



# The Blazon

The newsletter of the British Columbia/Yukon Branch of the Royal Heraldry Society of Canada

AUTUMN/WINTER 2024

Vol. 19, No. 2

# Merry Christmas Joyeux Noël

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The recent postal situation has added a wrinkle to the planned mailing of this issue of the Blazon, and it has also effected our annual Christmas card. This year the card is included as page 10 and this Blazon is sent via e-mail.

Our 2024 Branch Annual Report is also being developed for distribution in January 2025; I would also like to mail a printed edition of the Blazon with the 2024 Annual Report.

Please check the event dates that are shown of page 9. Your board has set Saturday, February 15, 2025 as our branch annual general meeting and luncheon. While I am getting the details finalized, please keep this date for our gathering as this is the Diamond Anniversary of our national flag.

And our national conference is April 25—27 in Victoria.

On the same page are also the details of our new B.C. Lieutenant Governor and our anticipated B.C. Distinguished Parton.

Our featured article by member Dr. Scott Whippo features our ongoing inclusion of indigenous art into Canadian heraldry.

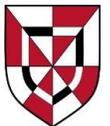
On the page 12 list of branch officers you will see Lesley Patten as our branch secretary. Lesley volunteered to fill this position following the retirement of Gary Mitchell.



The branch will be holding board elections at the February 15 AGM and we always welcome members to participate on our board.

Enjoy a safe holiday season at home or away with family and friends.

Steve Cowan  
Branch President



# Happy New Year Bonne année



## SYMBOLS OF TRANSFORMATION: CANADA'S HERALDIC EVOLUTION AND CULTURAL IDENTITY.

**Scott Whippo, PH.D., CHt.**



Signs and symbols have been communicating meaning throughout human history. Two influential thinkers, Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) and Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914), developed theories about how we understand signs and symbols. Saussure focused on how groups use signs and symbols to communicate, while Peirce explored how they shape our understanding of reality (Riera, 2020).



Ferdinand de Saussure  
(ar.pinterest.com)

These ideas form the foundation of semiotics - the study of signs, symbols, and their meanings.

This field of study extends far beyond academic theory into our everyday lives. Symbols can be found everywhere - from marketing and safety signs to emotional symbols that act as expressions of identity. According to Eco (1979), "A sign is everything that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as something standing for something". Understanding shared meaning through symbols has been crucial to human society since our earliest beginnings.



Charles Sanders Peirce  
(Wikipedia)

One of the most enduring uses of symbols across cultures has been the representation of animals to convey status and power. Throughout history, cultures worldwide have used animal imagery for this purpose. In ancient Persia (550 B.C.), animals like lions, wild boars, and falcons were used in jewelry to express royal power and cultural identity (Shokrpour et al., 2018). Even in prehistoric times, people carved animals into rocks to tell stories and mark their presence. Research by Wessman (2018) found that animals were among the most common symbols in Bronze Age rock art, with pigs being particularly popular.



Petroglyph in Wrangel, Alaska  
(Smithsonian Magazine)

This ancient practice of using symbols to convey meaning and status evolved into more formal systems, particularly in medieval Europe through heraldry. Heraldry developed as a sophisticated visual language with its own grammar and rules. Ragen (1994) states that heraldry can create "meaningful statements" like written language. The complexity of this system required specialists - heralds - to maintain and interpret it correctly.

The role of heralds grew significantly over time. By the 13th century, they had transformed from simple tournament announcers into important figures in medieval society. Their responsibilities expanded to include recording who owned which coat of arms, and they often served as trusted diplomats (Lester, 1990). This evolution reflected the growing importance of symbolic communication in medieval society.

As heraldry became more established, its use extended beyond individual nobles to include broader social institutions. Coats of arms became powerful tools for guilds and corporations to demon-



strate their importance in society. Meer (2022) explains that these symbols helped create group identity and encouraged members to maintain high standards. The practice of symbolic status display even extended to gift-giving, as evidenced by King Henry III of England, who used gifts strategically to build relationships and show both power and humility (Wild, 2010).

When we look at how these traditions evolved in the New World, Canadian heraldry offers a fascinating case study of how semiotics works in a modern context. While following British traditions, Canada developed its own distinctive style. Edward Marion Chadwick (1840-1921) played a crucial role in shaping Canadian heraldry, suggesting the maple leaf as a unifying symbol for all Canadians (Patterson, 2004). This adaptation of heraldic tradition to create a new national identity demonstrates the continuing power of symbols to unite people.

