

Education

Asper International Holocaust Studies

■ The Asper International Holocaust Studies Program at the International School for Holocaust Studies is focused on raising awareness and facilitating key outreach in Holocaust education around the world. The program, first conceived by Winnipeg philanthropists Israel (Izzy) and Babs Asper z"l, was designed to educate the wider public about the events of the Holocaust through various multilevel educational initiatives.

The Asper Foundation, established in 1983 and today led by the next generation of David, Gail and Leonard Asper, remains committed to undertaking and developing major initiatives in the areas of Jewish charity as well as culture, education, community development and human rights locally, nationally and internationally.

The Asper International Holocaust Studies Program provides targeted programming in areas that were identified by Yad Vashem experts. These include comprehensive professional development programs, ongoing support of high-level international outreach and promoting Holocaust awareness in the public sphere through expert engagement in international organizations such as the United Nations, UNESCO and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

The Asper Foundation sought to develop a grassroots-driven program in close conjunction with Yad Vashem's pedagogical experts, which



■ Moses Levy, Executive Director of The Asper Foundation, introducing the Closing Session in Memory of Izzy Asper at the Yad Vashem International Educators' Conference, 2010

has resulted in a diverse range of educational and outreach initiatives spanning 15 successful years. "For more than six decades, the devoted, principled leadership of the Asper family – in Canada, Israel and elsewhere – as well as their extraordinary generosity, has been exemplary and inspiring," comments Avner Shalev, Chairman of the Yad Vashem Directorate. "Their consistent commitment to promoting Holocaust awareness is remarkable

and is tangible not only at Yad Vashem, but also in myriad additional frameworks that they foster in Canada, including the Canadian Museum for Human Rights. They are cherished partners in the realization of Yad Vashem's mission."

The Asper Program is also unique in that regular board meetings are held on Yad Vashem's Jerusalem campus, allowing the committed team of trustees to remain closely involved with

Program Forges Ahead

ongoing content development. Additionally, The Asper Foundation Closing Session of each biennial international conference traditionally features world-renowned figures presenting or lecturing to an audience of hundreds from all over the globe. In recent years, the session has been dedicated to the memory of the program



■ Teachers from five continents participating in a workshop at an International Educators' Conference, sponsored by The Asper Foundation

founders. As such, each conference sees active and meaningful participation on the part of Asper Foundation representatives. To be afforded the opportunity to meet with the beneficiaries of the programming under their auspices remains a key tenet of the ethos of the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program.

Other groundbreaking projects under the Asper banner in the past decade have included annual teacher training programs, an International Forum for educators, the first-ever Yad Vashem Graduate Training Seminar for Canadian Educators in Toronto and a pilot seminar at Yad Vashem for Latin-American educational policy makers in conjunction with UNESCO. The "Keeping the Memory Alive" International Poster Design Competition, sponsored by The Asper Foundation in 2013, was officially launched by then-Canadian

Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism Jason Kenney and displayed in some 70 countries worldwide.

David Asper, Chair of The Asper Foundation, sees the need today more than ever for the program and echoed the words of his father Israel, who, in 2002, said: "The Asper Foundation is proud to



■ Izzy and Babs Asper z"l laying a wreath at Yad Vashem, 2002

play an integral role in supporting Yad Vashem, a world-renowned institution respected not only for commemorating the victims of the Holocaust, but also for imparting the lessons of the Holocaust and educating people worldwide to help ensure that the rally cry 'Never Again' refers not only to Jews but to all peoples." David notes that, "My father's thoughts perfectly capture our sentiments today and in 2016 we are proud to see that Yad Vashem continues to very successfully deliver on the objectives established for this program."

In view of the current challenges in Holocaust education and rising antisemitism in public discourse around the world, the Asper International Holocaust Studies Program will remain committed, together with Yad Vashem, to producing innovative programming to inspire and engage participants the world over.