

IMMACULATA

For over 75 years, Immaculata High School has been one of the City of Ottawa's best-known Catholic educational facilities. It began in 1928 as a private Catholic school for girls, with an enrolment of 85 students in what was then Form One and Form Two. Three Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Sister Loyola, Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart and Sister St. Geraldine, were the first members of the school's teaching staff. The Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception from Pembroke had been asked to open the Catholic girls' school to provide a quality Catholic education to those from families of moderate income. The girls, who wore uniforms, paid a minimum monthly fee of one dollar, but only if they could afford it.

The name of the school is attributed to Reverend J.J. O'Gorman who made the long-desired Catholic high school for girls a reality, acting under the advice of higher ecclesiastical authority. Apparently, he was the one who bestowed the revered name of "Immaculata" upon the school when it opened, a name it still bears today.

The Christie mansion property on Bronson Avenue at the corner of Lisgar Street was purchased for \$25,000 as the site for the new school. The mansion itself became the first convent home for the Grey Sisters who taught at the school.

The new school was designed by Werner Knoffke, a well-known Ottawa architect who designed the French embassy on Sussex Drive, among other buildings. It had eight classrooms, a science lab, a home economics classroom, a gymnasium and a stage area, as well as office space. A passageway linked the school to the Grey Sisters' convent.

During the construction of the school building, the students of the newly-

CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL



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formed Immaculata High School attended classes at St. Patrick's Home, which at that time was located at the corner of Laurier Avenue and Kent Street. At that site, Sister Loyola was the first principal and the teachers were Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart and Sister St. Geraldine. When the classes officially opened at the new location, Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart became Principal.

Immaculata High School flourished immediately, as enrolment soared to 160 students in 1929, requiring a new building with five classrooms, a science lab and a small library. Sister Agnes of the

Sacred Heart, Sister St. Hilda, Sister Loyola, Sister St. Geraldine and Sister St. Waltrude handled the teaching duties.

The year 1929 also saw the first commencement held at Immaculata High School for graduates of Forms One and Two. Rev. Father E. Maloney presided at this commencement ceremony. In the same year, a music department was established at Immaculata High School, where both violin and piano were taught to students. The school continued to grow, with enrolment reaching 200 students in 1930 and Sister Mary Celine and Sister Mary Christine joining the teaching staff. Another higher form was added to the original two offered at the school and a commercial course was also provided.

By 1939, enrolment at Immaculata High School had grown to 300 students taught by nine Sisters. A home economics department was added in 1939 as were nine new classrooms to accommodate the growing enrolment. In 1941, new Principal, Sister Mary Christine, was supervising a staff of 11. A camera club was formed with facilities such as developing and printing rooms added. By 1948, enrolment at Immaculata had reached 425, and the staff had grown to 17 Sisters. This meant that the school had to expand, and thanks to a bequest from the estate of Dr. B. Kearns, the school was able to add the Kearns Memorial Wing which opened in September 1950, adding eight classrooms including a double-sized commercial classroom and space for the Music Department.

This was by no means the end of new construction: in 1952, an addition was built on to the Kearns Memorial Wing, adding three new classrooms, a students' library and a principal's office. Then, in 1954, with the construction of a new convent on the north side of the property, the former Sisters' residence was transformed into two

additional classrooms as well as more space for the Music Department. The student population by this time had topped 725 students and the teaching staff stood at 22. The Music Department alone now had a staff of four.

The 1960s saw continuing growth and construction at Immaculata. In 1962, a chapel/auditorium was built, fulfilling a dream as well as the prayers of long-time principal Sister Mary Christine, who spearheaded the project and its fundraising. Four years later, Sister Mary Christine celebrated her silver anniversary as principal of the school.

Expansion continued. In 1967, a building with 12 classrooms, as well as labs and a gym, was opened.

The coming of the 1970s saw new challenges emerge for Immaculata, both in terms of enrolment and finances. Up until the 1970s, many English-speaking students from the Province of Quebec had been attending Immaculata. The opening of an English Catholic high school for girls in Hull resulted in a decline in the number of students attending Immaculata from that province. Enrolment at Immaculata suffered a further decline when St. Pius X High School became a co-ed school in 1972. These blows to Immaculata precipitated a student population drop to around 400 students.

At the same time, the Grey Sisters were facing increasing financial challenges in maintaining Immaculata. The mid 1970s, as a result, saw increased involvement from volunteers to help the Grey Sisters to meet these financial challenges. The volunteers served on a lay advisory board providing advice to the school principal, a management board, a lottery committee and the Immaculata Foundation, which used interest from investments to support Immaculata and Grey Sisters' projects.

