

2019 Agnes C. Higgins Tribute Award

Marie-Paule Duquette, P.Dt.



Marie-Paule Duquette graduated from the *Université de Montréal's* Department of Nutrition and completed her internship at the University of Saskatoon.

In November 1968, she was hired as a nutritional counsellor by the Dispensary. In 1976, she became the director of the one-year internship program in community nutrition. In August 1981, the Board of Administrators appointed her executive director of the Dispensary, a position she held until December 2013.

Over the years, she built up a solid team of dietitians, educators, lactation consultants, social workers, epidemiologists and administrative support staff who, with the support of the Board of Administrators, successfully took on a number of challenges.

In her role as executive director, to complement the counselling services provided by the Dispensary through the "Higgins[©] Method," she initiated group activities to support breastfeeding mothers, foster the mother-child bond and promote the acquisition of parenting and social integration skills. She opened a drop-in daycare centre and kitchen to give mothers opportunities to make new friends and provide each other with assistance.

Under Duquette's leadership, the research aspect gained momentum in order to provide scientific proof that the Higgins approach made a difference. Duquette completed Higgins' research and conducted approximately 30 studies on topics that included twin pregnancy; teen pregnancy; the feasibility, effectiveness and financial viability of the Higgins[©] Method in CLSCs; the cost of rental housing; the design and validation of the screening tool; early prevention of diabetes; breastfeeding; chefs' challenges; and the cost of the Nutritious Food Basket in various regions of Quebec and in the Cree community of James Bay.

The Dispensary's approach ended up setting the standard. From 1978 to 1981, Duquette coordinated training sessions for 115 American health care professionals through a project funded by the American March of Dimes Birth Defect Foundation. From 1981 to 1993, the same course was made available to Canadian health care professionals through a grant from Health Canada. From 1994 to 2013, Duquette coordinated intensive prenatal nutritional counselling internship sessions for dietitians in Quebec. For more than 15 years, she took part in the annual National Maternal Nutrition Intensive Course, a week-long training session offered by the University of Minnesota and other institutions to over 300 health care professionals each year.

In 2009, the *Ordre professionnel des diététistes du Québec* presented Duquette with the *Prix d'Excellence en carrière Suzanne-Simard-Mavrikakis*.

