

Québec will soon have a new museum

LE MONASTÈRE DES AUGUSTINES UNVEILS ITS MUSEUM CONCEPT AND NEW DETAILS ON ITS FIRST PERMANENT EXHIBITION

Québec, November 5, 2014 – Today, *Le Monastère des Augustines* unveiled the concept for its upcoming museum as well as new details on its first permanent exhibition. The museum, which has been an essential part of the Le Monastère des Augustines project since its inception, is still one of its most visible aspects. The permanent exhibition will be located mainly on the first floor of the historic wings, which date from 1695. It will showcase *Le Monastère's* exceptional heritage and will open to the public once renovations are complete in summer 2015.

A community of pioneers

Over the course of nearly four centuries, the Augustinian Sisters gathered a large number of objects and documents from their daily lives, their work and their worship. These relics comprise an exceptional collection of 40,000 artifacts—and an entire kilometre of archives and ancient books. This legacy tells the story of 375 years of committed care and traces the history of a major contributor to the creation of Quebec's health care system as we know it today.

The new museum: first permanent exhibition

The permanent exhibition (still to be named) will introduce visitors to (1) the Augustinian Sisters' work with the ill, (2) their communal way of life and (3) their spiritual ideal. These three major themes will be depicted through some 1,000 artifacts and archives chosen from the collection sourced from the Augustinian Sisters' 12 monastery-hospitals.

With their sleek and contemporary design, the museum rooms are designed to maximize the evocative power of the old cloister and that of its artifacts (medical and pharmaceutical tools, works of art, familiar objects from daily life in the community, liturgical items, objects related to traditional activities, pewter dishes, copper utensils, etc.) and archives (registers of women entering the Order, founding contracts and other documents signed by Louis XIII, Louis XIV and Minister Colbert, correspondence with suppliers, old books, diaries that were written in nearly every day, etc.) displayed under glass.

To strengthen visitors' connection with the Augustinian Sisters' rich public legacy, the museum experience will involve only a limited number technologies: mainly atmospheric video and optional headsets to enhance the visit with soundscapes.

“Immediately, the most impressive thing for people visiting our museum will be the Augustinian Sisters' rich collections and archives. Then it'll be the charm of actually experiencing such a historically important place, with its 17th-century European

architecture. We hope they'll be touched by the story of these health care pioneers—and that perhaps they will even leave with the feeling of having reconnected with their cultural roots,” said Catherine Gaumont, Director of Conservation and Museology at *Le Monastère des Augustines*.

A monastery museum

At *Le Monastère des Augustines*, the museum experience is enhanced by the historical significance of the place, which dates back almost four centuries. In addition to being presented in the museum, the Augustinian Sisters' impressive collection will be showcased in several other areas. The museum will also offer guided tours of some of these areas, including the vaults (1695) and the second- and third-floor hallways of the old wings (1695), where paintings and historical photographs will be displayed. The choir (1930) and church (1800) can also be seen on a guided tour, even though they are still used by the Sisters.

“We want the Augustinian Sisters' heritage to become part of our visitors' and guests' everyday life outside the museum. This intimate contact with the memory of the nuns is extremely enriching, and it's our way of breaking out of the traditional conception of a museum,” explained Isabelle Duchesneau, Executive Director of *Le Monastère des Augustines*.

In addition to the permanent exhibition and guided tours of the monastery, the museum will also have educational programs for school groups of all grade levels and, eventually, temporary exhibitions. *Le Monastère des Augustines* also offers cultural programs and access to the archive centre and museum reserve.

Le Monastère des Augustines is the non-profit organization responsible for the operations and activities that will take place in the historic wings of the Hôtel-Dieu de Québec monastery that founded the continent's first hospital north of Mexico (1639). Situated in the heart of Old Quebec and completely restored and redesigned, Le Monastère offers guests a unique experience in holistic health, along with a rare opportunity to connect directly with the Augustinian Sisters' remarkable heritage, all in a non-confessional approach. Experiential accommodations, a museum, an archives centre, programming, a restaurant, a boutique and specialized services will be available beginning in the summer of 2015. Le Monastère des Augustines was made possible through collaboration and financial assistance from La Fiducie du patrimoine culturel des Augustines, to whom the Augustinian Sisters entrusted their heritage for the benefit of the population of the province of Quebec.

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SOURCE: **Le Monastère des Augustines**

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