

EDUCATION: Holocaust Education Week remembers six million people killed by the Nazi regime

Students will learn lessons of Holocaust



HOWARD SHORE
Thornhill public school trustee proposed all York Region Schools observe Holocaust Education Week.

BY JENNIFER BROWN
Staff Writer

Public school students across the region will be learning lessons of the Holocaust at the end of this month, and educators say the morals to be gleaned are universal and applicable to today.

Last month, Thornhill Trustee Howard Shore proposed that all York Region schools observe Holocaust Education Week, to remember and honour the six million men, women and children killed by the Nazi regime and their collaborators.

The week was first designated by the Toronto Jewish Federation, but Shore said the York public board is the first to recognize the week.

"I'm really proud of our board for being the first public school board to recognize Holocaust Education Week," he said.

With fewer and fewer survivors of the Holocaust still alive to speak to students about what happened, Shore said it is important to explore other ways to educate young people about the Holocaust.

"We cannot afford to allow our students and young people to forgo the lessons of the Holocaust — the importance of diversity and the need for greater compassion and tolerance of

others, regardless of their ethnic background," he said.

York Region's separate school board has not made an official declaration of the week, but spokesperson Chris Cable said the board will provide teachers with resource materials on the Holocaust.

York public teachers will be encouraged to develop activities to educate and bring awareness of the Holocaust through plays, speakers or other presentations to students.

"This is a very emotional issue and it

is far more powerful than reading a chapter in a book," said Shore. "I've received a couple dozen calls from teachers across the region to say how much they appreciate that we are doing this."

Two years ago, two York Region teachers drew international attention for a unit they created to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to Grade 6 students. The unit, called These Shoes Could Be Yours, was designed by Barbara Heffler and Pauline Beder.

"Teachers are already doing things in terms of student curriculum and this dovetails on that. But teachers say they are enormously appreciative that we're recognizing this week," said Shore.

The unit introduces the concept that standing up for someone is the first step in preventing widespread hatred.

Holocaust Education Week will follow First Nations Awareness Week, which runs from Oct. 18 to 23, wrapping up with a pow-wow at Sutton District High School Oct. 23.

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