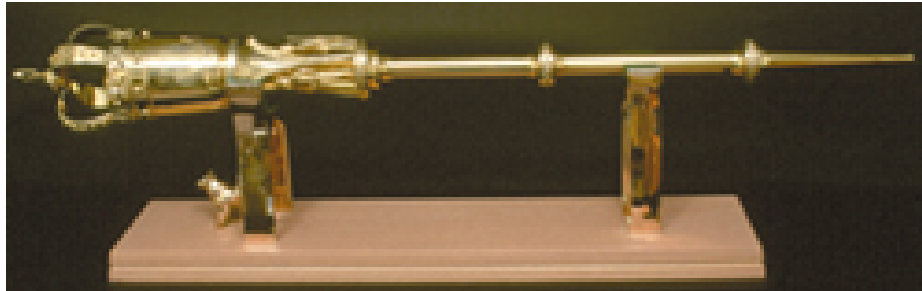


Yukon Legislative Assembly



Information Sheet No. 2 The Mace



The Origin of the Mace

The Mace was originally a weapon of war developed during the medieval period. Typically the mace was composed of an iron shaft topped with an iron ball. The ball was often spiked, and sometimes was at the end of a length of chain attached to the shaft. It was a potent weapon and could be used effectively against soldiers wearing suits of armour.

Today the Mace is seen as a symbol of order, not a weapon of war. In its August 9, 2002 edition the Official Newsletter of the Canadian Association of Sergeants-at-Arms describes the development of the Mace as a parliamentary symbol this way:

The significance of the Mace is historically linked with the role of the Sergeant-at-Arms.

The Crusader King Philip Augustus of France established a bodyguard of Serjeants-at-Arms in the early 13th century as protection against attacks by Muslim assassins. King Edward I formed his own bodyguard in 1279. In this protective role, the Serjeants carried the Mace as a weapon.

Because the Mace was inscribed with the royal arms, the Mace became a symbol of royal authority.

In 1415 one of Henry V's Serjeants was permanently detailed to the House of Commons. The Serjeant was to attend to the King when there was no Parliament, and to the Speaker of the Commons when there was.

In this regard, by the 17th century, it had become accepted that the House of Commons could not be properly constituted without the presence of the Mace. Reflecting this more ceremonial role, the Mace head was increasingly decorated with jewels, precious metals and heraldic devices.

The importance of the Mace has long been recognized. In 1626 King Charles I tried to close the English Parliament by demanding the surrender of the Mace. Oliver Cromwell made sure the Mace was removed when he forcibly dismissed Parliament in 1653.

The Use of the Mace

The Mace, then, is the symbol of the authority of the Assembly, and through the Assembly, the symbol of the authority of the Speaker. Only when it is in place is the Assembly duly authorized and proceedings may begin. When the Speaker, or Deputy Speaker, is in the Chair, the Mace is placed in the upper brackets on the Clerk's Table. When the Assembly is in Committee of the Whole the Mace rests on the lower brackets.

The Sergeant-at-Arms is the only person authorized to touch the Mace during proceedings. In 2002 a Canadian Member of Parliament (MP) grabbed the Mace in the House of Commons as a form of protest. The MP was suspended from the House of Commons for a number of days. He was only allowed to return to his seat after standing at the bar of the House and apologizing to the Speaker and all Members of Parliament.

The Yukon's Mace

The Yukon's Mace is made of sterling silver, including the gold areas, which are sterling-gold plated. The shields representing the coats of arms of Canada and the Yukon are enamel. A crown tops the head of the Mace. Beneath the crown is a topographical cross section of the Yukon. The Mace also features fireweed, the Yukon's floral emblem; the figures of a miner, a trapper and a First Nations person; as well as etchings of Yukon scenery and other armorial bearings. The Mace weighs eleven pounds (about 5 kilograms).

The History of the Yukon's Mace

In the early 1960s the idea that the Yukon should have its own mace started to be discussed. In 1964 the Yukon Territorial Council agreed that a competition be established for the design of the Mace. The prize for the winning design was awarded in 1966 to Royal Canadian Mounted Police corporal Jim Ballantyne. The Executive Committee of the Yukon, which included the Commissioner of the Yukon, two assistant commissioners and two members of the territorial council, approved his design.

The design having been approved, the Mace was crafted by Birks of Montreal in 1971-72. It cost approximately \$8300 to make.

On February 11, 1972 Hon. Jean Chrétien, Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs, announced that the Yukon would receive its own Mace. By that time the Parliament of Canada, all the provincial legislative assemblies and the Legislative Assembly of the Northwest Territories all had a mace of their own.

On March 6, 1972 Governor General Roland Mitchener presented the Mace to the Yukon Territorial Council as a gift from the people of Canada. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had granted Royal Authority for the use of the crown on the head of the Mace. The Honourable Ronald Rivett, Speaker of the Yukon Territorial Council, accepted the Mace on behalf of the council.

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