

# FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

## ALEXANDER DUNN PUBLIC SCHOOL, #P-148, CFB BORDEN

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FHBRO number: **94-088**  
DFRP number: **11022**  
Resource name: **Alexander Dunn Public School, P-148**  
Address: **CFB Borden, Ontario**  
FHBRO status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction : **1952 (first phase)**  
Designer : **Barott, Marshall, Montgomery & Merrett Architects, Montréal**  
Original function : **Elementary school**  
Current function : **Elementary school (renamed)**  
Modifications : **Addition of new wings; minor window and interior adjustments**  
Custodian : **Department of National Defence**

### Reasons for Designation

Building P-148, the Alexander Dunn Public School, is a “Recognized” Federal Heritage Building because of its historical associations, and its architectural and environmental values.

#### Historical value:

The Alexander Dunn Public School is part of the post-World War II base plan of Camp Borden (now CFB Borden), and associated with the theme of the introduction of family accommodation and services in support of a new conception of the military career. In parallel with other services after 1945, the Royal Canadian Air Force introduced subdivision plans with detached houses for married personnel and their dependents, patterned on the emerging civilian suburbs. The plans included supporting community facilities and recreation areas as centres within discrete neighbourhoods, three of which were developed at Borden. The primary themes for the historical value of building P-148 are (1) the social transformation of military services after 1945, and (2) the widening of traditional federal construction activity for the military to supporting non-military facilities. Erected in 1952 to a standard neighbourhood school design of 1950, and named for the first Canadian-born winner of the Victoria Cross (in the Crimean War) the school is integral to the neighbourhoods at the eastern edge of CFB Borden, south of the village of Angus.

#### Architectural value:

Building P-148, the Alexander Dunn Public School is a flat-roofed, steel-framed construction on grade, clad in red brick, with large multi-pane windows that correspond to the interior layout, a rectilinear though irregular U-shaped layout of classrooms and spaces along central hallways. Save for a second-storey balcony in the gymnasium, the building has one storey. Constructed in phases during the early 1950s to the standard RCAF school plan, more recent single-storey wings have been extended to both north-east and north-west. While clad in similar red brick, these extensions are at angles to the original plan grid, with slightly different roof profiles, with yellow-brick accents, and with fewer and smaller window openings.

The main entrance, adjacent to the school office and in front of the gymnasium block, is from the north (street-side) at the approximate centre of the inside of the U-plan. The main entrance maintains its original configuration of paired glazed doors with multi-paned transoms and sidelights matching the original windows. The original classroom and office windows, now altered, comprised sets of two-, four- or six-part stacks of three fixed horizontal units atop a slightly larger operable bottom pane, each set rising from a sill level of roughly three feet to the height of the interior ceilings. The double-height space of

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the gymnasium is day-lit through upper level glass-block walls on both north and south faces. The original slim and shallow overhanging eaves have been covered over by a sheet-metal parapet and soffit.

Apart from the added wings, the building is low-slung late modernist hybrid of asymmetrically ordered simplicity, characteristic of school architecture in the suburban baby-boom period of the 1950s, open to light and air in an open green plain that both sets off the aesthetic character of the building and provides a range of outdoor recreation for the school and neighbourhood. The school shares its general architectural character with other schools constructed on this and other bases to the standard RCAF plan, and in turn to the smaller civilian public schools of the decade.

### Environmental value:

Building P-148 is part of a generally level unfenced open space at the heart of a residential subdivision, a decidedly non-military suburban landscape at the edge of the military base. The school is located near the heart of a larger park setting bisected by a single road, with a radiating web of pedestrian greenways that accommodate sports fields and wooded areas in addition to community buildings. Mature trees are scattered casually along the roads and more densely around the perimeter of the recreation spaces.

### **Character-Defining Elements**

The following character-defining elements of Building P-148 (Alexander Dunn Public School) should be respected:

Its role as both illustration and embodiment of the social transformation and diversification of the Canadian military in peacetime as reflected in:

- its essential relationship to the improvement of family life and increased social support for married personnel in the military;
- the recognition of the need for non-military support to enable a stable military; and
- its location and informality within the suburb-like landscape of CFB Borden's neighbourhoods.

Its combination of architectural modernism and functionalism in a durable and economical form as manifested in:

- the overall asymmetries of plan and the informal horizontal massing of the building;
- the functional elevations, reflecting by their relative locations and window arrangements the building's program and activities;
- the rectilinear arrangements of the floor plan developed from a standardized understanding of school architecture; and
- the consistent, simplified and robust palette of materials and block forms that distinguishes late-modern architecture in general and school planning in particular.

The manner in which it reinforces the functionally but informally planned character of the setting as evidenced in :

- its orientation, alignment and deep setback from its road address and adjacent houses, combined with its informal green and recreational landscape, contributing to the essential character of its neighbourhood as a whole and to its connecting secondary open spaces; and
- its harmonious relationship within its residential neighbourhood, associated with its original development and continuing function.

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For guidance on interventions, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*. For further information contact FHBRO.

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