

Grey Nuns of Montréal
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary
Sisters of the Savior
Faithful Companions of Jesus
Franciscan Missionaries of Marie
Misericordia Sisters
Sisters of St. Joseph oh St. Hyacinthe
School Sisters of Notre Dame
Sisters of Providence
Sisters of Holy Cross
Missionary Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart
and Mary Immaculate
Filles de la Croix de St-André
Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate
Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions
Sœurs Dominicaines de l'Enfant Jésus
Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
Carmelite Sisters
Sisters of the Good Shepherd
Little Sisters of the Holy Family
Sisters of St. Benedict
Sœurs de la Charité (Sœurs Grises)
St. Hyacinthe
Ursulines Sisters of Tildonck
Congregation of Our Lady of Sion
Sisters of the Presentation of Mary
Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto
Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul
Sisters of Service
Petites Missionnaires
de St. Joseph d'Otterburne
Sisters of Charity of Halifax
Felician Sisters of Buffalo
Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus
Sœurs de Sainte-Marthe de Saint-Hyacinthe
Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross
Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception
Servantes de Marie (ND du St Rosaire)
Sisters of St. Joseph (Bourg)
Groupe Monde et Espérance
Missionary Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart
and of Mary Immaculate
Sisters of Holy Cross
Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa)
Sisters of the Child Jesus
Sisters of Mission Service
Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus
Daughters of Wisdom
Missionary Apostles of Christ in the Eucharist
Sisters of Providence (Kingston)
Ursuline Sisters of Prelate
Pallotine Sisters of the Society
of the Catholic Apostolate

Tribute to the Catholic Women Religious Congregations

Legacy of **Care, Courage
& Compassion**





WOMEN OF COURAGE AND ACTION

Some 50 congregations of Catholic women religious have contributed in a myriad of ways to the history of Manitoba, a province that would not be the same today without their courage and action.

The Sisters of Charity of Montreal or the “Grey Nuns” as they are more commonly known, came to Manitoba in 1844. They are the first of roughly 50 congregations of Catholic women religious who have worked in and from the province. Some stayed for more than 170 years, while others were only here for a short while, but all had an impact and helped create a better society.

While the Sisters play a key role in serving the various needs of the community in parishes and orphanages, tending to the poor and needy, “the two greatest action areas of Manitoba’s communities of women religious have been healthcare and education,” says Carole Boily, an archivist specializing in women religious congregations.

When they arrived in Manitoba with an education mission, the Grey Nuns saw that there were significant health needs. Together with the Misericordia Sisters, who arrived in 1898, they built homes and hospitals that still care for the sick and the elderly today. The Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, or SNJM, took over as educators.

But whether it was healthcare or education, both action areas stemmed from the same desire to “serve those most in need,” says Carole Boily. “It was the starting port for most of the religious communities; the root of it all. Their mission is to help the poorest either through education aimed at is giving them a better chance in the future or through healthcare.”

Social action also has an important place in the Sisters’ contribution to Manitoba. “The Sisters have always been open to helping everyone, including those who are unable to pay,” says the archivist. “They all made many home visits. People have relied a great deal on them for help.”

Serving a group

Some religious congregations sought to meet the needs of specific ethnic groups. “Such was the case, for example, of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, or SSMI, who work with the Ukrainian community, or the Ursuline Sisters of Tildonck and the Benedictine Sisters who have helped Manitoba’s Belgian and Polish immigrants,” says Carole Boily.

“Similarly, several congregations send their Sisters abroad to meet the needs of people in other countries,” she adds. “The missionary outreach of the women religious from Manitoba is was practically global.”

The archivist goes on to say that “many Manitoba congregations were founded elsewhere, so they already had a connection with a foreign country or specific community.”

The power of prayer

Less present on the ground but equally important and supported by the community, some congregations of Catholic women religious such as the Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood or the Carmelite Sisters fulfilled their mission through contemplation.

“The conventions of each congregation always set aside time for prayer and contemplation,” says Carole Boily. “Sometimes it is in addition to their mission work, while for others praying IS their mission.”

“People were very supportive of the contemplative communities. The Sisters received donations in exchange for specific prayers. They brought great comfort to the people through their prayers, as intermediaries to God,” Boily says.

Despite the dwindling numbers, their legacy lives on

Today, there are fewer and fewer women religious in Manitoba, and each congregation is rapidly shrinking due to the increasing average age of the sisters. However, there are still many women religous who are actively involved such as the Sisters of Charity, the SNJM, the SSMI and the Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus while others volunteer, support vulnerable communities and sit on boards of directors.

“Women today have many more career options than they did in the last century, when they could primarily choose to be mothers, teachers, nurses or women religious,” says Carole Boily. “A hundred years ago, a Sister had a higher level of education and a more diverse career than other women.”

Nevertheless, the archivist does not see Manitoba’s community of women religious disappearing altogether. “The future of these religious orders could be abroad,” she says, or those from abroad are immigrating here. “The congregations working overseas as missionaries have often been the most successful in recruiting new Sisters.”

“Just as we are seeing more African priests coming to work in Canada, the face of Manitoba’s women religious, like the clergy, is changing.”

But whatever the future has in store, the 50 or so congregations of women religious that have been in Manitoba since 1844 will leave their mark for a long time to come. Many of the English- and French-language institutions that they established, such as schools, hospitals and community centres, still exist today.

“Everyone who has known the Sisters talks about their fond memories. These women have always connected with people, from children to seniors, and those memories of human warmth will continue to be passed on in families for a long time. The Sisters’ role in Manitoba communities will not soon be forgotten,” concludes Carole Boily.

