

**CANADA 150
COMMEMORATIVE BANK NOTE DESIGN:
FINAL CHECK FOCUS GROUPS
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

FINAL REPORT

Presented to:



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STRATEGIC INSIGHTS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This executive summary provides an overview of the findings from ten (10) focus groups conducted between August 16th and August 25th, 2016. The focus groups were carried out to identify anything in the details of the Canada 150 bank note that might be of concern once it is released into circulation. Communications messaging describing the bank note, and descriptions of new security features included on it, were also tested.

1. First Impressions

After a first examination of the bank note, the most common aspects that stood out were (in order of most often mentioned):

- The inclusion of four portraits instead of the usual one;
- The colour-shifting arch which was recognized as a new feature;
- The clear window and its metallic features;
- The colours of the bank note in general; and
- The landscapes on the back of the bank note representing the different regions of Canada – with the northern lights, in particular, often mentioned as standing out.

2. Unprompted Examination of the Bank Note

Participants did not immediately note any unintentional errors in the design of the bank note.

3. Prompted Examination of the Bank Note

In the moderator-led prompted examination of the bank note, each of the design elements that appear on the bank note were examined in detail. Some minor details on the front portraits, as well as on the back landscape panels, were felt to be unintentional errors, such as a lock of Macdonald's hair touching Cartier's portrait. Certain elements were not immediately recognized and were confused with other symbols, for example the Hall of Honour from the Centre Block of Parliament Hill. Other detailed comments were collected for vignettes, front and back window borders and elements, show-through, and other design features.

4. Communications Messaging

Overall, the messaging that was developed to describe the front and back of the note was received positively and thought to convey the intended messages.

Participants tended to better connect, on an emotional level, with the messages explaining the back of the bank note.

Participants were intrigued and wanted to know more about the four individuals depicted on the front of the bank note especially after reading the messages.

5. Security Feature Descriptions

No major issues were reported in the prototype educational pamphlet on security features. The name and description of each of the three security features was clear, easy to understand and described what was seen on the bank note.

SOMMAIRE

Le présent résumé offre un aperçu des résultats des dix (10) groupes de discussion menés du 16 au 25 août 2016. Ces groupes de discussion visaient à dégager les détails qui pourraient être source de préoccupations sur le billet soulignant le 150^e anniversaire du Canada avant sa mise en circulation. Les messages de communication décrivant le billet, ainsi que les descriptions des nouveaux éléments de sécurité qu'il comporte, ont également été testés.

1. Premières impressions

Après le premier examen du billet, voici les aspects qui se sont démarqués le plus souvent (en ordre de fréquence de mention) :

- l'inclusion de quatre portraits au lieu d'un seul comme d'habitude;
- l'arche de couleur changeante, que les participants ont reconnue comme un nouvel élément;
- la bande transparente et ses éléments à reflets métalliques;
- les couleurs du billet de banque en général;
- les paysages au verso du billet représentant les différentes régions du Canada, les aurores boréales en particulier étant souvent citées comme aspect qui se distingue.

2. Examen libre du billet de banque

D'emblée, les participants n'ont pas remarqué d'erreurs involontaires dans la conception graphique du billet de banque.

3. Examen dirigé du billet de banque

Lors de l'examen du billet dirigé par l'animateur, chacun des éléments graphiques a été étudié de près. Certains détails mineurs dans les portraits au recto, ainsi que dans les panneaux de paysages au verso, ont été perçus comme des erreurs involontaires, par exemple une mèche de cheveux de Macdonald touchant le portrait de Cartier. Certains éléments n'ont pas été reconnus immédiatement et ont été confondus avec d'autres symboles, comme le Hall d'honneur de l'édifice du Centre de la colline du Parlement. D'autres commentaires détaillés ont été consignés pour les vignettes, les éléments et les bordures de la bande transparente au recto et au verso, la transvision et autres éléments graphiques.

4. Messages de communication

Dans l'ensemble, les messages élaborés pour décrire le recto et le verso du billet ont été bien reçus. Les participants étaient d'avis qu'ils véhiculaient les idées voulues.

Sur le plan émotionnel, les participants étaient généralement plus sensibles aux messages expliquant le verso du billet de banque.

Les participants étaient intrigués et voulaient en savoir davantage sur les quatre personnes représentées au recto du billet, surtout après avoir lu les messages.

5. Descriptions des éléments de sécurité

Aucun problème important n'a été signalé pour le projet de dépliant d'information sur les éléments de sécurité. Le nom et la description de chacun des trois éléments de sécurité étaient clairs et faciles à comprendre et décrivaient ce que l'on voyait sur le billet.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND APPROACH

Research Objectives

To commemorate the 150th anniversary of Confederation, the Bank of Canada will be issuing a special bank note. The main objective of this phase of research was to test the proof note and identify anything in the details of the bank note that might be perceived as an unintentional error of any kind before it is released into circulation. Communications messages and prototype educational material on security features were also tested for clarity of message, content, and feelings evoked.

