

# Putting Out Fires—Reclaiming Moncton

For more than a century, No. 2 Fire Station has stood on the corner of St. George Street in Moncton, New Brunswick. It's a solid building that has been dedicated to the community and recently reopened to much fanfare September 15, 1900.

For 62 years it was a fire station—a building that stood for safety. On any day could hitch up their teams of horses and be ready to respond.

After 1962, members of the Ford family operated a pharmacy there, serving the health and well-being of the community.

The tradition of providing community service from 199 St. George Street (MYR), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to serving at-risk youth, has become a central location for one-stop access to services for the homeless.



**No. 2 Fire Station** sat vacant for three years before the Youth QUEST project began.

**La caserne de pompiers n°2** était vide depuis trois ans avant le lancement du programme Youth QUEST.

**All photos courtesy of MYR.**



## 's Fire Station for Youth at Risk

corner of St. George and Robinson streets in downtown Moncton,  
to the well-being and safety of Moncton residents since it

safety and dependability. It's been reported that firemen of the  
nd to an emergency in 11 seconds flat.

re, building their business on a commitment to community

ge Street continues. In 2006 Moncton Youth Residences Inc.

ak youth from across New Brunswick, reopened the building as a  
ess and at-risk youth.

by Mel Kennah



**Moncton Youth Residences Inc.** offers a broad range of services to help young people succeed. In 2002 it launched a service called Youth QUEST to help homeless and potentially homeless youth through Quality, Understanding, Empowerment, Self-sufficiency and Transition.

Around the same time, the federal homelessness initiative conducted research in Moncton revealing that at-risk young people between the ages of 16 and 24 were falling through the cracks. Substance abuse, prostitution, conflict with the justice system and dropping out of school were all on the rise.

The need for a one-stop resource centre for at-risk young people was identified as a high priority, and the concept of Youth QUEST Central was born.

Youth QUEST Central is all about connecting—connecting young people with the community, specific individuals, necessary resources and their own potential.

It's also about reclaiming—reclaiming young lives, seeing youth as troubled, not trouble, helping them build brighter futures, and in some cases, actually saving lives.

And finally, Youth QUEST Central is about reclaiming a viable historic building that has a long tradition of providing community service.



**This colourful mural** depicts the centre's original function as a fire station.

**La peinture murale**, haute en couleur, décrit la fonction première de la caserne de pompiers.

**There were three distinct phases** to the Youth QUEST Central project: fundraising, construction and program development.

MYR quickly understood that the only way to get the project off the ground was to establish partnerships with public and private donors.

Government funding early in the fundraising campaign was essential for leveraging other support. The federal Supporting Community Partnership Initiatives contributed \$150,000, the New Brunswick government added \$380,000 and the local community contributed \$234,500—totalling nearly half the capital campaign goal of \$1.3 million.

A manager was hired and professional fundraising consultants were engaged to develop a case for support and a plan for the capital campaign. (See Case For Support sidebar on same page.)

Fundraising success depended on building solid relationships with donors. MYR recruited Francis McGuire, president and CEO of Major Drilling, as chairperson of the capital campaign. Mr. McGuire brought ideas, wisdom and contacts to the campaign. His influence helped MYR build a network of effective and experienced volunteers.

Through this volunteer network, partnerships with local businesses, foundations, service clubs and national corporations quickly evolved. High profile support from the Irving Group and former New Brunswick Premier Bernard Lord brought credibility to the project and helped open doors.

Three Moncton area Rotary Clubs, looking for a community project to celebrate Rotary International's centennial, signed on to Youth QUEST with a pledge to raise \$230,000, giving the campaign further momentum. Rotary's significant financial gift and its endorsement of the project early on was critical, as it helped to validate the idea of Youth QUEST Central for other community partners

## Having a central location was critical



Rebuilding an exterior wall using original brick.

*Un mur extérieur a été reconstruit en utilisant les briques originales.*

to the success of the project. No. 2 Fire Station, a municipally designated heritage building in the downtown area, had been vacant for three years when MYR purchased it in 2003 for \$140,000.

Recognized for its utilitarian Italianate architecture and fine brick detailing, it is the last surviving fire station of the original four brick ones built in the city. The Moncton Heritage Preservation Review Board approved design plans prepared by Architecture 2000. The board, which paid keen attention throughout the project, hired heritage consultant Jim Bezanson to work with Youth QUEST Central and the architect to develop a restoration plan for the exterior of the building.

The potentially costly job of dismantling old interior renovations was covered by a John Howard Society in-kind donation. This was a win-win relationship, since it gave the society a work site for its youth training program and MYR received free labour while supporting at-risk youth.

## THE CASE FOR SUPPORT

Building purchase	\$140,000
Retrofit/ refurbish	\$660,000
Various fees	\$10,000
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$810,000</b>

Furnishing and equipment	\$90,000
<b>TOTAL BUILDING AND OUTFITTING COST</b>	<b>\$900,000</b>

Administrative, campaign and project management	\$200,000
Seed money/ start-up costs	\$250,000
<b>TOTAL PROJECT COST</b>	<b>\$1,350,000</b>

In 2004 a crew of young people from the Westmorland Institution early release program worked for six months with job coaches on the dismantling. That support came from Newco Construction, who was contracted to manage the project and undertake all construction.

The exterior restoration included preserving original windows, repairing brick, and repainting wooden elements in a shade of green compatible with the one used in 1899. Inside, the original ceiling height was maintained. Much of the original brick was preserved and exposed in the new offices and kitchen spaces. The hose-drying tower, which boasts original beams, was also preserved.



The historic windows were repaired as part of the restoration project.

*Les fenêtres historiques ont été réparées.*



**Cultivating partnerships** didn't stop when the fundraising and restoration work was done. MYR needed ongoing commitments from service providers once the centre was operational.

To this end, MYR wanted all partners to be actively involved in the project and to feel that they had a stake in it. It fostered a collective mindset and encouraged terms like "we" and "our project."

On-site services include shower and laundry facilities, a clothing depot, media centre, academic upgrading opportunities, vocational training, transitional housing, directional planning, employment counselling and young offender services. Additional on-site support comes from community partners, including the YM-YWCA Reconnect Program, the Helping Hands Institute, Enterprise Greater Moncton and Service Canada, to name a few.

The Youth QUEST Central project required vision, courage, creativity and, most importantly, the highest level of commitment from MYR, the capital campaign volunteers and all partners. By forming a range of partnerships, MYR also built a higher level of community awareness and support for the project.

Not only did MYR successfully launch Youth QUEST Central, it also succeeded in preserving and reclaiming for the community a heritage building with a long history of public service.

**Mel Kennah, BA, MA, MBA, has been employed with MYR for 22 years, serving as executive director for the last nine. Committed to youth, he has been a foster parent for 20 years. He is a native of Moncton, living and working in the city for most of his life.**



The careful restoration of the brick and windows can be seen along this exterior side wall.

*La restauration méticuleuse des briques et des fenêtres est visible sur ce mur latéral de l'immeuble.*