This is a listing of where the Catholic Women Religious have served in Manitoba, as well as the date of arrival of each congregation in Manitoba.

Grey Nuns of Montréal	1844
Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary	1874
Sisters of the Savior	1895
Faithful Companions of Jesus	1883
Franciscan Missionaries of Marie	1897
Misericordia Sisters	1898
Sisters of St. Joseph oh St. Hyacinthe	1901
School Sisters of Notre Dame	1902
Sisters of Providence	1903
Sisters of Holy Cross	1904
Missionary Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate	1904
Filles de la Croix de St-André	1905
Sisters of the Immaculate Conception	1905
Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculatee	1905
Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions	1898
Sœurs Dominicaines de l’Enfant Jésus	1910
Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd	1911
Carmelite Sisters	1911
Sisters of the Good Shepherd	1911
Little Sisters of the Holy Family	1912
Sisters of St. Benedict	1903
Sœurs de la Charité (Sœurs Grises) St. Hyacinthe	1912
Ursulines Sisters of Tildonck	1914

Congregation of Our Lady of Sion	1914
Sisters of the Presentation of Mary	1918
Sisters Adorers of the Precious Blood	1918
Sisters of St. Joseph of Toronto	1919
Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul	1923
Sisters of Service	1924
Petites Missionnaires de St. Joseph d’Otterburne	1925
Sisters of Charity of Halifax	1929
Felician Sisters of Buffalo	1935
Society of the Sacred Heart of Jesus	1935
Sœurs de Sainte-Marthe de Saint-Hyacinthe	1935
Sisters of Our Lady of the Cross	1936
Sisters of Charity of the Immaculate Conception	1938
Servantes de Marie (ND du St Rosaire)	1938
Sisters of St. Joseph (Bourg)	1941
Groupe Monde et Espérance	1960
Missionary Oblate Sisters of the Sacred Heart and of Mary Immaculate	1962
Faithful Companions of Jesus	1983
Missionaries of Charity (Mother Teresa)	1984
Sisters of the Child Jesus	1986
Sisters of Mission Service	1996
Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus	2006
Daughters of Wisdom	2005

Missionary Apostles of Christ in the Eucharist	TBD
Sisters of Providence (Kingston)	TBD
Ursuline Sisters of Prelate	1912
Pallotine Sisters of the Society of the Catholic Apostolate	TBD





“WHEN THEY SAW THE HEALTHCARE NEEDS, THEY SET ABOUT TAKING CARE OF THEM.”

Several congregations of Manitoba women religious were pioneers in improving the province’s healthcare system, following in the footsteps of the first Grey Nuns who arrived in 1844.

“When the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, the Grey Nuns, came to Manitoba in 1844, they had been sent with a mission targeting education and youth,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot, coordinator of the Grey Nuns of Manitoba. “However, when they got here, they saw that there were healthcare needs, and they set about taking care of them.”

“These women created the St. Joseph Residence, a long-term care home for seniors,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot.

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception worked with seniors in remote Manitoba communities like Dauphin, while the Grey Nuns were present in Ste. Rose-du-Lac, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Other religious congregations targeted the healthcare needs of specific communities, such as the Sisters Servants of Marie Immaculate, whose mission was to serve the Ukrainian Catholic community.

“The most important thing for those Sisters was to care for the poor, who were often sick and aging,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot. “The government did not take them into account. Without the congregations of women religious, Manitoba’s healthcare system would have developed much more slowly, at the expense of those who needed it most.”

Lastly, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd, who came to Manitoba in 1911, soon established Marymound, an organization that continues to work with youth facing challenges in their lives, including mental health issues, addiction and psychological trauma.

Mental health has always been a key part of the work of the women religious congregations. For instance, in 1974, the Grey Nuns opened St. Amant for people with mental disabilities, and Sara Riel in 1978 for people with psychological issues.

“In the past, people with mental health concerns were placed and left in institutions. When they left, they were released into the community without anyone to take care of them,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot. “That’s why Sara Riel was created. It was vital to offer these people a rehabilitation period between leaving the hospital and re-entering the community.”

Today, the congregations of women religious are much less active in healthcare due to their advanced age. In 2000, the Grey Nuns transferred the administration to the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba (CHCM), including their works and those of other women’s congregations, to laypeople.

However, there are still many Sisters in the various congregations who are involved in a healthcare mission and who “continue to visit the sick in hospitals and seniors in homes,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot.

Some of the healthcare institutions created in Manitoba by congregations of women religious that are still active today include St. Boniface and Misericordia Hospitals and the Winnipegosis and District Health Centre for the sick, St. Amant and Sara Riel for people with mental health issues, St. Joseph Residence and Actionmarguerite St. Boniface and St. Vital for seniors, and Marymound for youth, among several others.

With a sister nurse who was among the four first Sisters arriving from Montreal in 1844, the Grey Nuns of Manitoba lost no time in delivering healthcare, taking elderly people in need of care into their own residence, and visiting the sick.

In 1854, a new and bigger Provincial Grey Nuns House was built to meet the growing need, as the Sisters were now taking in the sick as well as the elderly.

Later, in 1871, the Grey Nuns founded a four-bed hospital – the first one in the Red River Settlement - separate from their convent. It would later become the St. Boniface Hospital. In 1931, they also created a St. Boniface sanatorium for people with tuberculosis.

