FLAG DEVELOPMENTS IN CANADA

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The 1960's were a powerful decade in terms of vexillological dynamism. Our national flag, seven provincial flags, two territorial flags, and many of Canada's civic flags were hoisted between 1960 and 1970. Flag news have been quite remarkable in Canada in the past fourteen years as they have been around the world. This paper will examine some of the recent changes in flags and vexillology in the land we call «The True North Strong and Free».

Newfoundland introduced a new provincial flag in 1980 [Fig. 1-a]. Its design almost defies categorisation. Perhaps it may be called a «cross» flag (as the Quebec flag and Union Jack). The flag has won wide acceptance judged by the number of times it appears on automobile bumper stickers, T-shirts, and mastheads. There are a few objectors who consider the flag, designed by local artist Christopher Pratt, to have been railroaded through the provincial legislature. There is a good record of the flag's passage in the debates of that body that has yet to appear in the vexillological literature. Each of the provinces has a representative of the Governor General in the Office of the Lieutenant Governor. The flag of this office employed for many years a Union Flag with arms within a wreath in the centre. In 1981 the Queen of Canada approved a new Governor General's flag. Then eventually and piecemeal the lieutenant governors also adopted a standard design largely eliminating the Union flag for that office. The new design was approved in 1981 for Ontario, New Brunswick, Alberta, and Prince Edward Island. British Columbia joined the list in 1982, Manitoba in 1984. It wasn't until 1987 that Newfoundland's won approval. Nova Scotia's is unchanged (but the decision is subject to review in February 1994). Quebec had already adopted in 1952 its own version of this flag: the flag has a blue field, but the shield of the provincial arms appears within a white disc. In the standard design there is a blue field with the shield of the arms of the province encircled by a wreath of ten maple leaves in gold, and surmounted by a St. Edward's crown [Fig. 1-b]. The amalgamation of the army, navy and air forces of Canada into Canadian Armed Forces brought about a variety of new flags before 1980, and the final elimination of traditional yet Britannic elements, such as the White Ensign. Various types of Command flags and more camp flags were introduced in the 1980's [Fig 1-c].

The most important influence on more recent vexillological developments has been the Canadian Heraldic Authority, formed June 4, 1988. In essence on that date Queen Elizabeth II transferred the exercise of her Canadian heraldic prerogative to the Governor General. In a fairly quiet but often highly ceremonial way, the Authority has granted new arms, badges and flags, or registered old ones. Besides personal and municipal grants there are other types. The Canadian Coast Guard (under the Ministry of Transport) has many flags including rank flags. Dr. Günter Mattern reported on these emblems in Madrid at the XI Congress in 1985. The flags with minor changes have been registered with the Canadian Heraldic Authority. One new flag in the

grant is for use when the Governor General is on board: It consists of a white flag, ratio 2:1, bearing the flag of the Governor General in its canton. In the fly charges from the badge appear, viz. two golden dolphins facing the red maple leaf. The flags granted to colleges and universities are another group.

This heraldic attention to flags as a grant from the Governor General has in the main produced some very handsome flags. There are a number of patterns that emerge when we examine the flag grants of the Canadian Heraldic Authority. Perhaps the most common type is the armorial flag. In this form, the elements of the shield are bled out to fill the form of a flag 2:3 [Fig. 2, bottom row] as in the grants to the municipalities of Stratford, Ontario, and Mission, BC. Note the flag derived from the charge in the shield and the use of local flora and fauna, including the fir tips to the arms of the cross in the coat-of-arms of the municipal district of Mission. The armorial flags of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and the township of Ameliasburgh are 1:1 or square in form. A third type of flag grant shows a flag bearing the elements of the shield of arms but a compony border has been added to all but the hoist side of the flag. Examples [Fig. 2, top row] are the flags of Merrickville, an Ontario village, Stanbridge Township, PQ, and Charlottetown, PEI. Sometimes the shield of the arms appears in a Canadian Pale. Examples are the flags of the Village of Sayward, BC, and Port Hope, Windsor, Ontario, [Fig. 2, middle row]. In some flags with the Canadian Pale design, the elements of the shield fill up the central white square. Our example is the flag of Carbonear, Newfoundland [Fig. 2, top row].

