



Bus stop: Durham gets a lesson in tolerance

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A mobile history classroom that made a recent stop in Durham Region comes at a perfect time as communities continue to promote tolerance and diversity.

The unique Tour for Humanity bus is a classroom-on-wheels and is currently touring Ontario to examine the consequences of hate and intolerance. It stopped briefly in Durham this week at regional government headquarters in Whitby and features 30 seats for ‘students’ of history to learn about specific periods in history.

Created by the Simon Wiesenthal Centre for Holocaust Studies, the Tour for Humanity bus includes different presentations for interested participants. One focuses on Canadian history as it relates to diversity, covering such historical topics as Aboriginal residential schools, and the government-sanctioned treatment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War.

A separate presentation covers the Holocaust and other genocides, along with profiles on such historical figures as Martin Luther King, Helen Keller and Simon Wiesenthal, a survivor of the Jewish concentration camps who spent his life after the war documenting Nazi atrocities and pursuing those who engineered the Holocaust.

For officials at the Region, the tour bus message is extremely timely as government works to promote immigrant settlement and attract skilled foreign workers to Durham.

Avi Benol, president and CEO of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, says Canada is perceived as “a beacon of good” but notes that education and awareness about what is happening in other parts of the world is critical to informing Canadians. There is the current civil war that has displaced one million in Syria and fresh reports of genocide in Darfur. Closer to home, Canadians will remember the violence in Rwanda in 1993 when Romeo Dallaire led a peacekeeping force that was ill-prepared and unsupported by its United Nations political masters and which led to genocide.

The Tour for Humanity, then, serves to raise awareness about what is happening elsewhere right now, but what must also resonate is the examination of our own national history as it relates to the themes of tolerance. And, as Durham chairman Roger Anderson pointed out at this week's presentation, it's important for us to understand mistakes of the past so they are not repeated.

Canada may well be a beacon of good to others and other nations, but educational opportunities such as these encourage us to be vigilant in our efforts to embrace diversity.

To book the bus go to www.tourforhumanity.com