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# Outstanding Significance and National Importance (OS/NI)

Writing an Effective OS/NI Justification  
for the Certification of Cultural Property  
by the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board

December 2013



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## OS/NI at a Glance

- It's about the object: the OS/NI justification is not a biographical profile
- Any type of cultural property may be OS/NI
- The national heritage includes Canadian and international cultural property
- OS is necessary but not sufficient: it does not equal NI
- NI includes local, regional, and community importance
- The OS/NI justification is not an acquisition justification
- OS/NI transcends organizations and their mandates
- OS/NI justifications are assessed on a case-by-case basis

The [OS/NI tables](#) in this document contain prompts to help applicants develop a concise OS/NI justification based on the above general principles.

**Note:** this document replaces section 6 of the [Application Guide](#) (September 2010). However, that guide contains other essential information that should be thoroughly reviewed before a certification application is submitted

## 1 Introduction

The *Cultural Property Export and Import Act* (Act) aims to provide Canada with an opportunity to keep movable cultural property that is of outstanding significance (OS) and national importance (NI) in the public domain.

Under Section 11(1) of the Act, cultural property may be certified for income-tax purposes only if it is both

1. of outstanding significance by reason of its close association with Canadian history or national life, its aesthetic qualities, or its value in the study of the arts or sciences, and
2. of such a degree of national importance that its loss to Canada would significantly diminish the national heritage.

All certification applicants are required to submit an original OS/NI justification, prepared or endorsed by a qualified curator, archivist, librarian, or specialist, that clearly and convincingly demonstrates how and why the cultural property meets the criteria of outstanding significance and national importance.

The Secretariat to the Canadian Cultural Property Export Review Board has developed the following OS/NI framework and guidelines to help certification applicants write more effective OS/NI justifications. Because the Review Board will apply the same framework in its deliberations, it is in the interest of all applicants to adhere to it closely.

### 1.1 Key concepts and definitions

In order to avoid some of the most common mistakes and misconceptions about OS/NI, applicants should bear the following general considerations in mind.

#### **It's about the object**

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The OS/NI justification is not a biographical profile; it should focus on the most relevant aspects and attributes of the cultural property itself. Lengthy discussion of the life of the donor or creator should be avoided except where strictly necessary to provide appropriate context (e.g., in the case of an archival fonds).

#### **Any type of cultural property may be OS/NI**

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Cultural property created or found in virtually any context may meet the criteria of outstanding significance and national importance. Objects that might once have been considered “ordinary” – the letters of a soldier, a collection of antique toys, or the tools of a labourer – may come to occupy an important place in the national heritage.

### **The national heritage is inclusive**

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The national heritage includes cultural property that originated in Canada, or the territory now known as Canada, as well as significant examples of international cultural property that reflect Canada's cultural diversity or that enrich Canadians' understanding of different cultures, civilizations, time periods, and their own place in history and the world.

### **OS is necessary but not sufficient: it does not equal NI**

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Outstanding significance and national importance are closely related but distinct ideas. In order to establish OS, applicants must demonstrate that the cultural property meets at least one of the criteria for outstanding significance outlined in the Act. In order to establish NI, applicants must argue that, if the cultural property were lost to Canada, the national heritage would be significantly diminished.

### **NI includes local, regional, and community importance**

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National importance includes local, regional, and community importance in that cultural property that is important to a part of Canada is by extension important to Canada as a whole.

**Note:** the threshold for national importance is not a fixed or precise measure. Applicants must use their best judgment when making their case, but the final determination rests with the Review Board.

### **The OS/NI justification is not an acquisition justification**

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Acquisition justifications link cultural property to an organization's specific mandate and collecting priorities; OS/NI justifications must link cultural property to the national heritage. The purpose of the OS/NI justification is to assist the Review Board in determining whether cultural property is of outstanding significance and national importance so that it may determine whether to issue a certificate attesting to the fair market value of the property for income-tax purposes.

### **OS/NI transcends organizations and their mandates**

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Outstanding significance and national importance transcend the collections and mandates of individual organizations. If cultural property is of outstanding significance and national importance, it will be so regardless of the organization in which it happens to reside.

### **OS/NI justifications are assessed on a case-by-case basis**

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That a given type of object or a certain creator's work has been certified in the past is no guarantee that a similar object or another work by the same creator will automatically be of outstanding significance and national importance.

