

COMMEMORATIVE BANK NOTE DESIGN CONCEPTS: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

FINAL REPORT

Presented to:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary provides an overview of the findings from ten (10) focus groups conducted between July 11th and July 16th 2015. The focus groups were carried out to test initial public reactions and perceptions on design concepts for a new, commemorative bank note that will be issued to mark the 150th anniversary of Confederation in 2017.

Two design options for the **front** of the commemorative bank note were tested. The concepts were similar, the major differences being in the presentation of the portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald (full body vs. head only) and the design of the border around the large window on the right-hand side.

- Participants recognise both design options for the front of the bank note as a Canadian bill.
- Most participants either identify the portrait as the first Prime Minister or the Prime Minister at the time of Confederation. Many also specifically recognise Sir John A. Macdonald.
- Participants tend to recognise the image in the background (vignette), in general terms, as a group of people involved in the creation of Confederation (e.g. “historical figures” or “parliamentarians from the time”). A few specifically name the *Fathers of Confederation*.
- Reaction to both window borders is neutral. Participants do not have strong positive or negative feelings.
- The anniversary dates (1867 to 2017), shown at the top of the border on the Full Body Portrait design concept, are perceived to be meaningful and appropriate.
- Both concepts for the front are perceived as suitable options. When asked, participants indicate a preference for the Full Body Portrait. Showing the Prime Minister standing is viewed as innovative and new, a suitable option to commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Confederation.

Two design concepts for the **back** of the commemorative bank note were tested. The concepts illustrate two different themes: *Canadian Landscapes* and *United from Sea to Sea to Sea*.

- In general terms, participants can identify the different images included on the *Canadian Landscapes* design concept (e.g. mountains of the West Coast, Prairie wheat field, forests of Ontario or Quebec, Atlantic Ocean, Northern Lights).
- The *Canadian Landscapes* design concept is perceived as showcasing the natural beauty and vastness of Canada, as well as its natural resources.
- In the *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* design concept, most participants can generally identify a bridge, the building of a railroad and an Aboriginal sculpture. More specific identification of the three elements by name is much less common and varies by region.
- The *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* design concept is perceived as showcasing important historical events and achievements that have united Canada and its people from one end of the country to the other. However, participants perceive a lack of connection or

continuity between the three images. Participants have difficulty understanding and verbalising the intended theme.

- Participants tend to prefer the window border on the *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* concept. Although most do not recognise that the border is inspired by the Northern Lights, participants appreciate the inclusion of the maple leaf in the border, a recognizable Canadian symbol.
- The owl included at the bottom of the border on the *Canadian Landscapes* concept is often misinterpreted as a peacock. This confusion raises questions as to its significance and relevance. It would need to be explained, if retained.
- Both design concepts for the back are generally perceived to be suitable for the commemorative bank note. The *Canadian Landscapes* concept is more often described as a better representation of Canada and perhaps more easily understood as a concept. However, its link to Confederation may not be as strong as the historically-focused *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* design concept.

Two **foil** design concepts were also shown to participants.

- Participants do not have a strong preference between the two foil options.
- The initial reaction is often that the transparent window is crowded with graphic elements that are not clearly related to each other.
- Although many recognise the owl as an Aboriginal symbol, participants have difficulty understanding the meaning of the owl and its connection to the 150th Anniversary. This would require explanation if retained.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce résumé fournit un aperçu des résultats provenant de dix (10) groupes de discussion organisés entre le 11 et le 16 juillet 2015. Les groupes de discussion ont été organisés dans le but d'évaluer les premières réactions et perceptions du public concernant les concepts de design pour un nouveau billet de banque commémoratif qui sera émis pour marquer le 150e anniversaire de la Confédération en 2017.

Deux options de design ont été testées pour le **recto** du billet de banque commémoratif. Les concepts étaient similaires. Les principales différences se trouvaient dans la présentation du portrait de Sir John A. Macdonald (corps entier contre tête seulement) et le design de la bordure autour de la grande fenêtre sur le côté droit.

- Les participants reconnaissent les deux options de design pour le recto du billet de banque comme étant un billet canadien.
- La plupart des participants identifient soit le portrait du *premier* Premier ministre, ou encore le Premier ministre de l'époque de la Confédération. Plusieurs reconnaissent spécifiquement Sir John A. Macdonald.
- Les participants ont tendance à reconnaître l'image à l'arrière-plan (vignette), en général comme étant un groupe de personnes impliquées dans la création de la Confédération (par ex. « des personnages historiques » ou « des parlementaires de l'époque »). Un certain nombre ont expressément nommé les *Pères de la Confédération*.
- La réaction aux deux bordures de fenêtre est neutre. Les participants n'ont pas de forts sentiments positifs ou négatifs.
- Les dates anniversaires (1867 à 2017), inscrites en haut de la bordure sur le concept de design du portrait du corps entier sont perçues comme étant significatives et appropriées.
- Les deux concepts pour le recto sont perçus comme étant des options convenables. Quand on leur demande, les participants manifestent une préférence pour le portrait du corps entier. Le fait de montrer le Premier ministre debout est considéré comme étant novateur et inédit, une option appropriée pour commémorer le 150e anniversaire de la Confédération.

