

A Bold, Successful National Cultural Experiment

The Canadian Heraldic Authority: Personal Reflections on its First Sixteen Years

by Robert D. Watt
Chief Herald of Canada

“It is in and through symbols that man, consciously or unconsciously lives, works and has his being”.
— Carlyle

(illus. 1. Coat of Arms of the Canadian Heraldic Authority)

(illus. 2. the arms of office of the Chief Herald of Canada impaling personal arms of R.D. Watt surmounting baton of office)

At the outset, I want to express my appreciation to the Editor of *Canadian Monarchist News* for giving me this opportunity to reflect on the first sixteen years of the Canadian Heraldic Authority. This short essay is not a formal history, in part because some developments are too new for it to be possible to fully assess their long-term impact. Nevertheless, I hope my thoughts will form a significant source in the history of the Authority that I have no doubt will ultimately be written.

I want to explore four topics: what were the challenges to be faced in bringing the Authority to life, how were these met, what has the Authority achieved in the first period of its development and what are the rewards I feel I have enjoyed as a result of being appointed the first Chief Herald of Canada.

Several years ago, I was invited to give a presentation to a small group of Cubs. They were a very lively audience and paid close attention to the explanations about heraldic colours, how coats of arms needed to be simple and how individuals had an enormously varied choice of elements to include in any armorial design. At the end of the answer period, they took up paper and felt pens and drew their own coat of arms. There were about 20 in the group and as you can imagine, the quality of the results varied considerably; but several stood out. The one I thought was the best was described by its creator as we went around the circle with each Cub explaining his design. In the middle of the group was a boy who held up a purple shield with a gold guitar in the middle and a large gold numeral 3 above and to the left of the guitar. He explained that of the options I had given, he liked the richness of the purple and gold. His love of rock music was symbolized by the guitar. Clearly signalling that he was finished what he had to say, he turned to the Cub on his left to give him the floor. However, I interrupted by ask-



1. Coat of Arms of the Canadian Heraldic Authority

ing “But what does the three mean?” He looked at me with that unmistakable look young people can give older people when the former feels the latter are hopelessly out of it. He replied, “Three is my favourite time of day”. I still did not get it and must have looked puzzled. He gave a little sigh and explained “That’s when school gets out!” Everyone laughed, myself included, but the whole exercise was salutary because it reminded me of one of the most important reasons for the Canadian Heraldic Authority’s existence, the advantage in having a national heraldic office which provides the ability to respond to Canadian’s desire to learn more about heraldry and to understand it more deeply.

Of course, meeting that need is only one of the objectives which having the Canadian Heraldic Authority addresses. Near the head of the list is an importance of having a domestic mechanism for meeting our heraldic needs, or to put it another way, the Authority is an important expression of sovereignty in an important sphere of national life. While Carlyle, in the passage cited above, was not talking about heraldic symbols only, his comments refer directly to the way in which increasing numbers of Canadians find heraldry to be the perfect expression of individual identity or the celebration of the history, aspirations and character of communities and institutions.

I have frequently noted that the legal significance of and aesthetic dignity and versatility of heraldry set it apart from the transitory logos and word marks of a particular era, especially the one we live in at present. Heraldry is timeless. The coats of arms created today will be with us for centuries. In 1988, when the Authority was just a few months old, I told an international audience that I was very proud Canada had decided to create its own heraldic office, giving us a chance



2. The arms of office of the Chief Herald of Canada impaling personal arms of R.D. Watt surmounting baton of office

to shape a beautiful inheritance from Europe to suit our own needs. Later on I will describe how successful I feel we have been, but first, it is important to examine how the office came to be and what challenges were faced in creating the Authority and the Canadian heraldic system which flows from it.

In the two decades prior to 1988, the Heraldry Society of Canada, now the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada, was at the forefront of those advocating the establishment of a heraldic office for Canada. Through much of this period, successive national governments indicated that although they understood the arguments in favour of such an office, particularly the importance of national sovereignty over our symbols, for various reasons creation of a domestic heraldic authority was not a priority.

