

CELEBRATING MUNICIPAL ARMS
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By Steve Cowan

In 2016 we recognized the semi-centennial of our Society founded 25 October 1966 and this year, on 1 July 2017, we achieve the sesquicentennial of Canada. Looking down the road a few years, we will also reach the sesquicentennial of the super natural Province of British Columbia. While organization celebrations are specific to our membership and national or provincial celebrations include much larger populations, we still have an opportunity to include heraldry into local community activities.

In my analysis and study of municipal arms in Canada, I have used some 162 municipalities in



Arms of Summerland BC
 From the College of Arms
 Registered 10 May 1967



Arms of Nisga'a Nation
 From the CHA
 Granted 11 May 2000

British Columbia; this does not include regional districts, most First Nations Reserves or other special groupings of BC residents. It does include the treaty lands of the Nisga'a Nation and one Indian Band and, using data as at 18 September 2013, there are some 50 cities, 51 district, island and resort municipalities, 17 towns, 42 villages, with 1 aboriginal treaty lands nation and 1 First Nations band. From the

2016 census the BC population was 4,648,055 and growing.

As we are aware, heraldry is an artistic form of individual or corporate identity; all Canadians can petition for a grant of arms through the Canadian Heraldic Authority (CHA) (www.gg.ca) subject to their guidelines. This also includes bodies such as organizations, clubs and associations, educational institutions and businesses, and the assorted municipalities numbered above as well as an armigerous treaty land nation and an armigerous First Nations band.

Of the current 162 municipalities in BC, only 64 are armigerous, just under 40% of the total. Of those communities with heraldic achievements, some nineteen municipalities have arms granted by United Kingdom authorities (five from the Court of the Lord Lyon in Scotland and fourteen from the College of Arms in England). The balance of 45 communities has had their arms granted since 1988 by the CHA. This leaves some 98 cities, towns and villages without any formal means of visual identification



Arms of the District of
 Port Edward BC from the CHA
 Granted 15 January 2007

granted as an honour from our Sovereign. As an aside; among the 98 mentioned, five municipalities have assumed arms that are not official grants of arms.

Imagine the population of British Columbia having the same ratio of armigerous citizens as communities - it would result in many thousands of achievements. But while we have a healthy ratio of armigerous municipalities, the reality is that many of these arms are rarely used or displayed.

Of the 64 municipalities with a grant of arms, only seven, to date, were using them on their website; a disappointing 11%. Another five had their arms on their site in such a small size in a hidden corner that I didn't consider them as displayed arms. That means that 57 communities did not have any reference or display of their arms in their official local government website; that's 89% not using their arms online.

In their defence, I have not seen examples of official local government letterhead, documents, forms or brochures from all municipalities reviewed, but I feel comfortable that if arms are not shown online then the likelihood of them being displayed elsewhere as community identification is slim.

The community that has the best display and promotion of their armorial achievement is the City of Langley, shown here to sinister. The arms are displayed on the city's home page, are featured and described on their information page and, something truly amazing, featured and promoted in a student activity booklet titled *Getting to Know the City of Langley*.



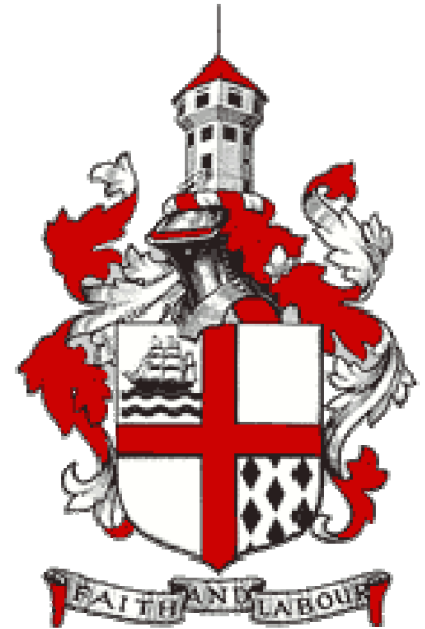
Arms of the City of Langley BC
From the CHA
Granted 30 January 1995

Protecting Our Heritage

It is amazing that municipalities seem to have lost sight of their heraldic heritage. While communities appraise the destruction of old buildings and homes and review the structures as they apply to the heritage and history of their communities, they miss the aspect of how this also applies to their arms. Municipal arms that have been granted years ago, some well before the creation of the CHA in 1988, have been ignored or forgotten; in most cases their function as the identity of the municipality has been replaced by a corporate logo. And that corporate logo has now

become the 'official' device on letterheads, municipal buildings, property and vehicles, and is used on municipal flags.

