



Artwork by George Gingras

## S is for Sash

The sash is a beautiful belt worn by many proud Métis. It is woven from wool and is fringed on the end.

### S si poor la saenchur flayshii

La saenchur flayshii katawaashishiw pi mishchayt lii Michif kii kishchiitaymoowuk aen pakoohtayhoochik. Avik la lenn ki ooshchikatew pi daan li bout la fraansh.



# S is for Sash

The sash is a beautiful belt worn by many proud Métis. It is woven from wool and is fringed on the end.

## S si poor la saenchur flayshii

La saenchur flayshii katawaashishiw pi mishchayt lii Michif kii kishchiitaymoowuk aen pakohtayhoochik. Avik la lenn ki ooshchikatew pi daan li bout la fraansh.

The sash is a very important part of being Métis. No Métis event or gathering is complete without someone wearing a sash. The sash originated with the Métis' French-Canadian ancestors, and was based on First Nations' fingerweaving techniques. Later, it was brought to present-day Western Canada. The Métis began wearing sashes during the fur trade. Sashes were made by Métis women in the early 1800s. These sashes were made in many different colours and patterns. It takes a tremendous amount of time to hand-weave a single sash. Métis **Elders** tell us that some families had their own family patterns and colours. In **Michif**, the sash is known as "aen saenchur flayshii," which means "arrow belt." It was given this name because of its arrowhead patterns. The sash was originally red with yellow, white, and black threads.

This bright and colourful article of clothing also had practical purposes as well. It could be used as a sling, a bandage, a harness, a rope, a belt, and a hunting marker. In the past, only Métis men wore sashes. Today, Métis men and women from all age groups wear sashes. One of the highest honours that can be given to a Métis is the "**Order of the Sash**."

The Métis almost lost the ability to make sashes because the **Hudson's Bay Company** began making and selling commercial sashes in the mid-nineteenth century. Many Métis began buying these machine-made sashes. Today, most sashes are made by machines in a variety of colours. The finger-woven sashes are usually of higher quality than the machine-woven ones, but are rare and expensive. Today, the art form is being revived and is being taught to young people.

### Other Resources:

Barkwell, Lawrence J., "The Sash of the Métis." *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* ([www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)).

Condon, Penny. (Narrator). *En saencheur flechey: Métis Fingerweaving*. Video. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2003.

"How to Fingerweave" (Instructional website with video). *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* ([www.metismuseum.ca/fingerweaving](http://www.metismuseum.ca/fingerweaving)).

Préfontaine, Darren R. and K. Shmon. "The Sash." *The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* (<http://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/00741>).

Taanishi Books Emergent Reader Series (*The Sash, Time to Dance, All About the Sash*). Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2014.

Troupe, Cheryl. *Expressing Our Heritage: Métis Artistic Designs*. Study Prints and Teachers' Manual. Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2002.

*The Virtual Museum of Métis History and Culture* ([www.metismuseum.ca](http://www.metismuseum.ca)).