The situation changed sharply late in 1986 when Vicki Huntington, now a Councillor for the Municipality of Delta, south of Vancouver, contacted Teresa Nahanni, a First Nations woman who was Parliamentary Assistant to the Honourable David Crombie, MP, Secretary of State. Ms Huntington urged Ms Nahanni to read the latest brief of Heraldry Society, “*A Canadian Heraldic Authority Symbols for a Sovereign Nation*” which has been issued in June, 1986. Ms Nahanni did, found the arguments persuasive and in turn made a strong suggestion to the Minister that the project outlined in the brief had real merit. David Crombie was sufficiently interested following his review of the document to request a meeting with me in Vancouver. At the time, I was Director of the Vancouver Museum and first Vice-President of the Heraldry Society, and co-author of the brief.

As he reflected on the proposal, Mr Crombie decided to have his department sponsor a National Forum on heraldry



3. Coat of arms of Governor General Adrienne Clarkson

which was held on Parliament Hill on 26 March, 1987. This historic meeting, which was organized by Harris Boyd, the Director of State Ceremonial in Mr Crombie’s Ministry, and his officials, notably Kevin MacLeod, drew national and international experts together and resulted in a strong recommendation to government that an Authority be created.

Mr Crombie’s determined championing of the idea with his cabinet colleagues over the next year, and very hard work by Harris Boyd and his team, by key advisors in the Ministry of Justice and by senior officials in the Governor General’s office, carried the day. Cabinet gave approval and the Authority became a reality on 4 June 1988, during a brief formal ceremony at Rideau Hall, when His Royal Highness, the Prince Edward, presented Royal Letters Patent to the Governor General, Jeanne Sauv , by which her Majesty transferred the exercise of her Canadian heraldic prerogative to the Governor General.

The central section of this historic document which bears the Royal Sign Manual and the Great Seal of Canada is worth quoting because all that has followed has been built on this foundation.

“Whereas it is desirable and our Privy Council for Canada has advised that Letters Patent do issue authorizing and empowering our Governor General of Canada to exercise or provide for the exercise of all powers and authorities lawfully belonging to Us as Queen of Canada in respect of the granting of armorial bearings in Canada.

Now know Ye that We, by and with the advice of our Privy Council of Canada, do by these presents authorize and empower Our Governor General of Canada to exercise or provide for the exercise of all power and authorities lawfully belonging to Us as Queen of Canada in respect of the granting of armorial bearings in Canada.”



4. Arms of Quebec City



5. Arms of Manitoba



6. Arms of Halifax Regional Municipality



7. Arms of St. Georges de Beauce

The Canadian Heraldic Authority...



8. Arms of Sooke, B.C.



9. Arms of Helen Magsagak, former Commissioner of NWT and NU



10. Arms of J. Dunlap



11. Arms of Town of Port Hope, Ontario

As readers will note, in the end, it was decided to take a very simple approach as to how the Authority was to come into being. The government's lawyers established that the Queen of Canada's prerogative powers in the area of heraldry existed and could be the subject of action by her Canadian ministers, and this action was taken via the Royal Letters Patent. Having explored several options for structuring, placing and funding the Authority, it was decided to reaffirm the principle that the Crown was the Fount of Honour. Coats of arms were to be described as an honour from the Crown and part of the national honours system. Thus the Governor General was the logical person to take the constitutional responsibility for heraldry, and therefore the Authority should most appropriately be situated as part of the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General. Interestingly, many of these key decisions were foreshadowed by recommendations in the Heraldry Society's brief of June 1986 (*illus. 3. coat of arms of Governor General Adrienne Clarkson*).

The memory of that hot hazy June day in 1988 sitting to the right of the porte cochère in front of the facade at Rideau Hall will remain with me all my life. By that time, I was Chief Herald, and throughout the excitement of the ceremony my mind was racing with all that had to be done. Staff had to be recruited, a budget shaped and above all a system put in place to grant new arms including determining the form the granting documents were to take.

There were a number of models to choose from: the ones I was most familiar with were the English College of Arms in London and the Court of the Lord Lyon in Edinburgh, the Crown's traditional heraldic offices which had served British North America from 1763 and then Canada after 1867 up to that day.

