

**Tania Martin**

**Assistant professor and Canada Research Chair in Built Religious Heritage  
School of Architecture, Laval University, Laval, Québec**

Professor Martin is an assistant professor of architecture at Laval University. She also holds the Canada Research Chair in Built Religious Heritage.

A building, she explains, is an archive. But buildings alone don't tell the whole story.

It takes more than measurement and photography to understand buildings. Students in Martin's courses learn to consult archives, community records, diaries, letters and maps. And they learn the social skills to meet with people and conduct oral histories by documenting memories and personal stories.



She completed her Bachelor of Architecture degree at the University of Toronto, and went on to McGill for a master's degree. In Montréal she was first inspired to look closely at domestic environments and cultural landscapes. She then completed a PhD at the University of California at Berkeley, with a focus on architectural history.

During her studies, Tania's understanding of the built environment broadened. She learned to look for signs of human modification in all environments. Even nature and parks are kinds of built environment, in her view, because "we structure the environment, and continually modify it."

Martin hopes that students from a variety of disciplines—history, archaeology and geography as well as architecture—will join her master's level course in Built Heritage and Conservation.

In the spring of 2007, Martin and six students travelled to the Gaspé to study two churches. The task sounded simple, but the church sites were complex environments that had undergone through many changes over time. The churches and their parishes are good examples of the "two solitudes" of French and English communities in Québec, Martin explains. One parish, St-Pierre de Barachois, is French Catholic, the other, St. Peter's in Malbaie, is English Anglican.

Students will return in 2008 to continue the work of documenting the buildings. Tania Martin also teaches a design course examines the issues associated with the



Tania Martin leads a workshop with students and community members, Gaspé, spring 2007

which adaptive

reuse of religious heritage. A recent case study looked at Québec's Hôtel Dieu Hospital which has outgrown its facilities and is considering building its out-patient clinics in an adjacent military barracks. As part of an exercise, Martin's students drew up different plans for the hospital's proposed expansion.

In addition to her university duties, Professor Martin serves on the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. She gets to review the sites, properties, people and events that are nominated for official plaques.

She has also been appointed as the Canada Research Chair in Built Religious Heritage. In her research, Martin plans to focus on developing new strategies to revitalize religious heritage buildings and propose improvements to conservation policy.



"I want to study places and landscapes that have spiritual significance for people," she says. "I think that built religious heritage may be much broader than we traditionally think."

School of Architecture, Laval University  
<http://www.arc.ulaval.ca/>

Canada Research Chairs – Profile on Tania Martin  
[http://www.chairs.gc.ca/web/chairholders/viewprofile\\_e.asp?id=1731&](http://www.chairs.gc.ca/web/chairholders/viewprofile_e.asp?id=1731&)

Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada  
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