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## Women of New France 6: Education and Literacy

Stacey Moore Western Michigan University, stacey.l.moore@wmich.edu

Fort St. Joseph Archaeological Project

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# Education and





# Education

In 1639 three Ursuline nuns sailed from France to Québec to establish a school to educate Native and French girls. At their head was Mother Marie de l'Incarnation who learned the Huron, Algonquian, Montagnais and Iroquois tongues. She composed a dictionary, grammars, and books of Christian doctrine in the Native languages. In 1697 a second Ursuline school opened in Trois Rivières. The Sisters of the Congregation de Notre-Dame founded a school in Montreal in 1670 and by 1731 maintained twelve schools for the education of *habitant* girls. Some frontier area families sent their daughters (including *métis* daughters) back to Montreal for their education.





Ursuline nuns

**Ursuline Superior** 

Du 9 Detobre 1703. Engagement marie francois fauveau a antome

## Literacy

Literacy rates in New France were quite low, but some Canadians came to possess substantial libraries including those living at Detroit and Michilimackinac. Written communications connected Fort St. Joseph residents with the outside world. Military orders, fur trade business letters, and the priests' baptismal register required writing skills. Very few people at the fort could sign their names, let alone write letters. The exceptions were the commandants who produced, as far as we know, only business related correspondence.



fortin; - a to cuant La evotaiser Rayal en lagramosto de quebre clouver diquer I Resident a Tempine of have no many, Aut prester Rene Sauveaus Dit Destoring gabitant Democrat on la Signary with beaund wend Ded office Belifaberh beissommen legart errans riding a mer exclusion your weller che Gara det at Dugromois Saine Subsister at Saigne quater andann andan agenderg when Hart Dummer Ohanger a grundament de Sangelanne, a pour prover l'amount Do Marie Camile Farman aginda grater and day at hy assure equi ast new mine ala vie et alanteretary realer longini Engage dad stiller pour des gans Surgens alage detrings and accounting Enqualisador contractor domestiques a ant going Souties Maislas des Canquedenne aut enlisteres paurais en laint Laurant au quitert et anystant qui a primes Ridon Lang Sanveau estang quatico pour lug-Tim Durant, you don't lequel Time Poter due Termis De devin hydronin et dasterne delog den storen et dag alion and Conter la Sidelien requiser Bet Engagement anity Sait alashavyo yar & Sourie Sala bare of from ment et delanousis, longes Clouchie, et entretenie d'hatien estinger avon vzage Selay saquation, Del Tustonia es Saino Sustanion Dever Choine guinigation neussaine avalut; le outre un dulay paya frantana jague, chilaine at anonymention pour tant les? Time Jurgues any age Der Singt anne accomptin ta voume der But Brig water line outer bour lin Gabiersquelle and alow along Vzager; cotant mant main Commen que Sy last side home lin de de your and you mariage anout less agender ingo and accomption, que les voreir due en un care d'ulement tome of the must on Semanie Depuis quinger Judquere adigs Sept and accomplia Degrages aster on ales finition doisant equinger limme at Jerry gavden, Sy cest Deguin Dig Supt Judgun a Discuss awayle Cont vergt luwer contract for den, Et dy Sist agreen lesez vings and accomptin lange Comme Do Bing was him in at desay Ganderer, Cav aindy the our oblige the Remonent the fait et passe and ynter ulissususny oraise anne misyle nuchicher Jane Doutobre will stryt Cum hair & my revenue Devertien Jaquergrand Summin & Corinne Villinger tourseline Chammen Dumbance any que segue out our ling forties at notais religne -Legebanerana ayour deland meretranon figure der enquires j provided Internation the Stationers



Re-enactor writing with a goose quill



Most documents were produced by government officials; most women, except nuns, were illiterate.

Artist's conception of a nun teaching girls

"The Sisters will only take girls between the ages of eleven and twelve, in order to make them able to receive communion within the first year, after which, they can be dismissed to make room for others. Those who remain in school longer are to learn the basics, then to acquire manual skills: sewing, spinning, knitting and even fine embroidery" ~ Monseigneur de Saint-Vallier, 1689