

Kootenay National Park, British Columbia
Aq uacourt
Radium Hot Springs Townsite

HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT

The aquacourt at Radium Hot Springs was constructed between 1949 and 1951 to a design by Ernest T. Brown, architect. Alterations to the building between 1966 and 1968 aimed to accommodate the increasing numbers of visitors, and included the penthouse restaurant wing, a second bridged walkway to the rooftop terrace, and the reworking of interior spaces. Parks Canada is the custodian. See FHBRO Building Report 92-79.

Reasons for Designation

The aquacourt was designated Classified for its architectural value, its environmental significance, and its historical associations.

The Radium Hot Springs aquacourt was the first major post-war building project in the western parks. Its modernist design, inspired by the International style, heralded a shift away from the rustic aesthetic that had dominated National Parks design philosophy since the system's inception in the 1880s.

One of three operational hot springs facilities within the National Parks system, the Radium Hot Springs and aquacourt have played a primary role in the development of Kootenay National Park and in the establishment of the townsite. The townsite was completely redeveloped over a 20 year period beginning in the early 1950s in response to highway reconstruction and increased aquacourt visitation.

Built to make use of the naturally occurring hot springs as well as the cooler water of Sinclair Creek, the aquacourt facility is a major landmark within the national parks system, and within south-west British Columbia.

Character Defining Features

The heritage character of the Radium Hot Springs aquacourt resides in its modernist design, the nature of its materials, and its relationship with the creek, pools and hotsprings in its dramatic setting in the basin of a gorge.

The building is "U"-shaped and symmetrical in plan, wrapped around the front and central rectangular "cool" pool. The overall massing is asymmetrical but visually balanced.

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Aquacourt (Continued)
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The design of the aquacourt is inspired by the International style, which is characterized by strong horizontal lines, smooth surfaces and a clear expression of the structural grid. In the design of the aquacourt, the influence of the International style is seen in the projecting concrete roof and floor plates articulated as continuous eaves, the ribbed metal flashings along the eaves, the strip windows and glazed curtain walls, the aluminum window frames, and stainless steel parapet railings. Other features include the exposed concrete at columns and floor plates, the flat roofs and folded plate pavilion roofs, and the exterior penthouse level breezeway. Although identifiably of a later date, the lightness and transparency of the pavilion-roofed restaurant wing complements the established architectural vocabulary of the original building.

Reinstating the original tripartite strip window pattern and returning the main entrance to a recessed and symmetrical configuration would greatly enhance the clean, crisp lines of the building. Similarly, the original railing details should be retained, and reinstated where required. Any repair work should match the original; new construction should be compatible with the established palette of materials and techniques.

Functionally, the the building is divided by floor level into three zones. The penthouse level is the most public, consisting of the main entrance and ticket area, restaurant and souvenir concession, and the outdoor rooftop terraces. The main level contains the change rooms, massage therapy clinic, and entrances to the hot and cool pools. Service and storage areas are contained in the basement. This arrangement of spaces and functions has proven effective and should be respected.

Situated in the basin of the Sinclair Canyon and at the base of Redstreak Mountain, the building's relationship to its site remains virtually unchanged since the early 1950s. Site circulation is heavily influenced by the pedestrian bridges to the main entrance and to the upper deck and restaurant, and rooftop terraces reinforce the connection between the landscape and building. The back of the building (south elevation) straddles Sinclair Creek which was diverted to pass through the basement of the building. Existing site relationships should be respected.

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