

MONTREAL GAZETTE
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QUEBEC

Holocaust lesson decries silence

Students urged to
fight against hate

JESSICA MURPHY
POSTMEDIA NEWS

WASHINGTON Louise Lawrence
Israelis clearly remembers May
5, 1945. It was the day Canadian
forces liberated Amsterdam, and
the day her family finally came out
of hiding.

Israelis, then almost three years
old, had spent most of her young
life with her parents and brother
living in a small attic hiding from
the Nazi forces that had occupied
the Netherlands since 1940.

Before that day, it was really the
only life she knew.

"All I remember is light, and no
walls," she recalled. "Our parents
took us to the park and said 'you're
free, play outside.'"

Her older brother began to cry,
overwhelmed by the experience
after more than two years without
ever going outdoors, but was soon
cheered when Canadian soldiers
gave them both Hershey choco-
late bars.

"You have no idea — that was the
best thing that ever happened to
me, tasting chocolate," she said.

Israelis told her family's story
— they were Jews from the Neth-
erlands — and their wartime ex-
perience on Monday to some 200
Canadian students gathered at the
U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum
in D.C.

The Grade 9 students were
among a group of 1,000 Canadian
youth taking part this year in the

Asper Foundation Human Rights
and Holocaust Studies program
— a human rights education initia-
tive for youth that includes a visit
to the Holocaust museum in the
U.S. capital.

Edmonton's Daniel Brick, 13,
said he was inspired by her talk
and impressed with how her par-
ents kept so much of the hardship
of their living situation from their
two young children.

But Israelis also spoke of how
— after the war — her parents in-
stilled in her an anger toward Ger-
mans. She's now careful to make a
distinction between the Nazis and
the German people.

Brick said: "I learned that par-
ents are important but they can
also be wrong. So you should trust
your parents, but you have to think
with your own mind."

Israelis said she hopes the stu-
dents left her talk remembering
not to be silent in the face of ha-
tred.

Alison Edwards has been the St.
John's, Nfld., program director for
the initiative since 2005 for stu-
dents from Prince of Wales Col-
legiate and Leary's Brook Junior
High. She said she has seen first
hand how youth who go through
the program refuse to be bystand-
ers when they see kids being
picked on.

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Human rights program to get a reboot

ASPER FROM A8

"They've learned those skills
about speaking up and being com-
fortable with it," she said. "They're
comfortable helping people who
might be bullied."

The human rights program,
launched in 1997, is getting some-
thing of a reboot next year.

Students from across Canada
will continue to participate in the
program's education and volun-
teer aspects, but the annual trip
to Washington will be moved to
the Canadian Museum for Human
Rights in Winnipeg. The program
is also one of the reasons the mu-
seum itself was created.

The new institution — the first
national museum created in Cana-
da since 1967 and the only one
outside the National Capital Re-
gion — will allow the program to
expand its scope.

The museum includes sections on
the five historical genocides recog-
nized by the Canadian government
— the Holocaust, the Armenian
genocide, the Rwandan genocide,
the Holodomor (Josef Stalin's
forced famine of the Ukrainian
people) and the Bosnian genocide.

It also looks at Canada's historic
relationship with its aboriginal
population.

MONTREAL
GAZETTE, MAY 6, 2015

Dad gave chocolate to kids in Holland

Re: "Holocaust lesson decries
silence" (Montreal Gazette,
May 5)

I was very touched by the
article about Louise Law-
rence Israelis's remembrance
of May 5, 1945, when she and
her family were liberated by
Canadian Forces in Amster-
dam. My father was a gunner
in the Royal Canadian Artil-
lery in the Second World War
and was one of those soldiers
who helped liberate Hol-
land. We grew up hearing the
story of how he and his unit
marched, handing out choco-
late bars to the children amid
cheering by all the people
lining the streets.

He said that the people there,
who had very little, were giv-
ing the soldiers little gifts in
appreciation. When growing
up, we girls often tried on
the small orange and white
beaded bracelet that a little
girl had given my father (un-
fortunately, over the years,
this bracelet has been lost).

When my sister, Liz, went
to Holland a number of years
ago, she was there on an an-
niversary of this liberation.
When she told an older man
about our father, she was
given a big hug!
Catherine Shearing-Harris,
Otterburn Park



Louise Lawrence Israelis