

Goodall inspires students to pursue their dreams

Young audience convinced they can make a difference

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World renowned primatologist Jane Goodall's message is one that may not inspire immediate optimism.

Concerned with massive deforestation that is threatening African chimpanzee populations and the cruel for-profit hunting of chimps, Goodall's issues are immediate and daunting.

But the high school students who listened to her Saturday morning at West Island College in Calgary said they left feeling they too could make a difference.

Grade 7 student Alex Coffield, 12, said she really enjoyed Goodall's speech.

"It was really good. It shows us to pursue what we want. If we want something, we should go for it."

Coffield, who said she is interested in nature photography and science, said she and other students learned about Goodall's career before the visit.

"They're pretty excited about it knowing all the stuff she's done," she said.

Social studies and psychology teacher Lynne Rousom Lee said students see Goodall as an inspirational figure.

"I know (Friday) many of the kids went to listen to her at the Jack Singer and the buzz, in my classroom at any rate near the end of the day, it was palpable. They were just that excited about being able to go listen to her.

"There's a tremendous respect for her," she said.

Many students feel she is a guiding light on taking difficult issues and giving people hope that they can make a difference, Rousom Lee said.

"It really inspires many of them."

Goodall, who usually tries to speak to children when she visits a city, told the Herald she too took something from the Alberta visit.

"I've spent half my life dealing with children of all ages -- it's indeed what gives me the energy to carry on," Goodall said.

"You just hope that you provide the right mixture of things that are going wrong, with the optimism that these things can be put right," Goodall said.



CREDIT: Della Rollins, Calgary Herald
Primatologist and environmentalist Jane Goodall poses with her stuffed monkey, Mr. H., after a talk in Calgary.

She was also surprised to learn on her trip about Calgary's explosive growth.

"I learned that it's a very rapidly growing population and city, second in the world for making a heavy ecological footprint -- probably not a good thing to be doing," Goodall said.

Banff resident Cody Erickson, 16, a Grade 11 student from Banff Community High School, travelled to Calgary for the opportunity to hear Goodall.

"I think it's interesting that she's so serious about conservation and so true to the things she's done for animals and is trying to do for the future and for us."

He was drawn to the event because he likes conservation and nature.

"I just enjoy the natural world and think we need to keep most of the nature we do have left, the resources, water and land, because we've used so much of it and it's become such a problem."

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