

Currents

Our home & native ...



Badaboum

When the 1987 NHL All-Star Game was set aside in favour of an exhibition series between the National Hockey League's best and the Soviet national team at the Colisée in Quebec City, a blue, wacky-looking creature — whose exact zoological identity is still hotly debated — made a first appearance. His name was Badaboum, and officially he was the mascot of the Rendez-Vous '87 series. He was so popular, though, that the NHL's Quebec Nordiques adopted him as their mascot.

For almost a decade, Badaboum entertained fans at the Colisée with his bizarre dance moves and kooky antics. But in 1995, the NHL franchise abandoned Quebec City for Denver, leaving Badaboum behind. The timing was especially tragic — the Colorado Avalanche would go on to sip champagne from the Stanley Cup the next season. Worse yet, Badaboum was replaced by a goofy white yeti named Howler.

The strange blue mascot is nevertheless fondly remembered, and his costume is proudly displayed at the offices of Creations JCT, outside Montreal. The company has been producing mascots for over twenty years, and one of its star creations is the fuzzy Badaboum.

— Christopher Webb



The Arrival of the Brides, a painting by Eleanor Fortescue Brickdale, shows Intendant Jean Talon and Bishop Laval greeting filles du roi at Quebec in 1667.

The king's daughters

Each spring, the men of New France listened with great anticipation for the cracking sound of ice dams breaking up on the St. Lawrence River, heralding the arrival of supply ships from France, their cargo holds bulging with foodstuffs, tools, trade goods, livestock, and — in at least one of those annual ships — a consignment of young, single women.

Soldiers, merchants, farmers, and coureurs de bois gathered on the wharf to eye the women as they disembarked on unsteady sea legs after their long and harrowing ocean journey. There was no opportunity to actually socialize, however, as the prospective brides — some as young as twelve — were quickly ushered away to their living quarters by nuns, who oversaw the screening of the suitors who came knocking.

The filles du roi — or king's daughters — were part of the Louis XIV's program of rapidly populating France's newly established colonies. Often poor orphans with few prospects, but sometimes women from the noble classes, they were lured to the



February 11
To celebrate the opening of the first Canada Winter Games in Quebec City in 1967. Get on your mark.



February 25
To note the 1831 granting of the first Canadian railroad charter to the Champlain and St. Lawrence Railroad. Make tracks.



Joseph Kage describes the plight of young François Lenois, who pleaded guilty in court to illegally trading with the natives: “The sentence passed by the judge was a most unusual one. François was to promise that as soon as the next group of girls arrived in Canada, he would marry one of them. If he failed to carry out this promise, he would have to pay a fine of one-hundred-fifty pounds.”

Men seeking brides had to report to the nuns and give a full account of themselves. If the suitor was found to be acceptable, he was presented to several women and allowed to choose. The women were not obligated to accept any marriage proposal, and even if they did, they often had a few weeks in which to change their minds, which was common.

While most of the women who arrived in the early years of the colony proved acceptable as brides, the pool of suitable young women began to dwindle over time. A group in 1669 “was said to have ‘some among them that were very coarse and very difficult to manage,’” says historical researcher Jack Verney in *The Good Regiment*. Marie de l’Incarnation, superior of the Ursuline convent in Quebec, began asking for “only country girls, as capable of

New World with the promise of free passage, a small dowry, and the chance to marry a man with a little land. With men in New France outnumbering women about seven to one, the new arrivals’ chances of marrying within a few weeks were high. But storybook romance was another thing.

A significant number of men in the colony were reluctant suitors. The freewheeling fur traders, who were often ex-soldiers, had little desire to marry. This alarmed the colony’s ambitious administrator, Jean Talon, whose job it was to develop a thriving, stable colony of French citizens. He cracked down on the bachelor life, imposing new rules in 1668, which barred any man from hunting and trading if he was still unmarried fifteen days after the arrival of the next shipment of women.

Even the courts nudged the single men into wedded bliss. In *Sketches of Canadian Life Under the French Regime*, historian

working as men are. Experience has shown that those who have not been raised to it are not suitable here.” Truly difficult cases — such as women who engaged in prostitution or other crimes — were deported back to France.

The majority of the filles du roi married and bore many children, at the encouragement of the state, which paid families of ten children or more generous pensions. The surviving progeny were a sturdy lot, observed Marie de l’Incarnation: “A poor man will have eight children and more, who run about in winter with bare heads and bare feet, and a little jacket on their backs, live on nothing but bread and eels, and on that grow fat and stout.”

The legacy of these robust families lives on today, with many Quebecers being able to trace their ancestry back to the filles du roi.

— Nelle Oosterom



March 3

To observe the day in 1875 that Montrealers witnessed the playing of the first indoor hockey game. Keep score.



March 13

To revere Henri de Bernières, who in 1660 was the first priest to be ordained in Canada. Fall to your knees.