

89-204
Esquimalt, British Columbia

Naden Building #67 (Communications School)
CFB Esquimalt

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The Communications School was built in 1941-42 to designs by the Department of Public Works. It continues its original training function. Renovations affecting both the interior and exterior were undertaken in 1987-88. The Department of National Defence is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 89-204.

Reasons for Designation

The Communications School was designated Recognized as a result of its historical association with the development of the Royal Canadian Navy training school at Naden, as well as for its Modern Classical architecture and its site relationship with the current parade ground.

The commission of HMCS Naden in 1922 established the first permanent naval training centre on the west coast. Post-war financial restraint produced a government strategy based on naval reserves. Reserve units were established across the country, but training was centered in Naden on the west coast and Stadacona in the east. The communications or signals school replaced a smaller facility which, given wartime training needs, had proven inadequate.

The Communications School is a good example of the influence of Modern Classicism on Department of Public Works designs during the 1930s and early 1940s. The handsome two-storey flat-roofed structure is well-proportioned and symmetrical and exhibits the simplified classical detailing typical of this style. The front and rear facades are composed of seven bays divided by pilasters, with the narrower centre bay marked by monumental piers and a projecting roof line. A classically-inspired tripartite division of the facade into base, piano nobile and entablature is achieved through the use of contrasting materials.

The school occupies a sloping site facing the current parade ground. To the rear, a partially-treed lawn extends back to a retaining wall, while steps lead down from the parade square to a parking area on the south-west. With its prominent location on a rise above the main route into Naden, and its relationship to the parade square, the structure is a well known local landmark.

Character Defining Elements

The heritage character of this building resides in the simplified classicism of its design

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and detailing, in the quality of its construction and materials, and in its visual prominence in its setting.

The Communications School reflects Modern Classical design in the formal, symmetrical massing and tripartite organization of the exterior. The characteristic division into three levels is achieved primarily by the use of materials; the red brick walls are distinct from the white basement storey, while an entablature is suggested by the cast stone string course below the copper coping. The main facade was compromised by the construction of the parade ground in 1956, when grade was raised to the point that it now masks the basement storey. The original front staircase was also eliminated; it is now represented by low walls with a cast stone coping. The 1987-88 addition of enclosed stairwells on each end of the structure disrupted the original rectangular profile, but respected the symmetry of the design and used like materials. Further modification of the profile and relationship with grade should be avoided.

Restrained decorative brickwork and cast stone ornamentation are typical of Modern Classical designs, and are here found in the recessed brick panels on the side elevations and over the main door, and in the string course, window sills, and prominent door surround of cast stone. These characteristic design components should be preserved. The original decorative multi-paned sash windows have been replaced; when the current units reach the end of their useful life, a return to windows of a more compatible design would restore some of the building's integrity. The main entrance retains its bi-fold wood door and ornamental fanlight. The glass panels in the door itself appear to have been covered or removed; these should be reinstated.

Recent renovations included modifications to the interior. While the original axial plan and central stairwell are retained, some interior features were lost. All remaining early finishes and features should be preserved, and the clarity of the layout preserved.

The Communications School is one of several comparable wartime buildings facing the current parade square. The creation of the square, with its concomitant grade change, altered the front of the site and the building. The rear facade was not affected, and it now most clearly expresses the original design intention. The current unimpeded view of this facade from the Naden entrance road should be preserved.

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For further guidance, please refer to the *FHBRO Code of Practice*.