

Arrow belt

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L'Assomption" style arrow belt, with lightning bolt motifs, made of 12 corridors. Made of red, yellow, black, green and white wool, the colors seem to come from natural dyes.

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Date 1880 an

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Measurements 18,5 x 210 cm

Historical context

The slightly faded colors of this arrow belt are probably of natural origin. Synthetic dyes, mostly used from the late 19th century onwards, often age differently.

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 standard Assumption belt, like this one, was established in the early 19th century. This standard, which represents the culmination of the fléché technique, features a red heart and lightning bolt motifs. The first 6 corridors (rows of colors counted from the center), must correspond to a color order, and the following ones may differ. Here, the colors of the last 6 corridors have been chosen by the craftsman (or customer).

This belt would have been made during the “great era” between 1830 and 1880, when dyers produced belts for fur-trading companies. Sent to trading posts, these pieces served as objects of exchange and agreement with certain aboriginal nations, who adopted them as symbols of their identity.

Long debated, the attribution of arrow belts should not obscure 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 on the cultural history of several territories and the socio-economic relationships that bind them together.



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