## 2 A Framework for OS/Ni

Under the OS/Ni framework, outstanding significance is a question of *nature* or *kind* (i.e., what?) whereas national importance is a matter of *degree* (i.e., how much, to what extent?).

### Outstanding significance

When addressing outstanding significance, applicants should consider questions such as the following:

**What** kind of association does the property have with Canadian history or national life?  
**What** is the nature of the property's aesthetic qualities?  
**What** is the nature of the property's value in the study of the arts or sciences?

*In other words, what makes the cultural property of outstanding significance?*

### National importance

When addressing NI, applicants should consider questions such as the following:

**How** notable is the property's association with Canadian history or national life?  
**How** singular or striking are the property's aesthetic qualities?  
**How** great is the property's value in the study of the arts or sciences?

*In other words, if the cultural property were lost to Canada, how significantly would the national heritage be diminished?*

### 2.1 Describing outstanding significance

In order to establish that cultural property is of outstanding significance, applicants must demonstrate that it meets at least one of the OS criteria identified in the Act.

**Note:** the five criteria for outstanding significance identified in the Act may overlap. For instance, if a work of art has outstanding aesthetic qualities, then a case may also be made for its value in the study of the arts. Similarly, if an object has a close association with Canadian history, then it may also have a close association with national life. However, such conclusions do not always follow and should never be taken for granted.

#### 2.1.1 Indicators of outstanding significance

Applicants may find it useful to consider any number or combination of the following indicators in describing the nature of the cultural property's outstanding significance.

INDICATORS OF OUTSTANDING SIGNIFICANCE	
<b>OS CRITERIA</b> Discuss all that apply	<b>NOTE:</b> The following indicators are prompts for thinking about the property's outstanding significance. They are not meant to be exhaustive or used as a checklist. Applicants may describe any attribute of the property that supports any of the five OS criteria.
<b>Close association with Canadian history</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property closely associated with an important historical               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• person or group?</li> <li>• place or event?</li> <li>• Canadian discovery or innovation?</li> <li>• theme, trend, process, pattern of life, or aspect of Canadian history?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Is the property closely associated with the development of Canada or a part of Canada?</li> </ul>
<b>Close association with national life</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property closely associated with               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a cultural tradition or way of life in Canada?</li> <li>• customs, beliefs, ideas, or values that are meaningful to a group or community in Canada?</li> <li>• a major change in society or a transformation of a way of life?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Does the property occupy a distinct place in the national consciousness?</li> </ul>
<b>Aesthetic qualities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property uniquely expressive, provocative, or powerful?</li> <li>▪ Is the property original or innovative in its conception, style, design, composition, or execution?</li> <li>▪ Does the property embody or reflect great technical accomplishment or craftsmanship?</li> <li>▪ Does the property have a symbolic dimension?</li> <li>▪ What qualities make the property exceptional?</li> </ul>
<b>Value in the study of the arts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Does the property contribute to an understanding of               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the arts (art, art history, design, literature, music, theatre, etc.)?</li> <li>• a style, genre, school, period, movement, or design?</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Is the property a particularly representative or revealing example of a creator's style, genre, or oeuvre?</li> </ul>

INDICATORS OF OUTSTANDING SIGNIFICANCE	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property of interest to the artistic community?</li> <li>▪ Does the property have research value?</li> </ul>
<b>Value in the study of the sciences</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property associated with a scientific discovery or breakthrough?</li> <li>▪ Does the property contribute to an understanding of natural history, technology, or the sciences?</li> <li>▪ Does the property contribute to an understanding of the history of science or technology?</li> <li>▪ Is the property of interest to the scientific community?</li> <li>▪ Does the property have research value?</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Demonstrating national importance

In order to establish that a given cultural property is of [national importance](#), applicants must explain how its loss to Canada would significantly diminish the [national heritage](#). The more grievous the impact of the loss, the greater the degree of the property's national importance.

### 2.2.1 Factors supporting national importance

Applicants may find it useful to consider any number or combination of the following factors in demonstrating the degree of the property's national importance. Although certain of these factors tend to be comparative or contextual, the specific property should always remain the focus of the justification.