A case in point is the City of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. Nanaimo was incorporated on Christmas Eve, 1874. Using the 2016 census, Nanaimo is the largest city on Vancouver Island; bigger even than the Provincial Capital, the City of Victoria, by a few thousand citizens. Nanaimo became Canada's second armigerous municipality on 28 September, 1951 when arms were granted by the College of Arms, London. On 15 February, 2001 these arms were registered by the CHA.



Arms of the City of Nanaimo BC
From the College of arms registered
28 September 1951

I am using Nanaimo as an example as I drive there from Comox at least once a month and the City of Nanaimo has arranged attractive landscaping with



City of Nanaimo gateway showing
Corporate flag with national and provincial flags.

flagpoles at its south and north highway gateway entrances. The flagpoles have been stylized to depict ships masts reminiscent of the sailing vessel on the City's flag. However, the City's flag is not flown; rather a flag showing the City's corporate logo is used. The City's flag is unique and designed for visual impact from a distance and can still be understood when there is little wind. The current corporate flag includes text of the City's name with the blue-coloured wavy images seen on the landscaped wall. The logo and its flag do not reflect the heritage of the City's arms nor its history that it implies. Unless the observer is up close to the flag, with it blowing fully extended in the wind showing the full lettering, it is impossible to actually read CITY OF NANAIMO on it as you drive past.

Projecting Our Heritage

The newest armigerous community in British Columbia is the Resort Municipality of Whistler. Its new arms were unveiled to the Whistler Council on



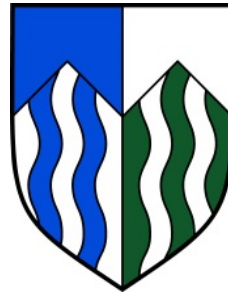
Recently granted arms of the Resort Municipality of Whistler

15 March 2016. (I do not have the date when the arms were granted and registered by the CHA.) The arms are in the website for Whistler under Culture and Recreation; they are not, as yet, shown on the municipality's home page. An interesting note is the detail of the official

use of the new arms, namely, "Whistler's coat of arms will be used exclusively for official purposes by the Office of the Mayor. It will be featured on official recognition documents such as Proclamations, Civic Service Awards and Freedom of the Municipality."

Could this be an ideal time for these new arms to be used to promote this honour from our Sovereign? The shield could be used in place of the corporate logo. It is of similar tincture to the logo and could be applied

to many uses from municipal vehicles to street signs, leaving the full achievement to be used for formal or ceremonial occasions. The many European visitors would easily grasp the shield as the use of arms is widespread throughout Europe. As the shield means Whistler the name would not be needed, like wearing braces and a belt at the same time.



Resort Municipality of Whistler
Armorial shield versus corporate logo

Encouraging Our Heritage

I live in the Town of Comox on Vancouver Island. As the largest town in BC; Comox is bigger than the 20 smallest populated cities in BC (from the 2011 census). Comox is one of three municipalities in the Comox Valley; the City of Courtenay and the Village of Cumberland are the other municipalities. None of the three communities is armigerous. The City of Courtenay has a logo stylized to loosely resemble a coat of arms; the apocryphal story I have from local research is that it was designed by a grade 12 high school student in 1989 as part of an arts project.

With the sesquicentennial of BC approaching, as well as the incorporation dates of the various communities to use as encouragement, the difficulty is not only getting municipalities to obtain a grant of arms but also to use the arms for their identification. I would encourage all members to learn about their local arms, if they have them, and to see how these arms are used. If your community doesn't have arms maybe we can develop an approach that will add to our national heritage and heraldic appreciation.