

The Knowledge keepers Diary

METIS NATION OF ALBERTA REGION 1

YOU ARE METIS, DON'T YOU EVER FORGET IT, BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE...

IN THIS ISSUE

THE HISTORY OF THE SASH

The presentation of a sash is considered a great honor and is worn with pride



The Métis Sash

The Métis or L'Assomption Sash is one of the most recognizable part of the Métis dress and identifies as a symbol of their people. The sash is styled after an "Assomption sash", named for the town in Quebec where they were made. In French, a Métis sash can be called "un 'ceinture flechée'", literally "an arrowed belt". The arrow design can be seen in the weaving. The sashes were used by voyageurs of the fur trade, but they became a popular trade item for the HBC, NWC, and the western Métis. Eventually the Métis started producing their own sashes in the Red River area.

The 3 metre long hand-woven sashes were made out of brightly colored red and blue wool with fringed ends. The fringed ends of the sashes were decorative, but also served as extra thread if anything needed mending while traveling. In more recent times, the Manitoba Métis Federation began a ceremony called "The order of the Sash" and this has been emulated by most Métis groups. A sash is presented as a thank you to honor for outstanding cultural, political and social contributions to the Métis Nation.

The sashes were also made out of different colors which represent different meanings.

Red - is for the blood of the Métis that was shed through the years while fighting for our rights.

Blue - is for the depth of our spirits.

Green - is for the fertility of a great nation.

White - is for our connection to the earth and our creator.

Yellow - is for the prospect of prosperity.

Black - is for the dark period of the suppression and dispossession of the Métis land.

Did you know?

The first sashes were used as back supports for the voyageurs in their canoes. They were wrapped around the midsection of the body to either keep the coat closed, or to hold belongings, like a hunting knife or fire bag.

The colorful Sash had many uses, including: Carrying items (knife, fire bag) Coat tie (tied around the waist to keep coat closed) Emergency sewing kit (fringed ends) Makeshift tumpline Markers left on buffalo (after killed- to mark buffalo as their property) tourniquet for injuries, rope, saddle blanket, towel and washcloth just to name a few...

- **A sash usually took about 200 hours to complete.**
- **Some sashes were woven with waxed threads and were so tightly made that they could haul water short distances.**
- **The Michif words for sash is *Â la sayncheur flayshii*.**

