

# Arrow belt

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Arrow belt with lightning and flame motif. The belt is made of yellow, green, red, blue, white and violet wool. The colors come from natural dyes.

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Period 4th quarter of the 18th century

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Measurements 21,5 x 180 cm

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## Historical context

An exceptional piece, this arrow belt is believed to have been made in Sainte-Marie-Salomé, Quebec, in the 1780s. One of the last owners was the Holt Renfrew family of stores.

Arrow belts are an important cultural element in Quebec. The arrow technique was developed by French Canadians in the second half of the 18th century, probably to embellish belts already used to protect themselves from the cold or to support their backs. Initially symbols of social prestige, they became identity markers, and were associated with French-Canadian nationalism in the early 20th century. Some aboriginal and Métis nations also adopted belts as symbols of identity in the 19th century, and went on to make their own.

Braided at the end of the 18th century, this arrowed belt bears witness to the development of a refined form of braiding by craftswomen: the fléché. This method creates patterns by crossing the threads, concealing the visible weft while allowing the creation of parallel motifs. The Assomption belt standard, established in the early 19th century, represents the culmination of this technique.

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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