

FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT
CENTRE ASTICOU -BLOCKS 2000-2700, 241 CITE DES JEUNES, GATINEAU, QC

FHBRO Number: **04-061**
DFRP Number: **07542**
Resource Name: **Centre Asticou - Blocks 2000-2700**
Address: **241 Cite des jeunes, Gatineau, QC**
FHBRO Status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**
Construction: **1963-1968**
Designer: **Papineau Gerin-Lajoie Leblanc**
Original Function: **Vocational and academic (comprehensive) high school (Ecole Polyvalente pour la Commission scolaire regionale de l’Outaouais)**
Current Function: **Government language training centre**
Modifications: **Major retrofit which involved re-partitioning, installation of a water source heat pump system serving Blocks 100-1100 and 2100-2300, and installation of air conditioning systems in Blocks 1200-200 and 2400-2700 (1976-77); extensive retrofit to accommodate the National Museum of Canada and the Museum of Civilization (1980); refurbishing program to address building code violations, HVAC deficiencies and provide new roofing, a new sprinkler system and new tenant services (1991-94); interior renovation of Block 1900 including addition of a new mezzanine and skylights (2000-02).**
Custodian: **Public Works and Government Services Canada**

Description of Historic Place

Centre Asticou consists of a twenty-six unit complex of buildings arranged in a roughly rectangular grid and linked by a network of corridors to form an interconnected, campus type layout. Centre Asticou was built in three stages beginning with the academic section (Blocks 100-1100), the vocational section (Blocks 2000-2700) and the common services facilities (Blocks 1200-1900). Blocks 2000-2700 consist of eight mainly low lying, one storey buildings clad with dark red brick and wood shingles, and feature extensive fenestration and flat black metal roofs with exposed black metal vertical supports running along the roofline. The one exception is Block 2100, which has a distinctive cedar-clad truncated pyramidal roof. Tucked into a rolling, park-like landscape, the Centre Asticou is located in an enclave of educational buildings and sits within the Gatineau Park and Parkway system. Blocks 2000-2700 are grouped together at the eastern side of the center of the site. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building^s.

Heritage Value

Centre Asticou – Blocks 2000-2700 together constitute a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of their historical associations, and their architectural and environmental values:

Historical value:

Through its initial use as a vocational and academic Québec secondary school, Centre Asticou is a convenient example of fundamental changes to Québec secondary education, stemming from major legislation passed in 1961. The Centre’s early and current use as a federal government language training facility also makes it a

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useful illustration of federal government expansion in the 1960s and of the need for government training facilities following the passage of the Official Languages Act, which made bilingualism a requirement for federal public servants beginning in the 1970s. As the first secondary school in Hull, now part of the amalgamated City of Gatineau, the Centre Asticou was built to serve a large region of potential students and is a very good illustration of the community's suburban expansion.

Architectural value:

Blocks 2000-2700 are a good example of the blending of several architectural styles and trends popular in Canadian architecture during the 1960s, in particular, the Modern International Style. Part of the second phase of construction at Centre Asticou, Blocks 2000-2700 are characterized by a low profile, clean lines, a pronounced horizontal emphasis, and a balanced asymmetry. Centre Asticou was designed to reflect new philosophies in Québec education including the creation of schools designed to promote teaching productivity, encourage teamwork and stimulate individual learning. Blocks 2000-2700 clearly express this ambitious and complex pedagogical program through the human scale of the architecture, the harmony of the design with the surrounding natural environment, the good functional quality of the blocks which are arranged into clear functional groupings, and the careful choice and combination of good quality materials used to create a sense of warmth, scale and harmony. The Prairie Style, organic American architecture, West coast architecture and a modern rustic vernacular found throughout Québec, influenced these aspects of the design.

Environmental value:

A low lying complex of buildings tucked into a rolling park-like landscape, Centre Asticou reinforces the present character of the area, which is composed of a band of institutional buildings situated between a suburban neighbourhood and a large natural park within the National Capital Region. Blocks 2000-2700 are grouped together at the eastern side of the center of the site and are surrounded by large, open, landscaped lawns and mature trees. Centre Asticou is recognized throughout the National Capital Region as a federal language training facility due to the large number of federal public servants and residents who have frequented the establishment.

Character-Defining Elements

The following character-defining elements of Centre Asticou - Blocks 2000-2700 should be respected:

The manner in which its architectural design illustrates the historical theme of fundamental changes to Québec secondary education stemming from major legislation passed in 1961, and reflects new philosophies in Québec education including the creation of schools designed to promote teaching productivity, encourage teamwork and stimulate individual learning as expressed in:

- The human scale of the architecture;
- The arrangement of the complex of buildings into clear functional groupings and their interior layouts;
- The harmonious interaction between the building and the natural, park-like surroundings; and,
- The blending of several architectural styles and trends popular in Canadian architecture in the 1960s, which influenced these aspects of the design.

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Its good aesthetic design, which blends together elements from the Modern International Style, as well as the Prairie Style, organic American architecture, West Coast architecture and a modern rustic vernacular found throughout Québec, its good functional quality and its good quality materials and craftsmanship as manifested in the:

- Low, sprawling, single storey massing of the buildings (with the exception of Block 2200);
- Pronounced horizontality created by the low elevations, flat rooflines and the linear pattern of the windows and brickwork, which is balanced by vertical elements such as the exterior expression of the structural skeleton that divides the brick panels, the projecting bays at either end of the second level of Block 2200, and the evenly spaced, exposed, black metal supports along the roof line of Blocks 2000 and 2600;
- Overall lightness of the composition achieved by the clean lines, the large picture windows and the black metal roofs supported on exposed beams floating above a narrow band of clerestory fenestration;
- Distinctive hat-like roof of Block 2100, comprised of a truncated pyramidal base over a band of clerestory windows, and supporting a smaller truncated pyramid;
- Arrangement of the complex of buildings into clear functional groupings such as academic, vocational and common services where Blocks 2000-2700 are the vocational section;
- Interior layouts of the blocks, which allow for a variety of educational experiences, including group classrooms, meeting rooms and individual study areas;
- Open and fluid design of the shared public and resource spaces, which are infused with natural light;
- Extensive fenestration, such as the large picture windows looking out to the grounds or the inner courtyards, which provide glimpses to the exterior's natural environment;
- High, pyramidal, wood-panelled ceilings and soaring, open interior spaces in Block 2100;
- Wide, well-lit corridors with their warm, wood plank and beam ceilings;
- Visually cohesive relationship between the all the buildings at the complex due to their consistent choice of materials and detailing;
- Choice of warm, natural materials for the exterior cladding of the buildings such as cedar shingles and mottled, dark red brick;
- External and internal expression of the wood post and beam construction including the exposed cross beams under the rooflines of some of the buildings;
- Connection details between elements of different materials, in particular the expressed steel angles and brackets connecting elements of the wood structure.

The manner in which the building reinforces the present character of the area, which is composed of a band of institutional buildings situated between a suburban neighbourhood and a large natural park, as well as its symbolic landmark value as evidenced in:

- Its visual harmony with the surrounding natural environment owing to its scale, low horizontal massing and choice of materials;
- Its location and role as a buffer zone at the edge of Gatineau Park; and,
- Its identity and familiarity to federal public servants and residents as a federal language training facility.

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For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. For further information contact FHBRO.

October 2006

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