The ministerial review and discussions of budget which had preceded 4 June 1988 gave some direction. It was clear, for example, that there would be no legislation along the lines of the Lyon Court Act of 1867 which confirmed Lord Lyon's elevated status, sole authority and powers to protect Scots heraldry via the

courts against misuse and misappropriation. Instead, the basic structure of the Canadian Heraldic Authority was to be closer, although not identical, to that of the English College. Thus the incumbent Secretary to the Governor General became the Herald Chancellor with the Deputy Secretary, Chancellery being known as the Deputy Herald Chancellor. These two officers were commissioned under the Privy Seal of the Governor General as head of the Authority to adjudicate the recommendations of the Chief Herald that particular persons or corporations be granted armorial bearings and to issue a warrant authorizing the grant if they agreed with the recommendation. The Chief Herald of Canada, also commissioned under the Privy Seal, was the senior heraldic professional at Rideau Hall, responsible for the day-to-day administration of the Heraldry Directorate, one of two sections in the Chancellery of Honours. The key sentence in the Chief Herald's commission, dated 6 September 1988 reads:

"...during your good behaviour in your present appointment, effective the fourth day of June in the year of Our Lord One thousand nine hundred and eighty-eight and in that capacity to grant and assign such arms, flags, badges and other heraldic devices to governments, corporations, associations, societies and persons worthy and deserving of this grant of honour as you may think fitting and appropriate upon receipts of a warrant for the same issued under the seal of the Canadian Heraldic Authority and signed by the Herald Chancellor or His Deputy and to undertake such other measures as necessary to create and maintain a heraldic system for Canada"

In short, the Chief Herald was to grant arms, under the powers exercised by the Governor General but only on receipt of a warrant issued by the Herald Chancellor or his Deputy, these latter officers being akin to the Earl Marshal and his Deputy in England, and to develop a full-fledged heraldic system for Canada, of which such grants were to be a central part.

Where did the titles for these officers and the other heralds come from? They

were among the earliest suggestions I made, even before taking up my position. Firstly, I felt that since it was unlikely that either the Secretary to the Governor General or the Deputy Secretary, Chancellery would ever have specialized technical expertise in the field of heraldry, what was called for were titles that combined a reference to a heraldic responsibility – but not the title of herald specifically. This led to Herald Chancellor and Deputy Herald Chancellor which produced neatly and elegantly in French, *Chancelier d'armes* and *Vice-chancelier d'armes*. For the heralds themselves, there was some pressure to have the senior officer called Canada King of Arms as a Canadian reflection of the traditional titles in London and Edinburgh. However, on reflection, there was general agreement that this was too exotic, and that in the context of late 20th century, there was a risk that such terminology might cause the new program to be made fun of rather than taken seriously.

Titles for the other heralds were an easier matter. One day, several weeks before June 4th, I was returning home from work and half way across the Lion's Gate Bridge, it came to me that the names of rivers could be used for titles, reflecting their deep and ongoing importance to the socio-economic evolution of Canada. Out of this idea came Saint-Laurent, Athabaska and Fraser Heralds and ultimately, Saguenay, Dauphin, Niagara, Cowichan, Assiniboine, Coppermine, Miramichi and Outaouais.

One of the most important challenges in the first years was the development of a budget and clarification of funding sources. There were three main themes central to the national heraldry program:

1. Providing visible and dramatic expression of Canada's sovereignty in the area of National Symbolism.
2. Ensuring that Canada's heraldic heritage was preserved, developed and strengthened as an expression of national identity; and
3. Providing opportunities for Canadians from all sectors of society to celebrate and affirm the history, geography and heritage of their communities, citizens and symbols.

In fulfilling these important objectives, the government, prior to 4 June 1988, had made it clear that the Authority's funding was to be based on a core of public sector support supplemented by private sector funding.