The study of Canadian heraldry through semiotics reveals complex political dynamics. Hicks (2010) notes that symbols played a crucial role in understanding Canada's constitution and the relationship between provinces and the Crown. Initially, each province maintained a direct relationship with the British Crown, as shown by their right to use official seals. This arrangement created interesting tensions when discussing the consolidation of heraldic authority under the federal government.

These tensions were reflected in Canada's official symbols. Boulton (2009) observed that Canada's coat of arms from 1921 seemed to represent British influence more than Canadian identity, suggesting that some elements should be replaced with symbols of Canadian geography. He argued against including First Nations symbols in the official coat of arms, believing it would misrepresent the historical relationship between the government and Indigenous peoples. This highlights the complex role of symbols in representing national identity and history.

This complexity is also evident in how different regions adapted traditional heraldic animals to their own contexts. While European heraldry often features lions and eagles, South American countries prefer the condor, reflecting their cultural heritage (Cabrera, 1935). Similarly, plants have taken on significant meaning in heraldry - from the Tudor Rose uniting English factions to Canada's maple leaf symbolizing national unity (Kenk, 1963; de Carvalho, 2012).

In contemporary Canada, heraldry continues to play a vital role in politics and culture. When government officials take office, their personal coat of arms is combined with their official position's coat of arms, symbolically joining individual identity with public service. This practice demonstrates how ancient symbolic traditions remain relevant in modern political and cultural practices, adapting to serve new purposes while maintaining connections to their historical roots.

The integration of Indigenous art into heraldry has become a powerful avenue for reconciliation and cultural recognition. The Canadian Heraldic Authority (C.H.A.) has played a pivotal role in this

Continued on page 4



A modern rendition of the Royal Arms of Canada by Cathy Burse-Sabourin, Fraser Herald of the Canadian Heraldic Authority, and registered on 22 September 2022. The emblems were approved by Order in Council on 21 April 1921, and by Royal Proclamation on 21 November 1921 by King George V.



transformative process, actively working to ensure that heraldic designs reflect Canada's diverse cultural landscape. In a one initiative, the British Columbia/Yukon Branch of the RHSC is developing a relationship with Emily Carr University of Art and Design. It is hoped that this relationship will develop heraldic programs that celebrate Indigenous artistic traditions and foster deeper understanding of cultural symbolism.

When Jacques Cartier planted the first heraldic standard on North American soil, that of France, it is doubtful that he imagined the change in heraldry that would follow. Cartier's coat of arms tells the story of his adventures in the New World through four carefully divided sections, featuring symbols that would have been instantly recognizable to his contemporaries: a proud ship, a Christian cross, and something quite revolutionary for European heraldry - an Indigenous figure.



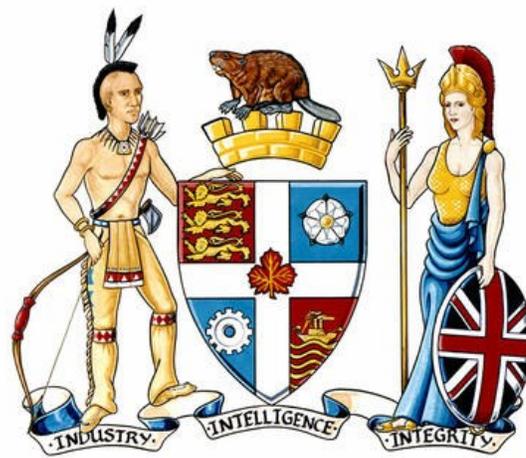
Jacques Cartier commemoration stamp issued April 1984 by Canada Post

Source: online

This was just the beginning of Canada's unique heraldic journey. In 1534, when Cartier raised that first standard bearing the royal arms of France - with its elegant gold fleurs-de-lis dancing on a blue field - little did he know he was setting the stage for centuries of fascinating heraldic evolution.

After the fall of New France, the British College of Arms and Scotland's Lord Lyon took the helm of Canadian heraldry. But here's where it gets interesting: while they started with traditional European designs, something remarkable happened. Canadian arms began developing their own distinctive

character, weaving together Old-World traditions with New-World elements.



Arms of The Corporation of the City of Toronto  
The se arms were originally recorded at the College of Arms, London, England, 20 December 1961. Registration of Arms and Supporters September 15, 2022.  
Source: Vol. VIII, p. 113 of the Public Register of the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

Take the arms of The Corporation of the City of Toronto, for example, above. While it keeps one foot firmly planted in tradition with the figure of Britannia, it boldly steps into the New World by featuring a Mississauga First Nation man as an equal supporter - a perfect symbol of Canada's dual heritage.

