



# Communiqué



## Governor General and Minister of Supply and Services Unveil 1990 \$100 Gold Coin

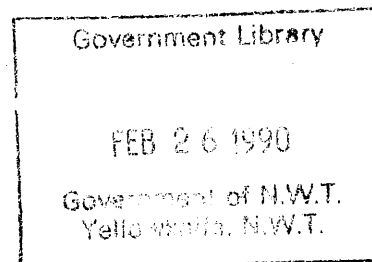
(Ottawa, February 21, 1990): The Royal Canadian Mint is celebrating the United Nations International Literacy Year with a special gold \$100 coin that salutes Canada's unique contribution to literacy.

The new coin was unveiled today by the Governor General, His Excellency the Right Honourable Raymon John Hnatyshyn, and the Honourable Paul Dick, Minister responsible for the Mint, during a ceremony in Ottawa.

"Literacy is a concern in our country and around the world, and by drawing public attention to the issue, we will encourage progress toward solutions," said the Governor General. He has previously indicated his strong commitment to promoting literacy during his term as Governor General.

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# Canada



"As we move more and more toward the information society, the ability for all to read and write becomes absolutely essential," said Minister Paul Dick. "This coin is a visual reminder of our commitment to ensuring all Canadians have this opportunity."

The new coin salutes Canada's unique contribution to literacy through an inscription written in Inuit syllabics, a special alphabet developed to express the sounds of the Inuit language. The coin shows an Inuk woman writing syllabics with her child while carrying her baby in a traditional Inuit coat called "amaotik." The syllabic inscription placed over the design refers to literacy in Inuktitut, the language of the Inuit.

Martha Flaherty and her daughter Allissa, the models for the design, attended the unveiling ceremony, along with John Amagoalik, President of Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC), a national organization representing the interests of the Inuit population of Canada. He expressed his strong satisfaction with how the ITC provided input for the coin. "We believe our participation helped to ensure the accuracy of the coin design," said Amagoalik.

Designed by Ontario artist John Mardon, this is the 15th annual \$100 gold coin issued by the Mint. It contains one-quarter ounce of gold alloyed with silver. It features the new Canadian portrait of Queen Elizabeth II. It has a face value of \$100, and sells for C\$245. To order the coin, contact the Royal Canadian Mint, Box 457 Station A, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 9H3, or phone 1-800-267-1871.

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### 1990 CANADIAN \$100 GOLD COIN

- Theme marks the United Nations International Literacy Year
- Obverse side shows an Inuk woman with a child writing Inuit syllabics, a special alphabet developed to express the sounds of the Inuit language; syllabics is Canada's unique contribution to literacy
- Reverse side shows new Canadian portrait of Queen Elizabeth II designed by Dora de Pédery-HUNT
- Contains one-quarter ounce of gold alloyed with silver
- Specifications:

Diameter	26.9 mm
Thickness	2.18 mm
Weight	13.338 grams
Reeded edge	
- Each coin is packaged in a plastic movable frame to allow viewing of both sides without handling
- Coin is presented in a luxurious brown leather case, adorned with a gold-toned maple leaf
- Face value is \$100; sale price is C\$245
- To order, phone 1-800-267-1871 or write:

Royal Canadian Mint  
Box 457, Station A  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1N 9H3

## **BIOGRAPHY OF THE ARTIST**

### **JOHN MARDON**

John Mardon, well-known Canadian artist, designed the Royal Canadian Mint's 1990 gold coin that marks the United Nations Literacy Year.

This is not the first time Mardon's designs have been featured on coins from the Royal Canadian Mint. Last year, his design commemorating the exploration of the Mackenzie River appeared on the 1989 silver dollar. His drawings of bobsled and biathlon athletes graced two of the very successful 1988 Calgary Winter Olympic coin series.

Mardon describes himself as a commercial illustrator who specializes in line art and colour wash graphic art. The bulk of his work is in newspaper advertising, but he finds designing coins and stamps an exciting challenge.

In 1987, he designed the Heritage collection of postage stamps for Canada Post. This series of four stamps honoured the original architecture of postal buildings across Canada and was featured at CAPEX '87, an international exhibition for stamp artwork.

He has won design awards in Canada, the United States and Japan.

Mardon has recently returned to his artistic roots at the Ontario College of Art from which he graduated in 1963. He is an instructor in portfolio preparation for graduating students.

He is continuing his work in the print advertising industry, and plans to enter future coin design competitions for the Royal Canadian Mint.

## **SYLLABIC WRITING**

- **Developed by Methodist missionary James Evans in 1840s while working among Cree Indians at Norway House in northern Manitoba; developed as a way to express Cree verbal language sounds in written form**
- **Syllabics system quickly spread across the prairies and in Quebec**
- **Cree syllabics were adapted to Inuktitut language through efforts of John Horden and E.A. Watkins from the Church Missionary Society of England who were stationed in James Bay; it was further promoted by Edmund James Peck who arrived in 1875**
- **Reading and writing syllabics has been taught in schools from Peck's time until today and has become widely adopted; it has not totally supplanted the Roman alphabet; the Labrador Inuit, for example, do not use syllabics**
- **Syllabics system is simple and widely understood among the Inuit so that illiteracy was unknown to them even before the advent of formal education**
- **In the 1960s, Inuktitut and syllabics were threatened when English was made compulsory in all schools; in the 1970s, the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada adopted official Roman and syllabic orthographies to help keep the language alive**
- **Today, syllabics have taken firm root in the Arctic:**
  - **computers and word processors can produce Inuktitut syllabics using various software, and these are widely used in schools and within Native organizations**
  - **Inuit children can read books written in syllabics**
  - **Inuktitut articles appear in inflight magazines**

**\*\* Source: "Syllabics," by Ken Harper**

## FACTS ON ILLITERACY

### Canada

- One of every six Canadians is illiterate\*
- About eight per cent of Canadians are totally illiterate; another 16 per cent have serious problems reading or writing; about 4.5 million Canadians have serious difficulty understanding written material
- Only 10 per cent of illiterates are registered or planning to register in language classes
- Lack of motivation is given as the main reason by 51 per cent of Canadians aged 18 to 34 for dropping out of school; for people over 54, the main reason was financial constraints that obliged them to work
- The literacy rate for Canadians aged 21-25 is lower than for Americans of the same age group

### Illiteracy in the World

- In 1985, there were an estimated 889 million adults (one quarter of the world's population) who could not read or write\*\*
  - 75% of illiterates (666 million people) are in Asia
  - The illiteracy rate is higher among women (34.9 per cent) than men (20 per cent)
  - Illiteracy rates are 54 per cent of the adult population in Africa; 36 per cent in Asia; 17 per cent in Latin America; eight per cent in Canada
  - The United Nations Assembly has invited Unesco to be the lead organization for observing 1990 as International Literacy Year; the objective is to increase awareness of the problem of illiteracy and to promote efforts to spread education
- \* L'analphabétisme au Canada, Rapport d'enquête/Southam News
- \*\* Unesco Information Document, June 1989