Broadly speaking, the government's contribution was to be focused on the core activities: program management including policy development, conceptualizing new coats of arms and related heraldic designs including interaction with petitioners; establishment and maintenance of artistic standards and provision of national expertise in this area; creation of a full archival program to ensure proper record of all granting and recording activity and provision for public access; development of research capacity to respond to public enquiries; and development of a research library.

At the same time, it was expected that the petitioner, the individual or corporation requesting the coat of arms would bear all of the direct costs of developing the arms and these would be cost recovered, mainly through use of freelance artists, painters and calligraphers.

It took several years to put this funding structure in place but the necessary balance was achieved by 1991 and has been operating since then. The result is a budget structure closer to the Scottish rather than the English model. Not only has it operated effectively but the annual contribution of public funds to the Authority's operation has ensured that another important government and, I would say, Canadian cultural objective has been met. Canadian heraldry has remained affordable. As the work of the Authority has become more widely known, Canadians wishing to use heraldry have not faced an economic hurdle.

For the new program, locating well qualified staff was one of the main initial challenges. Happily, because it was essential that the Authority demonstrate a solid bilingual capacity from day one, Auguste Vachon, who was a well-known heraldist, historian and archivist, and who had been responsible for the National Archives' heraldry collection, was available and joined the Authority as Saint-Laurent Herald, rapidly assuming



12. Arms of St. George's Society of Toronto



13. Painting of the new arms of Canada by C. Sabourin



14. Arms of Asper Foundation



15. Arms of City of Penticton

The Canadian Heraldic Authority...



16. Arms of Trail, B.C.



17. Arms of Judith LaRocque, CVO



18. Arms of Kamloops Indian Band



19. Arms of the City of Toronto

responsibility for preparation of granting texts in both official languages. Charles Maier, a historian and archivist, was appointed as Athabaska Herald, with a particular responsibility for policy development.

Equally fortunately, the essential in-house artistic capacity was realized when Cathy Sabourin joined the staff in April 1989 as Fraser Herald. Ms. Sabourin was a skilled heraldic artist who had been painting Forces badges at the Department of National Defence for several years. Assisting the heralds were a number of important administrative support staff in addition to the expertise available in other sections of Rideau Hall. Within a few years, we were also able to supplement the expertise of the in-house heralds through a system of technical consultants, based across the country, expert heraldists who could work with petitioners on a regional basis and strengthen the visibility of the national program in different parts of Canada. Most, if not all, were recruited from the membership of the Heraldry Society of Canada.

There was some concern, which I did not share, that it would be difficult to find the qualified freelance painters and calligraphers who would undertake most of the concept and final art. This was not an academic question because the first petition was received just a month after the Authority was created. It came from Jean Pelletier, then Mayor of Quebec City, and we had to move like lightning to have the design discussions and prepare the Patent which was presented by Governor General Jeanne Sauvé at a splendid ceremony in the Hôtel de Ville in the heart of the Old Capital only three and a half months after the Authority's birth. The unofficial dean of Canadian heraldic artists Gordon Macpherson of Burlington, now Niagara Herald Extraordinary, came to the rescue and completed the painting on the Quebec City Patent in record time. Other artists were found fairly quickly, including some such as Linda Nicholson and Joan Bouwmeester who had also been previously involved in heraldic art. After Cathy Sabourin arrived, other painters were located and took to the work eagerly,

although some had not done a lot of heraldic painting before. Fortunately, a group of skilled calligraphers was located in the National Capital Region, including Judy Bainbridge who calligraphed the Quebec City Patent, Nancy Ellis and John Whitehead.

The form of the granting document, the Letters Patent, was one of the early matters to be settled as was the related issue of the material to be used for the Patents. This also was made more urgent because of the limited time available to complete the grant to Quebec City. An official seal was needed and before that, arms for the Authority which would be featured on the seal. The design for these arms was one of my earliest concepts and I still believe its simplicity not only effectively expressed the identity and mission of the Authority and the link with the Governor General but exemplified the kind of simple, powerful design that I hoped would be one of the hallmarks of new Canadian heraldry.

