

# Arrow belt

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L'Assomption" style arrow belt, with lightning bolt motif, made of 9 corridors. The belt is made of red, black, green, yellow and white wool, whose colors seem to be derived from natural dyes. Its bangs are broken.

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Accession Number 2021.07.13

Date 1880 an

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Measurements 14 x 190 cm

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## Historical context

This arrow sash would have belonged to the Allen family of Westmount, owners of the Allen Juice Company, whose daughter was in the Canadian Racket Club. This may explain the pale, faded colors: in contact with water, the wool becomes damaged and the dyes rub off. The fléché technique was developed by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century, probably to embellish belts already used to protect themselves from the cold or to support their backs. Gradually, they became an element of identity, even nationalism.

The Assomption model took shape in the early 19th century, establishing a distinct standard for arrow belts like this one. Between 1830 and 1880, lyers made this model 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 with travelers, certain aboriginal and Métis nations adopted the belts as symbols of their identity.

When the fur trade declined at the end of the 19th century, arrow belts essentially became a cultural element, notably adopted by snowshoers. 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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