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Learning Activity: Examining Symbols of Government, British Columbia's Coat of Arms, and the Royal Coat of Arms for the Court.

Grade level / Big Idea: The development of political institutions is influenced by economic, social, ideological, and geographic factors.

Provide a short description of the activity you want learners to engage in:

Lesson title: "Re-imagining Images of Democracy & the Court" or "RID"ing the Court

Students will begin by examining a speech by Chief Dan George that introduces them to a forgotten voice in Canada's historical development, its governance and values. They will then examine the BC Coat of Arms to understand how symbols have been used to convey the underlying power structures and decision-making values of the period. In the third part of the activity, they will be asked to re-imagine the current Royal Arms of the United Kingdom used in BC Courts.

Curricular Competencies *what students will be able to do:*

- Use analysis skills in looking at the BC Coats of Arms
- Make decisions about how the BC Coat of Arms is not reflective of BC's legal and political values
- Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments and compare varying perspectives on their perspectives at particular times and places, and from group to group

Core Competencies *how does this activity align with Communication, Personal & Social Responsibility, Creative & Critical Thinking:*

- Social Responsibility: recognition of the contribution of diverse peoples to the development of BC, with clear reference to the indigenous methods of governance that pre-existed the British democratic values reflected in the official Coat of arms
- Creative & Critical Thinking: Students will demonstrate critical thinking through examining BC's Coats of Arms

Overview of the learning opportunity:

Part 1: Hook(s):

In this first part of the lesson, the teacher will present a famous speech and scaffold some important ideas and themes.

- Start lesson with Chief Dan George's oral rendition (speech) of "A Lament for Confederation" speech
 - Discussion sample questions:
 - Who do you think is speaking?
 - What did you hear him say?

- What is his argument?
- Hand out the text version of the speech and show the video from YouTube.
- Teacher should **explain** the following perspectives presented in the speech. Students might not know what these perspectives mean. So as part of the explanation, the teacher should give examples of how these perspectives might be seen in present day society:
 - **Political**
 - **Cultural**
 - **Social**
 - **Economic**
 - **Moral**
- After discussing these perspectives, students will look one more time at Chief Dan George's speech and discuss what perspectives are stressed from the above list

Part 2: BC's Coat of Arms Discussion and Analysis

In this second part of the lesson, students will look at a specific example of a cultural representation, the BC Coat of Arms, and have some discussions about what it represents.

- **Curricular Competency:** *Assess the significance of people, places, events, or developments and compare varying perspectives on their perspectives at particular times and places, and from group to group.*
- Show the BC Coat of Arms and discuss with students what they see (see resources list below).
- **Discussion #1:** Have a discussion about the symbols used in BC's current Coat of Arms.
 - Who does the current BC Coat of Arms represent? (What do these images mean?)
 - What and whose perspectives (moral, political, etc.) are currently shown in BC's Coat of Arms?
 - As a symbol of our government, what perspective of power does the BC Coat of Arms portray? (Democracy at this time meant that about 3,000 male, property-owning British citizens had the right to vote. So, does our BC Coat of Arms represent our current democratic values where there is universal franchise?)
- **Discussion #2:** How does the BC Coat of Arms support or refute Chief Dan George's argument? Why or why not?
- How would you change/add to your understanding of BC's Coast of Arms based on what you have read and/or seen in the video?
 - What other perspectives (political, cultural, etc.) would you include that are not represented in the BC Coat of Arms?
- **Curricular Competency:** *Look at the notion of continuity and change in our understanding of symbols and representations of power and democracy.*
- **Discussion #3:** Have another discussion around how and what a revised BC Coat of Arms might include based on the speech.
 - Which symbols are still relevant today?
 - For example: geographic symbols, representations of constitutional monarchy
 - Are there symbols and images that are missing from the BC Coat of Arms based on students' current understanding of BC's values?
 - For example: connections and contributions of First Nations Peoples in the development of British Columbia (perhaps reference www.silverfx.ca/native-symbols)

- Are there aspects of our society that are not represented in the BC Coat of Arms? Could we make it more inclusive?

Part 3: Re-imagining Symbols of Justice

In this final part of the lesson, students will create their own re-imagined representation reflecting current social and political values that could replace the BC courts' current Royal Arms of the United Kingdom used in the court system.

Students will develop a visual representation (such as a digital production, physical representation, drawing) to show a re-imagined (new) Coat of Arms to replace the Royal Arms of the United Kingdom currently used in BC's Courts. Students should accomplish the following in their creative representation:

- Replace the existing mottos;
- Select symbols that capture various perspectives of our provincial values related to our third branch of government;
- Make a connection to BC's historical past, present and future;
- And make a connection to recognized legal texts (could include the Constitution, First Peoples influence, or other legal texts).

This symbol should represent BC's current diverse and historically cultural mosaic and should be something more representative of BC's current political and cultural landscape.

Part 4: Presentation

Students will present their revised Coat of Arms to the class in a gallery walk.

Suggestions for challenge-based or inquiry and cross-curricular integration

Work with Music and/or English classes to develop an anthem or poem for British Columbia that reflects our provincial values.

Work with Business or English classes to develop a formal proposal or letter that they would use to present their new symbol to their local MLA.

Sample learner self-reflection questions:

- How have your understandings of democracy and power changed?
- How do your symbols represent the continuing and changing values of the justice system (to BC)?
- Assess and evaluate the need for the creation of a new and more representative BC Coat of Arms.
- Evaluate how your new coat of arms better represents BC's cultural landscape.
- Evaluate how someone might better understand your coat of arms versus the current Royal Arms of the United Kingdom as seen in BC courthouses.

Resources

- A copy of the BC Coat of Arms (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/celebrating-british-columbia/symbols-of-bc/coat-of-arms>)
- PDF of provincial symbols
- <https://www.leg.bc.ca/content-peo/Learning-Resources/BC%20Symbols%20Fact%20Sheet%20-%20English.pdf>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/celebrating-british-columbia/symbols-of-bc>
- www.silverfx.ca/native-symbols as a reference for symbolism for First Nations Peoples Great Binding Law or the Iroquois Confederation

- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Coat_of_arms_of_British_Columbia

Assessment

- New symbols are put on display around the classroom. During a gallery walk, students attempt to interpret each new symbol. Afterwards, groups explain the thinking behind their symbolic choices, and their final products are evaluated based on how effectively their design conveys their message.
- Teacher can lead a discussion around creating a simple “single-point” rubric (<https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/single-point-rubric/>) to assess student understanding of the re-imagined Coat of Arms and the gallery walk presentation.

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