



On this promontory, "Le Cap Diamant", named by Jacques Cartier in 1535, are found the oldest parts of the city of Quebec. The "Promenade des Gouverneurs", a boardwalk 670 metres long, decorates the walls of the Citadel. Photo: Mia and Klaus.

### Quebec French — Real French?

Some unknowing English Canadians say that Quebec French is not real French. It is real enough. It is not the French of Paris, nor the French of Marseilles, nor of Bordeaux. It comes, basically, from Normandy in the 17th century, exported to Canada at that time and retaining some aspects of its old vocabulary. It is Norman French that de Maupassant, writing in the 1870's, would have recognized. His short stories are full of bits of the same Norman French one finds in Quebec: "icitte" for "ici", "pi" for "puis", and other characteristics. The French of Paris is official French, but each region of France, like Quebec, has its own regional accents. English is the same. The Yorkshireman, the Australian, and the Canadian all speak English; it is certainly not the same English, nor is it the English of the Queen. Equally, the Marseillais, the Norman, the French Canadian, all speak French. It is not the same French as that of upper class Paris.

There are anglicisms that have crept into France that have been rejected in Quebec. In France it is "le weekend", in Quebec it is "la fin de semaine"; in France the road sign says "stop", in Quebec "arrêt". Quebec French does, however, include words from English that French in France does not, especially from commerce, business and engineering. One amusing example is the word "dominion". In English, it means two things — it is part of Canada's 1867 name, *viz.*, the Dominion of Canada; it is also the name of a large supermarket chain called

"Dominion Stores". To go to a supermarket, any supermarket, French Canadians are apt to say, "Je fais mon Dominion", meaning, that I am doing my supermarket grocery shopping. There are numerous other examples of the effect of English upon French in Canada. But notwithstanding that, it has to be said that Quebec's French is French. If it happens to be delivered in a regional accent that does not make it less French. Of course, French Canadians worry about deterioration of language standards in the modern world the same as we English do. In French it is more serious because French grammar is more demanding than English, and grammatical mistakes stand out like sore thumbs. And the French care about these things, rather more than the English do.

### French — An Island in a Sea of English

The fact of French is the first and in some important ways the only point to be made about French Canadians. It is a French Canadian society. It lives, works, thinks, loves in French. French Canadians care passionately about their language in ways that English Canadians fail largely to understand. The North American world of English is a world, like the Australian, not obvious because one is part of it. English-speaking North America is not just Canada, but the United States. This world comprises 250,000,000 people who speak English. The whole North American continent north of the Rio Grande, (the Mexican border), from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic, with its power, riches, greed, well-meaning naïveté, generosity, all its energy and its