A \$100 lottery was established with weekly prizes, with Robert Hunter coordinating the fund on behalf of the school and community. The funds from this lottery supplemented the support, which the Grey Sisters were able to provide. In addition, lay staff members took on extra duties and classes to help the Grey Sisters.

As Immaculata celebrated its golden anniversary in 1978, boys were admitted for the first time in its history, and, in 1984, grades 7 and 8 students were added as well. This was also a significant year because Ontario Premier Bill Davis announced full funding for Catholic schools. The resulting grants for Grades 11, 12 and 13 gave Immaculata the financial stability that it needed and eased the fiscal pressures that Immaculata had been facing since the 1970s.

As Immaculata marked its 60th anniversary in 1988, change continued. James J. Shea was appointed as the school's first lay principal, ending the tradition of having a Grey Sister at the helm. Enrolment at Immaculata, once again increasing, had grown to 870 students by 1988. The biggest change in the school's history occurred just after Immaculata celebrated its 65th anniversary. In September 1994, Immaculata students and staff moved from the treasured Bronson Avenue site to a facility at 281 Echo Drive, which had been built in 1929-30 as St. Patrick's College, administered by the Oblate Fathers. The Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board purchased the site from Algonquin College, with Edward Cuhaci as the architect for the renovations that were undertaken at that time.

At this new location, Immaculata held its first Terry Fox Run in 1995. Since that time, the school has raised over \$100,000 for cancer research through its Terry Fox Runs involving students, staff and parents.

In 1996, Immaculata students went on their first trip to the Dominican Republic where they visited the missions of the Grey Sisters.

In the spring of 2000, a satellite classroom site for Immaculata High School was set up at St. Mary's Home, a dynamic centre that brings together, in one location, a variety of community services in the support of young pregnant teens. As a result of a formal partnership between the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board and the Home, a classroom was created within the residence to enable pregnant teenagers from all schools in the city to continue with their academics during their pregnancies. The inaugural class had ten students. Bernard Swords was the first principal of this satellite site, followed by Denise Andre and then by Tom D'Amico, the current principal. Maryalice Mullally has been the teacher in this satellite classroom since its inception.

The program began in a basement room at St. Mary's Home residence in May 2000. In January 2002, the program moved into a newly renovated facility at 780 rue de l'Eglise called St. Mary's Home Community Outreach and Program Centre. The students helped to design the classroom, which is a bright and inviting setting that is very conducive to learning. The school held its first graduation in June 2000, and has had a growing number of graduates ever since. In 2006, St. Mary's Home presented a plaque to the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board in gratitude for its partnership and the support that it gives to the home in providing its residents with an amazing educational opportunity.

Immaculata High School was one of eight Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board schools which, in the 2005-06 school year, raised approximately \$6,000 in total for the "OK Clean Water Project." This project (OK stands for Ottawa-Kumbo, a

town in Cameroon in Africa) is an initiative of the Congregation of Notre Dame, an international religious community of Sisters and associates. The “OK Clean Water Project” supports the purchase of water pipes, which are laid from a clean water source into their communities by villagers in Cameroon.

Immaculata High School celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2003 and is now moving towards its centennial in 2028.

Present Principal

Thomas D’Amico (2003–present)

Past Principals

Sister Loyola (1928) (while students attended classes at St. Patrick’s Home)
Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart (1928-1941) (first principal at Bronson Avenue site)

Sister Mary Christine (1941-67)
Sister Lucille Martin (1967-70)
Sister Anna Clare (1970-75 and 1976-82)

Sister Anne O’Brien (1975-76)
Sister Theresa Kelly (1982-87)
James J. Shea (1987-89)

Mary Durst (1989-95)
Evelyn Kelly (1989 (acting) and 1995-1997)

Bernard Swords (1998-2001)
Denise Andre (2001-03)

All of the Sisters who were principals were Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Former Staff, Students and Others

In 1988, Sister Barbara Ryan was honoured as one of three Grey Sisters still teaching at Immaculata. She began teaching at Immaculata in 1950.

Evelyn Kelly, a former student, teacher and principal at Immaculata, was the first recipient of the YM-YWCA’s Women of Distinction Award for Education, Training and Development in 1994. This award is presented annually celebrating the achievements of women and honouring the women who inspire others in the community.

