



Canada's
Historic Places

A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Collaboration



CANADIAN REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

WRITING STATEMENTS OF SIGNIFICANCE



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

HERITAGE VALUE

What is the Purpose of the Heritage Value Section?

The Heritage Value section seeks to identify what matters and why. It explains why a historic place is important to the community that formally recognized it. Naming the heritage values of a place makes it possible to identify the character-defining elements that express its values. It helps determine what aspects of the place need to be conserved and why.

The Heritage Value section should answer the question: Why is this historic place considered to be important?

What is heritage value?

Heritage value is what makes a historic place significant to a community of people. It is comprised of the many meanings and values that people attach to a place. Traditionally, historic places have been valued mainly for their historical associations or architectural importance. Today, historic places are valued for a broader range of meanings including social value, spiritual value and cultural associations.

A single place may have more than one heritage value. It may be valued for different reasons by different communities of people. The heritage values associated with a place may also change over time as the understanding of its history develops and the needs and context of the community change.

The heritage value of a place should be assessed within the context of that value and in relation to comparable places. Certain places are more highly valued than others. A place might be valued because it is the oldest place of its kind, the only place of its kind, or a rare surviving example of a place of its kind. It might be valued because it is an excellent example of a certain type of place or the work of a certain individual. It might be valued because it is a good illustration of a certain activity or phase in the history of a community, or because it plays an important role in the current social or spiritual life of a community.

Heritage value reflects the reason for recognition of the historic place. Usually, only places with significant heritage value will be formally recognized by an authority. Each authority will have its own criteria for evaluating heritage value and determining the level of significance required for the official recognition of a historic place.

Types of Heritage Value

The need to categorize heritage value by type sometimes arises during the evaluation of the historic place when an authority must decide how to define heritage value and how to determine if heritage value is significant enough to warrant a formal recognition. Such categories are simply convenient ways of grouping similar kinds of heritage value. Categories encourage an authority to think about the different ways in which heritage value could arise. In a cumulative scoring evaluation system, categories can also ensure that values are weighted properly.

There are an infinite number of ways to categorize heritage value. The categories used by a particular authority tend to reflect the perspective of that authority or the community they are representing.

The Canadian Register of Historic Places (CRHP) defines heritage value as: “the aesthetic, historic, scientific, cultural, social or spiritual importance or significance for past, present or

future generations.” The CRHP definition is based on the definition for cultural significance (or heritage value) set out in the Burra Charter. The Burra Charter is an internationally accepted statement of principles that provides guidance for the conservation and management of places of cultural significance. The CRHP definition is not an exhaustive list of different types of heritage values but broadly identifies some of the key areas in which heritage values may be found. The CRHP categories are intended to assist in thinking about the broad spectrum of ways in which heritage value could arise. It is not necessary to name the CRHP type when writing about heritage value in the SOS.

Aesthetic value refers to the sensory qualities of a historic place (seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting) in the context of broader categories of design and tradition. A place may have aesthetic significance because it evokes a positive sensory response, or because it epitomizes a defined architectural style or landscape concept. Visual aesthetic value is typically expressed through form, colour, texture or materials. It is possible for historic places to have other aesthetic values as well, such as auditory ones. Historic places with aesthetic significance may reflect a particular style or period of construction or craftsmanship, or represent the work of a well-known architect, planner, engineer or builder.

Example of Historic Place with aesthetic value:



[*Château Frontenac*](#), Québec, Quebec. For full text see SOS 4, page 22.

Historical or cultural value refers to the associations that a place has with past events and historical themes, as well as its capacity to evoke a way of life or a memory of the past. Historical or cultural value may lie in the age of a heritage district, its association with important events, activities, people or traditions; its role in the development of a community, region, province, territory or nation; or its patterns of use. Historical or cultural value can lie in natural or ecological features of the place, as well as in built features.

EXAMPLE OF HISTORIC PLACE WITH HISTORICAL VALUE:



[*Warkentin Blacksmith Shop*](#), St. Francois Xavier, Manitoba. For full text see SoS 1, page 17.

