

Arrow belt

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L'Assomption" style wool belt with lightning bolt motif, made of 13 corridors. The multicolored belt is cut in half and curved. A hand-sewn border has been added on one side. The wool color is obtained using natural dyes.

Accession Number 2021.07.01

Date 1880 an

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Historical context

This belt has the unusual feature of being cut in two. While the reason for this is unknown, it is not unique, as other pieces have been recorded. With the outer edge held in place by a stitched border, the belt has deformed and curved over time.

Arrow belts were developed by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century. Initially symbols of social prestige, they became identity markers, then became associated with French-Canadian nationalism in the early 20th century.

The Assomption model was gradually established in the early 19th century. In keeping with this standard, this belt has the unusual feature of a red and green dotted outer border.

It was probably made during the “grande époque”. Between 1830 and 1880, dyers made arrow belts for fur-trading companies. Sent to the trading posts, these pieces served as objects of exchange and agreement with the natives. As a result of this trade and the many encounters of travelers, certain aboriginal and Métis nations adopted the belts as symbols of their identity.

Long debated, the attribution of arrow belts should not overshadow their multicultural dimension: their use by different social groups gives them a rich cultural identity and historical importance. Although difficult to date, they provide us with information about the cultural history of several territories and the socio-economic relationships that bind them together.



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