A former Immaculata staff member and Art teacher, Father Herman Falke, has received national and international acclaim as an artist and sculptor. His work is based principally on liturgical and scriptural themes.

Edgar “Rocky” Rockburn was Immaculata’s school custodian for 28 years, retiring at the age of 69. For 28 years, he arrived at the school at 4 a.m. each day.

Chris Spiteri was elected Immaculata’s first head boy in the school’s history in the 1982-83 school year.

Joseph Meagher, builder of the original school building and convent as well as several additions, attended the school’s 50th anniversary celebrations in 1978. He was 91 years old at the time.

2003 Immaculata graduate Corey Centen became the first graduate to win the prestigious Canadian Merit Scholarship worth over \$8,000. In that same year, Corey also won gold at the Canadian National Science competition.

Former Immaculata Principal Bernard Swords became a Justice of the Peace after retiring from education.

The first lay staff member at Immaculata was Vera McCoy, who taught elocution. She helped build the school’s Drama Club presenting annual plays, which became major events in the community.

Alice Maloney was one of the graduating students in the picture of the first graduating class which hung on the wall on the top floor of Immaculata’s Bronson Avenue building. There were only five graduates that year. Alice was also in the first graduating class of nurses at the University of Ottawa, as the university had just started classes for registered nurses. Alice went on from her university graduation to join the war effort as a “Wren.”

A number of Immaculata graduates have become members of religious communities. Several graduates, as Grey Sisters, have served as missionaries in China, Japan, the Bahamas and the Dominican Republic.

International singing star Alanis Morissette attended Immaculata for Grades 7 and 8. At the age of 12, she produced her first record, *Fate Stay With Me*. On the cover of an album she wrote a note to a teacher, Mr. Gorman, as follows: “Mr. Gorman, just think, you’ve taught me all I know, and I’ll never swallow gum again. Alanis.”

Student Keenan MacWilliam took time away from her studies at Immaculata to star in the television series *The Saddle Club*. She also appeared in the Saddle Club movie and appeared in several music CD’s and concerts for the show. She also had roles in a number of other movies including a TV movie called *Get a Clue* for Disney Productions. She was the host and presenter for a pilot television show, *Popular Mechanics for Kids*.

Craig Lauzon had a regular role on The Comedy Network's *Chez Carla*. He co-wrote and starred in *The Chick and Cubby Comedy Hour*, which received a Canadian Comedy Award nomination for best new play. He is a member of the comedy troupe *Tonto's Nephews* and is a regular cast member of *Air Farce* on CBC-TV.

Immaculata graduate Dorothy Dunn became the Director of the Teacher Education Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Education.

Immaculata graduate Andrew Scheer was elected as a member of the House of Commons for the riding of Regina-Qu'Appelle in Saskatchewan in June 2004.

Immaculata graduate Lynn Nightingale became a Canadian ladies' figure-skating champion.

David Azzi had an outstanding football career with the University of Ottawa and then played for the Ottawa Renegades of the Canadian Football League in 2004 and 2005. The Toronto Argonauts in the Renegades' dispersal draft picked him up in April 2006.

Ben Eager was drafted by the Phoenix Coyotes in the first round of the National Hockey League Entry Draft in 2002. He then went on to the Philadelphia Flyers organization.

Jeremy Mercer worked as a crime reporter with the *Ottawa Citizen* from 1995 to 1999. He is the founder of a literary magazine, *Kilometer Zero*, and recently published his third book, *Time Was Soft There*.

1990 Immaculata graduate Kris Klein is a counsel in the federal Department of Justice and is a co-author of a leading

text, *The Law of Privacy in Canada*.

Immaculata graduate Carmel Maloney attended university and then joined the Ottawa Police Department in its first hiring of female officers. When she married, she had to resign because a female officer could not remain on the Force if married, at a time when male officers could marry and still remain with the Police Department.

Immaculata graduate Colleen Swords is Canada's ambassador to the Netherlands.

Immaculata graduate Rita Desjardins became an elected trustee with the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board.

Immaculata graduate Betty-Ann Kealey became an elected trustee, serving as Chairperson of the Ottawa Roman Catholic Separate School Board and of the Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board.

School Colours

The school colours are navy blue, white and silver/grey.

Logo and Motto

The school logo and motto were created in 1967 by Sister Mary Paula (Rita McGuire) and her students. The centennial year class project was presented to Principal Sister Mary Christine for approval. The students came up with the motto "Study Builds Character." They also designed the school logo with its three symbols: a white lily as a symbol of Mary's immaculate purity, a Celtic cross in recognition of the financial contributions of Irish Catholics in Ottawa and the lamp of learning to recognize the pursuit of knowledge.