Research Approach

A total of ten (10) focus groups were conducted between August 16th and August 25th, 2016 in five (5) locations across Canada: Moncton, Quebec City, Toronto, Winnipeg and Calgary. The focus groups were conducted in English with the exception of one group in Moncton and both groups in Quebec City where the discussions were in French. All discussions lasted 90 minutes and included between nine (9) and ten (10) participants except for one (which had seven [7] participants). The entire project included 94 participants out of a possible total of 100. Participants received \$75 in appreciation for their time.

Seven (7) of the ten (10) focus groups included members of the general population. The other three (3) focus groups comprised cash handlers, individuals whose jobs require that they handle cash on a daily basis. Recruitment for each general population 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 less than 10 years; and
- At least one Indigenous Canadian.

Half of the groups included at least one Indigenous Canadian (Quebec City, Winnipeg and one group in Calgary).

Participants were shown the proof note and asked to record their initial impressions using a short questionnaire. Then, all the various aspects of the bank note were examined in a detailed exercise led by the moderator. Participants were encouraged to use magnifying glasses to better see all the details. This report is based on findings from both the group discussions and the questionnaires.

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. First Impressions

After receiving a copy of the proof note, participants took a few minutes to look at the bank note and write down their first impressions on a short questionnaire. This exercise was done in silence to collect everyone’s first impressions without the influence of other participants. A short discussion followed. The most common aspects of the bank note that stood out were (in order of most often mentioned):

- The four portraits instead of the usual one – only Sir John A. Macdonald was easily recognized and identified in all groups;
- The colour-shifting arch which was recognized as a new feature;
- The clear window and its metallic features – especially the owl and the coat of arms;
- The colours in general – many appreciated the mix of vibrant colours, namely the purple and the green; and
- The landscapes on the back of the bank note representing the different regions of Canada – with the northern lights, in particular, often mentioned as standing out.

2. Unprompted Examination of the Bank Note

Participants did not initially note any unintentional errors about the design of the bank note. That being said, a few top-of-mind comments were heard in most groups:

- The exclusion of the tactile feature for blind and partially-sighted individuals (proof notes did not include tactile feature or serial number);
- Colour-shifting arch from the Memorial Chamber of the Peace Tower and Hall of Honour from the Centre Block of Parliament frequently perceived to represent a church window and a cathedral respectively, as discussed in section 3;
- Elements relating to the 150th anniversary of Confederation were not deemed prominent;
- The perceived lack of Indigenous representation.

3. Prompted Examination of the Bank Note

Participants were shown examples of unintentional errors on past bank notes (e.g. the 1954 \$20 bank note with “a devil’s head” in the Queen’s hair). Then, each aspect of the note was examined in detail. Listed below, under each aspect of the bank note, are the comments relating to perceived mistakes, illusions or errors, as well as other comments most often mentioned in all or most groups.

Front of the Bank Note

a) Colour-shifting Arch from Memorial Chamber of Peace Tower

- Many saw an optical illusion of some kind.
- Memorial Chamber arch often associated with a church window.

b) Portrait of Sir John A. Macdonald

- Hair on the right side of Sir John A. Macdonald's face touching Sir George-Étienne Cartier's ear.
- Patterns and shadow treatment on his face too dark in places.

c) Portrait of Sir George-Étienne Cartier

- Ear on the right not well defined.
- Eyebrows with one hair in particular sticking up.
- Seems to have an incomplete bow tie.

d) Portrait of Agnes Macphail

- Posture and expression appear different than the other three portraits.
- Asymmetry in her face (e.g. glasses appear crooked; one eyebrow seems missing or hidden by glasses).
- Too many different patterns and shading (green) on her face and chin.

e) Portrait of James Gladstone

- Looks older compared to the other portraits.
- Ear on the right appears lost in the background pattern.
- Lips are one tight line.
- Unintentional effects from vignette design seen above and beside his face (discussed later).

f) Metis Sash Pattern at the Bottom and Top of the Bank Note

- Easily identified as “ceinture fléchée” in Quebec City.
- In both groups in Winnipeg, mention was made that it might represent a Metis sash or native embroidery.
- Generally, Metis sash pattern was seen as resembling lightning.

g) Hall of Honour Vignette

- Most often perceived to depict a cathedral.
- Some also believed it might represent the parliament buildings.
- Lacking definition to show what it represents.
- Many questioned why the image changed from left to right side of bank note.
- Many noticed the circles beside and above James Gladstone’s head and questioned their meaning or relevance.

h) Window Border Design

- 2017 on the top right side is hard to read compared to 1867 on the left side.

