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Abstract

This short article offers information on the scope of archival resources held at The Archive of the Jesuits in Canada (AJC), located in Montreal, Canada. It describes the characteristics of the archival collection with a focus on historical records that testify to the Jesuits of Canada's involvement in educational activities and institutions. It concludes by offering reflections on contemporary strategies at the AJC, particularly regarding archival material about Indigenous peoples, and by highlighting the AJC's support to researchers.

The Archive of the Jesuits in Canada (AJC) is located at Maison Bellarmin in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. It holds the historical records of the Jesuits of Canada and Haiti, including those that were produced under the auspices of the previous provinces of French Canada and English Canada. In 2009, all the collections were consolidated under one umbrella, combining records that were previously held in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, and Toronto, Ontario.

The AJC's archival collection testifies to the activities of Jesuits in Canada since 1611. However, due to the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773, not all records concerning the Jesuits in New France are located at the AJC in Montreal. Some were dispersed and are now held by other institutions, such as Library and Archives Canada and the Musée de la Civilisation in Québec City. However, other documents that were left behind to the Hospital Sisters of the Hôtel-Dieu in Quebec City at the end of the eighteenth century were repatriated in 1844 by Félix Martin, S.J., and are now held at the AJC. They form a special collection that includes original records as well as copies documenting the presence and activities of the Jesuits before the suppression. This collection, known as the Collection des Archives du Collège Sainte-Marie (CACSM), attracts researchers interested in a diversity of topics. It contains historical information on the Jesuit presence in New France, encounters between missionaries and Indigenous people, and the Jesuit connection with Rome and

France. The theme on New France is especially attractive for historians interested in Jesuit, mission, and Indigenous histories.

The AJC's archival collection is structured by theme. In addition to the CACSM, the archival fonds of individual Jesuits, which illustrate their personal activities, form an important portion of the overall collection. Moreover, fonds and collections about the administration, various initiatives and projects, Jesuit residences and colleges, and missionary work overseas and in Indigenous communities, form the remaining bulk of the collection.

Jesuit Education and The AJC Collection

The theme of education emerges strongly in the records held at the AJC. The Jesuits returned to Canada in the 1840s at the request of Monseigneur Ignace Bourget, the Bishop of Montreal, who wished the order to build an institution of higher learning. The result was the Collège Sainte-Marie, founded by Félix Martin, S.J. in 1846. The College became a prominent school in Montreal and provided a classical education to its largely French-Canadian pupils. Its impact on Quebec society was widespread, ranging from the development of education throughout the province to contributions in other areas such as the arts and sports. Many prominent Quebec politicians, artists, and lawyers studied at Collège Sainte-Marie. In 1968, the College ceased its operations in the aftermath of the

Parent Commission, which prevented the Catholic Church from managing educational institutions in the province of Quebec. To this day, the College's archival fonds represents a major landmark of the AJC collection and is used by dozens of researchers each year, from a vast array of disciplines and interests.

Jesuits in Canada were and are still affiliated with other educational institutions. In Montreal, the Jesuits founded two prominent classical colleges that impacted the development of higher education on the island: Collège Jean-de-Brébeuf, created in 1928 and transferred to secular leadership in the 1970s, and Collège Saint-Ignace. In addition, the AJC holds fonds from Regiopolis College, in Kingston, Ontario; Champion College, located in Regina, Saskatchewan; and St. Paul's College, in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Regis College, a theological school in Toronto, is still active and affiliated with the University of Toronto. It holds an important fonds focused on the development of the school and its impact on Christian theology. Records about Jesuit education also emerge in other collections, in particular those related to the Jesuits' activities abroad. For example, the Jesuits of Canada were involved in creating schools in Ethiopia and India, and were part of educational activities in China. Overall, these fonds testify to the depth of the Jesuits of Canada's contribution to the evolution of Catholic educational approaches and innovations.

The AJC and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

The Jesuits of Canada managed a residential school for Indigenous youth in Spanish, Ontario, from 1913 to 1958. As early as the 1840s, however, they had set up a school in Wiikwemkoong on Manitoulin Island, not far from the town of Spanish. The fonds associated with the residential school is at the heart of the AJC's priorities and commitment are to serve Indigenous researchers, as well as to follow the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). At the AJC, we seek to adapt our collection management activities to respond

to Indigenous researchers' concerns and preoccupations, especially regarding the residential school and intergenerational trauma. The TRC has become a catalyst for the transformation of archival theory and practice. It has resulted in more critical research and reflection by the Canadian archival community on issues such as managing colonial archives and residential schools, trauma, and access. At The AJC, we acknowledge the harm at the root of these records and their creation, and its perpetuation through descriptions and access policies written by Jesuits and archivists.

Research support at the AJC

At the AJC, we are committed to supporting researchers and their projects. We are currently developing more access points to our collections through our website and online platforms, which will contribute to information discovery and render the collection more accessible. The digitization of textual records, photographs, and other materials are also an integral part of the service we offer to researchers.

We also activate our records to contribute to research and educational activities, through collaborative projects with academic researchers and other memory institutions. In parallel, we welcome groups of students, especially those in history, religious studies, and information studies to visit the AJC and learn about our collection. Openness to researchers, students, and other users is crucial if we want to support further studies on the rich and complex history of the Jesuits in Canada. 