Nous avons testé deux concepts de design pour le **verso** du billet de banque commémoratif. Les concepts illustrent deux différents thèmes : *Paysages canadiens* et *Unis d'un océan à l'autre*.

- De manière générale, les participants peuvent identifier les différentes images comprises dans le concept de design *Paysages canadiens* (par ex. les montagnes de la côte ouest, les champs de blé des Prairies, les forêts de l'Ontario ou du Québec, l'océan atlantique, les aurores boréales).
- Le concept de design *Paysages canadiens* est perçu comme représentant la beauté naturelle et l'immensité du Canada, ainsi que ses ressources naturelles.
- Dans le concept de design *Unis d'un océan à l'autre*, la plupart des participants peuvent généralement identifier un pont, la construction d'une voie ferrée et une sculpture

aborigène. Une identification plus précise des trois éléments par leur nom est beaucoup moins fréquente et varie d'une région à l'autre.

- Le concept de design *Unis d'un océan à l'autre* est perçu comme représentant des réalisations et événements historiques importants qui ont uni le Canada et son peuple d'un bout à l'autre du pays. Les participants perçoivent cependant un manque de lien ou de continuité entre les trois images. Les participants ont de la difficulté à comprendre et à verbaliser le thème visé.
- Les participants ont tendance à préférer la bordure de fenêtre du concept *Unis d'un océan à l'autre*. Bien que la plupart d'entre eux ne reconnaissent pas que la bordure est inspirée des aurores boréales, les participants apprécient l'inclusion de la feuille d'érable dans la bordure, un symbole canadien reconnaissable.
- Le hibou qui se trouve au bas de la bordure du concept *Paysages canadiens* est souvent pris à tort pour un paon. Cette confusion suscite des interrogations quant à sa signification et sa pertinence. Il devra être expliqué s'il est retenu.
- Les deux concepts de design du verso sont généralement perçus comme étant appropriés pour le billet de banque commémoratif. Le concept *Paysages canadiens* est plus souvent décrit comme étant une meilleure représentation du Canada et comme étant un concept plus facile à comprendre. Cependant, son lien avec la Confédération n'est peut-être pas aussi fort que le concept de design plus historique *Unis d'un océan à l'autre*.

Nous avons également montré deux concepts de design de **bande transparente avec reflets métalliques** aux participants.

- Les participants n'ont pas de préférence marquée entre les deux options.
- La première réaction est souvent que la bande transparente est encombrée d'éléments graphiques qui ne sont pas clairement reliés les uns aux autres.
- Bien que le hibou soit reconnu par beaucoup comme étant un symbole aborigène, les participants ont du mal à comprendre la signification du hibou et son lien avec le 150e anniversaire. Il devra être expliqué s'il est retenu.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

Research Objectives

To commemorate the 150th Anniversary of Confederation, the Bank of Canada plans to issue a special bank note. After conducting broad public consultations with Canadians to collect ideas on possible themes and images that might be used, the Bank of Canada was ready in July 2015 to test the resulting preliminary design concepts for how the front and back of the bill might appear.

The main objective of this phase of research was to gauge initial public reactions and perceptions. More specifically, the research was designed to:

- Measure understanding of the intended message from the design concepts;
- Confirm recognition as a Canadian bill;
- Identify any concerns and misunderstandings which might result from the particular depictions, words and images used;
- Evaluate the perceived suitability of the concepts; and
- Record suggested improvements.

Research Approach

A total of ten (10) focus groups were conducted in five (5) locations across Canada: Montreal, Halifax, Toronto, Edmonton and Vancouver. The focus groups were conducted in English with the exception of Montreal where the discussions were in French, and held between July 11th and July 16th, 2015. All discussions lasted 90 minutes and included between eight (8) and ten (10) participants in all groups except for one (which had six [6] participants). The entire project included 88 participants out of a possible total of 100.

Recruitment for each group was carried out to include a mix of men and women from different age groups, education levels, family income and backgrounds including:

- At least two individuals between the ages of 18 and 24;
- At least two individuals who self-identified as a visual minority;
- At least two individuals who have been living in Canada under 10 years; and
- At least one Aboriginal Canadian.

All groups included at least one Aboriginal Canadian with the exception of Montreal. Participants received a cash incentive of \$75 in appreciation for their time.