The seal, designed by Bruce Beatty, was made in record time by Rideau Orders and Decorations Limited of Ville St-Laurent near Montreal. We decided not to have a pendant seal in wax, as used in London or Edinburgh, nor to use vellum for Patents because a supply could not be guaranteed in Canada, nor did we have enough artists who knew how to work on it.

The form chosen for the Letters Patent was a version of the Patents issued by the English College of Arms. So, from the outset, Canadian Patents of Arms, whether in one or two parts, all featured as armorial headings in the upper centre, the shield of Arms of Canada, ensigned by the Royal Crown, to the left, the personal arms of the incumbent Governor General and to the right the arms of the Heraldic Authority (*illus. 4. arms of Quebec City*). The granting text itself, in English and French, was patterned on both the Scottish and English Patents but more than a decade later was reduced in volume, with some titles and biographical information being removed. Until early 1989, the Patents were signed only by the Chief Herald but in that year, the signatures of the Herald Chancellor and

Deputy Herald Chancellor were added at the request of the former who felt that the signatures of two officers who issued warrants should be present to attest to the Chief Herald's action.

Of course, there was so much going on in these early years as the Authority was taking shape and Canadians were responding to the new program neither time nor space allows for detailed discussion of all developments. But as I reflect on the first two to three years a decade and a half later, my overwhelming impression was that we boarded a train that left the station very quickly and kept gaining speed. The constant challenge in the early years was to create operational procedures and a functional heraldic system from scratch at the same time as we were receiving more and more requests, in fact a larger number than we could respond to in a timely way. The result was a backlog which took many years to clear away. It is only since 2001-02 that the backlog has been eliminated and that we are now in a position to begin working with a petitioner virtually as soon as we are contacted.

What have been the main accomplishments of the Authority's first sixteen years? These can be divided into a number of areas: Canadian sovereignty, preservation and strengthening of heraldic heritage as an expression of national identity, heraldry as a celebration and affirmation of identity, how Canadian heraldry reflects our own history and aspirations, procedural and aesthetic achievements, heraldry and the Canadian Crown, national and international impact.

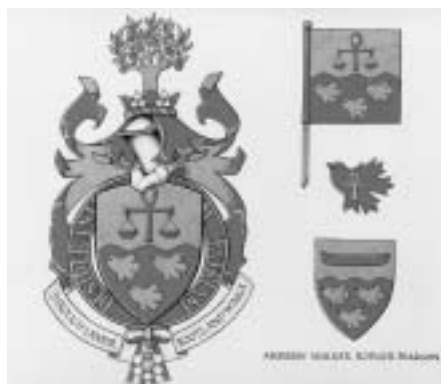
Firstly, the Authority has been entirely successful as an expression of Canadian sovereignty in the realm of national symbolism. If there was any doubt that heraldry could be successfully patriated, it is gone and with each passing year, the new symbols granted by Vice-Regal Warrant of the Governor General or by the Chief Herald are seen as constant proof of our ability to shape new heraldic symbols in our own way. Many examples come to mind: the augmented arms of Manitoba (*illus. 5. arms of Manitoba*) and Prince Edward Island, the new arms of Nuna-

vut, the arms for dozens of municipalities and religions and educational institutions (*illus. 6. arms of Halifax Regional Municipality, 7. of St. Georges de Beauce, 8. of Sooke, B.C.*). From the beginning, we have been creating Canadian heraldry for Canadians and by Canadians (*illus. 9. arms of Helen Magsagak, former Commissioner of NWT and NU*). The creation of the Authority has unleashed a pent-up demand for new heraldry, once Canadians have appreciated that this can be developed at home by compatriots knowledgeable in the field and with the active involvement of the recipient.

The Canadian heraldry system is a measured and thoughtful response to our own symbolic traditions, history and laws. It is not a rigid system. From the moment I took up the position as Chief Herald, I have never felt that Canadians would accept a heraldic straight jacket but would respond positively to invitations to keep their new heraldry simple (*illus. 10. J. Dunlap*) and wherever possible to preserve their heraldic patrimony (*illus. 11. Town of Port Hope, Ontario*).

