

# Consultation on Provincial Coat of Arms



## What We Heard

October 2021

## Overview

The **Coat of Arms Act** sets out the legal description of Newfoundland and Labrador’s official Coat of Arms, and contains the legal authority for use of the emblem. The written description of the Coat of Arms reflects the original 1637 patent, which does not reference the Labrador portion of the Province. This description also contains racist and colonial phrases which are specifically derogatory toward Indigenous peoples.

The Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs was directed to amend the legal description of the Coat of Arms Act to add Labrador to the name of the province and replace the words “Savages of the Clyme pper armed and appareled according to their Guise when they goe to Warre” with “Beothuk”.

The consultation is intended to:

- collect written feedback from Indigenous leaders, as a specific stakeholder group, on the proposed wording changes for the Coat of Arms description; and
- provide a mechanism for input from self-identified Indigenous persons and the general public before an amendment is made.

The legal description of the Beothuk depicted in the Coat of Arms found in Schedule A of the Act, is colonizing and racist in nature. Respect for the culture and heritage of Indigenous peoples is an important step towards Reconciliation and building an inclusive environment in the province.

## Methodology and Approach

The approach utilized to gather input on amendments to the Coat of Arms Act, was an online questionnaire posted on engageNL. An email address was also provided for written submissions to be sent directly to the department. In total, 201 submissions were received through engageNL.

## Overview of Participants

**Question 1:** Respondents were asked to identify how they were responding to the questionnaire. Respondents were asked to “select all that apply”. The responses are outlined in the table below. Note some respondents selected more than one option for question 1.

| Response                                 | Number of Responses | Percentage |
|--|---------------------|------------|
| I am a member of an Indigenous community | 29                  | 12.89%     |
| A resident of Newfoundland and Labrador  | 182                 | 80.89%     |
| Other                                    | 11                  | 4.89%      |
| I prefer not to answer                   | 3                   | 1.33%      |
| Total                                    | 225                 | 100%       |

## Overview of Results

**Question 2:** Do you agree that legislation should be amended to replace “two Savages of the Clyde pper armed and appared according to their Guise when they goe to Warre” with “two Beothuk”?

The opinions and response are outlined in the table below.

| Response                   | Number of Responses | Percentage |
|----------------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Strongly Agree             | 128                 | 63.68%     |
| Agree                      | 41                  | 20.40%     |
| Neither Agree nor Disagree | 7                   | 3.48%      |
| Disagree                   | 6                   | 2.99%      |
| Strongly Disagree          | 19                  | 9.45%      |
| Total                      | 201                 | 100%       |

**Question 3:** Do you have any additional comments you would like to add with regards to proposed changes to the **Coat of Arms Act**?

## Key Themes

Those who responded to question 3 mainly supported the proposed changes, citing they were long overdue.

Suggestions for an amended Coat of Arms included:

- The elk should be replaced with another animal – caribou and moose were suggested.
- Change the word savages to Beothuk or first peoples.
- Remove angry, aggressive look of the faces of the Beothuk.
- Francophone/Acadian population, European ancestry should also be represented.
- Others need to be recognized – Innu, Inuit, Mi'kmag.
- The Coat of Arms should include an image reflective of Labrador.
- Include Labrador in the name.
- Wording should change as well as the visual presentation.
- The Beothuk should continue to be represented, their story should not be forgotten.
- Instead of references to war, refer to Beothuk in ceremonial dress.

Other comments:

- The Coat of Arms should represent the past and the present.
- Replacing racist terminology does not change the fact the Coat of Arms is not representative of the province.
- Will proposed changes help with reconciliation?

- Province should focus on “more important” issues, waste of time and government resources.
- Coat of Arms is part of our cultural identity – respectfully acknowledge the Beothuk and not erase them.
- Trying to change history won’t solve anything, education is needed.

Three written submissions were received by the Department. One was in agreement with the proposed amendments, and two provided feedback on changes to the design/imagery of the Coat of Arms, which are reflected in the key themes section above.