“The arrival of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) in 1874 was a great help to the Grey Nuns in their healthcare

mission,” says Sr. Juliette Thévenot. “The SNJM Sisters took over education, which allowed the Grey Nuns to focus more on healthcare and the elderly.”

Likewise, the Misericordia Sisters who arrived in Winnipeg in 1898 were behind the establishment of the Misericordia General Hospital. They started out working with single young mothers and their babies and went on to expand their services to meet a range of needs in the community. Their establishment continued to grow and has become the present-day Misericordia Health Centre.

The Benedictine Sisters, who came to Manitoba in 1903, also “had a healthcare mission,” adds Sr. Juliette Thévenot. “They cared for the sick and the elderly in areas where there was no Grey Nuns presence,” such as Arborg or the Winnipegosis-Mossey area.



Sr. Juliette Thévenot
Grey Nuns of Montreal

A PASSION FOR HELPING PEOPLE

A member of the Sisters of the Saviour congregation, Sr. Denise Jubinville worked for more than a dozen years with the sick and seniors in homes.

"If you combine all of my experience, I worked for around 12 years in the healthcare field," says Sr. Denise Jubinville of the Sisters of the Saviour congregation. "And I have no regrets! I really loved being able to help people."

Sr. Denise Jubinville's interest in healthcare developed due to circumstances. It was when she was doing the bookkeeping at the Notre Dame Hospital in Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes and helping patients fill out their admission papers in the 1950s that she began to take an interest in them and their health.

"I therefore asked my congregation for permission to take a nursing course," she remembers. "I took that course at St. Boniface Hospital from 1956 to 1958. My congregation then suggested that I also take a one-year hospital administration course so that I could better serve the Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes Hospital."

Sr. Denise Jubinville ended up not returning to the Notre-Dame Hospital, but was sent to the Foyer Notre-Dame personal care home that had just opened and where she would stay until 1967. "I managed that home with 48 senior residents and was also the head nurse," she says. "I was very busy, and I was the only one familiar with the medications! However, the seniors living in the home at that time were not as ill as today's residents."

Sr. Denise Jubinville rekindled her passion for healthcare in 1977, when her congregation sent her to Ottawa to take a pastoral course in caring for the sick.

"I went on to be the director and healthcare supervisor at the Foyer du Dr. Gendreau home in Ste. Rose-du-Lac," she continues. "If residents were sick, I had to make the decision about whether to send them to the hospital."

The Sister of the Saviour also took her healthcare mission abroad, to Haiti, working with the very poor.

"I was in Haiti from 1982 to 1987," she says. "I worked mostly as a nurse, first at the Hospital of the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King, and then at the Foyer de Charité Les Cayes charity home. It was a very poor community. We often dealt with seniors who had been picked up on the streets with no one to take care of them."

"Haiti was the most powerful experience of my life," says Sr. Jubinville. "Especially when the Foyer was flooded and we had to get the 120 or so senior residents out and take them to the highest hill; I then had to wade through the water to get the trays of medicine for them!"

Those poor people who had nothing were so grateful for everything that we did for them, it was incredible. Never before have I seen such gratitude," she says.



Sr. Denise Jubinville
Sister of the Saviour

TREATING THE WHOLE PERSON, LIKE THE SISTERS

While St. Boniface Hospital's capacity has grown more than one hundred-fold since its creation in 1871, it has remained true to the original mission and vision of the Grey Nuns.

The first hospital in Western Canada and Manitoba's second-largest tertiary care hospital, St. Boniface Hospital (SBH), built by the Grey Nuns, has gone from four beds in 1871 to 554 beds and 78 bassinets today. In 2014-2015, the hospital admitted some 22,000 inpatients and had 122,000 outpatients from across the province.

While SBH has grown considerably over the decades, passing from the hands of the Grey Nuns to a lay administrator in 1969, it has always reflected the original mission and vision given to it by the nuns.

"Remembering where we come from is important to us, and we always remind new employees about this," says H  l  ne Vrignon, Director, Corporate Affairs and Communications.

"Today, as in the days of the Grey Nuns, the patients are central to everything we do and in all the decisions we make," she says. "They aren't just a number; they are human beings who must be respected as a whole person, the way the Sisters did."

"SBH also has a pastoral care team of some fifteen chaplains from various cultures, "offering emotional, spiritual and physical care to each one of our patients," says Ms. Vrignon. "Typically, hospitals only have one or two pastoral care workers, not 15! What's more, we have an art gallery and a music at bedside program to soothe the whole being," she adds. "We were the first hospital in Manitoba to put such a program in place, in 2001."

The Lean program for improving patient care that SBH introduced in 2011 is another excellent illustration of this legacy. "Lean is aimed at treating the patient more effectively and quickly, with better care, and using our human and financial resources to the best of our ability; to be there when and where there is a



H  l  ne Vrignon

need," says Ms. Vrignon. Communication between staff, patients and families is therefore essential at all levels at SBH.

SBH, which has never moved from its original 1871 location, has built a solid reputation for its Mother Child Unit, with some 5,800 annual births, and for its cardiology expertise.

"We head up the cardiology program for all of Manitoba at SBH, and performed our first cardiac surgery here in 1959," says the Corporate Affairs and Communications Director.

The bilingual hospital employs 3,800 staff and 400 physicians, and has around 400 volunteers.

SISTERS' REFLECTIONS

"Do you remember how excited you were about leaving for Guatemala in 1974? And two years later how disappointed you were when an earthquake left you with rheumatoid arthritis that forced you to return to Toronto for five months of rest and treatment? One day, a friend's invitation over lunch brought light and hope into the darkness.

