

## AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

The archaeological site of the Marguerite Bourgeoys Museum, reached through the crypt, provides a fascinating experience for visitors. This site, one of the oldest Catholic sites in the Americas, shelters the foundations of Montreal's first stone chapel constructed by Marguerite Bourgeoys in 1675 and destroyed by fire in 1754.

Upon entering the site, visitors come to an immediate understanding of its historic importance. They are filled with a sense of the sacred and of a strong emotional connection with the past and its mystery. Constructed mainly of fieldstone, as were the walls of the chapel, the foundations are clearly outlined. Signs of the 1754 fire, so fierce that the window glass melted like plastic, are evident in the ash that remains on the site. The foundations provide a contrast to the cut stone of the present chapel, and recalling that they were fervently erected almost 350 years ago evokes a feeling of permanence.

During the 1996-1997 archaeological dig, the archaeologists were astounded by the quality and the quantity of the artefacts they found. More than 5000 elements were uncovered on a number of strata going back at least 2400 years. Indeed, built as it was on an embankment along the river, the chapel was a close neighbour to signs of the passage of First Nations groups uncovered during the dig. The objects found are on display in the crypt along with a model of the archaeological site and the history of the chapel over the centuries.

### Chronology of the Site

From 2400 to 1000 years ago	Occupation of the site by prehistoric aboriginal groups (Archaeological remains uncovered)
1655-1658	First attempts to construct the chapel (No archaeological remains found)
1670	Wooden shelter (No archaeological remains found)
1675-1678	Construction of the first stone chapel (Vestiges uncovered)
1754	Fire that destroyed the chapel (Remains of the fire uncovered)
1771	Construction of the second chapel (Vestiges of this period)
Mid-19 <sup>th</sup> century	Installation of a coal-fired heating system (Remains uncovered)
November 1996 to July 1997	Archaeological dig on the Bonsecours site (school cellar, yard and basement of the chapel)
December 1997 to March 1998	Preparation of the archaeological site for display