As time marched on, Canadian heraldry started speaking with its own voice. The maple leaf, which surprisingly didn't emerge as a Canadian symbol until 1806, began appearing on shields alongside European lions and fleurs-de-lis. But the real Canadian star of heraldic designs? The beaver! This industrious creature has represented Canada for nearly 400 years, first appearing on Sir William Alexander's arms in 1633 when he became Viscount of Canada. The Hudson's Bay Company loved the symbol so much that they put four beavers on their seal in 1678. Talk about beaver fever! The creature became so important that in 1975, Parliament officially recognized it as a symbol of Canada.

Some heraldic designs show delightful creativity. Take the badge of the ship Discovery, which cleverly

Continued on page 5



erly uses heraldic elements to spell out its name: a disc over a Y shape (Disc-over-y). It's now proudly used by Vancouver's Naval Reserve Division.



Ship's Badge of H.M.C.S. DISCOVERY, the naval reserve division at Vancouver BC. Source: Readyayaready.com

land, Scotland, Ireland, and France), it proudly displays distinctly Canadian touches with red maple leaves at the base and in the lion's paw.

Some military coats of arms have also incorporated indigenous art into their arms, as seen in the following examples.

The modern Canadian coat of arms, established in 1921, shows this beautiful blend of old and new. While it maintains traditional European elements like the harp, fleurs-de-lis, and lions (nodding to England, Scotland, Ireland, and France), it proudly displays distinctly Canadian touches with red maple leaves at the base and in the lion's paw.

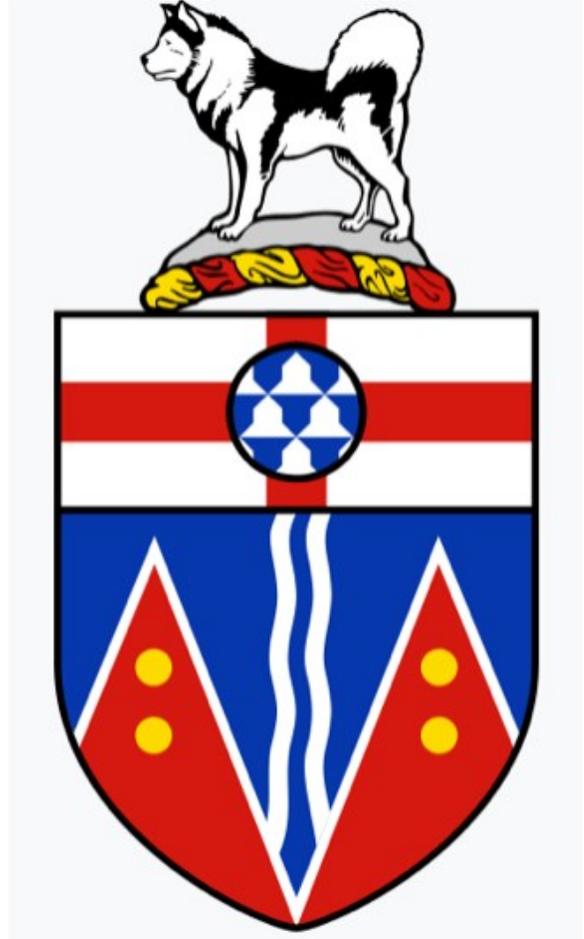


Arms of the Territory of Nunavut

Source: Vol. III, page 293 of the Public Register of the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

However, perhaps the most exciting developments are happening in Canada's newer provinces and territories. Compare British Columbia's traditional 1990 coat of arms, with its Union Jack and wavy

lines representing the sea, to Nunavut's strikingly modern 1999 design. Nunavut's arms proudly feature Indigenous elements like an inuksuk (a stone monument used as a guidepost) and a qulliq (a traditional stone lamp), along with five gold circles representing the arctic sun and the North Star (Niqirtsuituq).



Arms of Yukon

These arms were originally approved by Her Majesty The Queen, 17 February 1956.