Mascot

The school mascot is a Saint Bernard called "Bernie Mac."

Team Names

The school sports teams are known by the nickname "Saints."

Feast Day

The Feast of the Immaculate Conception on December 8 is celebrated at Immaculata every year. The Virgin Mary is the school's patroness.

Trips

At one time Immaculata students were escorted by their teachers on annual pilgrimages to Mayo, Quebec where there is a shrine to Our Lady of Knock, honouring the Blessed Virgin's appearance to children in Ireland. Father Braceland, who at various times served at St. Patrick and St. Theresa Parishes in Ottawa, visited the Our Lady of Knock shrine in Ireland and brought back relics to Canada. Later, he established a similar shrine in Mayo. Both sites are recognized around the world. Father Braceland's sister, Sister Mary David of the Grey Sisters, was a teacher at Immaculata High School.

Song

The school song was written and composed by Sister Loyola (1875-1953) and Michael C. MacNeil (1893-1958).

The lyrics are as follows:

Immaculata
Immaculata, we praise Thee;
Loyal we'll always stand
'Neath dar'ning cloud or sunbeam
light,
Our hearts at thy command –
And though the years in their swift
flight
May find us apart,
Thy cherished name will all unite
Immaculata hail!
Mem'ries that ne'er will fade,
Comrades and friends so dear,
Souls that are unafraid –
All these are gathered here.

Subjects

In 1929, students trying for Lower School standing, which enabled them to enter Normal School, were required to study the following subjects: botany, physiography, arithmetic, zoology, geography, English grammar and English history.

Subjects taken when aiming for promotion to higher forms and to Ontario matriculation included Catholic apologetics, French, English, geometry, algebra and latin.

Yearbook

The school's first yearbook was published in 1942. It was dedicated to Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart, the first principal of Immaculata at the Bronson Avenue site. She wrote this message in the yearbook: "In the war-torn world of today, "V" stands for Victory. Immaculata girls of 1941-42, it will be your glorious task to make "V" stand for Virtue in the post-war world which will necessarily require fundamental re-making in the pursuits of home, career, art, literature, science, business and the professions."

Immaculata's first hardcover yearbook, entitled *Highlights*, was published in 1955.

Ladies' Auxiliary

A Ladies' Auxiliary was formed at Immaculata in the 1950s to raise funds for the school. Large community dinners were a regular activity of this Ladies Auxiliary.

Drama Club

The school's drama club celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1955.

Uniforms

By 1978, Immaculata was into the fourth version of its school uniform. The first was simply a black smock, the second a navy blue tunic, and the third a royal blue vest and short kilt. The current uniform colours are blue and gray.

Graduates

Over 6,000 students graduated from Immaculata from its beginnings in 1928 to its 65th anniversary in 1993.

The Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

The history of the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception begins with the Sisters of Charity of Montreal (Grey Nuns) whose foundress, Marguerite d'Youville, was the first Canadian-born saint in the Catholic Church. One of the daughter groups of the Montreal congregation was the Grey Nuns of the Cross in Bytown (now the Sisters of Charity of Ottawa). In 1926, the Grey Sisters of the Immaculate Conception were formed from the Ottawa community as a Canadian English-speaking congregation, with its motherhouse and novitiate in Pembroke.

Immaculata continues to have a link with the Grey Sisters. The Grey Sisters and the Immaculata Foundation provide \$8,000 in scholarships and awards on a yearly basis to Immaculata graduates. In addition, the Immaculata Foundation provides support to the chaplaincy at Immaculata as well as to the Religious Education Department. The Immaculata Foundation continues to function with its Board of Directors consisting of Grey Sisters and members of Ottawa's education and business community.