FACTORS SUPPORTING NATIONAL IMPORTANCE	
Discuss all that apply	<p><b>NOTE:</b></p> <p>The following factors are prompts for thinking about the degree of the property's national importance. They are not meant to be exhaustive or used as a checklist. Applicants may refer to any factor that is relevant to the property's national importance. No single factor should be considered more or less important than any other.</p>
<b>Provenance</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property's creator, user, owner, or place of origin notable?</li> <li>▪ Is the chain of ownership complete and unambiguous?</li> </ul>



<b>FACTORS SUPPORTING NATIONAL IMPORTANCE</b>	
<b>Impact of the creator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the creator well known or recognized in Canada or internationally?</li> <li>▪ Is the creator highly influential?</li> <li>▪ Does the creator have a major public presence (e.g., exhibitions, publications, etc.)?</li> </ul>
<b>Origin</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property associated with or discovered at an important location?</li> <li>▪ What makes the property important to Canada and Canadians?</li> </ul>
<b>Authenticity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property's authenticity credible and verifiable?</li> <li>▪ Is the property a known or particularly important copy, fake, or forgery?</li> </ul>
<b>Condition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property in good or excellent condition?</li> <li>▪ Is the property in its original, unrestored condition?</li> <li>▪ Has the property been restored to its original condition?</li> <li>▪ Has the property been repaired, conserved, or compromised?</li> </ul>
<b>Completeness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property intact, complete, or comprehensive?</li> <li>▪ Is the property a draft, a prototype, or a finished work?</li> <li>▪ Is the property characterized by exceptional unity or integrity of parts?</li> </ul>
<b>Rarity or uniqueness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property rare, unique, endangered, or extinct?</li> <li>▪ Is the property an unusual example of its class or type?</li> <li>▪ Is the property a duplicate of an item already held by the organization or elsewhere in Canada?</li> </ul>
<b>Representativeness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property a good or outstanding example of its class, type, genre, or style?</li> </ul>
<b>Documentary or research value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Is the property of high real or potential interest to scholars?</li> <li>▪ Does the property hold the potential for new scholarship in a field of study?</li> <li>▪ Does the property have the potential to make a significant and lasting contribution to a field of study?</li> <li>▪ Does the property have significant educational value?</li> </ul>

## FACTORS SUPPORTING NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

### Contextual associations

- Does the property have a notable present or historical value to a community or group in Canada?
- Does the property have an important relationship to other objects in Canada?
- Does the property illuminate an aspect or dimension of its physical or historical context?

### 3 OS/NI Justifications for Collections and Archival Fonds

All of the indicators and factors listed above may be brought to bear in a justification of the outstanding significance and national importance of a collection or archival fonds.

Because collections and fonds are integral wholes, outstanding significance and national importance must be demonstrated for the entirety – not at the level of individual component parts. Accordingly, a single OS/NI justification will be sufficient.

A *collection* is a group of associated objects ordinarily developed through careful selection and connoisseurship on the basis of a common characteristic or specific set of criteria.

Examples of collections include:

- Multiple works by the same creator that exemplify his or her development, reflect characteristic practices or techniques, express recurrent preoccupations, etc.
- A body of ceramic ware from a particular region, period, or culture
- A group of fossils excavated at a particular location
- A series of meteorite samples
- A group of illuminated manuscripts, incunabula, or books with a common subject

**Note:** a more or less random assortment of disparate objects acquired from a single donor or vendor does not constitute a collection. In such cases, a distinct OS/NI justification is required for *each object*.

A *fonds* is the records created and accumulated by a particular individual, family, or corporate body, as selected and arranged by the applicant organization. (A fonds should not be presented for certification until it has been arranged and described. For more information on describing archival material, please refer to the corresponding section of the [Certification Application Guide](#).)

Although lengthy biographical discussion is discouraged in OS/NI justifications, a minimum of contextual information is acceptable for archival fonds.

**Note:** when a collection or fonds has been selected from a larger body of material, the OS/Ni justification must give an account of the selection criteria. If the acquisition is an accrual, the justification must indicate which accrual, whether there may be future accruals, and how and why this particular accrual is OS/Ni.

Applicants must use their best judgment when determining whether the cultural property is a collection, a fonds, or a group of objects. If applicants choose to treat the cultural property as a collection or a fonds, the OS/Ni justification must demonstrate that the removal of any part would undermine or compromise the integrity of the whole.

Applicants may choose to limit their discussion to particular objects, series, or sub-series, but they must demonstrate that, taken together, the collection or fonds constitutes a meaningful and cohesive whole that is greater than the sum of its parts.

Under certain circumstances, the Review Board may determine that the collection or fonds does not constitute an integral or organic whole. In such cases, it may either

- 1) place the application on hold and request further information before making a final OS/Ni determination, or
- 2) refuse the application as submitted.

