



374 years ago today:

## **THREE AUGUSTINIAN SISTERS ARRIVE IN QUEBEC AND FOUND THE FIRST HOSPITAL ON THE CONTINENT NORTH OF MEXICO**

**Quebec, August 1, 2013** – The *Fiducie du patrimoine culturel des Augustines* wishes to recognize this historic day that commemorates the arrival of three young Augustinian Sisters who came to Quebec from Dieppe, France, to found the first hospital on the continent north of Mexico: *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec*.

### *Their History*

On August 1, 1639, Marie Guenet de Saint-Ignace, Marie Forestier de Saint-Bonaventure and Anne Le Cointre de Saint-Bernard arrive in Quebec after three months at sea. At the request of the Duchess of Aiguillon, they establish a hospital to care for the aboriginal peoples and the few European settlers in New France. *L'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec* thus becomes the first hospital on the continent north of Mexico.

The Augustinian Sisters laid the foundations of Quebec's healthcare system in founding 12 monastery-hospitals (*Hôtel-Dieu de Québec* (1639), *Hôpital Général de Québec* (1693), *Hôtel-Dieu du Sacré-Cœur de Québec* (1873), *Hôtel-Dieu de Chicoutimi* (1884), *Hôtel-Dieu de Lévis* (1892), *Hôtel-Dieu de Roberval* (1918), *Hôtel-Dieu de Gaspé* (1926), *Hôtel-Dieu de Saint-Georges-de-Beauce* (1949), *Hôtel-Dieu de Montmagny* (1951), *Hôtel-Dieu d'Alma* (1954), *Hôtel-Dieu de Dolbeau* (1955), *Hôtel-Dieu de Jonquière* (1955)). They also actively participated in the system as the owners and managers of hospitals and as nurses and pharmacists. In so doing, they also contributed significantly to the economic development of the regions where they settled and worked with great devotion.

### *Present-Day Realities*

All of the hospitals founded by the Augustinian Sisters have been integrated into Quebec's public healthcare system and are still in operation. Six of the adjoining monasteries are still active (the monasteries of *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Québec* (1639), *l'Hôpital Général de Québec* (1693), *l'Hôtel-Dieu du Sacré-Cœur de Québec* (1873), *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Chicoutimi* (1884), *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Roberval* (1918), *l'Hôtel-Dieu de Dolbeau* (1955)). The remaining six have been converted to serve other purposes.

The Order of the Augustinian Sisters of the Mercy of Jesus of Quebec once had nearly 800 members. Today, 135 sisters remain. Faced with declining numbers and an aging community, the Augustinian Sisters decided to entrust the safeguard

of their cultural heritage to the population by creating a Trust for that expressed public purpose.

“August 1 is even more significant this year as we have begun major restoration work to the *Hôtel-Dieu de Québec* monastery. When the work is completed in 2015, the project **Le Monastère des Augustines** will witness to the truly exceptional contribution that the Augustinian Sisters have made to our society socially, spiritually and culturally speaking”, said Bernard Cliche, Chair of the Board of Directors of the Fiducie.

*The mission of La Fiducie du patrimoine culturel des Augustines is to preserve and share the heritage and memory of the Augustinian Sisters of Quebec for the benefit of the entire population and for generations to come.*

*Le Monastère des Augustines grew out of the Augustinian Sisters' will to entrust their invaluable heritage that has accumulated since 1639 to the people of Quebec. More than 40 000 artefacts and 1 linear km of archives and old books will be gathered together at the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec monastery and will be accessible to the public in 2015. Cutting-edge, contemporary programming that promotes both culture and the concept of total health will respond to the needs of today's people for renewal on many levels. Designed in an integrative fashion, l'Hôtellerie, le Musée and les Archives will all reinforce the unique experience of the new facility.*

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**SOURCE: La Fiducie du patrimoine culturel des Augustines**

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