

Finger Weaving A Voyageur Sash

by Joani Reese

Twine ribbons: gold, red, emerald, for his eyes
Her furrier trades, her babe a nascent flame.
Her hands keep weaving: Listen to the cries.

This sash will dip for water, tote supplies.
Spread beeswax forms the cup, deft hands the frame.
Twine ribbons: gold, red, emerald, for his eyes

A chevron pattern forms as threads embrace.
Skinned beaver pelts all sold, he paddles home.
Her hands keep weaving: Listen to the cries.

Skilled fingers work, a smile in place denies
approaching screams--perhaps a children's game.
Twine ribbons: gold, red, emerald, for his eyes.

Her focus on each knot fast fingers tie
--not Frenchmen overrun, not bodies maimed.
Her hands keep weaving: Listen to the cries.

Night's air awhirl, the sky shoots fireflies.
Sometimes, she bleeds black arrows in her dreams.
Twine ribbons: gold, red, emerald, for his eyes.

Sad voyageur, death swooped with swift surprise.
Thuds shake the door. A sister screams her name.
Her hands cease weaving: Listen to the cries.

Her lover, bones and ashes where he lies.

and still wild roses star far fields the same.
His sash weaves with the fire's flames that rise
in ribbons: gold, red, emerald, for his eyes.

In the 1700s and 1800s, both French voyageurs (independent fur traders) and Native Americans enjoyed wearing colorful sashes for both practical and ceremonial occasions. They are known by many names: voyageur, metis, Red River, Hudson's Bay, and L'Assomption sashes. The men wore them by wrapping them twice around their waists. Voyageur sashes could also be slung around the forehead to support packages being carried. In addition to their own use, voyageur sashes were also traded for pelts.