The activities of the Canadian heralds have resulted in a much wider and more informed understanding throughout Canada of the nature of heraldry and how it celebrates and affirms identity. Often this has occurred as successive Governors General have continued the tradition begun by Jeanne Sauvé of personally presenting Letters Patent in a public ceremony or when the Chief Herald or another herald has made a formal similar presentation. Sometimes lectures to a variety of audiences have produced a similar result. That said, many millions of Canadians are still unaware of the Authority although I think in time, especially using electronic means, this will diminish.

Perhaps one of the Authority's most obvious achievements is in the ever growing body of Canadian heraldry which is enshrined in the national armorial, the Public Register of Arms, Flags and Badges of Canada. There are now over 1200 entries in the Register representing over 2500 new symbols. This is not only a solid numerical accomplishment over a relatively short time, even



20. Arms of Jane Pepino



21. Halifax Rifles Badge



22. Joint Forces Imagery Centre Badge



23. Full Patent of Mr. Koval's Arms

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24. Arms of the Monarchist League of Canada



25. Badge of Vancouver Police



26. Arms of Regional Municipality of Cape Breton



27. Arms of City of Medicine Hat

more so it represents an aesthetic victory. Canadian heraldry early established a reputation for excellence in conception and art, the marriage of the talents of heralds and artists. Formal recognition of this came before the Authority was a decade old when in 1996, it received the Prix Gustav von Numers in recognition “*d’une création de dessin héraldique nouveau et vivant toujours basé sur une composition traditionnelle*” (illus. 12. *St George’s Society of Toronto*, 13. *painting of the new arms of Canada by C. Sabourin*).

This is not to suggest that all Canadian arms are the models of simplicity in numbers of elements and limited colours that the heralds, given a completely free hand, might wish. But slowly and surely, I believe we are having greater success in weaning recipients away from the worst excesses of Victorian heraldry, particularly the quartered shield with four different symbols on it in too many colours, toward simpler designs with limited numbers of symbols arranged in symmetrical fashion.

This process must be user friendly. To be successful in the sense of being fully accepted and used heraldry cannot be imposed from on high or at a distance. It must truly resonate with the recipient and that resonance comes from the active involvement of grantees in the development and approval process. From the outset, Canadian heralds have become known as good listeners. We pay close attention to the wishes of the petitioners and always try to reach a balance between the recipients’ desires and the obligation of the Chief Herald under his Commission to ensure the uniqueness and the excellence by international standards of what is being granted (illus. 14. *Asper Foundation*).

There is another element to Canadian heraldic art that must be noted. It is creative. The Authority’s heralds have fully embraced the opportunity to incorporate Canadian flora, fauna, allusions to historic themes and events and even heritage structures into their designs (illus. 15. *arms of City of Penticton*, 16. *of Trail, BC*). On a more technical level, they have invented new heraldic figures and ways of dividing the shield. A good example is



28. Nunavut Patent

found in the arms of the former Herald Chancellor, Judith LaRocque, CVO., where the shield is parted by a horizontal “*érable*” line of alternating maple leaves (illus. 17.). But we have not thrown out the heraldic baby with the bathwater. Our heraldic art is still very evidently European in structure, colour, and in the use of many traditional heraldic geometrical figures and symbols.

Another area in which the Authority has had some success is in formally recognizing the symbolic traditions of the First Nations. This has occurred in two ways, either through affirmation of these traditions for a particular First Nation or, with the approval of elders, by incorporating a First Nations symbol in another design. Two examples can be cited, the grant to the Kamloops Indian Band in British Columbia (illus. 18.) and the golden eagle in the crest of the arms of the City of Toronto, placed there to honour the Mississaugas, the original inhabitants of the area which is now Toronto (illus. 19. *arms of the City of Toronto*).

