

Arrow belt

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L'Assomption" style arrow belt with lightning bolt motif, made of 14 corridors. The belt is made of red, blue, yellow and white wool. The colors appear to be derived from natural and synthetic dyes. The weave shows errors in its construction.

Accession Number 2021.07.06

Date 1899 an

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Historical context

This belt has a distinctive color scheme. The yellow, tending towards orange, corresponds to a synthetic dye. It probably dates from the late 19th century, a period of transition from natural to synthetic dyes. Indeed, synthetic dyes gradually appeared in the 19th century. In 1856, the first synthetic dye, mauvéine, was developed. The following decades saw a succession of discoveries. Synthetic dyes are particularly appreciated for their resistance and the diversity of their shades. These shades can, however, be garish, like the orange-yellow shown here. The wool used here is probably of British origin. By the end of the century, Quebec wool production was limited. To meet demand, it was imported from Great Britain.

Arrow belts, created by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century, become a cultural symbol in Quebec. Adopted by Aboriginal and Métis nations, handmade belts declined after 1880, as English imitations were produced in large numbers. The decline of the fur trade also contributed to their decline.

Arrow belts reflect a multicultural identity. 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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