

Order of the Arrow Beaded Sash

Beading Patterns



The Beaded Sash

When I was a younger member of the Order of the Arrow, I was always impressed by the beaded sashes worn by a number of the more respected members of our lodge (Harold Stevens and Al Deprez). Although I attempted the project once as a Scout, I did not have the time or creative ability to come up with something that I felt was of the appropriate quality. Later, as I learned more of the beadwork craft and found supplies of good quality, I decided that I could now attempt the project. It took about 6 months (spread out evenly across my free time — you know, between troop/district/council and other assorted meetings) of effort. Although not incredibly expensive in terms of supplies, it was costly in terms of time and effort.

I refused to allow even one bad bead, so if there was a break or I discovered a mistake, I would remove row after row (sometimes up to 1/2 inch) to replace the mistaken section. I always worked with the belief that this is a one-time project, never to be repeated, so I should do it right.

The patterns were worked out using Corel Draw on a PC Clone. The actual work was done on a modified beading loom that I bought from Tandy Leather (the large wooded one, not the little wire thing). The only modification was to extend the length of the loom from 3 feet to 8 using some aluminum braces from the local True-Value hardware store.

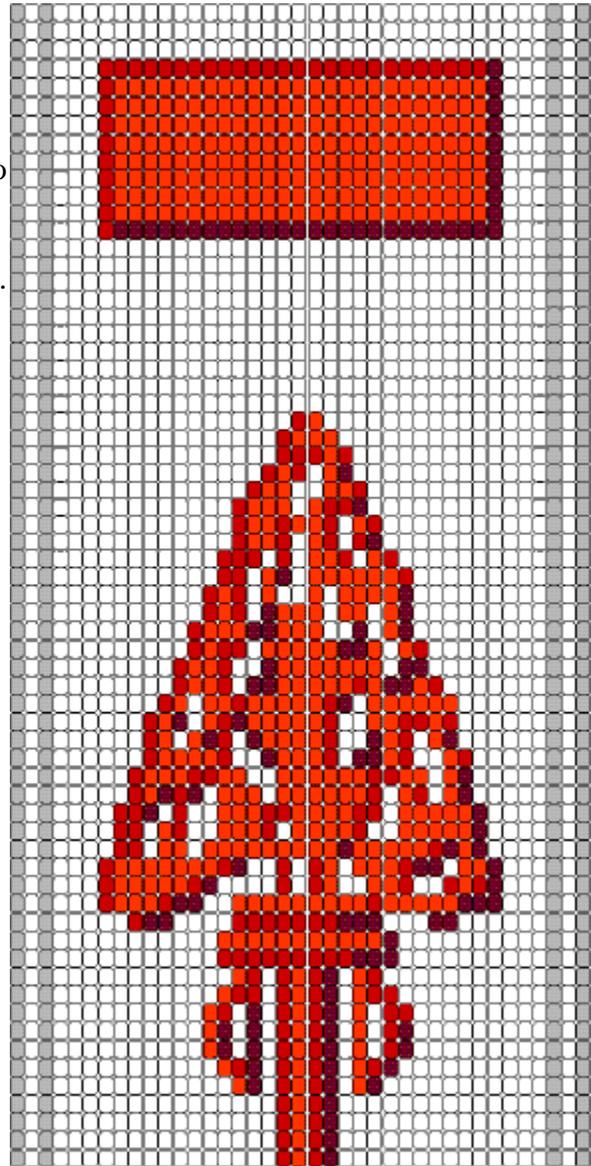
All the initial loom threading was done using nylon based, cotton covered carpet thread (from a fabric store). This is much more durable than simple cotton. I have seen a number of beaded sashes that are only 25-30 years old that are in pieces because of lack of foresight, the cotton rotted away beneath the beads..

The actual beading was done using NYMO, a nylon beading thread available thru Tandy Leather and other craft stores specializing in beading.

In regard to beads, it is important to get high quality beads for this project. That means beads that are almost all of the same width and color. To do this, you must research the available sources and buy them all at once. In this regard, Tandy is not the best place to purchase the beads (at least since the last time I was there). I buy mine through “The Wandering Bull” in Attleboro, MA; an indian craft supply store of very high quality.