"How would you like to come to Transcona and live at l'Arche?" You wondered what you could do at l'Arche while you were still suffering and needed to heal. Can you still see the stone that Marie took out of her pocket, which read COME AND SEE?

You were welcomed by the people of l'Arche at Rosseau Court and you soon learned about the home's history. Looking back, I want to tell you how grateful I am for the reception, prayers, healing and joy I experienced at l'Arche. The people in that community taught me about the importance and the gift of being sensitive to others, of listening and of non-verbal communication. They are a shining example that "it's who you are and not what you do that matters."

Betty Lou Knox, CSJ
Sisters of St. Joseph, Toronto

"Picture your life as a three-dimensional tapestry. You will discover that your life will be woven by three significant threads: God, yourself, and others. Each thread will be richly textured, with multicolored variations while interweaving intricate designs in your life. Each thread will form patterns which will influence the ever-changing design. Sometimes the threads will seem thin and delicate; sometimes they will be thick and coarse in texture. Still other times, they will tire you and you will feel frustrated, weary and disillusioned. At other times, you will experience delight and excitement at how the design looks. Sometimes your stitches will seem confused – at times even knotted. Then there will be times when you want to quit.

But trust the process. To your amazement, God cherishes the work and always lovingly superimposes His gentle original purpose and Plan, redirecting the threads to safeguard the beauty you are."

Theresa Matwe, SSMI
Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate

"If you feel the call to do something important from deep within, to choose your profession or vocation, and you believe you have the necessary abilities, take that step forward and continue along your path even if there are those around you who try to talk you out of it. Trust in yourself and trust in God who Loves you and is always with you. You'll see, you can succeed and be happy.

There will be wonderful surprises at different stages in your life. There also be disappointments. Leave those behind you and go where your life is leading you.

In religious life, you are invited to respond not only to that first call from the Lord but to all the others along the way. Some are easy, while others require greater submission, and you will answer with faith. In teaching, you go where your community sends you, and then you work in an area where you never thought you would serve. You love your sick Sisters and they awaken your compassion."

Laura Gosselin, SNJM
Sister of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary

"When I was 13, I used to go to visit Jesus in the convent chapel. There, I basked in the peace, joy, and happiness of being loved by my Saviour. Then one day, He spoke to my heart: "Yvonne, I have chosen you. I am setting you aside... I am keeping you... I am inviting you to give yourself to me. Come with me so that together we can build my Father's Kingdom. Come, my beloved, take the Good News to all those poor who are thirsting for love." Those words touched me deeply and are still with me today..."

Yvonne Jamault, SDS
Sisters of the Saviour

"Over fifty years ago, I felt a call to religious life for about four years before finally saying yes to God. I questioned God, 'Why me? Why not someone else?'. After much prayer and struggle a thought came to my mind. "Why not me? I will try."

Marie Baker, OSB
Sisters of St. Benedict

"When I was about 12 years old, a nun, Sister Gabrielle-Marie, saw that I had a talent for music and gave me organ lessons so that I could accompany the church and convent choirs. I admire her patience because I was so mischievous! Sometimes, I did not show up for lessons or practices, preferring to spend time with my girlfriends.

I think that she already saw a possible religious vocation in me. After I retired from teaching, I was given the mission of caring for refugees. On behalf of the Daughters of the Cross, I sponsored hundreds of refugees, providing guidance to many, helping them adapt to their new country. I received so much from them, as well: openness to and knowledge of other cultures and close bonds of friendship. I am still in touch with many of them. I've become their friend, their mother, even their grandmother! I strongly believe that that is part of the hundredfold return that Jesus promises, and I give thanks for it."

Eliane Lagasse, FDLC
Daughters of the Cross

"I entered the Good Shepherd to respond to the call of Jesus who chose to image himself as the Good Shepherd, and to live by the singleness of purpose: to care for the lost, wandering, and wounded people. During my sixty years of service with the Good Shepherd, I have served the congregation from coast to coast. I have received many blessings. Over three hundred children have been placed directly in the units under my care. Today, many of these children, now grandmothers, keep in touch to share their memories and life experiences."

Florence McFadden, RGS
Sisters of the Good Shepherd

"I asked to go to Peru when I was 54. I was told that being a missionary is a very hard life but that I could go. I wanted to learn and receive. Filled with joy, peace and serenity, I was keen to help people "know and love Jesus Christ." I will never forget my impression of the sea – the Pacific Ocean spoke to me of God's power and greatness. The mountains and seaports once again reminded me of Jesus in his public life. I saw the face of God's tenderness in all of those people who showed me love and friendship. During my life as a missionary, I feel I learned a great deal about the true poverty that we don't see here."

Diane Belisle, RNDM
Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions

"I had a deep awakening to my own compassionate nature as I worked at St. Joseph's Vocational School with boys from the age of 6-16, having come to us from broken families and the juvenile court system. It was a challenge as religious to provide a home-like environment in a family atmosphere in which these boys could flourish. As I reflect on my experience with these boys, I realize it was more than a momentary blessing in my life. It gave me a focus which has prevailed throughout my life that is, to extend my compassion to all others irrespective of origin. Learning to rely on available resources, is another gift that developed in me which has prevailed throughout my life."

