incredible, educational, emotional experience they will carry with them for the rest of their lives.

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