

**FHBRO HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**  
**CENTRE ASTICOU -BLOCKS 1200-1900, 241 CITE DES JEUNES, GATINEAU, QC**

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FHBRO Number: **04-061**  
DFRP Number: **07542**  
Resource Name: **Centre Asticou - Blocks 1200-1900**  
Address: **241 Cite des jeunes, Gatineau, QC**  
FHBRO Status: **“Recognized” Federal Heritage Building**  
Construction: **1963-1968**  
Designer: **Sarra Bournet & Audet**  
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 1200-1900 consist of seven relatively low lying, two storey buildings clad with mottled, dark red brick, exposed concrete and wood shingles and feature massive, truncated pyramidal and flat wood shingle roofs with deep, angled overhangs and corner cuts. 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 1200-1900 are grouped together at the center of the site. The designation is confined to the footprint of the building.

**Heritage Value**

Centre Asticou – Blocks 1200-1900 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 1200-1900 form the third phase of construction at Centre Asticou and are a good example of the blending of several architectural styles and trends popular in Canadian architecture during the 1960s, in particular, the influence of the Brutalist Style. Visually cohesive, Blocks 1200-1900 are characterized by a weighty, monolithic massing and substantial forms, clean lines, minimal ornamentation, and the expression of fundamentalist qualities. Centre Asticou was also 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 1200-1900 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 1200-1900 are grouped together at the center of the site, immediately adjacent to the first phase (Blocks 100-1100) and the second phase (Blocks 2000-2700), 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 1200-1900 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,

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which influenced these aspects of the design.

Its very good aesthetic design, which blends together elements from the Brutalist 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:

- Relatively low height and weighty, monolithic massing achieved by the massive truncated roofs supported on angled overhanging brackets and eaves with corner or dormer cuts, and large, solid, brick panels or shingle clad walls with fewer windows (as compared to the two previous phases of construction);
- Clean lines and minimal ornamentation;
- Expression of fundamentalist qualities, for instance the exposed exterior ducts at Block 1500;
- Bold expression of the building entrances, in particular at Block 1300 (the main site reception building), where a flat concrete roof supported on paired concrete columns projects out over the entry, to create a deep bay backed by a wall of glass;
- Distinctive visual quality of Blocks 1700 and 1800, which are tall single storey structures clad in wood shingles, set on pyramidal bases with heavy, box-like, overhanging roofs;
- Arrangement of the complex of buildings into clear functional groupings such as academic, vocational and common services where Blocks 100-1100 are the academic section;
- Interior layouts of the blocks, which allow for a variety of educational experiences, including group classrooms, meeting rooms and individual study areas;
- Open, well-lit and fluid design of the shared public and resource spaces including the double height spaces of Blocks 1300 and 1900, and 1700 and 1800 which also feature exposed wood trusses;
- Large picture windows looking out to the grounds or the inner courtyards, which provide glimpses to the exterior's natural environment;
- Wide, well-lit corridors and spacious cafeteria 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, and the contrasting exposed concrete elements and black metal trim;
- 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; and,
- Functional choice of interior materials, such as the concrete block walls.

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, relatively low horizontal massing and choice of materials;

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- 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.

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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