

Battling all racism

Schools offer two ways to inform students

If racism could be eliminated in a day, it would perhaps be March 21. That is the officially designated international day to repudiate racial biases, and it was an active one in the local community.

UNBC and CNC presented displays to the public each conveying a brawny message of racial tolerance, although each took a radically different form. One used living beings to demonstrate racial solidarity, the other used the long-time dead to do the same.

The First Nations Centre at the college called upon their artisans to speak to passersby with their actions. Aboriginal artists, carvers and painters and even the rare birch bark biters, were on-hand to personally create art and at the same time create a non-verbal dialogue about human equality.

The library at the university, meanwhile, unveiled a display of memorabilia, photos, written testimonials, scrap books and other documentation of the World War II holocaust, all compiled by Jewish survivors.

Stephanie Curtis, the diversity project co-ordinator for both schools, helped establish the events for the International Day for the Elimination of Racism. She explains the goals of these two approaches.

"The exhibit at UNBC is going to try to relate issues of cultural genocide. It is drawing a parallel between what happened in the Holocaust back then and what is happening now in places like



A yellow cedar mask carved by Dwayne Williers at CNC on Tuesday.

JOHN MCKENZIE/FREE PRESS

Rwanda and Bosnia. The whole point of bringing up the Holocaust is to demonstrate and remind people that sure, that was in the past, but it happens in today's society. It goes on today.

"The one at the college was suggested by the First Nations Centre. Instead of going out of town for resources, we have stayed in town and it looks at the native culture and talent from right here in PG area. All the artists are local, it is made here, it can be purchased here, it shows what is being done here. I think it defeats the

stereotypes, all the negative things you hear about native people. It also breaks down barriers because people tend to speak to the artists if they are there, so it makes a personal connection."

The artists were only present at CNC for the day, but their work is available at art galleries all over the city. The collection of Jewish concentration camp experiences is an on-going exhibition at the UNBC library made available by the Vancouver Holocaust Centre for the next eight weeks. The public is encouraged to visit.

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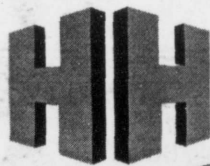
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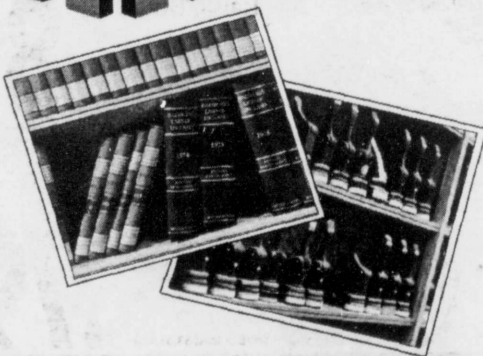


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