From the time the Authority was created, it was recognized that Canadian heraldry would have to conform to the requirements of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, particularly its equality provisions and to related provincial statutes. Ensuring that this happened has been extremely important to me even though I knew it would rapidly give rise to changes in what some heraldists in Canada saw as an important feature of heraldry, that is the descent of the arms being linked with a surname. From the beginning, Canadian heraldry has been gender equal; not identical, but equal. Women have been granted the same structures as men and, more significantly, female grantees have the right to pass on their arms to all heirs, male and female, whatever the surname. Thus our heraldry has become heraldry of bloodlines rather than names (illus. 20. *Jane Pepino*). It is interesting to me that almost without exception grantees have welcomed this approach and see it as consistent with their own wishes and the nature of present-day Canada.

The creation of the Authority has also brought a new rigour to the development of military badges. These important symbols of identity and service are now all fashioned in discussions between the Chief Herald, supported by the other heralds and any units of the Forces requiring a new badge. Gradually, through this process, our great tradition of military heraldry is being brought into the national armorial (illus. 21. *Halifax Rifles badge*, 22. *Joint Forces Imagery Centre*).

On another matter, the Authority, although young, has rapidly established an international presence and is respected abroad for its art and creativity. In 1996, the Canadian heralds and the Authority’s

administrative staff, supported by colleagues in Rideau Hall, hosted the 22nd International Congress of Genealogical and Heraldic Sciences in Ottawa, the first of these international events ever held outside Europe. It was a tremendously successful affair and included the first ever heraldic artists’ workshop which drew leading practitioners from Canada, England, Scotland, South Africa, Russia and Finland. Ever since the 19th Congress in Innsbruck in 1988, I have made a presentation on some aspect of Canadian heraldry and have been joined in recent years by my fellow Academician of the International Academy of Heraldry, Dr. Claire Boudreau, Saint-Laurent Herald. At the Congress in Turin, 1998, I was elected President of the Bureau permanent des Congrès internationaux des sciences généalogique et héraldique, the Secretariat which oversees the siting and administration of the Congresses. Dr. Boudreau is Secretary.

This overview would not be complete, especially for the readership of the *Canadian Monarchist News*, if I did not comment on the Canadian Crown and heraldry. There are several dimensions to this. The first has been touched on earlier. The wording of each new Canadian grant of arms makes it clear that the grant is an honour from the Canadian Crown under powers held by the Governor General of Canada received from Her Majesty as Queen of Canada. Beyond this, each Patent visually dramatizes that fact by placing the shield of the Royal Arms of Canada ensigned by the Royal Crown at the top of the document (illus. 23. *full Patent Mr. Koval’skyj*).

Perhaps most significantly, the creation of the Canadian Heraldic Authority has at last provided a vehicle for the formal approval of the use of the Royal Crown in new Canadian heraldry. On a case by case basis, the Governor General can recommend such use to the Queen and once the Sovereign’s approval has been given, the grant proceeds. In this way, the Monarchist League (illus. 24. *arms of the Monarchist League*) itself was honoured by having the Royal Crown in its arms. Other civilian examples include the Cities of New Westminster, BC and Regina, and the Rideau Club in Ottawa. In particular, this process has ensured that municipal police services across the country have been able to include the Crown in their badges (illus. 25. *badge of Vancouver Police*, 26. *the Regional Municipality of Cape Breton*, 27. *City of Medicine Hat*).

In summary, as the work of the Authority continues, Canadian heraldry becomes more deeply embedded in the Canadian experience and character even as it becomes more deeply a part of it.

About ten years ago at a dinner party, I was asked to explain my work. When I

had finished, the person besides me said, “You deal in beautiful things and good news”. It is hard to overstate how deeply fortunate I have always felt in being given the opportunity to play a key role in creating the Authority and the Canadian heraldic system. Heraldry is one of our most beautiful inheritances from Europe. At the same time, Canada is one of the few countries in the world where the First Nations’ symbolic traditions have survived. So we are doubly fortunate.

I often think that Canadians tend to underestimate our ability to transform something old into something new to meet our needs. Evolution, not revolution, is a deeply important theme in our history. Through the Authority, we are reshaping our heraldic inheritance and creating something uniquely ours, without breaking totally with the past. We are keeping the best and innovating slowly and where we must.