Josephine Deiron, SP
Sisters of Providence of St. Vincent de Paul

"Life is full of surprises and disappointments, joys and sorrows, ups and downs, and you may even be tempted to give up and despair. You will encounter people, embrace cultures that would shake your very existence, and the faith you hold so dear today. As a missionary, you could be anywhere at any time. In Manitoba, you will greatly miss the tropical sun and yearn for the natural air and warmth, but remember that if there are humans surviving there, you can too. Do not dwell on the difficulties and discomforts, but rejoice in the gift of life and the joy of living among humans like you. Use every opportunity to serve and bring hope to others in conformity with the motto of your congregation - 'Love and Service'."

Bibana Alpiana Narun, HHCJ
Handmaids of the Holy Child Jesus

"Twenty-three years in Colombia – what joys and sorrows! The desire to help the less fortunate was fulfilled. Children, the elderly, students and the sick gave a great deal to you. Even today, when you think about the painful times, you can rejoice in them; for example, the nameless soul on that 1996 Christmas Eve who you took to the hospital, and even the hospital didn't want to take him. You asked them to give him oxygen so he didn't suffer too much, and to call you when he was dying and that you could take over. Which they did. What stories you could tell! All for the glory of God. The community was always present and everyone helped to the best of their abilities."

Yvette Bouchard, SGM
Grey Nuns of Manitoba

Tribute to the Catholic Women Religious Congregations

PRESS CONFERENCE
September 11, 2015
11:00 a.m.

Musée de Saint-Boniface Museum
494 Taché Ave.
Winnipeg, MB

OPENING
Sisters' Reflections exhibit
September 11, 2015
5:00 – 7:00 p.m.



EDUCATION



POURING EVERYTHING INTO EDUCATION

Many of Manitoba's schools owe their existence to some 15 different religious orders that have worked diligently to provide education for boys and girls province-wide.

Since 1844, some 15 orders of women religious have overseen the education of Manitoban boys and girls in English, Ukrainian, and especially French, in urban and more remote rural areas.

"The Grey Nuns were the first to arrive in Manitoba, so they created many schools," says Normand Boisvert, a retired educator and author of the *Écoles à caractère francophone au Manitoba depuis 1818, un repertoire* directory.

Even though the Grey Nuns were always there when schools needed to be established in Manitoba, it was the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) who became education leaders after they arrived in 1874, allowing the Grey Nuns to focus more on healthcare.

"The SNJM were highly influential at the provincial level," says Normand Boisvert. "They were very involved in founding schools. They showed exceptional leadership, especially in the cities and bigger communities."

"They were pillars of French-language education in Manitoba, even creating ties with the University of

Manitoba in collaboration with

Collège Saint-Boniface, so that university courses could be offered to women as early as 1930!", he says. They went on to contribute significantly to the development of the French-immersion system in Manitoba in the 1970s.

While the Grey Nuns and SNJM Sisters had a huge impact on education, other religious congregations also made their own contributions and faced challenges to give young Manitobans improved access to education.

The Sisters of St. Joseph of Ste. Hyacinthe went to open schools in the remotest and poorest communities with very few students," says Normand Boisvert. "It was quite a challenge. They barely had enough to make ends meet financially."

The Sisters of the Saviour, the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions, and the Daughters of the Cross of St. André are three other congregations who took French-language education in the rural communities under their wing. The first was in the Mountain region, the second south of Brandon, and the third in the St. Claude and St. Adolphe area. "The Daughters of the Cross even opened one of the first rural boarding convents," says Boisvert.

Similarly, some congregations focused on the educational needs of specific communities, such as the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, who served the Ukrainian Catholic community, and the Benedictine Sisters, who worked with Polish immigrants.

Lastly, the Oblate Missionaries of the Sacred Heart and of Mary Immaculate were also "very much ahead of their time in the education field," says the educator. "They opened the first kindergarten, Jardin Langevin, in 1909, to prepare boys for school at Collège.

"They also opened a home economics school in St. Boniface for women who were less interested in formal education, to prepare them to be good mothers and housewives. In the 1930s, seeking to meet the needs of people who were not inclined to go to school was ground-breaking!"

While the Grey Nuns worked mainly in healthcare, they also continued to play an important educational role in some communities such as St. Norbert and Ste. Anne.

The religious congregations also all played a critical role in ensuring the survival of the French, Ukrainian and Polish languages in Manitoba.

Today, even though the religious congregations have had to turn over most education to the governments and lay administrations due to a lack of new Sisters, "they all made an exceptional contribution in Manitoba by playing a key role in educating the population and in French-language retention," says Normand Boisvert. "They went above and beyond, pouring everything they had into the cause."



Normand Boisvert

WHEN MISSION MEETS TALENT

Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck of the Daughters of the Cross congregation has been an educator for some 30 years.

When Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck was at the novitiate in the early 1950s, she was told she could become either a nurse or a teacher. She therefore began her 30-year teaching career in St. Malo in 1954-1955.

“My first year, I had 45 Grade 2 and 3 students, including the current Provincial Superior of the Daughters of the Cross!” recalls Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck. However, she preferred teaching adolescents, and in 1956-1957 took over the Grade 8 class.

“I taught adolescents for the rest of my career, first in St. Malo, then in Saskatchewan, St. Adolphe, St. Norbert and Ste. Anne,” she says.

Even though Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck taught all the subjects to her students, her favourite was unquestionably home economics, where she was a pioneer.

“I was sent to St. Norbert in 1968 as the director of the home economics department for the two Seine division schools in St. Norbert and Ste. Anne. I was in charge of starting up that program in both of those schools, and of teaching it. I then brought it to Lorette, but did not teach it there,” says Sr. Schaubroeck.