In other municipal flags and in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police ensign there is a canton. Elements of the municipal shield, badge or crest may appear in the canton and on the fly of the civic flag. The Corps Ensign of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police granted by the Canadian Heraldic Authority in 1991 is shown in [Fig. 3]. Each of the various regional headquarters of the RCMP may fly its badge in the fly. We show the flags of Port Coquitlam, B.C., and Picton, Ontario [Fig. 2, middle row]. The latter has the old British Union flag in the canton in honour of its Loyalist founders.
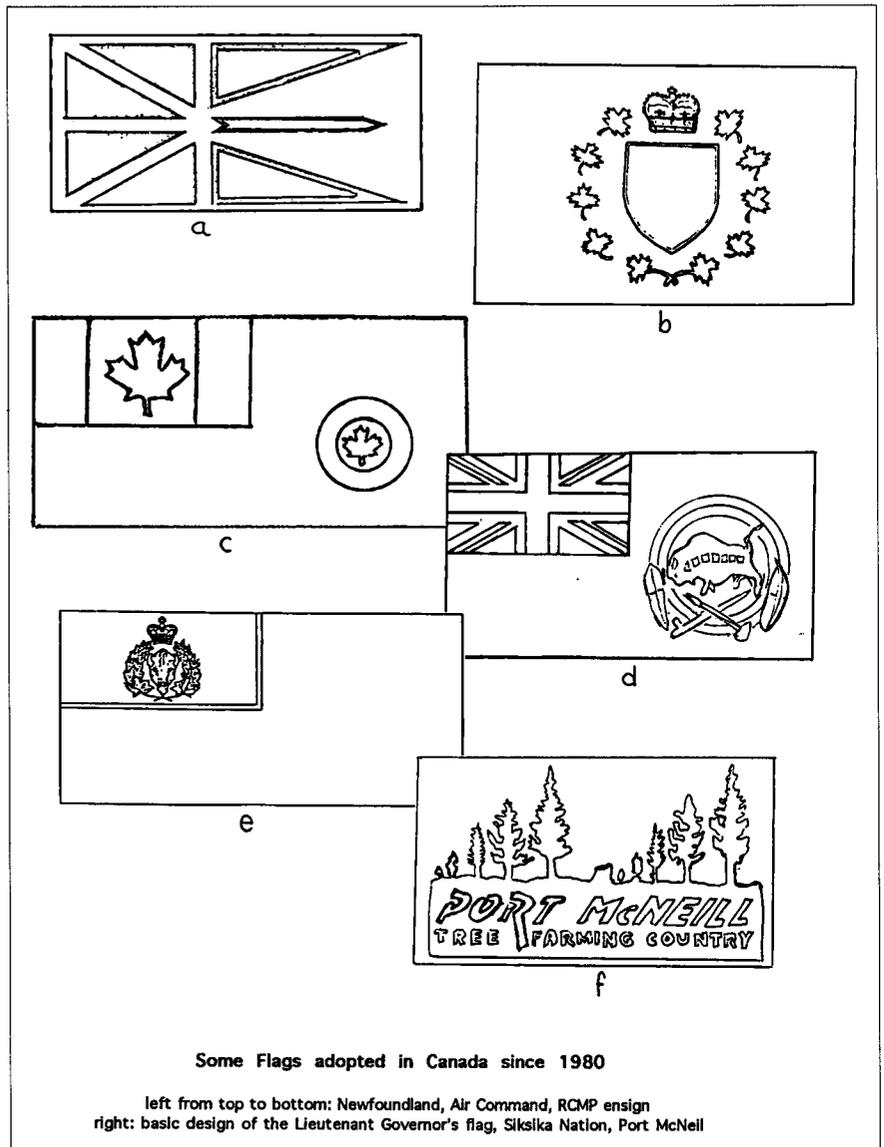
In a few cases the resulting flag grant has displaced a flag design that passed all tests of validity for flags. It seems we have no place for discarded flags. Perhaps we should encourage municipalities and other vexilligerous entities to retain as historic flags such displaced banners as part of a civic treasury or heritage of emblems. The Canadian Heraldic Authority, of course, does not force itself on any corporate entity. It has no force of law compelling these entities to apply for grants of arms or flags. Let's take British Columbia as an example. In that province grants of coats of arms and flags have been made to scores of municipalities, whether from our own Authority or from overseas bodies (College of Arms, Lyon Court, Ulster King of Arms, etc.). Fine symbols have been developed with care for the inclusion of Canadian flora, fauna, folk lore. Of course, there is still freedom in Canada to show bad taste and conceit as well as poor knowledge of good flag design let alone heraldry: A municipality in British Columbia, Port McNeill, adopted a civic flag at the end of 1992 [Fig 1-f]. The flag has a white field, in green appear a