The Grey Sisters

Sisters who taught at Immaculata between 1928 and 1993

Sister Agnes of the Sacred Heart
 Sister Loyola
 Sister St. Geraldine
 Sister St. Richard
 Sister Mary of Mount Carmel
 Sister St. Waltrude
 Sister St. John
 Sister St. Hilda
 Sister Helen of the Sacred Heart (G. Desrochers)
 Sister Mary Christine
 Sister Mary of the Sacred Heart (Tunney)
 Sister Mary Celine (Marion Kelly)
 Sister Mary Louise
 Sister Mary Elizabeth
 Sister Adeltrude
 Sister Mildred
 Sister St. Walbert
 Sister Mary Ida
 Sister St. Leo
 Sister Mary Beanor (Eleanor Swain)
 Sister Catherine of the Cross (Gladys Brennan)
 Sister Mary Alice
 Sister Francis Clare
 Sister Margaret Mary (Mildred Moyle)
 Sister M. Celestine (Geraldine Kelly)
 Sister Mary Monica (Monica Prestley)
 Sister Mary Charlotte (Margaret M. O'Neill)
 Sister Mary Alfred (Gwyneth Roberts)
 Sister St. Benilda
 Sister St. Denis (Evelyn Melcohe)
 Sister St. Basil (Teresa Doyle)
 Sister Mary Terence
 Sister St. Helena
 Sister Mary Andrew
 Sister Maureen (Nora Dolan)

Sister St. Emma
 Sister Teresa Ann (Helen
 Dunnigan)
 Sister Francis Maurice
 Sister Mary David
 Sister Frances Margaret
 Sister Mary Joanna (Barbara
 Ryan)
 Sister Mary Mildred (Margaret
 Ferguson)
 Sister Mary Stephen (Catherine
 McCann)
 Sister Mary Sheila (Marguerite
 Somers)
 Sister Mary Lucia
 Sister Mary Lucille (Lucille
 Martin)
 Sister Mary of Perpetual Help
 (Mary Mulligan)
 Sister Mary Evangelista (Helen
 Nolan)
 Sister Mary Sylvia (Bernice
 McCoy)
 Sister Mary James (Catherine
 Noonan)
 Sister Mary Olive (Geraldine
 Daley)
 Sister Patricia Ann (Joan Nugent)
 Sister William Bernard
 (Bernadette Kinsella)
 Sister Mary Arthur (Rose Welsh)
 Sister Mary Teresa (Teresa Kelly)
 Sister Mary Deborah (Catherine
 Fairbairn)
 Sister Mary Rosaleen (Margaret
 Ann Cuthbert)
 Sister Mary Hugh (Helen Berthe)
 Sister Mary Paula (Rita McGuire)
 Sister Mary Susan (Anne Taylor)
 Sister Mary Paschal (Marie
 McArdie)
 Sister Mary Julia (Catherine Shea)
 Sister Mary Cornelia (Cornelia
 Goulet)
 Sister St. Callista (Elizabeth
 Johnston)
 Sister St. Barbara (Madeline
 Tokar)

Sister Mary Gregory (Mary Anne
 Bondy)
 Sister Mary Adrian (Celia
 Turcotte)
 Sister Margaret Helen (Helen
 Leeney)
 Sister Mary Patricia
 Sister Mary Judith (Margaret
 Foran)
 Sister Michael Anne (Anne
 O'Brien)
 Sister St. Frances (Houlihan)
 Sister Margaret Dempster
 Sister Anna Clare
 Sister Gertrude Harrington
 Sister Elizabeth Ann Kinsella
 Sister Mary Ruddy
 Sister Bonnie Zentner
 Sister Mary Irene
 Sister Mary Beatrice
 Sister Roseann (Teresa Todd)
 Sister St. Ignatius Loyola

**Sisters who taught in the Music Department
 at Immaculata High School**

Sister St. Edmund
 Sister St. Bernard (Bernadette
 Stanton)
 Sister Mary Claire
 Sister Zita of the Cross
 Sister Mary Arthur (Rose Welsh)
 Sister St. Agatha
 Sister Mary Erma (Erma
 Courneene)
 Sister Paul of the Cross (Madeline
 Demarse)
 Sister St. Geralda
 Sister Caroline
 Sister Mary Elaine (Elaine
 Reaume)
 Sister St. Inez (Marilyn Burns)
 Sister St. Bonaventure (Florence
 Lapierre)
 Sister Mary of Victory (Sheila
 Finnerty)
 Sister St. Stephen (Aileen Johnson)
 Sister Diane Marie (Anne
 Fairbairn)

Immaculata Graduates

Immaculata High School graduates
 who have returned to the school as lay staff
 members

Amy Connolly
 Jane Cronin
 Anne Mason
 Louise Hunter
 Joan St. Germain
 Patricia Reilly
 Carol Arnason
 Emily Grimes
 Maureen DeMontigny
 Carol Farbar
 Rita Costantini
 Julie Swords
 Sheila Fergus
 Donna Shaughnessy
 Kathleen Robinson
 Mary Gauthier
 Kathleen Dodds (Maloney)
 Evelyn Kelly
 Brent Hopkins