“I feel very fortunate, given that home economics, especially sewing, was one of my personal passions. I always have some sort of knitting in my hands. The Lord gave me these gifts and He allowed me to use them as part of my teaching mission.”

While the home economics program created for the Seine division by Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck, including sewing and cooking in Grades 7, 8 and 9, and family life in Grades 10 to 12, was in English, the Daughter of the Cross was also a French-language pioneer.

When St. Norbert’s French-language school, École Noël-Ritchot, was built in 1977, Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck was asked to “develop a program to teach home economics in French, given that no such program existed at the time,” she says.

And while she was teaching in St. Norbert in 1969, the Daughter of the Cross was talked into becoming a Guide leader. This “new way of teaching adolescents about life” also left her with fond memories.

Sr. Schaubroeck wrapped up her teaching career in the schools in 1982 to work in the parish. However, she never really abandoned her passion and continues to teach in one way or another to this day.

“I have prepared parents for catechism, developed and delivered a program aimed at deepening personal faith, and started a catechism class in St. Adolphe when it stopped being taught in the schools. Teaching is truly my passion, and I have had a meaningful and interesting life. I don’t regret having chosen that mission over nursing at the novitiate,” she says.



Sr. Rachel Schaubroeck
Daughter of the Cross

WAITING LISTS FOR EVERY GRADE

Built in 1902 by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, St. Mary’s Academy continues to be the choice of many parents for their daughter’s education.

More than 110 years after it was built by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) to make room for a growing number of female students, St. Mary’s Academy has maintained close ties with its founding Sisters. “The Provincial Superior still has her office in our building,” says Connie Yunyk, President of St. Mary’s Academy.

Moreover, until July 2015, the President’s position was held by an SNJM Sister. “I am the Academy’s first lay president,” says Connie Yunyk. “It is a great honour and I am reassured by the close proximity of the Sisters, who continue to offer me their advice and prayers.” The SNJM Sisters have also remained St. Mary’s Academy shareholders.

For the 2015-2016 school year, there are 585 students enrolled from Grades 7 to 12, “but each grade level already has a waiting list,” says the president. 105 to 112 students graduate from the school each year.

The popularity of St. Mary’s Academy is due especially to its programs, which have something for everyone, including theatre, art, choral singing, science, pottery, sports, humanitarian and environmental studies, journalism, home economics, event planning, and public speaking.

“With our elective programs and compulsory courses such as religion, we are continuing the mission of the SNJM Sisters to nourish the whole person: spirit, mind and body,” says Connie Yunyk.

True to the Quebec roots of its founders, St. Mary’s Academy continues to offer compulsory French courses from Grades 7 to 9.

After 110 years, St. Mary’s Academy is still a girls-only school. “In a non-mixed school, there is a strong sense of community; the students are really there to learn and think about their



Connie Yunyk is the first lay president of St. Mary’s Academy.

future,” says the president. “When they leave, they are well-prepared for the world, with a strong sense of how they can make a difference. We feel good about that. Our students often become real community and even world leaders.”

Connie Yunyk also says that St. Mary’s Academy continues to be open to students from all social backgrounds, as in the beginning, thanks to its scholarship program. In 2015-2016, some \$277,000 in scholarships were distributed to 74 students.

“Past or present, our objectives have stayed the same,” says, Connie Yunyk. “We look to the future without forgetting our roots, just like the SNJM Sisters who left Quebec to settle here in the West and teach French.”





Courtesy of Société historique de Saint-Boniface

SERVING THE NEEDY

While some religious congregations focus more on education or healthcare, they all share a core mission: that of serving the needy in Canada and elsewhere.

“Social action aimed at serving the poor is at the heart of everything done by many religious congregations,” says archivist Carole Boily. “The Grey Nuns, who were the first to arrive, founded hospitals where they helped those who could not pay, and schools where they welcomed poor children. People counted on the Sisters of all of the congregations to provide them with medical care at home and even feed them.”

Helping the most vulnerable members of our community, including youth, seniors, the poor, offenders, and immigrants is an important part of the mission of many Catholic congregations of women religious.

For instance, in the 1970s, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary (SNJM) did a great deal of work in prisons and social rehabilitation centres.

“We recognized that our ‘involvement in the educational mission of the Church aimed at contributing to the full development of human beings’ (SNJM const. # 11) had no direct presence in the prisons,” says Sr. Léonne Dumesnil, SNJM. From that time onward, we have always had a few members working in those institutions or in post-incarceration rehabilitation groups.”

The SNJM Sisters were also pioneers in helping young offenders, and in 1974 they opened Winnipeg’s Rossbrook House, a drop-in centre for street youth having trouble adapting to the mainstream education system. They also help refugees and newcomers from all ethnic backgrounds and cultures at their House of Peace and Micah House centres.

While there was no shortage of poor people in Canada, “my heart told me that there were poorer people in other parts of the world,” says SNJM Sr. Corinne Chartier. Humanitarian missions in less-advantaged countries are often encouraged by the religious congregations.

Sr. Corinne Chartier spent 27 years in Haiti, while Grey Nun Aurise Delaurier worked in Brazil and Colombia.

“I joined the Grey Nuns more because I wanted to be a missionary than a nun. However, in those days, it wasn’t easy to be a lay missionary,” says Sr. Aurise Delaurier. “I saw those people who hardly had anything while we had so much, and I wanted to work with and for them.”

