

Ethnohistorical collection

Arrow belt

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Collections / arrow belt



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L'Assomption" style arrow belt, with lightning bolt motifs, made of 14 corridors. The belt is made of red, white, blue, yellow and green wool. The colors seem to come from natural and synthetic dyes. The bangs are very long, with braids and twists.

Accession Number 2021.15.16

Period 1st quarter of the 20th century

Materials fiber, wool

Technique braided

Measurements 21,5 x 222 cm

Historical context

The corridors correspond to the color rows and are counted from the center of the belt. Here, 14 corridors indicate a relatively large piece, probably made for ceremonial purposes. In fact, the larger the belt, the more prestige it confers on its wearer.

Vivid and solid, certain colors such as yellow and light blue appear to be derived from synthetic dyes. Indeed, on older, naturally dyed pieces, the little blue is usually the first color to fade.

Synthetic dyes began to appear gradually in 1856, with the development of the first synthetic dye, mauvéine. They were particularly appreciated for their resistance and the diversity of their shades. The end of the 19th century marked a period of transition from natural to synthetic dyes: it was common to find both dyes in the same belt.

Created by French Canadians in the 2nd half of the 18th century, arrow belts became a cultural symbol in Quebec. Adopted by Aboriginal and Métis nations, their handcrafted production declined after 1880, with English imitations being produced in large numbers. The decline of the fur trade also contributed to their decline, as did changes in fashion.

Arrow belts reflect a multicultural identity. 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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