



## THE ASPER FOUNDATION

### **Award-Winning Human Rights Program Reaches Record Number of 110 Canadian Communities and Goes Green**

**WINNIPEG, MB. – April 28, 2009** – One of Canada’s largest educational initiatives is proud to have reached over 7,000 high school students and chaperones of many faiths and backgrounds in 110 cities and communities spanning 12 provinces and territories. In 2009 alone, 36 schools and four community organizations are participating in The Asper Foundation’s award-winning Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program. At the culmination of this year’s program, over 1,100 high school students and chaperones from 30 cities in six provinces will travel to freedom memorials and the renowned US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC on five separate trips between May 3 and May 27. Since the 1997 inception of the program in Winnipeg, Manitoba, The Asper Foundation, in partnership with other community organizations, has funded the participation of high school students and their chaperones.

The program is also excited to be going green. With over 1,100 high school students and chaperones from across Canada travelling to Washington, DC each year, The Asper Foundation recognized the real need for the program to help alleviate the effects of its share of carbon dioxide emissions. This year will mark the first of annual donations that will be made to charitable organizations that plant and care for trees. A donation is being made to Tree Canada, a not-for-profit, charitable organization established in 1992 to plant trees for non-commercial purposes. Tree Canada is a leader in promoting the value of urban forests in Canada and has tree-planting sites in all 10 provinces. As well, a donation is being made to the Jewish National Fund of Canada’s Go Neutral program. Established in 1901, the Jewish National Fund is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that has helped capture approximately 110 million tons of carbon by planting more than 240 million trees in Israel and turning 250,000 acres of arid land into sustainable forests.

The Asper Foundation Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program is aimed at promoting understanding and sensitizing Canadian high school students to the consequences of racism. It deals with topics ranging from racism to genocide and its extraordinary 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” and The Asper Foundation received the 2008 New Brunswick Pioneer of Human Rights Award from the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission in recognition of “human rights pioneers for their historic contributions to the protection and promotion of human rights in Canada.”

Mrs. Babs Asper, Chair of The Asper Foundation said, “This program teaches young people that they can make a positive difference in the world. By learning about past human rights injustices and success stories, they learn about their personal responsibility to actively preserve human rights for all people today and in the future.”

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

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, DC where they spend several days at the US 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 Asper Foundation is the founding member of a consortium comprising private and public institutions that spearheaded the establishment of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights as a Canadian national Museum in March 2008. Construction has begun in Winnipeg, Manitoba and the opening is projected for 2012. The Museum has made groundbreaking history as it will be the largest human rights institution and centre for education in the world today. It will explore the subject of human rights and its purpose is to promote understanding, respect and to encourage reflection and dialogue.

**For coverage of the program or more information, media are asked to contact Mr. Jeffrey Morry, 204-989-5539, e-mail at [jmorry@aspergroup.com](mailto:jmorry@aspergroup.com) For more information on the program, visit [www.humanrights.asperfoundation.com](http://www.humanrights.asperfoundation.com). For information on The Asper Foundation, visit [www.asperfoundation.com](http://www.asperfoundation.com). For information on the Canadian Museum for Human Rights, visit [www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com](http://www.canadianmuseumforhumanrights.com) and [www.humanrightsmuseum.ca](http://www.humanrightsmuseum.ca).**