Scientific value refers to the capacity of a historic place to provide evidence that can advance our understanding and appreciation of a culture. The evidence is found in the form, materials, design and/or experience of the place. Scientific value can derive from various factors, such as age, quality, completeness, complexity or rarity. Scientific value may also be present when the place itself supplements other types of evidence such as written sources, such as in archaeological sites.

Example of Historic Place with scientific value:



[Opimihaw](#), Saskatchewan. For full text see SOS 5, page 24.

Social value considers the meanings attached to a place by a community in the present time. It differs from historical or cultural value in that the value may not have an obvious basis in history or tradition, and relates almost entirely to the present time. Social value may be ascribed to places that perform a key role within communities, support community activities or traditions, or contribute to the community's sense of identity. Places with social value include sites that bring the community together and create a sense of shared identity and belonging.

Example of Historic Place with social value:



[Halifax Public Gardens](#), Halifax Nova Scotia. For full text see SOS 6, page 25.

Spiritual value is ascribed to places with religious or spiritual meanings for a community or a group of people. Sacred and spiritual places could include places of mythological significance, landscape features associated with myth and legends, burial sites, rock cairns and alignments, fasting/vision quest sites etc., places representing particular belief system(s) or places associated with sacred traditions, ceremonial practices or rituals of a community/group of people.

Example of Historic Place with spiritual value:



[Arvia'juaq and Oikiqtaarjuk](#), Arviat, Sentry Island, Nunavut. For full text see SOS 7, page 27.

Writing the Heritage Value section

The Heritage Value section should be written as a narrative. The description of each heritage value should include a statement of the value followed by an explanation that sets out the comparative context and the reason why the historic place is significant within that context. If more than one significant heritage value has been identified, all the values should be stated in an introductory paragraph, followed by separate paragraphs for each value explaining the context and significance of the place.

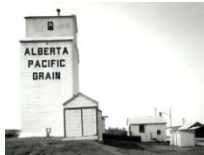
Heritage Value should include only the significant values associated with the formal recognition of a place. In most cases, only significant heritage values are identified during the recognition process and all should be included in Heritage Value. If additional values are identified during the preparation of the SOS, these should be approved by the formal recognition authority to ensure that they are in keeping with the intent of the formal recognition.

The Heritage Value section is not a detailed history of the historic place. The Heritage Value section is a statement of value, not a statement of fact. The Heritage Value section should not include any information that does not relate to the heritage value of the place. For instance, the current use of the historic place should not be included unless the current use is one of its heritage values.

Heritage Value should conclude with a reference to the source document that provides the official record of the recognition and heritage value of the place. A source document may be the formal recognition or designation report, minutes of the evaluation meeting, the designation by-law, or an approved statement of cultural heritage value or heritage character statement. Writers may include more than one source document where necessary.

In most cases, the Heritage Value can be explained in two paragraphs. Where there are multiple heritage values, the Heritage Value section may be longer. The technical limit imposed by the CRHP for Heritage Value is 4000 characters (about 1.5 pages of text).

Examples of Heritage Value sections:



[Alberta Pacific Grain Elevator Site](#), Meeting Creek, Alberta. For full text see SOS 8, page 29.



[Halifax Public Gardens](#), Halifax, Nova Scotia. For full text see SOS 6, page 25.



[King George V Building](#), St. John's, Newfoundland. For full text see SOS 9, page 31.

CHARACTER-DEFINING ELEMENTS

What is the purpose of the Character-defining Elements section?

The Character-defining Elements section identifies the principal features of the historic place that contribute to its heritage value. It gives a concrete form to the heritage value of the historic place. It provides guidance to property owners and to managers, planners, architects, designers and others involved in the conservation or management of the historic place.

The Character-defining Elements section is intended to answer the question: What features of the historic place must be preserved in order to maintain its heritage value?

What are Character-defining Elements?

