

27 AUG 2016 - 7:30PM

Victorian school collects buttons to honour children killed during the Holocaust



IMAGE

VIDEO

AUDIO

Students at a Jewish school in Melbourne are on a mission to collect 1.5 million buttons to commemorate the children who perished during the Holocaust.

In an effort to honour the 1.5 million children who died during the the Holocaust, students at Bialik College in Melbourne decided to collect buttons.

With more than a million buttons already donated, the school is hoping to reach its target by the end of the year, appealing for another 500,000 to be donated.

Collection boxes have been placed at various businesses around Melbourne and donations have come from around the country and as far as New Zealand.

Coordinator of The Button Project, Dalia Gurfinkel, said buttons were chosen as the symbolic object to collect by a group of students when the idea was first born almost a decade ago.

"They unite, just like you wear buttons on a shirt that unites one side of a shirt to the other, children unite the family, they come in different shapes and different sizes just like children do," Ms Gurfinkel said.



Buttons upon buttons (SBS)

The buttons appear to have taken on a personal meaning to many of the students, including 10-year-old Mia Rom, who said: "I think of all the kids that were killed in the Holocaust and all of the memories. I think of them and actually feel like I'm one of them."

Principal of the school, Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, said: "Everybody has kind of got involved in flooding us with buttons."

"And the stories that have come out from those small gifts of buttons: my grandmother had these from the war, my uncle was a collector," he added.

Comprehending the mass loss of life

Vivianne Spiegel, who is originally from France, was lucky enough to survive the Holocaust when so many other children didn't.

In 1942, she was sent with her younger siblings to be hidden on a farm in France.

"My mum realised that if she wanted to save her three children she had to have the strength to separate from us," she said.

Ms Spiegel credited the Button Project for helping students comprehend the mass loss the life.

"The Button Project is so much more visual and so much more effective than just being quoted a number," said Vivianne.