If the Review Board refuses the application as submitted, the applicant may either

- a) submit a new application with a new OS/Ni justification that argues more rigorously for a comprehensive appreciation of the collection or fonds as a unified whole, or
- b) submit a new application for the certification of specific objects, series, or sub-series only.

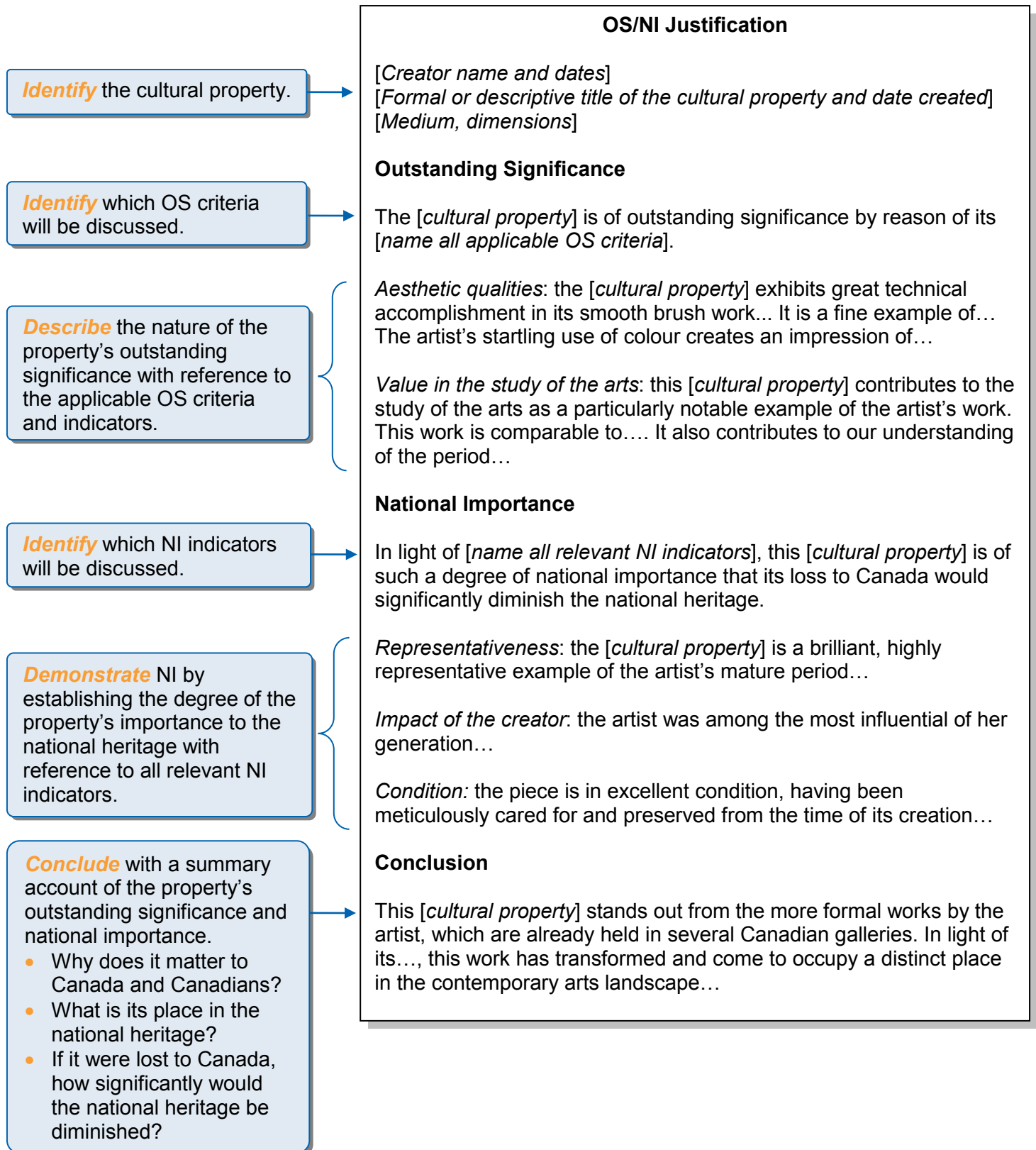
If after receiving additional information or an amended OS/Ni justification the Review Board is still not satisfied that the cultural property is a collection or a fonds, it may elect to certify certain objects but not others.