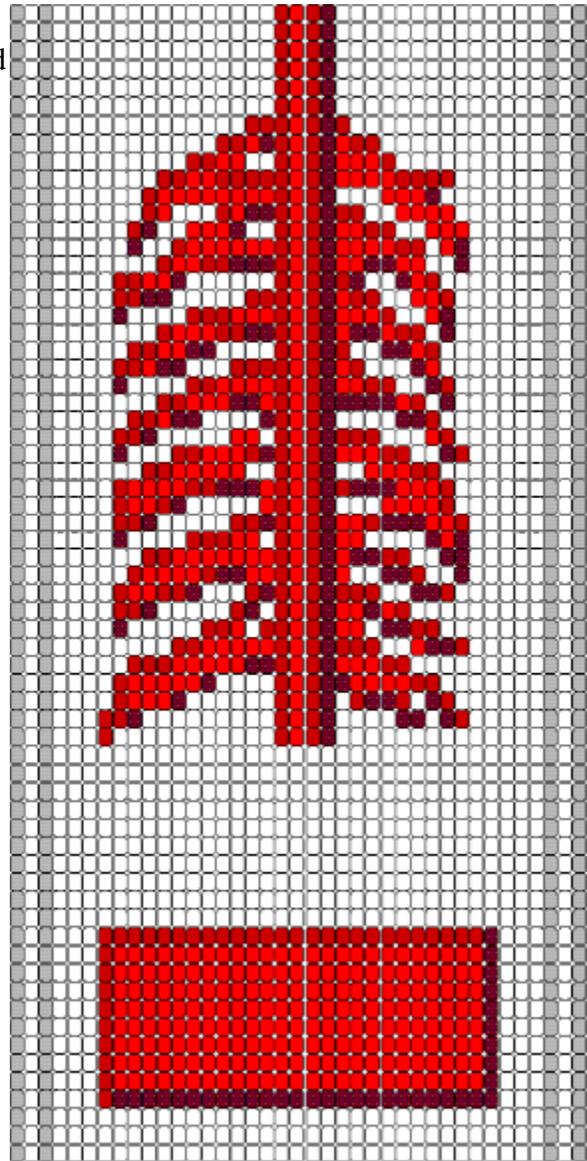
The Arrow Head

The top of the OA arrow shows the pattern format for making the this OA sash. The loom was beaded with 40 strings. This allows for a sash of 39 beads wide, utilizing a size 11-0 bead. **BUY QUALITY BEADS.** The background (white) is made up of two shades of white. I used translucent white beads for the edge bars (and later for the background arrow pattern), and a solid opaque white for the main sash. Be sure to mix all the different beads of the same color together, to evenly distribute small differences in color shades based upon dye lot. The arrow is made up of three shades of red, creating a 3-D effect.



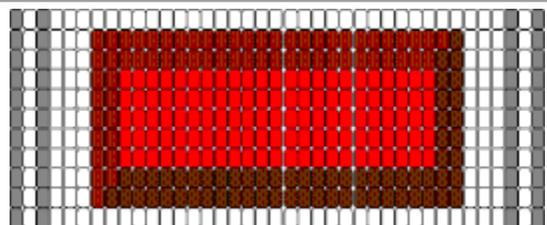
The Arrow Tail

The pattern for the arrow tail is similar to the top, repeating the three shades of red for the arrow, and two shades of white for the background.



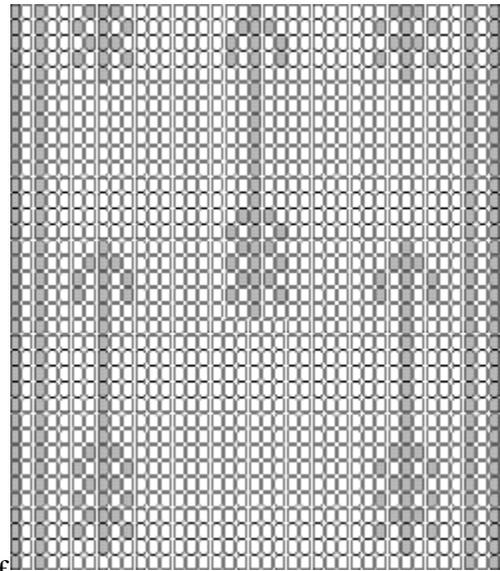
Updated Arrow Bars

After starting the sash, I found that I was not happy with the plan for the brotherhood bars, so I created an updated pattern providing a deeper 3D effect.



The Background

After the first few inches of work on the sash, I was not happy with the way it was coming out. I imagined it as being boring (even with the 3D effect on the arrow). Knowing that this would probably be a once-in-a-lifetime project, I wanted it to be unique. Knowing the BSA's attitude towards sash legends, I did not want to offend those who were very obstinate about the topic (later I learned of those who are just as much against beaded sashes— sheesh, you'd think there was more important things to argue over). I came up with the idea of embedding images in the white part of sash, by utilizing two shades of white. The first step in doing this, was to update the pattern behind the arrow and bars, so as I came to within an inch of the lowest bar, I started working this pattern into the background as I beaded the arrow. The effect is amazing. I continued the pattern through the top of the arrow and bar, and extended it for one inch beyond, then settled for a solid white pattern for the over-the-shoulder section of the sash. I then started to repeat the pattern in reverse down the back. As I am not a member of the Vigil honor, I never created the pattern for the additional triangle and arrows needed to complete that part of the sash. As I get some free time, I will attempt to do so in the future (if anyone has the time to do it for me, the effort would be appreciated).



The Sash Back

As I went down the back of the sash, I worked in the following patterns, spaced evenly down the back. Remember, the dark beads on the pattern represent transparent beads. You may need to check the beads to ensure that the transparent beads are the same width as the opaque ones. (I seem to remember having to buy transparent beads one size smaller than the others because they were from different sources and the sizing did not match). In actuality, there is one more pattern of an indian on a horse that has been lost over the years, I will have to recreate it from the sash itself when I get time. I also added an additional symbol (a small Star-Trek emblem) to the bottom of the back of the sash, but do not think that it needs to be added here. I firmly believe in adding images of some sort that will personalize the project for yourself.

