

Just in time for Will and Kate's arrival in Canada, the Government of Canada unveiled a personal flag Wednesday for the Duke of Cambridge — a meticulously designed banner that will follow Prince William on his nine-day royal tour of Canada. The flag will be “broken” at a special military welcoming ceremony at Rideau Hall Thursday. The Canadian Heraldic Authority, which answers to the Governor-General of Canada, spent three months coming up with the designs for not just William's flag, but also the Prince of Wales. Here, the Post's Sarah Boesveld deconstructs the two new designs and the time-honoured traditions inherent in each:

HERALDING THE HERALDRY

The practice of personalized crest-making dates back to the 12th century, when knights and warriors started painting on their shields. About two centuries later, the Royal family took it on in a very organized manner, said Canada's chief herald, Claire Boudreau. It has been the monarchy's prerogative ever since to oversee heralding across Britain. In 1988, Queen Elizabeth gave Canada's Office of the Governor-General the official right to oversee heralding in Canada, spawning the creation of the Canadian Heraldic Authority. Three months ago, Prime Minister Stephen Harper asked them to create a flag for the Duke of Cambridge, and, since Canada had yet to craft a flag for his father, they also made one for the Prince of Wales. “You wouldn't do one without the other,” Ms. Boudreau said.

WHERE YOU'LL SEE THE FLAGS

The Heraldic Authority has manufactured 12 to 15 made-in-Canada flags to accompany the Duke of Cambridge on his tour. Small flags will be affixed to vehicles carrying Prince William and his new bride. Larger ones will be attached to vessels carrying the Royal couple. Medium-sized ones will be hoisted outside of hotels and buildings the Duke and Duchess visit. The relative scarcity of the flags make them a prime target for souvenir-snatchers, Ms. Boudreau said. “Don't try to give people the idea to try to get one off a car,” she said. “People think they're great memorabilia.” The flag should make its first appearance once the plane carrying the Royal couple hits the tarmac at the Ottawa Macdonald-Cartier International Airport at 2 p.m. ET.

THE IMPORTANCE OF A PERSONAL FLAG

As a Commonwealth country, Canada creates the flags in an act of tribute, respect and observance of the Royal Family's heralding traditions. Many countries do not create flags for the Queen and her family, but Canada does so in honour of its history. When Prince William sees his flag Thursday, Ms. Boudreau hopes it will make him feel welcome. Is it a faux pas not to make a flag? No, says Ms. Boudreau. “I would see it this way — I think it's nice to do it. These things can be seen as not important, I can understand there are other topics of interest. But it's nice to do.”

FRESH FLAGS

Both new flags are based on the Queen's personal banner for her visits to Canada that have been hoisted since 1962. Until now, she has been the only member of the Royal Family to have a flag for use in Canada. Ms. Boudreau said she spent the past three months consulting with the households of the Queen, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Cambridge to come up with the final product, relying heavily on the monarchs' own heralding practices.

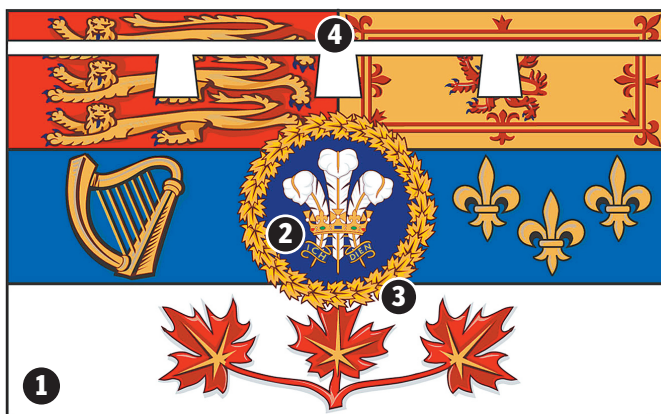
FLAG OF HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN



1. THE FIELD

The flag's background is an enlarged version of the Arms of Canada. The three lions in red, the framed lion in yellow, the *fleur-de-lis* and the harp all represent New England and New France's founding nations: Britain, Scotland, Ireland and France. The three adjoined maple leaves at the base represent all Canadians, wherever they come from.

FLAG OF THE PRINCE OF WALES



2. THE ROUNDEL

“We could have used the letter C, but he doesn't use it,” Ms. Boudreau said of Prince Charles' Cypher. Instead, he's been using this three-feathered badge, commonly known as the Prince of Wales's feathers, which dates back to the 15th century. It is traditionally used by the heir apparent to the sovereign. The letters seen there are a contraction in German that means “I serve.”

3. THE WREATH

Because he is only to use this flag in Canada, the wreath is made of maple leaves.

4. THE LABEL

This three-point, pure white label is the traditional heraldic mark of an eldest male child.

FLAG OF THE DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE



2. THE ROUNDEL

Prince William's roundel is royal blue with his Cypher in the centre — the letter “W” for his first name — in a font already chosen for the prince in 2009. The Royal crown on it signifies he's the son of the heir, Ms. Boudreau said. The crest in the middle, the *fleur-de-lis* and the strawberry flowers all have significance and were also officialized by the palace in 2009, revealing that he is the child of the heir apparent.

3. THE WREATH

The wreath is intertwined with maple leaves, to symbolize Canada, and conch shells, which is from the coat of arms of his mother's family, the Spencers.

4. THE LABEL

The red shell in the middle of the white, tabbed label also signifies his mother's family and is taken from his own coat of arms.