

The Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program Celebrates Significant Success With First Nations, Métis and Inuit Students

- From 2001 to 2008, over 320 Aboriginal students from every province spanning British Columbia to Newfoundland and Labrador as well as the Yukon and Nunavut territories have participated in The Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program including students from Winnipeg's inner-city and communities such as Norway House Cree Nation, MB (Kinosao Sipi Cree Nation), Cross Lake First Nation, MB (Pimicikamak First Nation) and Opaskwayack Cree Nation, MB. *The Asper Foundation has directly contributed almost half a million dollars for the participation of these students.*
- The program's curriculum incorporates coverage of Aboriginal discrimination in Canada including issues such as residential schools, Aboriginal discrimination in voting and Aboriginal urban ghettoization.
- The Asper Foundation has solicited hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash and in-kind support from the following organizations to support the participation of Aboriginal students in the program: The Jewish Federation of Winnipeg, Perimeter Airlines, Calm Air, Opaskwayack Education Authority, Southern Chiefs' Organization, The Winnipeg Foundation (see below), Victoria Inn (Winnipeg), Winnipeg School Division, Manitoba Métis Federation, Assembly of First Nations, and The Jewish Foundation of Manitoba (through Marjorie and Morley Blankstein Fund, Bill and Beulah Shuster Memorial Fund and Jackie Simkin).
- Between 2001 and 2005, The Asper Foundation arranged for The Winnipeg Foundation to provide \$625,000 in support for almost 250 students to participate in the program from Winnipeg city schools. Approximately 25% of these students were Aboriginal.
- In 2005, First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals aged 18-24 from across Canada were in Ottawa for a National Youth Summit organized by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. After the summit, The Asper Foundation brought 55 from this group to Washington, D.C. as part of program.

Thoughts from Aboriginal Participants in The Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program

"Today I was reminded of the resiliency, courage and will to survive of our human race. It's important for us to remember and to never forget the history and stories we witnessed today. I know that I will share my experience with others. I am very fortunate and grateful to have participated in this opportunity."

"After reflection, I felt compelled to be a stronger voice against the injustice and inhumane treatment perpetrated against oppressed peoples."

“This experience was beneficial and I believe that all cultures should learn about one another and from there we will all realize how unique, diverse and special we are to the world. Thank you so much. It was an honour and eye opener.”

“Thoughts brought about today are that of comparison to Aboriginal injustices and compassion for a race/religion and a people. We as First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Aboriginal youth need to be reminded that we need to be responsible for our own futures, to ensure that these injustices are never allowed to happen again. Thank you for the opportunity to reflect, compare, learn and be reminded that voices, strong voices = power. Let’s use that to do good things.”

“In my personal studies, I have been researching the genocides and atrocities that have occurred in our world over the last century. In considering the Holocaust, it is arguably the greatest human tragedy in our time. I was apprehensive in speaking to the politics at our own National Youth Summit. I consider myself a citizen of the world and, also as a Métis youth, I recognize that our world histories are interwoven just as the Métis sash. We are bound together through our cultures, our love, our security and our plights. Today I cried for the Jewish people and the victims of the Holocaust and our world. This wasn’t the first time. But once again, I was struck by profound emotion. When we talk of justice, our peoples and humanity, we need to consider and honour the struggles of other people. And it is so frustrating for people to compare their histories and contrast who are the most severely wounded. The Holocaust and other injustices threaten justice for us all.”

“I am grateful to The Asper Foundation for giving me the opportunity to attend this trip to Washington, D.C. I did some research on The Asper Foundation before coming here and was a little confused as to why they would invite Aboriginal youth and sponsor them for a weekend. I now understand that their reasoning is something many Aboriginal peoples have been wanting for a long time. Cross-Cultural Awareness.”