“I started working in the Aboriginal and Inuit communities in northern Canada, teaching and leading retreats for young people,” she says. “But after those initial experiences, I wanted something more permanent and was sent to Brazil.” Sr. Aurise Delaurier spent 10 years in northwestern Brazil in the small and very poor villages of the interior, where she worked with the Grey Nuns of Brazil, teaching local communities, parishes and young candidates interested in entering an order. “I was shocked by the degree of selfishness and injustice,” she recalls. “The poor were forced off their land when that was all they had! But I was also struck by the boundless generosity and hospitality I found there. People who had nothing still welcomed us. They gave me so much, and I was deeply touched.”

She continued her mission in Colombia, in the impoverished suburb of Cúcuta, for eight years. “I liked Brazil and it was hard to leave. But there was a need in Colombia, so I accepted that new mission to serve people there.”

In Colombia, she did similar work to what she had done in Brazil, in addition to teaching English to Colombian seminarians.

“Colombia was a very difficult experience,” she says. “There was so much violence. So many people were assassinated, including the poorer street people that we visited and who came to our little school. There was an endless string of funerals and we couldn’t say anything, or our Colombian Sisters could have been killed, as well.”

“It taught me to love people as they are, to accept their differences. But I felt very cowardly about not being able to denounce anything. That’s why I finally came back to Canada. I was emotionally and psychologically burnt out.”

Today, Sr. Aurise Delaurier continues her mission with the needy and people from around the world, in Manitoba. Since 2013, she has been a volunteer at the Flavie Laurent Centre, where she helps many needy families, including several newcomers.

“After Colombia, I realized that missionary life is possible anywhere,” says Sr. Aurise Delaurier. “In Canada, there are people who don’t have the means to live in dignity and respect, and with whom we also need to show solidarity.”



Sr. Aurise Delaurier
Grey Nuns

CONNECTING WITH YOUTH

Sr. Janet Kozak, of the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate, enjoys serving the community by working with local youth.

“With the congregation, we move around a lot, staying no more than four or five years in one place” says Sr. Janet Kozak. “That’s why it was important for me to make a connection with the people where we were, especially youth. It’s my passion and our future!”

From 2007 to 2012, in Winnipeg’s North End, Sr. Kozak organized or was involved in many activities and camps for the children, teens and young adults in her Ukrainian Catholic diocese.

“It creates energy in our youth,” she says. “When young people have a positive contact with a Sister, a Brother, or a priest, they are more likely to embrace religion as they are growing up. I hope they have seen me as a mentor, a spiritual yet human guide, and their friend. I hope I have made them feel loved, because I have a great deal of love and respect for them. I like learning to get to know them, and vice versa.”

Sr. Janet Kozak’s most fulfilling experiences with her young

people were at summer camp, north of Roblin, on the Manitoba-Saskatchewan border. She continues to organize these camps every summer, even though she is no longer in Winnipeg.

“With the youngest participants, we have religion classes, liturgical services, and we do sports and activities on the lake,” says Sr. Janet Kozak. “I take part in all of their activities! But my favourites are the teen camps. Each year, we work with these youth on a project for the host community.”

These youth projects included sprucing up old cemeteries, “a highly spiritual experience, given that they adopted the deceased buried there and prayed for them,” making traditional Ukrainian perogies and offering them to the hungry, or renovating a bell tower and a church that no longer holds services but is still a place of pilgrimage for many Ukrainian Catholics.

“Those experiences give them a sense of belonging,” says



Janet Kozak
Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate



photos: Courtesy Janet Kozak

Led by Sr. Janet Kozak, a group of youth renovated a small abandoned church, which is now a pilgrimage site.

Sr. Janet Kozak. “Today, the five girls who learned to make perogies can help senior parishioners prepare them for special occasions. It brings the generations together.”

“The young people who renovated the church were reconnected with their faith, their history, their heritage, their people and God through the project,” she says. “Now, two years later, they are still asking me to go back. It’s become their church!”

FOLLOWING THE SISTERS FOOTSTEPS: THE FLAVIE LAURENT CENTRE

While the Flavie Laurent Centre was not created by the women religious themselves, it has followed directly in their footsteps.

The Flavie Laurent Centre in St. Boniface is now one of Winnipeg’s main non-food resources for the needy. From the dozen or so families served each day in 2005, the Centre now helps up to 100 people a day, and has more than 26,000 different clients.

“We have three trucks and make five to six daily deliveries,” says Gilbert Vielfaure, executive director of the Flavie Laurent Centre. “We pick up and donate furniture, appliances, clothing, luggage, lawnmowers...even cars! We accept pretty much any non-perishable item that can be used in or around the home.”

Created in the 1990s by a lay group from the St. Boniface Cathedral parish to provide the basic necessities to those in need, the Flavie Laurent Centre is directly inspired by the work of the Grey Nuns.

“Even our name is that of a Grey Nun, Sr. Flavie Laurent, who came from Montreal in 1850, when she was 18 years old,” says Gilbert Vielfaure. “For 75 years, she walked the streets of Winnipeg, helping the sick and the poor. She visited people to help them. Some 50 years after her death in the 1970s, the Grey Nuns picked up her social mission by starting a clothing depot, which they named Laurent Centre,” he continues. “While that depot closed in the 1980s, there is clearly a link with today’s Flavie Laurent Centre, which initially collected and distributed clothing before branching out.”



Gilbert Vielfaure, Executive Director CFLC

Gilbert Vielfaure can therefore say without hesitation that “we are directly linked to the Sisters’ legacy. Our roots are there.”