i) Metallic Features Inside the Window

- The *Canada 150* text in the middle of the window was described as an interesting element but hard to see. Would stand out better if it was silver or coloured.
- Can only read the *Canada 150* text from the front. Might also be spelled backward so that it can be read if looking from the back (similar to other elements in the window that can be read from front and back of the bank note).
- Provinces at the top and bottom noticed and considered positive elements.
- Many questioned the meaning and relevance of the owl. Not immediately identified as an Indigenous symbol or cultural work.
- Many commented on the fact that the feet of the owl were not aligned with the rest of its body.

j) Right Hand Side of the Bank Note

- Canada 150 logo not recognized. Believed to be a modernized version of Canada’s maple leaf and also a reference to the centennial of Confederation.
- All groups questioned the inconsistency between the order that English and French standard bank note text is presented.
- Some commented that the bank note did not appear to have been cut properly at the top and on the right side.
- Many wondered what the 3/13 (plate position number) at the bottom of the bank note represented.

k) Show Through from the Front

- White lines from the back of the note show through Sir John A. Macdonald and Sir George-Étienne Cartier's faces when the bank note is held to the light.
- Denomination numerals on the front and back of the bank note do not line up when held to the light.
- Canada at top of the front and back of the bank note do not line up when held to the light.

Back of the Bank Note

a) First Landscape Panel on the Far Left: The Lions

- Image not defined enough to see the different elements (i.e. mountain, trees, water).
- Participants often mentioned seeing an optical illusion in the middle of the mountain.
- Dark spot noticed in the middle where the trees and water meet.

b) Window Border Design

- Less connection/engagement with the window border design on the back of the note compared to the window border design on the front.
- The green elements are not well defined. For example, the word CANADA in the top left corner was often not noticed. The maple leaves on the bottom left corner are difficult to discern and the number 10 is not visible to many.

c) Second Landscape Panel: Wheat Field

- Good, clear and crisp picture.
- Clearly represents the Prairie provinces.
- Some wondered why this picture was a close-up compared to the other panels that showed a wider perspective.

d) Third Landscape Panel: Canadian Shield

- Some participants perceived the water to be a path or grass.
- Many mentions of an optical illusion in the water, rocks or trees.

e) Fourth Landscape Panel: East Coast at Cape Bonavista

- In the context of the rest of the elements of the note, perceived to represent the East coast. Some confusion as to what this picture depicts.

f) Final Landscape on Far Right: Northern Lights

- Tree line was noticed but would like to see it bigger or more defined.
- Northern lights at top and bottom of *East Coast Cape Bonavista* and *Canadian Shield* panels show hard lines that stop abruptly to the detriment of the design.

g) Other Aspects: Security Patterns, Text at the Top, Denomination Numerals

- Some mentions of the font chosen for the “1” in the denomination numerals as unusual.
- Questions about the green dots in the security patterns and what they represent.

h) Show Through from the Back

- Portraits from the front of the bank note showing through when holding it up to the light.
- Denomination numerals on the front and back not lined up when holding the bank note up to the light.
- Canada at top of front and back the note not lined up when holding it up to the light.

4. Communications Messaging

Each participant received a printed copy of the following communications messages describing what the front and the back of the bank note is about.

Front of the Bank Note – Nation Builders:

- *This note presents four public figures who, from the time of Confederation, dedicated themselves to creating a better Canada.*
- *Macdonald, Cartier, Macphail and Gladstone symbolize that the Canada of today was shaped by people of different backgrounds who, through their vision, courage and effort, created a better country.*
- *As we celebrate the 150th anniversary, Canadians can draw inspiration from these four visionaries and work towards what comes next.*

Back of the Bank Note – Canadian Landscapes:

- *This note presents the rugged splendour of Canada, a land as diverse as its people.*
- *The five landscapes represent different regions of Canada: the West Coast, the Prairie provinces, Central Canada, the Atlantic provinces and the Northern Territories.*
- *The landscape of Canada has been, and will forever be, where our story unfolds.*

Overall, the descriptions were well received and thought to convey the intended messages.

Front of the Bank Note:

- Participants were intrigued and wanted to know more about the four individuals depicted on the front of the bank note especially after reading the messages. They felt the descriptions for the front of the note did not provide enough information in that regard.
- The expression “work towards what comes next” was often described as too vague.

Back of the Bank Note:

- Participants tended to better connect, on an emotional level, with the messages for the back of the bank note. They were perceived to well represent what Canada has been, is and will be for years to come. The choice of words such as “rugged splendour” and “land as diverse as its people” evoked feelings of pride.
- Many were surprised to read “five landscapes” as they did not consider the northern lights as a landscape compared to the other four panels on the back of the note.

5. Security Feature Descriptions

Each participant received a copy of a prototype education pamphlet describing the new and enhanced security features on the note. No major issues were reported. The name and description of each of the three security features were clear, easy to understand and described what was seen on the bank note. The only exception was the reference to the colour-shifting arch changing from green to blue as the note is tilted. Many participants did not see the blue in that change in colour.