Source: Vol. V, page 74 of the Public Register of the Canadian Heraldic Authority, .October 15, 2006

In recent years, even more distinctive Canadian elements have found their way into heraldic designs. The Northwest Territories and Yukon showcase uniquely Canadian wildlife - narwhals and Alaskan Malamutes - rather than traditional European creatures. Several Canadian Forces units and based have embraced West Coast Indigenous art styles, featuring ravens, totem poles, and stylized eagles and bears in their official designs. (See examples on next page.)

Continued on page 6



19 Air Maintenance Squadron based at CFB COMOX, Comox BC.  
Source: Government of Canada Gallery of CF badges



402 Squadron based at CFB WINNIPEG, Winnipeg MB.  
Source: Government of Canada Gallery of CF badges

While individual Canadian coats of arms often maintain strong ties to traditional designs, government agencies, municipalities, and corporations are leading the charge in creating a distinctly Canadian heraldic style. British Columbia alone has thirty-seven municipalities with their own coats of arms - more than any other province! Many of these coats of arms show innovation, as some of these arms include aspects of Indigenous art forms.

It is increasingly a story of mutual respect, artistic innovation, and the ongoing journey of reconciliation - told through symbols that speak not just to Canada's past, but to its hopeful, inclusive future.



426 Transport Training Squadron based at CFB TRENTON, Trenton ON.  
Source: Government of Canada Gallery of CF badges



748 Communications Squadron based at Nanaimo BC  
Source: RC Sigs.ca

The story of Canadian heraldry is still being written as modern designs blend time-honored traditions with contemporary Canadian identity. It is a living art form that reflects Canada's unique heritage and evolution as a nation, told through symbols, colors, and designs that bridge centuries of history.

For many years, Canadian heraldry remained firmly rooted in European traditions. From the early settlement until 1988, most Canadian coats of arms followed English or French styles. This wasn't surprising, as many early settlers either arrived with their family arms already granted by European authorities or had to apply to their mother countries for new grants of arms.



Canadian Forces Base COMOX, Comox BC.  
Source: Government of Canada Gallery of CF badges



Canadian Forces Military Police Group  
Source: Government of Canada Gallery of CF badges

European heraldic traditions were relatively rigid, with standardized colors and shield designs following well-established rules. While this preserved the rich heritage of heraldry, it didn't leave much room for innovation beyond occasional new charges (symbols) or unique combinations of existing elements.

However, a fascinating transformation emerged in Canadian heraldry, particularly by incorporating Indigenous art and symbolism. Two notable examples showcase this beautiful blend of traditional heraldry with Indigenous cultural elements:

Steven Lewis Point, who served as the Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia and Chancellor of the University of British Columbia, has a coat of



arms that wonderfully demonstrates this fusion. His arms, granted by the Canadian Heraldic Authority, feature:



Arms of Steven Lewis Point, O.C., O.B.C. former Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. Source: Volume V, page 428 of the Public Register of the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

Two black timber wolves as supporters, honoring his mother's position as head of the Wolf Clan of the Sumas First Nation

- The motto "Lĕtsĕ Mĕt" (meaning "One Mind" in the Salish language)

As former Territorial Commissioner, Judy Gingell's coat of arms offers another excellent example of Indigenous artistic integration. Her arms feature:

- A traditional shield in red, white, and blue with a gold sun

- A distinctive copper and black Tlingit war shield design as a background element, similar in placement to the eagle in the United States coat of arms

- Stylized Tlingit representations of a crow and wolf as supporters

- A base featuring fireweed



Arms of Judy Gingell, C.M., O.Y. former Territorial Commissioner of Yukon.

Source: Volume III, page 272 of the Public Register of the Canadian Heraldic Authority.

- A shield with a unique two-headed silver snake (given to him by his father from the Musqueam Indian Band)

- Five golden stars arranged in a chevron, representing the Five Star Canoe Club and referencing a constellation significant to his people

- A golden eagle with a white head as the crest, reflecting his Blackfoot name, "Flying Eagle."

- Two black timber

The copper and black design is particularly significant, as it resembles a Tlingit war shield and shares similarities with the Nisga'a coat of arms, symbolizing great wealth. The shield includes decorative elements representing salmon, crochet hooks, and a fishing hook rendered in black (CHA, 2023).

These examples demonstrate how Canadian heraldry has evolved to embrace and celebrate Indigenous artistic traditions while maintaining the core principles of heraldic design. This integration creates unique and meaningful coats of arms that reflect Canada's diverse cultural heritage and its commitment to reconciliation through artistic expression.