Since 1988, I have proclaimed Patents in hundreds of ceremonies in every province and territory except Newfoundland and Labrador. I have been privileged to serve four Governors General and to meet her Majesty on several occasions. I have worked with more than 25 Lieutenant Governors and Territorial Commissioners on their coats of arms. I have

On behalf of our President, Dr Kevin Greaves, I would like to express the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada’s pleasure that you have provided an opportunity for Robert Watt, the Chief Herald of Canada and head of the Canadian Heraldic Authority in the Office of the Governor General, to tell the story of the creation and the development of Canadian heraldry, which has gained such a high reputation among the heraldic officers throughout the world.

The Authority has achieved this standing due to the guidance Robb has provided in recognizing, and working with, all Canadians – from our First Nations to those of us who, together with our ancestors, have come from every part of the world. This can be seen most clearly by viewing the armorial bearings which have been granted since the Authority was created by Her Majesty in 1988 and recognizing the traditional features of so many nationalities which are displayed in them.

We, as a Society, are very proud of how Robb, as a Society member since its early years and president in 1988, has provided the inspiration in the development of the means by which we can obtain, as an honour from the Crown of Canada, a way to identify ourselves and our many and varied incorporations and associations.

*John Wilkes
Honorary Secretary
The Royal Heraldry Society of Canada*

The Canadian Heraldic Authority...

seen almost every Government House in Canada and made proclamations of Patents in several of them. It is difficult for me to speak about highlights through these sixteen years but heading the list must be the Nunavut project which took me to the Far North five times and led ultimately to the proclamation of their new arms and flag in Iqaluit on 1 April 1999 (*illus. 28. Nunavut Patent*). The project is a whole story on its own, not least because in order to complete the Patent where the granting text was also in Inuktitut and Inuinniaqtun we worked with elders who created new words for us, in both languages, for some of the terms and the technical description in the ancient language of heraldry – blazon – for the new arms and flag.

Many other ceremonies come to mind. The ceremonies for the Siksika (Blackfoot) in Alberta, for the Kamloops Indian Band, for Holy Trinity Anglican Cathedral, Quebec City, for Congregation Machzekei Hadas, Ottawa, for the RCMP at the Academy in Regina, for the 4 Airfield Engineering Squadron, CFB Cold Lake, Alberta, for Prince Edward County, for North Vancouver District, and as recently as February, for the City of Fernie amidst the splendour of the Rockies and, on the Authority's 16th birthday, for the District of Pitt Meadows. I never imagined I would see so much of Canada and learn so much about our country and its people.

In a few years, I will retire but, of course, the next generation will carry on the work of the Authority and a new chapter in its evolution will begin. The Authority will evolve in new ways but I believe the user friendly, innovative and professional reputation now firmly established will be maintained and even strengthened.

While the foregoing views are personal, I want to emphasize strongly how much the Authority's accomplishments are a team effort. I am blessed with fine colleagues, Saint-Laurent (*Claire Boudreau*), Fraser (*Cathy Sabourin*), Saguenay (*Bruce Patterson*), Assiniboine (*Darrel Kennedy*), Coppermine (*Catherine Fitzpatrick*), Miramichi (*Karine Constantineau*), Dauphin (*Robert Pichette*), Niagara (*Gordon Macpherson*), Cowichan (*Graham Anderson*) and Outaouais (*Auguste Vachon*) and our support staff (*Sylvianne Latus*, *Francine Cayer* and *Fatima Bourhil*). Many thanks to all of you and all our consultants, artists and calligraphers, and friends beyond Ottawa. And lastly, fondest love and gratitude for your singular contribution to the Authority and Canadian heraldry, for your love and support, to my wife *Alison* and our children, *Michael* and *Catherine*.

Readers interested in learning more of the work of the Canadian Heraldic Authority may obtain information by clicking on the Heraldry tab at the Governor General's web site, http://www.gg.ca/menu_e.asp. HM's Heralds in Britain maintain their own web site, which includes a subscription form for their quarterly Newsletter, to be found at <http://college-of-arms.gov.uk/> while The Court of Lord Lyon, King of Arms of Scotland, also offers a web site at <http://www.heraldry-scotland.co.uk/Lyoncourt.htm>