row of conifers of different sizes, in the centre there is only a stump. Underneath the trees but on the same green background are the words in white, «Port McNeill, tree farming country» in two lines.

The Heraldic Authority has also been anxious to nurture the symbols of Canada's native people Here as Indian land claims begin to be fought for and recognised, the flag has been an important identifier. The first Indian flags seem to have been adopted as early as the 1940s, but again most Indian flags have appeared in the last thirty years. No one flag has been able to capture the allegiance or even the interest of the many nations, bands and reserves. In fact some Indians reject the idea of a flag as not being part of an Indian tradition. This was the response to a very recent attempt to promote a native flag, according to letters published in the «Windspeaker», 1993. The decision to create Nunavut and divide the Northwest Territories into two parts along mostly ethnic lines will result in at least one new flag. The Inuit people have been using a variety of emblems (Arctic flora and fauna, artifacts, maps, igloos) as seen on the letterheads, flags and logos of their municipalities and organisations. The Canadian Heraldic Authority has worked successfully with such 'first nations' as the Siksika [Fig. 1-d] and the Huron-Wendigo in granting emblems. Perhaps these experiences might lead to success with other Indian nations.

There is much research yet to be done in Canadian vexillology. The preceding has merely tried to highlight the patterns emerging. Many civic flags remain unknown and undocumented. Métis flags have been exhaustively studied (Calvin Racette, «Flags of the Métis», Regina, 1987) but Indian symbols including many flags, need more study How influential will the Canadian Heraldic Authority be in influencing the use and design of flags in Canada? Who will evaluate its achievements? Regional flags have emerged in Canada (the Saguenay, Labrador, Madawaska, Cape Breton, Northern Ontario, etc.) but they are not fully documented. Did the Republic of New Iceland - a settlement in what is now Manitoba – have a flag? The formation of the Canadian Flag Association in 1985 and the birth of its journal the following year have made a first step towards Canadian vexillological scholarship

We still do not know the reasons for the choice of design of provincial flags. Nor do we know the identity of the «movers and shakers» behind the selection of a design for the provincial flags. We have in «Canada's flag: A Search for a Country» by John Ross Matheson, a most thorough account of the Great Flag Debate and the emergence finally of a distinctive national flag. But some voices are saying there is more – will the memoirs and papers of other individuals active in the 1964-1965 controversy yet appear to shed more light on the birth

of our national flag? And lastly, since «vexillologists thrive on change», they will be interested in knowing what other flags will be flying in Canada's future. If Canada's future is clouded and unsure, how will this be evident in flags?

