



The Asper Foundation

Award-Winning Human Rights Program Reaches Record Number of 101 Canadian Communities

WINNIPEG, MB. – March 28, 2008 - Eighteen new schools and communities have joined one of Canada's most innovative human rights programs for young students. Strathmore High School, (Strathmore, AB), Norway House Cree Nation, MB (Kinosao Sipi Cree Nation), Cross Lake First Nation, MB (Pimicikamak First Nation), Opaskwayack Cree Nation, MB, Thompson, MB, Isaac Newton Junior High School (Winnipeg, MB), Kelvin High School (Winnipeg, MB), Collège Sturgeon Heights Collegiate (Winnipeg, MB), Herring Cove High School (Herring Cove, NS), Sir John A. Macdonald High School (Upper Tantallon, NS), Herdman Collegiate (Corner Brook, NL), Carbonear Collegiate (Carbonear, NL) and Beaconsfield Junior High School (St. John's, NL), will join 25 other schools and community organizations in The Asper Foundation's award-winning Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program in 2008. At the culmination of this year's program, almost 1,200 participants from 30 Canadian cities in nine provinces will travel to freedom memorials and the renowned U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC on five separate trips between April 6 and May 28, 2008. Since the 1997 inception of the program in Winnipeg, The Asper Foundation, in partnership with other community organizations, has funded over 6,000 program participants of many faiths and backgrounds in 101 cities and communities spanning 12 provinces and territories.

The program is aimed at promoting tolerance and sensitizing Canadian high school students to the consequences of racism. It deals with topics ranging from racism to genocide and its success in communities across Canada was the inspiration for the original vision of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. In 2004, the program received the Human Rights Award from the Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission "in recognition of (its) creative means of advancing and protecting human rights and working to address racism in our communities."

Mrs. Babs Asper, Chair of The Asper Foundation said, "This program is about transformation. Young people not only learn about the past, they are inspired by it to make change for the future. When they come to understand that heroes are often ordinary people whose actions have led to extraordinary results, they come to believe their actions matter. As a result, graduates of this program have been a driving force for change in their schools, in their communities and throughout the world."

Program students have commented, "This experience inspired me. I will stand strong for what I believe in and will take on the responsibility to educate other people in the future", "It taught me that we are all responsible to teach others about human rights", "It gave me a different view of the world", "As I speak to people now, I realize the true meaning and importance of bearing witness", "I am more willing to take action now instead of just talking about what should be done", "The program was one of the most influential things in my life" and "This program had a profound affect on me."

The program includes an 18-hour education program on human rights and the Holocaust with an added emphasis on American history, the civil rights movement and the current situation in the world today. The curriculum for the educational component of the program was developed specifically by human rights and Holocaust educators for The Asper Foundation. After the educational component is completed, students participate in a trip to Washington, D.C. where they spend several days at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and other important monuments relating to human rights and freedom. Students are also required to volunteer in their communities on public projects of their choosing when they return.

The last component of the program is an evening graduation ceremony held to present a Memorandum for Personal Responsibility to each student. This document was commissioned by The Asper Foundation specifically for this program and written by Dr. Israel Asper, Founder of the foundation. The Memorandum aims to provide each student with a sense of the importance that they participated in the program and to remind them that they have a personal responsibility for the world community. A significant portion of the costs of the program are borne by The Asper Foundation.

The Asper Foundation is currently spearheading the establishment of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg. The museum has made groundbreaking history, as it will be the largest human rights institution and centre for education in the world today.

For coverage of the program or more information, media are asked to contact Ms. Kim Jasper, 204-989-5525, e-mail kjasper@aspergroup.com or Mr. Jeffrey Morry, 204-989-5539, e-mail at jmorry@aspergroup.com. The on-ground Washington, D.C. contact for the May 18-21 and May 25-28 trips is Ms. Beth Shore at 204-771-2865. For more information on the program, visit www.humanrights.asperfoundation.com. For information on The Asper Foundation, visit www.asperfoundation.com. For information on the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, visit www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com.