

# Postcard

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Color postcard.

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Fabricant / Éditeur Montreal Import Co.

Artiste / Auteur Unknown

Date 1914 an

Medium and Support ink, cardboard

Technique industrial process

## Historical context

This postcard from the “Canadien Girl” series produced by the Montreal Import Co. between 1902 and 1914 shows a Canadian woman snowshoeing in a northern landscape. She is dressed in a casual daytime gown typical of the turn-of-the-century elite in Europe and Canada, consisting of a high-collared white blouse and long skirt, with a long belt at the waist and a head scarf, red gloves and small ankle boots. Postcard companies of the period produced several thematic series on women in Canada. This postcard is representative of the tourist-oriented souvenir cards of the period, and gives us an idea of the image of Canadian women at the time.

In addition to showcasing the breadth of Canadian nature, this scene of the “Canadian woman” allows us to appreciate some of the clichés conveyed about women in the early 20th century. For example, the careful, delicate clothing on display echoes the feminine standards of the time.

The sporting activities permitted to women in the 19th and early 20th centuries were designed to enable them to wear dresses and require little physical effort. Snowshoeing, cross-country skiing and curling were the winter activities in which women were encouraged to participate.

As illustrated on the postcard, snowshoes are used to get around on the snow. Winter footwear is one of the hallmarks of aboriginal engineering. The First Peoples have been using and making snowshoes

since time immemorial, and each community across North America adapts the shape and weight of the snowshoes to the particularities of the territory. Using a snowshoe needle, women lace the inside of the wooden frame with untanned animal hide, often moose.

Thanks to this technology and the help of the First Peoples, the first settlers were able to survive and get around in Canadian winters. In addition to its utilitarian nature, from the mid-19th century onwards, snowshoeing became a popular recreational and sporting activity practised by members of the wealthier classes, including women, as can be seen on this postcard. As early as 1861, a few Montreal women founded a women's snowshoe club, the Ladies' Prince of Wales Club of Montreal. Although the practice of this sport by women was socially accepted, snowshoe racing competitions were reserved for men. At the time, however, Aboriginal women were excluded from all sports – with the exception of softball, which they played on certain reserves.