

Arrow belt

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L'Assomption" style arrow belt with lightning bolt motif, made of 13 corridors. The belt is made of relatively thick wool in red, white, blue, yellow and green. Its colors are potentially derived from natural and synthetic dyes.

Accession Number 2021.07.30

Period 2nd quarter of the 20th century

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided


Historical context

Wool is the fiber used to make an arrow belt. Observing its nature is often useful when dating a piece. Here, the wool is thicker than that found on 19th-century belts. The latter were often made from “Worsted” wool from England, a fine, combed wool of the highest quality, renowned for its great strength. In the early 20th century, several factors gradually relegated Worsted wool to a more restricted use, including the growing demand for cheaper materials. More affordable wools were less twisted and thicker.

Arrow belts, created by French Canadians in the second half of the 18th century, became a cultural symbol in Quebec. After 1880, artisanal production of arrow belts declined. The fur trade, which used handmade belts as an object of exchange with aboriginals, declined. By the early 20th century, they had become essentially folkloric. Folklore researchers and a handful of dart makers gradually set up initiatives to preserve and promote the belts.

This belt incorporates modern elements of its time, such as synthetic dyes. Developed since the mid-19th century, they are gradually replacing natural dyes. Nevertheless, the weaving is particularly well executed, reflecting traditional craftsmanship.

Despite debates over their attribution, 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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