#### 4 Number of OS/Ni Justifications Required

Application Type	Number of OS/Ni Justifications Required
Single object	1 justification
Multiple objects	1 justification per object
Collection	1 justification
Archival fonds	1 justification

## 5 Structuring the OS/NI Justification

The OS/NI justification for a single object, collection, or archival fonds should not exceed 600 to 800 words. It should be divided into clearly labelled sections and written in clear, non-technical language that is precise and to the point.



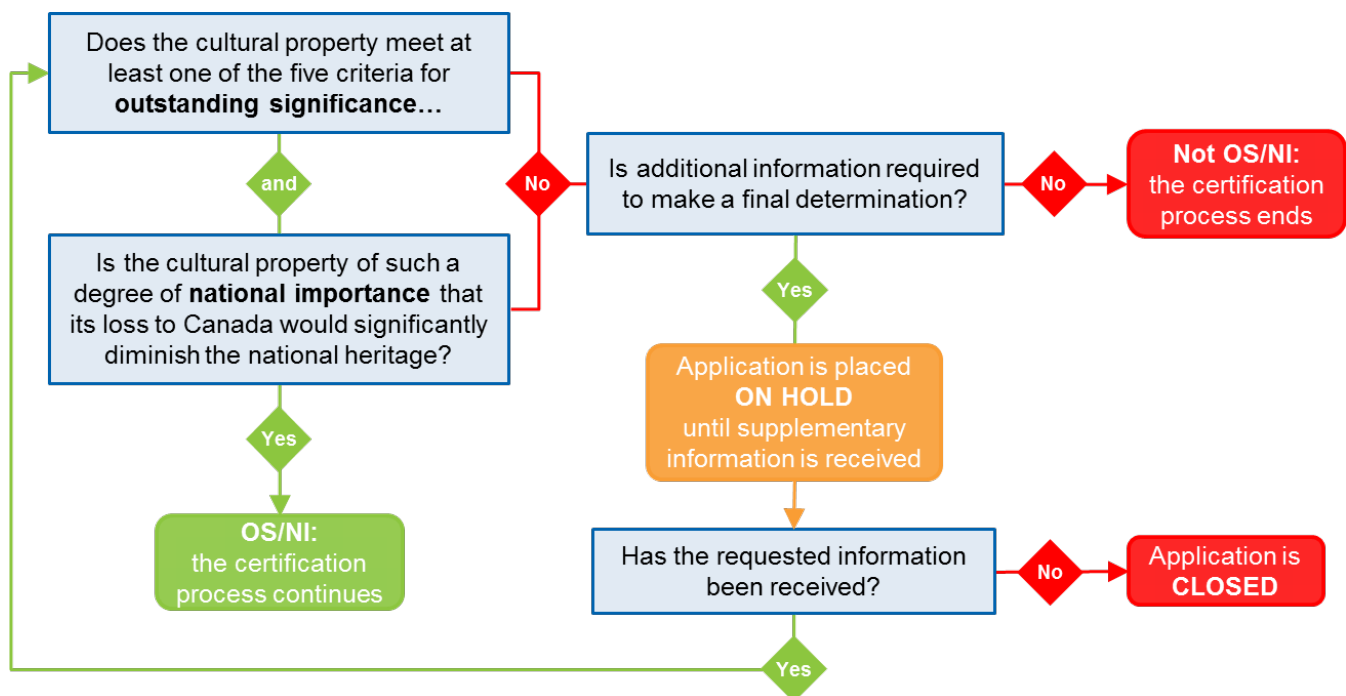
## 6 Review Board Assessments of OS/NI Justifications

The Review Board assesses OS/NI justifications on a case-by-case basis. If the OS/NI justification does not demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Review Board that the cultural property is of outstanding significance and national importance, the Board may either place the application on hold or else refuse it.

When an application is placed on hold, no formal determination of the cultural property's fair market value will be made. In certain cases, the Review Board will seek expert advice; in others, the applicant will be notified of the need to provide additional information or an improved OS/NI justification. Applications will remain on hold until the Review Board receives sufficient information to determine whether the property meets the criteria of outstanding significance and national importance.

If the Review Board concludes that the property does not meet the OS/NI criteria as set out in the *Cultural Property Export and Import Act*, the application will be refused. There is no formal appeal process for OS/NI determinations, but refused applicants may still issue a regular charitable tax receipt. An OS/NI refusal should not be construed as a judgment of the property's worthiness or suitability to the applicant organization's collecting mandate.

### Typical OS/NI Decision-Flow



**Note:** all Review Board determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. The Review Board may deem it necessary or appropriate to deviate from the above process if the circumstances of a particular case require.

