



COUNT YOUR PENNIES

Shopping in Canada in the First Half of the 20th Century

Have you ever wondered what your money would have looked like, what life was like before credit cards, and how much you could buy with a dollar on a trip to the store a hundred years ago?

Count Your Pennies, a new travelling exhibition about currency, methods of payment and purchasing power in the first half of the 20th century, and is currently travelling to museums across the country over the next three years.

General Description

In the context of a trip to the store during the early decades of the 20th century, *Count Your Pennies* showcases the currencies in common use, and demonstrates the growing standardization of Canadian banknotes and coins. The visitor is invited to window shop at three different stores selling grocery products: one from the 1900s, one from the 1930s, and one from the 1950s. As well as showcasing money, the exhibition examines the prices of goods and some of the changing trends in how people shopped.

Each time period is represented within an area bordered by two free-standing structures. The spaces recreate a general store, a grocery store, and a supermarket. The outside of the structures resemble exterior walls. One has an external window panel, giving the sense of looking through the window into the store, and the other shows the store interior with counter and shelves. Each module is similarly constructed, although the look is different. For example, the store counter for the 1900s is heavy oak, whereas the shelving for the 1950s consists of formica and chrome. The theme is developed further through the use of graphic images, and store products.

Each module includes a photographic backdrop created from an archival photograph of a store interior, which sets the scene, and a three-dimensional store counter, that seems to be an extension of the image. The counter provides the housing for the showcase containing the currency; namely, low-denomination notes, coins, tokens, and cheques in circulation at the time. Shelves, also in the appropriate style, contain reproduction grocery products that would have been for sale. Visitors can compare prices from each time period by looking at a store catalogue, that features some of the products.

The modules represent three different economic times. The module for the 1900s, titled "The Good Old Days," portrays the end of an era of relative stability, and presents a rather nostalgic view of the days before World War I. The module for the 1930s, titled "Tightening the Belt," is set against the backdrop of the Depression. The module for the 1950s, titled "Peace, Prosperity and Progress," depicts a time of growth, following World War II. The social interpretation is presented primarily through an audio conversation, accessed through a wand. Visitors listen in on a casual conversation that is set in the context of the time.





The audio experience expands on the visual aids and text story-line on the panels. Other support materials include store advertisements and posters.

An associated activity encourages the visitor to comparison shop, by looking up the prices in a "store catalogue" and calculating totals for a shopping list for each time period.

The introductory module resembles a modern day scanner checkpoint where no cashier is necessary. This module also houses some modern-day products and today's cash and plastic cards. A monitor screen shows some of today's prices. This module acts as a "gate" through which visitors enter and exit the exhibition and encourages them to make comparisons to the modern day. It includes the exhibition title panel and the acknowledgement panel.

Exhibition Details:

Organizer: The Currency Museum of the Bank of Canada

Space Requirements: The exhibition requires a floor space of approximately 600 sq. ft. Each of the three time periods requires a minimum of 54 sq. ft. and includes two exhibit structures situated diagonally across from each other. The circulating room around them can vary. The introduction module is 4 ft. x 3 ft. and needs to be accessed from both sides. There is also a supplementary showcase 2.5 ft. x 3 ft. (optional).

Interpretation and Enhancements: The exhibition is fully bilingual. It comes complete with interpretive panels and labels. It also includes three audio stations, each with two wands that allow visitors to listen to 3 to 4 minute recorded conversations, set in the different time periods. Activity booklets are provided for visitors, and contain three shopping lists for which costs are to be calculated using information from each module. These booklets can be kept as a souvenir. There are also comment cards in the form of postcards, which can be dropped off in a reproduction period mailbox. Approximately 100 colour promotional posters will be provided to assist in marketing the exhibition.

Transportation and Installation: The exhibition will be transported by a recognized shipping company. The store counters can be blanket wrapped, as can the six sets of hinged panels, which fold together for easier transportation. The three shallow showcases containing the artifacts (currency) can be removed from the counters and crated separately. The artifacts do not need to be removed from their showcases. The reproduction grocery products will, however, be removed from the shelves and packed in small crates or boxes. The installation of the exhibition is the responsibility of the borrowing institution. Easy-to-follow instructions with photographs will be provided.

Exhibition Fee: The borrower will share in pro-rated shipping and travel-insurance costs for the exhibition which is approximately \$2500. There is no rental fee.

Insurance: The borrowing institution is responsible for insuring the exhibition while it is on its premises. The exhibition fee includes travel insurance for the exhibition, while in transit between institutions.





Special Requirements: Borrowing institutions must provide detailed information on their facilities, especially on security, environmental conditions, and other related subjects.

Availability: The exhibition is available to Canadian Institutions for 10- to 15-week bookings until 2007.

To reserve the exhibition, please contact:

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