

RAYMONDE GAGNÉ'S TESTIMONIAL CATHOLIC HEALTH CORPORATION OF MANITOBA

As a board member of the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba, I would like to take a moment to talk about a personal memory that I think, will resonate with a good number of you present here today.

As the youngest of nine siblings, I grew up in Saint-Pierre-Jolys. In elementary school, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary were my teachers. They were the first women that I had seen working outside the home. During my mother's generation and generations that preceding hers, female Canadians had very little influence on what occurred outside the home.

The sisters of the Saint-Nom-de-Jesus-et-de-Marie were my primary school teachers but later I would meet Sisters who were also nurses and the first social workers.

It wasn't until much later that I started to realize that they were developing and building schools, hospitals and institutions. I realized that all that work – driven by faith and compassion - also required strategic planning and collaboration with governments and business leaders.

They were truly the first businesswomen.

As I see so many of the Sisters here today I realize you must have had great confidence and faith in what you needed to do and great skills in negotiating to get others to support your vision.

But the Sisters we know had great control and they paved the way for so many of us women to have careers outside the home today.

I am convinced that my journey which led me to eventually become rector of the Université de Saint-Boniface, is due to the Sisters who taught young women, like me, to have self-confidence and to accomplish each daily task, however menial it seems, with self-assurance.

They showed other people that a woman could have a grand vision, realize it, and carry it forward for years and years. And this, outside of one's home and family. That is why and am so PROUD today to be a lay person of the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba, who is responsible to carry on the heritage and legacy that the Sisters have entrusted us to do as a result of the tireless efforts to continue their mission.

As you probably know, the Grey Nuns are the ones who created that Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba in the year 2000. Like always, they had the vision that surpasses what most people could only imagine.

By creating the Catholic Health Corporation of Manitoba the Grey Nuns ensured their work continued in the way that was sustainable. With an aging population and fewer women entering the order they realized they had to become agents of change in order to perpetuate their mission.

Since that time 15 years ago – three other orders have asked CHCM to sponsor their good works. They include les Missionnaires Oblates de Saint-Boniface, The Sisters of St. Benedict and The Sisters of the Good Shepherd.

So today CHCM sponsors over 20 Communities of Service – some as large and established as St. Boniface Hospital and others as new and small, but as impactful as Abri Marguerite that gives new immigrants a first home in St. Boniface.

We are here today as a member of Catholic Health Association of Manitoba and proud sponsor of the *Legacy of Care, Courage and Compassion Project* that celebrates ALL of Manitoba's Catholic consecrated women this year.

So to all the Sisters here today thank you so much for all you have done for so many over the generations.

May we all remember the legacy you have given us and be as compassionate and smart as you have been as we look for ways to continue to serve the underserved as you have taught us.

To all the women religious present here today, I address my heartfelt thanks for all that you have accomplished for so many of us over a number of generations.

May we always remember the legacy that you have transferred over to us. That we be intelligent and compassionate like you in our search of new ways to respond to the needs of the most destitute, and that, as you have taught us. Rest assured that it is with great pride that we hold dearly to the torch that has been lit for so long, and will keep it lit for years to come.

Thank you

Raymonde Gagné