## 7 Other Considerations

Applicants may wish to consult the donor or vendor of the cultural property before drafting the OS/NJ justification. Donors and vendors may be in a position to offer valuable information about the property that could strengthen the justification.

For cultural property that holds particular social or spiritual significance for a certain group or community, applicants may also wish to consult community or group members so as to be able to faithfully reflect a range of perspectives on what the property means or represents.

Finally, applicants may find it useful to consult secondary sources (e.g., exhibition reviews) and other reference materials when researching the specific cultural property for which certification is being sought.

**Note:** whenever possible, the completed OS/NJ justification should be made available to the appraiser(s), who may draw on it in assessing the property's fair market value. Once complete, the justification should be reviewed alongside the appraisal report to ensure that each document is as comprehensive as possible.

## Appendix A: Sample OS/NI Justifications

### Sample 1: Objects of Fine Art (Group 5)

John Smith  
American, 1901-1975  
“Study 17,” 1935

Pastel, chalk (rubbed and washed), crayon, pen and ink on paper  
48 x 35 cm  
Signed in ink, lower right corner: *Smith 31*

### Outstanding Significance

John Smith’s drawing “Study 17” is of outstanding significance by reason of its aesthetic qualities (1) and value in the study of the arts (2).

#### 1. *Aesthetic qualities*

John Smith was among the twentieth century’s most significant sculptors, and one of the first American sculptors to win international recognition for his bold, monumental works in bronze and stone. However, as “Study 17” (1935) makes clear, drawing was also an integral dimension of his art.

“Study 17” is among the largest, most elaborate, and most carefully rendered drawings from Smith’s extensive body of work. Representational and figural elements tend to predominate in his sketchbooks, but the overlay of different colours, dot-and-line sequences, and whimsical, spontaneous gestures in “Study 17” create a lively series of undulating abstract motifs that recall works by Picasso and Miro from the same period.

The drawing is arranged into three tiers of four sketches, several of which offer glimpses of Smith’s signature subject: the human form in different attitudes of repose. Although none of the sketches were ever developed into sculptures, they together reveal the artist’s fertile imagination at play as he explored and experimented with the organic elements of design.

#### 2. *Value in the study of the arts*

It was through Smith’s facility as a draughtsman that he came to understand the different possibilities for rendering the human form in works of sculpture. In the early 1930s, he made hundreds of life drawings and studies that reflect the art of other cultures and contributed significantly to the development of Primitivism. Later in the same decade, his involvement with the Surrealist movement led to drawings with more abstract, less geometrical shapes as he sought to give expression to nature’s principles of form and rhythm.

“Study 17” exemplifies Smith’s work from this period. Although he later returned to a more naturalistic style, “Study 17” illuminates his unique vision and creative process at a

stylistic turning point in his career, thus enriching our understanding of a pivotal phase in his development. “Study 17” also serves as an emblem of Smith’s desire to confront what he considered to be a stolid, insular American public with the more radical developments in modernist art and architecture then afoot in Europe.

## **National Importance**

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In light of the impact of the creator (1) and the condition (2), uniqueness (3), and contextual associations (4) of “Study 17,” the drawing is of such a degree of national importance that its loss to Canada would significantly diminish the national heritage.

### **1. Impact of the creator**

John Smith was one of the most influential and visionary artists of the twentieth century. By the time of his death, his name had become synonymous not only with American sculpture but with modernism more generally. Whether they have challenged or embraced it, his successors have all worked in the long shadow of his influence, which extends well beyond his native America.

### **2. Condition**

Although slightly faded, “Study 17” is otherwise in excellent condition, having been carefully preserved since its acquisition by the donor. Never before publicly displayed, the drawing may be exhibited in its current condition.

### **3. Rarity or uniqueness**

Smith was a prolific draughtsman who produced thousands of drawings in his sketches and notebooks, but “Study 17” stands out not only for its size and degree of detail but also for the number of concepts that are explored together. Considered jointly, the forms in the drawing allow one to trace the workings of the artist’s mind in a way that solitary sketches do not. The drawing also illuminates Smith’s unique vision and creative process at a stylistic turning point in his career.

### **4. Contextual associations**

Home to one of the world’s most comprehensive collections of John Smith’s work outside the United States, Canada is an internationally recognized site for Smith study and display. “Study 17” is a revealing and complementary addition to the existing national corpus of this revolutionary sculptor’s work.

