

Commemorative coins

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Light blue rectangular case containing 4 coins commemorating the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games. Each coin features an illustration representing a discipline. From left to right: hurdles (men's), marathon, javelin (women's), shot put.

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Date 1975

Materials metal, silver

Measurements 3 x 7 x 22 cm

Historical context

Coins commemorating the 1976 Montreal Olympic Games were issued between 1973 and 1976. The coins presented here date from 1975 and feature illustrations by artists Leo Yerxa and Lynda Cooper.

Leo Yerxa is an award-winning artist from Couchiching First Nation. He studied graphic and fine arts before designing the 1976 Olympic coins. In particular, he turned to Algonquin quillwork to represent athletic sports. In addition to his artistic career, he has illustrated and published several award-winning children's books.

First used in ancient Greece, it wasn't until 1952 that the Olympic Games revived the tradition of the Olympic coin. At the initiative of the Finnish government, specific coins were issued for the Helsinki Games. Subsequent editions followed suit, including the Montreal Games in 1976. However, the Royal Canadian Mint was the first to issue a series of 28 silver and 2 gold coins to finance the event.

The Montreal Olympic Games give a significant place to the Native Nations, as shown by the illustrations on the coins presented here. Numerous Aboriginal artists and artisans, such as Leo Yerxa, are contributing to the artistic and cultural programming of the Games. This involvement comes at a time when Canada is seeking to redefine its national identity and its relationship with the Aboriginal Nations.

Photo by Michel Julien