Some Sources

Heraldic and flag illustrations are derived from colour copies of the grants courtesy of the Heraldic Authority of Canada. Some Information on the Authority is derived from the booklet «The Canadian Heraldic Authority / L'Autorité héraldique du Canada», Rideau Hall, August 1990, and from a «Heraldry in Canada» article of June 1993: «An Interview with Robert Watt, Chief Herald of Canada». Most flag developments mentioned here have been discussed in the pages of «Flagscan», the journal of the Canadian Flag Association.

Some Flags adopted in Canada since 1980

left from top to bottom: Newfoundland, Air Command, RCMP ensign
right: basic design of the Lieutenant Governor's flag, Siksika Nation, Port McNeil

Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Flags in Canadian Heraldic Authority Grants

Note various design patterns - Plain Armorial, Compony Border, Canadian Pale, and Canton

Top row: Merrickville, Stanbridge, Carbonear
Middle: Sayward, Picton, Port Coquitlam
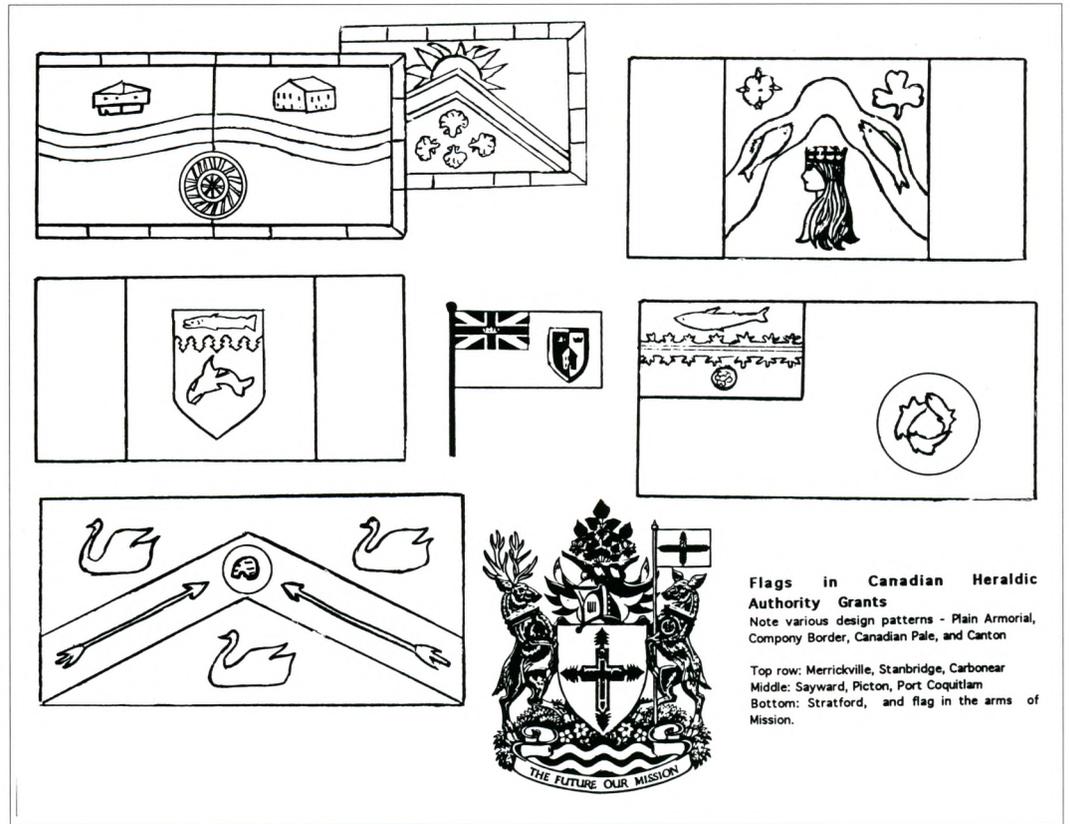Bottom: Stratford, and flag in the arms of Mission.

Fig. 3
Ensign and various badges of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.