Participants were shown two (2) design concepts for each of the front and back of the new bank note. The design concepts shown first were alternated by group. Participants were first asked to record their initial impressions of each design concept using a short questionnaire. Detailed

discussions followed. This report is based on findings from both of these inputs (questionnaires and discussions).

Participants were informed that design concepts tested were preliminary and subject to change. Each individual signed a confidentiality agreement promising not to divulge the contents of the focus groups. All design materials used in the groups were numbered and accounted for at the end of each session.

Focus groups are used to understand how people think and feel about the item being tested. The views expressed in focus groups are likely reflected in the general population, but we cannot say in what proportions. Results are only indicative in nature and cannot be extrapolated to all Canadians.

DETAILED FINDINGS

1) Conceptual Designs for the Front of the Bank Note

Two design options for the front of the commemorative bank note were tested. The concepts were similar, the major differences being in the presentation of the portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald (full body vs. head only) and the design of the border around the large window on the right-hand side.

i. Recognisability

Participants recognise both design options for the front of the bank note as a Canadian bill. The usual purple colour, the word *CANADA* and the maple leaf are all elements mentioned by participants as associated with the current \$10 bill. That being said, some participants feel the head portrait is closer to what Canadians are used to when it comes to the design of the current bills.

ii. Portrait and Vignette

Most participants either identify the portrait as the first Prime Minister or the Prime Minister at the time of Confederation. Many also specifically recognise Sir John A. Macdonald. Participants tend to recognise the image in the background (vignette), in general terms, as a group of people involved in the creation of Confederation (e.g. “historical figures” or “parliamentarians from the time”). A few specifically name the *Fathers of Confederation*.

iii. Window Borders

Reaction to both window borders is neutral. Participants do not have strong positive or negative feelings. The decorative features based on the gates of Parliament Hill are sometimes seen as representing vines, flowers, buds, plants. For most, however, these elements do not evoke anything in particular. They are simply decorative and not specifically recognised as the gates and decorative fencing of Parliament Hill.

The anniversary dates (1867 to 2017), shown at the top of the border on the Full Body Portrait design concept, are perceived to be meaningful and appropriate. For that reason, many prefer that window border over the other. The rounded top of the border including the dates is seen as reminiscent of the large windows that also appear in the background of the Fathers of Confederation vignette, a positive aspect of the design.

iv. 150th Anniversary Logo

The 150th Anniversary of Confederation logo, on the right-hand side, is not often noticed. Those who notice it do not associate the logo with the 150th Anniversary celebrations. Instead, they see it as a modernized version of the maple leaf, a symbol of Canada. A few participants say the logo reminds them of the centennial celebrations emblem used in 1967.

v. Preference and Suitability

Both concepts for the front are perceived as suitable. When asked, participants indicate a preference for the Full Body Portrait. Showing the Prime Minister standing is viewed as innovative and new. Issuing a unique, different design is definitely appropriate to commemorate a special event such as the 150th Anniversary of Confederation.

2) Conceptual Designs for the Back of the Bank Note

Two design concepts for the back of the commemorative bank note were tested. The concepts illustrate two different themes: *Canadian Landscapes* and *United from Sea to Sea to Sea*.

i. Option 1 – Canadian Landscapes

In general terms, participants can identify the different images included on the *Canadian Landscapes* design concept.

The image on the far left successfully evokes the mountainous terrain of Western Canada but not necessarily a specific place. Participants describe the image as the Rockies, and some say it might represent Banff or Lake Louise. In Vancouver specifically, many correctly identify the Lions Peaks in the image.

Participants recognise the wheat fields of the Prairies in the second picture from the left.

The next picture is often assumed to represent Ontario or Quebec, with its forests, water and rocks. The perception that this image represents Central Canada rests primarily on this picture’s position in relation to the other more distinct regional images in the design. Only a handful of participants actually use the term ‘Canadian Shield’ to describe the picture. Some cannot distinguish the water with certainty and think that the image depicts snow instead and therefore, represents the different seasons in Canada.

Participants recognise the East Coast in the picture second from the right. Some think it represents Newfoundland while others are not sure which of the Atlantic Provinces is depicted here. In Halifax specifically, when Bonavista is mentioned as represented on the picture, the general response is positive.

Finally, the Northern Lights, on the far right, are identified as representing the North and uniting all of Canada, from coast to coast. The Aurora Borealis evoke very positive feelings.

Participants were asked to write down words or adjectives that describe the design concept. *Canadian Landscapes* is mainly perceived as showcasing the natural beauty and vastness of Canada, as well as its natural resources. The most common words used by participants in the written questionnaire to describe *Canadian Landscapes* are:

• Beautiful/Beauty (24 mentions)	• Aboriginal Heritage (8 mentions)
• Nature/Natural (21 mentions)	• Vast (7 mentions)
• Colourful (20 mentions)	• Land/Landscapes (6 mentions)
• Peace/Peaceful/Calming (11 mentions)	• Clean (5 mentions)
• Diverse/Diversity (10 mentions)	• Different (5 mentions)

ii. Option 2 – United from Sea to Sea to Sea

Most participants can generally identify a bridge, the building of a railroad and an Aboriginal sculpture in this design concept. More specific identification of the three pictures by name is much less common and varies by region.