### Conclusion

A partnership between the British Columbia Branch of RHSC and Emily Carr University of Art and Design would represent a critical step in reimagining heraldry as a living, evolving art form. By creating academic programs that explore the intersection of traditional heraldic design and Indigenous artistic expression, the collaboration aim might be to:

- Provide Indigenous artists with formal training in heraldic design

- Develop new methodologies for incorporating Indigenous symbolism into official heraldic representations
- Create a platform for dialogue about cultural representation and symbolic communication
- Challenge and expand traditional European heraldic conventions

This collaborative approach to heraldry goes beyond mere visual representation. It is fundamentally about reconciliation - creating a visual language that acknowledges the rich cultural heritage of Indigenous peoples and their integral role in shaping Canadian identity. By actively involving Indigenous artists and scholars in the heraldic design process, the C.H.A. and R.H.S.C. will help heal historical wounds and create a more inclusive national narrative.



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## Editor's note:



Scott has had an interest in heraldry since he was 13 years old. He joined the RHSC in 2009. and has enjoyed several years of reading the various publications of the society.

While working on his Master's in Communication and Leadership at Gonzaga University, he wrote his first academic paper on heraldry. Scott has successfully

completed level 1 heraldry course offered by the RHSC. Because of the expansion of communication studies into other fields, he was able to combine two areas of interest he has held for many years. Scott's Ph.D. dissertation combined Northwest Indigenous art and heraldry. His research questions were: do totem poles and coats of arms serve the same purpose, and how do they influence each other?

Members may recall that Scott was our 2024 AGM Guest Speaker; he spoke on the same subject as this article. His knowledge of aspects of Canadian indigenous art and heraldry is one of our sources as we develop the expansion of heraldry at our local RHSC bursary institution, Emily Carr University of Art and Design in Vancouver.



## Our New B.C. Lieutenant Governor

The Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau, announced on Friday, December 21, 2024 the appointment of Wendy Lisogar-Cocchia as the new Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia.

Wendy Lisogar-Cocchia is a respected entrepreneur in Canada's hospitality industry and a dedicated community leader and philanthropist. A trusted advisor to business associations and community organizations, she is also the co-founder of the Pacific Autism Family Network, which supports neurodivergent people and their families.

The Prime Minister thanked the outgoing Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Janet Austin, for her service to the people of British Columbia and to Canada.

With this new Vice-Regal appointment all current patronage appointments are cancelled. Our branch will now make a new patronage request; something we have enjoyed for several decades. And we look forward to showing members the arms of our new B.C. Vice-Regal once the arms are granted.



Wendy Cocchia, C.M., O.B.C., LL.D. (Hon) , the new Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia. Source: Government House, Victoria BC

## Important 2025 Events!

### BC/YUKON BRANCH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON

Saturday  
February 15

Location to be advised

Times are  
11:00 am for the AGM

Followed at 12:00 noon  
by a luncheon for members and guests

The theme is the Diamond anniversary of the  
National Flag of Canada  
First flown on Parliament Hill  
At noon of February 15, 1965



Cost and details to be advised  
In a flyer out soon

### R.H.S.C. NATIONAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

Friday April 25 to  
Sunday April 27

At the Coast Victoria and Marina  
Victoria

Events include

Friday, April 25  
Afternoon Board meeting  
Evening Beley Lecture

Saturday, April 26  
Morning Annual General Meeting  
Midday Luncheon  
Afternoon tour  
Evening Gala Dinner and Presentation

Sunday, 27 April  
Board meeting

Cost and details to be advised in the official conference flyer in early 2025



*Merry Christmas*



*Joyeux Noël*

*Season's Greetings*

*&*

*Best wishes*

*From*

*The*

*British Columbia / Yukon*

*Branch*

*Joyeuses Fêtes*

*&*

*Meilleurs vœux*

*De*

*La section*

*Colombie-Britannique /*

*Yukon*



**BOOK REVIEW**

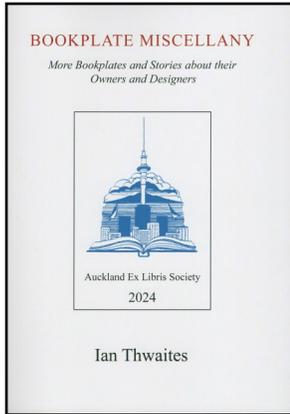
Steve Cowan, Comox BC



I am reviewing the following book I received earlier this year from New Zealand:

**BOOKPLATE MISCELLANY**

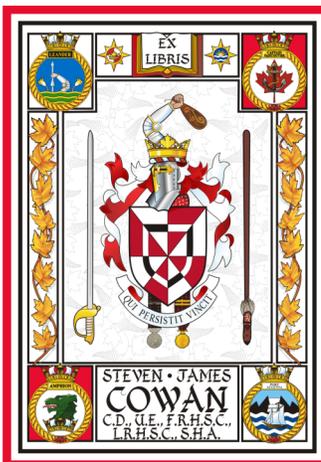
By Ian Thwaites



Cover of 'BOOKPLATE MISCELLANY' published Auckland NZ in 2024 ISBN 978-0-473-71565-6

The author Mr. Ian Thwaites Auckland NZ Photo supplied

Readers may recall an item from Blazon Volume 18, Number 2, of Autumn 2023 titled Heraldic Meeting Downunder. In late October 2023 I had the pleasure of meeting with three fellow members of the Heraldry Society of New Zealand. One was Mr. Ian Thwaites who specialized in bookplates; Ian is a longtime member of the Auckland Ex Libris Society and enjoys all style of bookplates.



Bookplate of Steve Cowan shown on pages 40-41.

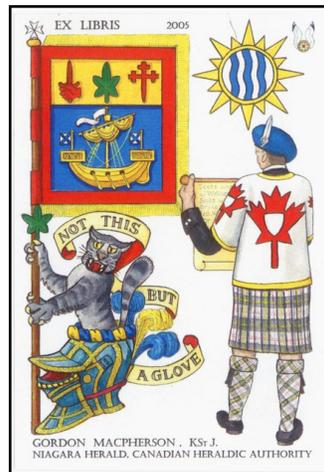
I told Ian I had recently done my own heraldic bookplate, my first attempt at this use of heraldry. After I returned home Ian wanted to see my bookplate. He asked if he could include this in this book that featured 100 bookplates. This book is the successor to *Biographical Journeys: 100 Favourite Bookplates* (2009), also by Ian. I agreed and Ian sent me a copy of the book.

My bookplate is shown on page 40 with biographical details and mention of our BC/Yukon branch and society on the adjacent page 41.

Besides my bookplate there are other bookplates that have a Canadian relationship, I am in fine company that includes Gregor Alexander Macaulay, F.H.S.N.Z., whom members may recall was our guest speaker at our branch annual general meeting on March 6, 2021. Gregor, who is also a member of the R.H.S.C., has a bookplate done by renowned Canadian heraldic artist, the late Gordon Macpherson, C.M., F.R.H.S.C., (1927-2023). Gregor's bookplate, to sinister, was done in 1999 by Gordon.



Bookplate of Gregor Macaulay done by Gordon Macpherson and featured on pages 98-99.



Bookplate of Gordon Macpherson done by Jim McCready (1923-2012) in 2005 and featured on pages 100-101.

While Gordon Macpherson was a well known Canadian bookplate artist, he had a bookplate done, to dexter, by his friend James McCready, F.H.S.N.Z. who made notable contributions to New Zealand heraldry.



Heraldic bookplate of James McCready by Danial de Bruin in 2006 and featured on pages 114-115.

Ian's book has several other heraldic bookplates as well as a wide range of none-heraldic plates.

I had not seen a bookplate book before and it furthers the links between Canada and New Zealand and our heraldic societies. Ian's book also includes Australian, American and English examples. And since I am in this book of bookplates, I now have my bookplate in the front of this book of bookplates.



# Help wanted

The BC/Yukon Branch has a vacancy for a

## Webmaster

Following the retirement of our webmaster, Lee Van Horne after more than 15 years of being our volunteer webmaster, the Branch is seeking a new volunteer for this important branch feature.

You can see our site at [bc-yukon.heraldry.ca](http://bc-yukon.heraldry.ca) to see the details of what is included. One item that Lee developed is the Roll of Arms of our members. This shows the various heraldic shields of our armigerous members.

One item to be further developed is the Honour Roll to feature the awards members have achieved from their participation on our Society. We have several to add to this section.

Please e-mail your interest to the branch board at [Bc\\_yukon@heraldry.ca](mailto:Bc_yukon@heraldry.ca)



Screenshot of our branch website title page [www.bc-yukon.heraldry.ca](http://www.bc-yukon.heraldry.ca)

## THE BLAZON

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Articles are welcome for submission to the Blazon Editor

[bc\\_yukon@heraldry.ca](mailto:bc_yukon@heraldry.ca)

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