

Armorials and Armigers in your community

Goals:

- To gain an understanding of the presence of Armorial Bearings (“Coats of Arms”) in your community, and of how an organization or individual obtains a Grant of Arms from the Canadian Heraldic Authority
- To improve your research and communication skills

STEP ONE

Finding Armorials in your community

THERE ARE LIKELY MANY individuals and organisations in your community that possess arms. Possible source of information include:

- Word of mouth: a teacher, classmate or family member may know of an organization or individual who possesses Arms.
- Using your eyes: a club, faith community, government organization or occasionally an individual may display Arms outside their home, building or place of business.
- An On-line investigation: to find people or organizations which have recently acquired Arms in your community, you can access the Canadian Heraldic Authority’s grants of Armorials which are published several times a year in The Canada Gazette (an official publication of the Government of Canada) which is available on-line without charge.

How could you go about finding individuals and organizations which have Arms in your community?

STEP TWO

Selection

THERE CAN BE MANY REASONS why you might choose a particular Armorial Grant to be the focus of your project. This could include:

Personal Knowledge: your research may turn up the fact that a family friend, your temple or other worship site, a nearby store or the town hall you pass every day has Arms. Any one of these might prove convenient for you.

Interests: you might be a keen cadet, an amateur astronomer, a member of the soccer team or a community volunteer. There may well be organizations in your area of interest that possess Arms.

How can you select an Armorial Grant to be the focus of your project?

Aesthetics: perhaps in your researches you see a Coat of Arms that simply looks unusual or strikes you as fascinating or is particularly colourful. That may be all you need to decide to focus on a particular Armorial.

Access to information: before you settle on your choice, you need to make sure that you will be able to contact an individual or individuals who have Arms or who represent a business or institution with Arms so that you can continue your project with their assistance. Your teacher and/or parents can help you find the appropriate way – letter, email, telephone call – to make this first contact; and of course if you're under 16 you should not contact anyone without your parents' knowledge and permission.

Aesthetics is a word that refers to a person's taste in any of the arts – such as design, architecture, painting and music

STEP THREE

Finding Information

WHAT YOU WANT TO FIND OUT is whether the mayor's secretary, club manager, local Rabbi or Fire Chief, for instance, has information about how the Arms were acquired and designed, or whether they can refer you to a more useful contact who had direct involvement with the process. Remember that unlike a television show where everything is wrapped up neatly in 30 or 60 minutes, the process of research is often frustrating. You may have to pursue several leads. Your possible source of information may be out of town or too busy to help you. You may find no one really knows how the Town acquired its Arms. You might need to change your choice. These road-blocks are not wasted time; they are part of the real world, and give you a chance to show perseverance – that means sticking with your project until you find the best way to attain your goal.

Some possible questions to ask – their suitability depending on whether the Arms you selected were for an individual or for an institution:

- What was the motivation for the Arms to be acquired? If it had been discussed previously, what factors made the application process actually happen when it did?
- Did you ask the Canadian Heraldic Authority to include certain elements in the Arms? Or did you leave it to the Herald you dealt with?
- How many drafts did the process entail? Were there many changes made to the Herald's first sketch of the Arms?

What do I want to find out from my source or sources about the Armorial I have selected?

- How long did the process take? When were your Arms officially granted?
- Did you hold a fund-raising event or solicit specific donations to pay for the Grant?
- How did you introduce the Arms to your family or members? Did you hold an event to unveil them?
- How have you displayed the Arms or otherwise used them (store front, club room, den or family room, office, boardroom, signage, letterhead, etc...)?
- Looking back, are you satisfied with the Arms and have they met for you the original motivation to acquire them?

You will also wish to take pictures of the Armorials, possibly including the first sketches, the formal Grant of Arms and the use/s made of the Arms by the individual or organization – as well as imagery of the person or members who use the Arms.

STEP FOUR

Reporting what you have found

DEPENDING ON YOUR TEACHER'S INSTRUCTIONS , you may share your findings by means of a written report, a slide show, a Power-Point presentation, a video, a sound recording or a combination of these.

Decide on the order of what you will present so that it flows logically with a clear beginning setting out what you are trying to explain; the central section which contains signposting of your main points; and then a summary which bundles together what you found out and reflects your views.

Remember that while you have gained some expertise in Armorials, it's probably wisest to assume your audience knows little if anything about Heraldry. So a very brief introduction about it is important to include at the beginning of your presentation.

Regardless of the fact that your teacher may have assigned you to write a written report of at least so many words or pages, your oral presentation should keep in mind two golden rules of public speaking:

1. Less is more! This means that you should not try to include everything you've learned: stick to the highlights and most interesting points – and let your classmates ask questions if they want to know more.

How can my report best interest my classmates (and impress my teacher!)?

2. Speak, don't read! Your presentation will be so much more effective if rather than reading a lengthy report (which the audience could do for themselves!) you speak naturally, make eye contact with your audience and seem really engaged with your subject. Confidence comes with practice and with really knowing what you are talking about.