The *Confederation Bridge* is recognised, by name, mostly in Eastern Canada (Halifax and, to some extent, Montreal).

The *Inukshuk* is recognised as an Aboriginal symbol even though many are not certain what it signifies.

The image of the *Last Spike*, showing the completion of the Canadian Pacific railway, tends to be recognised in general terms only. A handful of participants use the words “Last Spike” or “completion of the railroad”. Discussion around the image of the *Last Spike* often leads to a more general discussion about the lack of representation of “ordinary people”. Where the front of the design concepts include a Prime Minister and dignitaries, the back does not appear to portray the labourers who helped to build the railway or the people that make up Canada.

This design concept is perceived as showcasing important historical events and achievements that have united Canada and its people from one end of the country to the other. However, many see a lack of connection or continuity between the three images. The design is often criticized as confusing and disjointed. Specifically, the *Inukshuk* is perceived to have been placed in the concept as an after-thought.

The most common words used by participants in the written questionnaire to describe *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* are:

• Heritage/Historic/Historical (35 mentions)	• Connection (7 mentions)
• Unification/Unity (14 mentions)	• First Nations (7 mentions)
• Confusing/Incoherent (11 mentions)	• Diverse/Diversity (6 mentions)
• Evolution/Progress (10 mentions)	• Beginnings/Foundation (5 mentions)
• Colour/Colourful (9 mentions)	• Bridge (5 mentions)
• Canada (8 mentions)	• Busy/Cluttered (5 mentions)
• Railroads (8 mentions)	• Past, Present and Future/Old and Modern (5 mentions)

iii. Window Borders

Most participants tend to prefer the window border on the *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* concept. Although most do not recognise that the border is inspired by the Northern Lights, participants appreciate the inclusion of the maple leaf in the border, a clear Canadian symbol. They also remark on the fluidity of the pattern and the overall integration with the other graphic elements.

The owl included at the bottom of the border on the *Canadian Landscapes* concept is a focus of discussion. The image is often misidentified as a peacock rather than an owl. This confusion raises questions as to its significance and relevance. Some participants also find the owl symbol in the border redundant given that an owl is also represented in the foil design. If retained, the border image would need to be explained.

iv. Suitability

Both design concepts for the back are generally perceived to be suitable for the commemorative bank note. The *Canadian Landscapes* concept is more likely than the *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* concept to be perceived as representing Canada. The results shown in the table below come from a question included in the written questionnaire completed by participants.

Table 1: *This design represents Canada. (n=88)*

Canadian Landscapes				
Definitely	Somewhat	Not really	Not at all	No answer
47	31	7	0	3
United from Sea to Sea to Sea				
Definitely	Somewhat	Not really	Not at all	No answer
34	32	15	2	5

The *Canadian Landscapes* concept is perhaps more easily understood by participants. However, its link to Confederation may not be as strong as the historically-focused *United from Sea to Sea to Sea* concept. Some participants remark that the *Canadian Landscapes* concept illustrates Canada’s natural beauty but not the evolution and achievements over the years.

3) Foil Designs

Participants were shown large-scale printouts of the two foil design concepts: one including *Vibrant Young Owl* and one including *Owl's Bouquet*. Participants do not have a strong preference between the two foil options. The initial reaction is often that the transparent window is crowded with graphic elements that are not clearly related to each other. Further, as discussed earlier, many participants have difficulty understanding the meaning of the owl symbol and its connection to the 150th Anniversary. This would have to be explained, if retained. If included to represent Aboriginal people, some believe more recognisable symbols could be used such as a bear, a caribou, a totem pole and a beaver.

Many misinterpret that the *Vibrant Young Owl* is wearing a headdress and, therefore, see an association with First Nations. Others feel the *Owl's Bouquet* is more appealing visually because the placement of the graphic elements is centered and balanced.

Participants find the idea of listing all provinces and territories and the dates they entered Confederation interesting. However, many find the text font too small and question the inclusion of an element that many say they cannot read. Some participants are confused by the order in which the provinces and territories are listed as it does not appear chronological or alphabetical.

4) Final Comments

Participants were offered the opportunity at the close of the discussion to comment on anything they felt could be improved in the design concepts or if anything was missing.

No major suggestions or improvements are mentioned beyond those outlined previously in this report. However, while most participants, as noted earlier, appreciate the significance of the dates in the upper border, some suggest a more explicit reference to "150 years" would be welcomed.