The Legacy project, a Comprehensive Tribute to the Women Religious Congregations of Manitoba:

A beautiful photo book published by Les Éditions des Plaines

"The photo book, Legacy of Care, Courage and Compassion: 200 years of history of the women religious congregations of Manitoba, traces the history of the 50 or so congregations of Catholic Sisters involved in Manitoba since the founding of the St. Boniface Mission in 1818. Contemporary photos complement archival photographs and the rich history presented by the authors."

"They were healthcare, social services and education pioneers who helped tens of thousands of people in all aspects of community life. This beautiful book presents a brief history of each of these congregations who made a unique contribution to the development of Manitoba and Western Canada."

Joanne Therrien,
Owner, Les Éditions des Plaines

A commemorative monument in honour of the women religious congregations of Manitoba, to be unveiled in June 2016.

When creating this sculpture, I had to reach beyond simply illustrating the various areas of service provided by women religious.

A visual metaphor seemed to be the only way to gather into imagery the many contributions of these women, past and present.

I chose to depict a symbolic weaving of the fabric of our society.

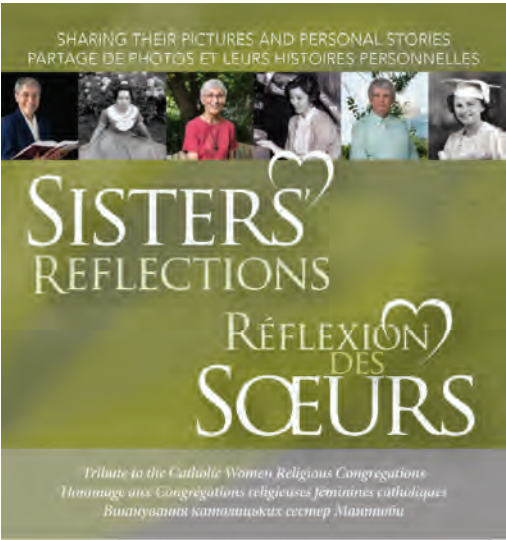
Called into existence by Spirit, this work is their legacy and, continuing forward, a model to emulate.

Madeleine Vrignon

Documentary on the Catholic Sisters of Manitoba

This documentary is an intimate and reflective look into the lives of the Catholic Sisters of Manitoba. Humour, feminism, intelligence and compassion flow through their stories as they recount their life experiences. Throughout their ground-breaking work in our society's social fabric, their sisterhood, sense of social justice, and religious faith upholds them through various challenges with the world that tests even their own faith. These refreshing and articulate women reflect on the future of their work and their kind, in a time when women no longer seek out the nunnery to effect change in this contemporary world. This documentary is a testament to the deep and permanent imprint the Catholic Sisters of Manitoba have and continue to leave on our soil.

Danielle Sturk,
director



Réflexion des Sœurs

Réflexion des Sœurs est un recueil de lettres manuscrites rédigées par des religieuses et dans lesquelles elles partagent de bonne grâce certaines de leurs expériences personnelles tout en jetant un regard rétrospectif sur leur vie. Nous vous invitons aussi à consulter le site www.sisterslegacy.ca, où vous pourrez lire d'autres lettres de religieuses.

Sisters Reflections

Sisters Reflections is a synopsis of handwritten letters by the Sisters who are graciously sharing some of their personal stories as they reflect back on their lives. We invite you to also visit www.sisterslegacy.ca to read more Sisters' letters.

Роздуми сестер

Роздуми сестер – це збірка рукописних листів монахинь, в яких вони люб'язно діляться деякими моментами свого особистого досвіду, згадуючи своє минуле. Ми також запрошуємо вас відвідати сайт www.sisterslegacy.ca, на якому ви зможете ознайомитися з іншими листами монахинь.



Sisters Reflections / Réflexion des Sœurs
Exhibit Locations / Lieux d'exposition

- Musée Saint-Boniface Museum, Winnipeg
September 11 to October 30, 2015
- Université de Saint-Boniface, Winnipeg
October 30 to December 1, 2015
*Exception of November 18 & 19, 2015
- St. Boniface General Hospital Atrium, Winnipeg
December 1, 2015 to January 25, 2016
- Misericordia Health Centre, Winnipeg
January 25 to February 12, 2016
- St. Mary's Academy, Winnipeg
February 22 to March 7, 2016
- Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes
Centre Albert Gaillot, musée et Centre Dom-Benoit
March 7 to 28, 2016
- Cabane à sucre – St. Pierre Jolys
March 28 to April 11, 2016
- Villa Youville • Sainte-Anne
April 11 to May 2, 2016
- Manitoba Legislative Building, Winnipeg
May 2 to 30, 2016
- Ste. Rose du Lac Health Centre & Regional Library
June 2016
- Winnipegosis District Health Centre and Museum
July 1 to 27, 2016
- Dauphin Ukrainian Historic Church
July 27 to August 02, 2016
- Church of the Resurrection, Dauphin
August 03 to 15, 2015
- St. Viator's Roman Catholic Church, Dauphin
August 15 to September 04, 2016
- St. Augustine Church, Brandon
September 05 to 16, 2016
- Assiniboine Community College, Brandon
NHC - MB Institute of Culinary Arts
September 17 to 30, 2016
- Bibliothèque Saint-Georges Library
October 2016
- Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Cathedral, The Pas
November 2016
- Holy Family Home, Winnipeg
December 2016



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