A character-defining element is any tangible or intangible feature that expresses the heritage values associated with the historic place. The CRHP defines character-defining elements as: the materials, forms, location, spatial configurations, uses and cultural associations or meanings that contribute to the heritage value of a historic place, and which must be retained in order to preserve heritage value. Character-defining elements include both tangible features (materials, forms, location and spatial configurations) and intangible features (uses and cultural associations or meanings).

Character-defining elements are those features which most clearly convey the meanings and importance of the place. If they were removed, it would no longer be possible to understand the importance of the place. The heritage value of the place is dependent on its character-defining elements.

Types of Character-defining Elements

There are an infinite number of ways to categorize character-defining elements. Categories are simply convenient ways of grouping similar kinds of elements. Categorizing character-defining elements by type may assist the writer in capturing all the different aspects of the historic place that contribute to its heritage value. Categorizing character-defining elements by type may also make it easier for the property manager or architect to use the SOS in guiding conservation decisions about the historic place.

The categories used for a particular historic place will be determined by the nature of the heritage values associated with that place. Character-defining elements fall within the following categories:

- style, scale, massing and composition
- interior layout or exterior spatial configuration
- functional features
- materials and craftsmanship
- the relationship between the historic place and its broader setting
- the ways in which people use the historic place
- customs and traditions that were or continue to be associated with a historic place
-

Writing the Character-defining Elements section

The Character-defining Elements section should be written in point-form. Where a historic place has multiple values or multiple resources, it may be clearer to divide the elements into sections. For instance, where a place has more than one heritage value, the elements associated with each value could be listed separately under a heading naming that value. Alternately, where a place has multiple resources, the elements relating to the place as a whole, and the elements relating to each of the principle resources within the place, may be listed separately under headings naming each resource. Character-defining elements may be further grouped by type as suggested above.

The description of character-defining elements should provide a clear link between the heritage value of the place and its existing features. It is more than a list of property features: each element must directly relate to a heritage value. Only the principal character-defining elements that embody the heritage value of a historic place should be

stated. Features that do not contribute to the heritage value of the place should not be included. Features that no longer exist should not be included.

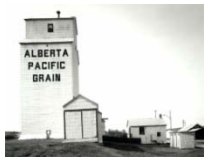
The Character-defining Elements section is not a detailed description of the historic place. It is not a definitive list of elements and the failure to name particular features does not mean that they are not included. The challenge in writing the Character-defining Elements section is to achieve a balance between being too specific and being too general. Rather than listing all elements, the Character-defining Elements section should point readers towards where value is embodied. The writer can identify broad categories and sub-categories of elements, followed by inclusive language (“including,” “such as,” “as illustrated by,” “as expressed in,” or “for example,”) and a list of sample elements.

The accuracy of the information provided in the Character-defining Elements section is critical if SOSs are to be used as tools in the conservation of a historic place. Site visits are important in confirming that elements mentioned in the Character-defining Elements section actually exist on site.

Conservation advice does not belong in the Character-defining Elements section. Advice on what should be retained, protected or replaced at a historic place belongs in a conservation plan.

The technical limit imposed by the CRHP for the Character-defining Elements section is 4000 characters (about 1.5 pages of text).

Examples of Character-defining Elements sections:



[Alberta Pacific Grain Elevator Site Complex](#), Meeting Creek, Alberta. For full text see SOS 8, page 29.



[Alton Mill](#), Caledon, Ontario. For full text see SOS 2, page 18.



[Arvia'juaq and Qikiqtaarjuk](#), Arviat, Sentry Island, Nunavut. For full text see SOS 7, page 27



[Dacotah Store](#), Cartier, Manitoba. For full text see SOS 10, page 33.



[Halifax Public Gardens](#), Halifax, Nova Scotia. For full text see SOS 6, page 25.

©Parks Canada, November 2006.

(Electronic edition, 2011)



Canada's
Historic Places

Lieux patrimoniaux
du Canada



Parks
Canada

Parcs
Canada

Canada