



September 28, 2011

www.covenanthealth.ca

New monument honours the contributions of Catholic Sisters in Alberta

Edmonton, Canada

A new addition to the Alberta Legislature recognizes the courageous and intrepid religious women who helped to found the province, providing health care, education and social services to pioneer communities. A bronze monument unveiled today honours all the congregations of Sisters who served across the province and celebrates their legacy of care and compassion carried on by others today.

“This monument serves as a powerful tribute to the impact the Catholic Sisters have had on so many lives in our province, including my own. As a young child, I experienced the care and compassion of the Catholic Sisters firsthand, and this is a fitting way to honour their service, dedication, and care to countless Albertans,” says Premier Ed Stelmach.

The Catholic Sisters’ Legacy Recognition Project is being led by Covenant Health in collaboration with the Catholic community. The monument was funded by donations from various organizations and individuals.

“They taught school, fed the hungry, visited the distraught, housed orphans and tended the sick. These were no small tasks when you consider how little they had and how primitive conditions were,” says Gordon Self, Executive Sponsor of the Catholic Sisters’ Legacy Recognition Project. “It is from these humble beginnings that we have been able to build the Catholic schools, hospitals and social agencies we are so proud of today.”

Over 70 orders of Sisters have served in Alberta in the past 150 years. The first were three Sisters of Charity of Montreal (Grey Nuns) who arrived in Lac St. Anne, September 24, 1859. They were among the first Caucasian women who arrived in the region before Confederation. In September 1863, the Grey Nuns opened a new convent in St. Albert, which operated as the first hospital, orphanage and school, in what was then the Northwest Territories.

“I am very grateful, it is wonderful recognition,” says Sister Annata Brockman about today’s tribute to all the Sisters who have made contributions in Alberta. “My hope is it will inspire others to carry on our work.”

Local artist Herman Poulin from St. Paul, Alberta was commissioned to create the Catholic Sisters’ Legacy Recognition monument, *Service Through Christ*. For Poulin, the project brought him back to his childhood and stirred feelings of gratitude.

“To work on the Sisters’ project is an honour. It is full circle for me.” says Herman. “In my primary school years, it was the Sisters who helped me discover my talent as a young artist. They called it a gift. Today, it is my turn to honour and respect my mentors.”

The 10 ft bronze statue of a Sister holding a piece of stained glass stands on a pedestal engraved with the names of the religious orders of Sisters who served in Alberta. The bronze



figure moves through a foundation pillar and incorporates a crucifix around her neck, which Poulin defines as the source of her inner strength and purpose.

“Her movement exudes service” says Poulin. The figure in traditional dress strides forward, one heel up. “The flow of her long dress and her apron symbolize many tasks to do.”

In conjunction with the project, many communities—including the City of Edmonton—have declared September 28, 2011 as Catholic Sisters’ Legacy Recognition Day. A video celebrating the Sisters’ legacy is also in production and will be premiered at Covenant Health’s Annual Community Meeting on October 5 and released on www.covenanthealth.ca later that month.

-30-

Rayne Kuntz, Media Relations Senior Advisor
Covenant Health
E rayne.kuntz@covenanthealth.ca
W 780.735.9930 C 780.246.2523

Covenant Health is Canada's largest Catholic health care organization with over 14,000 physicians, employees and volunteers serving in 12 communities across Alberta. A major provider in Alberta's integrated health system, Covenant Health works with Alberta Health Services and community partners to positively influence the health of Albertans through a broad range of programs and services.
www.covenanthealth.ca