## **Conclusion**

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John Smith occupies a prominent place in the Canadian public imagination. In addition to the significant holdings in Canadian collections, such major public commissions as *Figure 8* in Toronto (1941) and *Waterfall* in Winnipeg (1951) have secured Smith’s place in the national heritage. Never before publicly displayed, “Study 17” enriches our understanding of a pivotal phase in the artist’s development and allows us to more fully



appreciate his contribution to modernism in particular and to developments in twentieth-century sculpture more generally.

**Sample 2:** Textual Records, Graphic Records, and Sound Recordings (Group 7)

John Smith fonds  
1950s-2011  
2.3 m of textual records

John Smith was a Canadian educator, entrepreneur, and aid organizer who held many posts around the world. Born in 1941 in Toronto and raised in Ontario, he earned degrees from the University of Toronto and Queen's University, where he completed his PhD. in the 1970s. Over his long and varied career he worked for numerous international-aid and educational agencies, including the XYZ Student Foundation, the Canadian University Services Overseas (CUSO), the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, and the University of Waterloo. Smith established several consulting firms to foster business connections between Canada and underdeveloped nations. In his later years, he worked closely with First Nations communities in Northern Manitoba, participating in several committees on Native education. John Smith died in 2011.

### **Outstanding Significance**

The John Smith fonds is of outstanding significance by reason of its close association with Canadian history (1) and its close association with national life (2).

#### ***1. Close association with Canadian history***

Records relating to Smith's role as Director the ABC Education Task Force – including the final report and notes on public feedback from community consultations in several Northern Manitoba communities – offer insight into these First Nation communities and how they interact with the Canadian government. In addition, Smith presented a brief on behalf of these communities to the Provincial Committee on Economic Development. The detailed records, which include correspondence with band councils, inquiry reports, and transcripts of hearings, provide important information on economic development in the communities and shed light on their relationships with private industry. This documentation is closely associated with the development of Northern Manitoba.

#### ***2. Close association with national life***

The majority of the fonds documents Canada's growing role in international development and aid in the 1970s and 1980s. The records of the XYZ Student Foundation and CUSO, which include meeting minutes, promotional material, reports, correspondence and planning records, yield tremendous insight into the work of these Canadian organizations in Africa during this period. Smith's records also document the early years of the Development Resource Organization. Publications, reports, planning records, and trip reports record his activities in locations throughout Latin America and Asia.

One particularly noteworthy project, Project Educate, focused on the delivery of primary education in several countries. Planning documents, reports, correspondence, and teaching modules constitute a compelling history of this effort at international development through education. These records document an important period when Canada became increasingly conscious of its role on the international stage and its obligation to improve the lives of others through education and aid programs. These values continue to be meaningful to many Canadians today.

## **National Importance**

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Because of the impact of the creator (1) and its documentary research value (2), the John Smith fonds is not only of outstanding significance but also of national importance.

### ***1. Impact of the creator***

Although Smith may not be well known to many Canadians, he was a highly respected educator recognized around the world for his efforts in international development. He became a Member of the Order of Canada in 2005, and has received numerous awards from the many countries where he worked. The John Smith fonds documents his entire career, much of it in great detail. These records will afford others access to the thoughts, insights, and efforts of a pivotal figure in Canadian international development.

### ***2. Documentary/Research Value***

The John Smith fonds will provide researchers with new and unique information into aspects of international development and aid from the perspective of an individual involved at the ground level. The fonds will be of high scholarly interest because of the completeness of the records as well as the range of organizations and development and aid projects covered. Some of the records, such as the detailed planning documents for Project Educate, are extremely rare, with no other known equivalents extant.

The fonds is also an important source of information about First Nations communities in Northern Manitoba. The notes on public feedback from community consultations offer important insights into seven small communities, including information about housing conditions, employment, and educational opportunities, all as told by the community members. These unique records, which present voices not often heard, promise to be of particular interest to First Nations communities, scholars, and researchers.

The fonds is a good fit with the collecting mandate of the 123 University Archives and will support teaching and research across several university departments. The vast majority of the fonds is open to researchers with no restrictions on access.

## **Conclusion**

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John Smith was a key figure who worked at a time when Canada was still developing and defining its approach to international aid and development. Later in his life, he became an important champion for northern First Nations communities. The records of his life's work will be an invaluable source of scholarship in these and related fields.

