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A little less than a month from now, the BCHS will host the first of a three-part workshop on the traditional and highly skilled art of finger weaving. Not widely practiced today, finger weaving was the method by which Native and Métis women created the beautiful “ceinture fléchée” that their men, the dashing and daring Voyageur, wore around their waists as they plied the dangers of the fur trade. In recent decades, the colourful woolen sashes have enjoyed worldwide recognition as the apparel of choice for Bonhomme Carnaval, the iconic father of February fun in Old Québec!

The workshops will be given by Michelle Beauvais of Granby who has been practicing “tisser à doigts” since the mid 1970s. An expert in the art and its origins, Beauvais strives to share her knowledge with as many students as possible, something she was urged to do by her esteemed teacher, Pierre Bélanger, who passed away prematurely in 1986. At the time of his death, Beauvais was operating a small “atelier/boutique” in Knowlton called Chez Robb where she hosted exhibits and gave workshops.

Beauvais began studying the history of her craft in earnest in 1998 and was surprised to learn that cultural sensitivities made it a contentious subject! She persevered, and the results of her research were published in 2005. Five years later, she met fellow weaver Tom Condé with whom she has since partnered for a number of projects and initiatives aimed at preserving and promoting traditional finger weaving in Québec and beyond. Further collaborations with Le Musée de l'Arme et du Bronze in Granby, who are now the custodians of an impressive traveling exhibit Beauvais and Condé created, have helped enormously in bringing the craft to a wider audience.

A regular contributor to the Townshippers' Association, Beauvais volunteered to spend Townshippers' Day 2016 at the museum in Knowlton, sharing her vast knowledge and beautiful handiwork with the bus loads of visitors who came from the fair grounds in Brome. Her presence on that day inspired the BCHS to collaborate with her on what she charmingly refers to in English as “taking the art out of the bag.”

Finger weaving with Michelle Beauvais is open to adults and teenagers (13+) who are accompanied by adults, a rule by which Beauvais abides strictly as she feels strongly that young people need to learn traditional crafts in the presence of, if not directly from, older family members. Instructions will be given in French with English translation provided by fifteen year old Rose Skinner, Beauvais' grand-daughter and understudy. Participants should bring a bagged lunch.

The three-part workshop takes place on March 11th, 18th, and 25th from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Marion Phelps Building, located at 130 Lakeside in Knowlton. The fee for the three sessions is \$30 for BCHS members and \$35 for non-members and covers the wool and extra materials needed to create a small bag. To register please call the BCHS at 450-243-6782 or visit bromemuseum.com. We are also on Facebook!