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Staff Sgt. Bob Christmas, 49, of the Winnipeg Police Service, was among 13 graduate and undergraduate students from Winnipeg who recently visited the African nation learn to learn about a society living in the shadow of apartheid and how reconciliation is a crucial part of the healing process.

The University of Winnipeg Global College initiated the course, which included students from the University of Manitoba. The contingent was joined by six South African students, as the program is offered in partnership with the Cornerstone Institute in Cape Town.

Apartheid was a system of legal segregation enforced by the nation's National Party government from 1948 to 1994.

Bourrier has a personal connection to South Africa, as his mother left there as a teenager with her family to escape the sanctions of apartheid.

"The main reason my grandparents decided to come to Canada was because they were classified as coloured," said Bourrier, 20, who hopes to pursue a legal career in human rights or international law.

Bourrier, who lives in Sturgeon Creek, said the trip was a chance to share ideas and experiences — and return home with a new perspective.

"We met with different speakers and went to a lot of places with historic meaning. I came back with a real desire to keep learning. Even though apartheid ended, it's still eye-opening looking at the world so differently," Bourrier said.

"Understanding history and different events can make you more critical, in terms of your thinking."

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