**Sample 3:** A collection of textual records (Group 7)

The Sherwood Smith Collection

1920-2012

340 volumes of poetry and criticism by or about John Smith

**Outstanding Significance**

The Sherwood Smith Collection is of outstanding significance by reason of its value in the study of the arts (1) and its aesthetic qualities (2).

**1. Value in the study of the arts**

The collection consists of 340 volumes published between 1901 and 1965 by, about, or from the personal library of the seminal modernist American poet John Smith (1878-1952), one of T.S. Eliot's most accomplished contemporaries and followers. Assembled by Jane Sherwood, a world-renowned Canadian authority on Smith's life and work, the collection is the largest of its kind in Canada and a monument to the depth and discernment of Professor Sherwood's knowledge of her subject. Together with the many rare first editions of Smith's poetry, criticism, correspondence, and occasional prose, Professor Sherwood's working library of annotated secondary sources represents one of the most comprehensive and meticulously constructed bodies of Smith scholarship in the world. Taken as a whole, the collection holds tremendous value for Smith scholars and promises to open up new avenues of inquiry into this unique American writer's complex poetics.

**2. Aesthetic qualities**

Professor Sherwood devoted much of her life to acquiring editions of Smith's work, from early periodical and fine-press printings to original hardcovers. The collection includes all of John Jacobson's printings of the poetry, which are particularly striking for the artistry of the jackets and the stoutness and beauty of the binding. Quite apart from the intrinsic literary merits of Smith's verse and the scope and scrupulousness of the critical commentary, many of the volumes in the collection contribute to an appreciation of the physical book as an historical and aesthetic artifact worthy of study in its own right.

**National Importance**

In view of the impact of the creator (1) and the provenance (2), rarity (3), condition (4), completeness (5), and research value (6) of the Sherwood Smith Collection, it is of such a degree of national importance that its loss to Canada would significantly diminish the national heritage.

**1. Impact of the creator**

John Smith is a modernist American poet of international standing whose works are read and studied the world over. A contemporary and disciple of Eliot, Smith left an astonishingly diverse body of work in which he experimented with an array of poetical

forms and modes to create endlessly suggestive poems that are at once lucid and elusive. As Smith's official biographer, the editor of his correspondence, and the author of several ground-breaking critical studies, Professor Sherwood is the world's foremost authority on his life and work. Her now classic studies not only were among the very first to recognize Smith as a major poet but also effectively inaugurated Smith scholarship in Canada.

## **2. Provenance**

The collection includes over 100 titles originally owned by Smith, from Sophocles and Shakespeare to Eliot and Larkin, many of them extensively annotated in his own hand. Several of these, including a number of volumes by Al Purdy and Ted Hughes, were given to Smith by the poets. All of the books were acquired by Professor Sherwood and held in her working library at the University of Toronto, where she drew on them extensively in developing her own thought. Many of the secondary works are also extensively annotated by Professor Sherwood.

## **3. Rarity or uniqueness**

Such is the rarity of many of the early editions of Smith's work that, even with unlimited funds, the collection would be virtually impossible to reconstitute today. The annotated editions are unique: Smith's marginalia have never been collected and published, even though they illuminate his interests, preoccupations, and habits of mind. Much the same is true of Professor Sherwood's annotations, in which may be traced the evolution of her thought.

## **4. Condition**

Although a number of the critical studies have been rebound, the vast majority of the books in the collection are pristine. The original dust jackets of the cloth editions all survive with only minor wear.

## **5. Completeness**

The Sherwood Smith Collection is one of the largest and most comprehensive collections of Smith poetry and scholarship in the world. Taken as a whole, it not only encompasses the entire historical and biographical record of Smith's life but reflects the vast and varied critical response that his work has inspired.

## **6. Research value**

Given its scope and the expertise of the collector, the Sherwood Smith Collection holds tremendous value for scholars of English literature in general and twentieth-century poetry in particular. That variant printings of Smith's works are included is of particular significance for textual and bibliographic studies because Smith so often revised his work between editions. Also included are many books from Smith's own library that illuminate his interests, thoughts, influences, and reading habits.

## **Conclusion**

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As a unified, carefully constructed body of knowledge that served as the foundation and point of departure for Professor Sherwood's formative contribution to the field, the Sherwood Smith Collection represents the complete history and evolution of her thought. Its loss would not only be a blow to higher learning and the academic community in Canada; it would significantly diminish the national heritage by depriving Canadians of the life's work of one of the most recognized and respected Canadian scholars of English literature to work and teach in this country.