

Victoria artist leaves mark on new Canadian \$10 coins

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Richard Hunt holds a \$10 silver coin, the third coin he has created for the Royal Canadian Mint. The coin's design is based on Hunt's artwork, Mother Feeding Baby. Photograph By DARREN STONE, Times Colonist

Richard Hunt's image on Canada's newly minted \$10 silver coin shows a mother eagle giving a minnow to her eaglet, while the father flies toward them carrying a salmon.

Called Mother Feeding Baby, it highlights the value of the family and also recognizes the importance of the eagle to the renowned Victoria artist, who now has three of his artistic creations emblazoned on Canadian coins.

"The eagle is the main crest of our village," said Hunt, whose family is Kwakwaka'-wakw and is based in Fort Rupert, near Port Hardy.

The coin — the third Hunt has created for the Royal Canadian Mint — contains a hologram, what the mint calls a combination of aboriginal art and modern technology. It was produced last week in a run of 10,000. The design is based on a print Hunt created in 2007 to give to people involved in a Big Brothers Big Sisters of Victoria golf tournament.

"There's 180 prints," he said. "The edition was never sold. It was given away."

Hunt's relationship with the mint began when the Crown corporation contacted him about using his work for a coin minted in 2005. That coin showed two native groups coming together, while a second one he designed in 2012 to mark the 25th anniversary of the loonie featured two loons kissing.

"The good thing about the mint is they're using native people instead of people that do native art," Hunt said. "I'm just glad that they picked my work; they like my work."

Hunt did not want to disclose his financial arrangement with the mint, but said that is not his focus. "It's more prestige."

This year's specially designed and packaged hologram coins sell for \$79.95 each. Such collector coins can technically be used as money, but they would be worth only their face value.

Michael Tarantino of AAA Stamp Coin Jewellery said the new Hunt coin is available at his Fort Street store, but they could be bought up quickly. Similar coins from the mint routinely sell out, he said.

"That's actually what drives the market," said Tarantino, whose store is the official outlet for the mint in B.C. "They sell out and you didn't get one, so then you have to go look for it on a secondary market.

"It makes it kind of fun that there's a bit of a hunt to it."

Hunt, 63, has built a huge reputation as a carver of gold, silver and wood, and is also an accomplished painter. Art has been a passion for most of his life.

"I've done this for 50 years," he said. That includes time at Thunderbird Park under the tutelage of his late father, Henry, as an apprentice carver.

He went on to serve as chief carver in the park's carving program for 12 years before striking out on his own. Over the years, he has been awarded the Order of B.C., the Order of Canada and an honorary doctorate from the University of Victoria.

His UVic doctorate came in 2004, 21 years after his father received the same recognition.

Hunt's art will be front and centre again next month when his Dancing Heron design appears on Times Colonist 10K T-shirts.

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