

## French Native Allies

The clothing worn by those native warriors at Fort Carillon in the summer of 1758 was not dissimilar from Canadian clothing. Apart from their normal attire of a painted shirt, leggings, moccasins, and a breechcloth, many of these natives wore Canadian garments. These consisted of gilets, vestes, capotes, and toques. Although in many cases native clothing was similar to Canadian dress, they had some unique characteristics in their appearance. Their shirts were painted, their moccasins were often decorated with ornate quill and bead work, and their leggings were similarly embellished. According to Pierre Pouchot, they are describe as heavily decorated, "with ribbons of different colors, mingled with designs in glass beads, which forms a very pleasing effect, especially when the leg is not too short and thick, which is rarely seen among them. Besides this, they wear garters of beads, or porcupine quills, bordered four fingers wide, which are tied on the legs."

The Natives' basic clothing was utilitarian, but fashionable amongst their culture. Their accouterments followed a similar trend: a few basic items, usually highly decorated. Pouchot described these items in great detail as well.

The men wear a belt about six inches wide, made of wool of different colors, which the Indian women make very neatly, with flaming designs. They hung to this belt their mirrors and their tobacco pouch, which is the skin of an otter, beaver, cat or bird, taken off whole and tanned, into which they put their pipe tobacco and steel. They have also a pocket hanging like a little wallet, for carrying their balls and lead for hunting or war. They carry their mirror and tomahawk upon their hips. They have an ox horn with a shoulder strap for carrying powder. Their knife is hung in a sheath on the neck, and falls upon the breast. They also have a crooked knife or a curved sword, and they make great use of this.

These few items carried by the Natives represent the bare minimum that they needed to fight. Apart from these, natives didn't carry much more. A list of supplies for an Abenaki war party in 1757 correlates with this account, listing only the utilitarian items they needed to fight and survive.



Outer garments consisted of matchcoats, or more commonly for the French-allied tribes, capotes. "The men prefer to wear capotes or a kind of laced coat, with a false cap on the border, the sides held together with buttons, and further adorned with blue, yellow, or red feathers," Natives also included many distinctively French items into their wear. During Peter Kalm's travels through North America in the early 1750's he notes that the Natives allied to the French "had already begun to dress like the French: the same kind of jacket and vest, while on journeys they wore the same red cap or hat. But one could not persuade them to use trousers, for they thought they were a great hindrance in walking." Considering the natives access to Canadian clothing, it is likely that the natives who were fighting in the 1758 campaign that year would have dressed similarly to what Kalm observed.

Although there was not much difference in the types of garments worn by the natives and the Canadians, there were distinct differences in their appearance. The decoration of their clothing as previously described would be one such difference. Natives adorned their bodies as well as their garments. Most contemporary accounts of natives described them as always being painted red, black, and sometimes other colors like green. Other than being painted head to toe, they wore items that they considered decorative. These ornaments are described in a letter dated October 21, 1757 from an anonymous missionary to the Abenaki.

Each part of the head has its distinct ornaments: the nose has its ring: there are also rings for the ears, which are pierced at an early age, and so greatly elongated by the weight with which they have been overloaded that they swing and beat against the shoulders.

The missionary goes on to describe the many "porcelain necklaces" and "silver bracelets" that they wore. A fully adorned Native with all of his finery would have looked overly ornate to a European eye, but according to Pouchot "they regard this property as sacred as their children."

What the witnesses to the natives described is not only the wearing of only utilitarian and basic clothing, but clothing that is distinctively decorated in their own native fashion. It was clothing that is



both culturally fashionable and intimidating to their enemy. As Major Robert Roger's described, "Their military dress has something in it very romantic and terrible..."

### **Neckwear**

*Best:* Silk, linen, cotton neckerchief, sterling silver gorget, or shell gorget.

*Acceptable:* None

*Unacceptable:* Leather neck-stocks.

### **Hats and Caps**

*Best:* Toque, preferably of red wool.

*Acceptable:* Tapaboard, or none.

*Unacceptable:* Fur cap, voyageur cap.

### **Wool hood**

*Best:* Abenaki or Nippissing influenced wool hood, with or without decoration.

*Acceptable:* No hood.

### **Shirts**

*Best:* Hand-stitched white or blue linen or correct period cotton shirt with narrow band cuffs with thread buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links).

*Acceptable:* White or blue linen or correct period cotton shirt with narrow band cuffs with thread buttons or made for sleeve buttons (cuff links) with minor visible machine-stitching.

*Discouraged:* Checked, striped linen, or wool shirts.

*Unacceptable:* Cotton calico or plaid shirts.



## Breachcloth

*Best:* Wool stroud cloth, decorated or not decorated.

*Accepted:* Other wool.

*Unacceptable:* Leather, cotton, linen.

## Legwear

*Best:* Well fit, unadorned or adorned wool Indian leggings, or mitasses with hand woven garters.

*Acceptable:* Well fit, unadorned or adorned leather Indian leggings with hand woven garters.

*Unacceptable:* Gaiters, or baggy wool leggings.

## Footwear

*Best:* Pucker-toe or vamp-toe moccasins.

*Acceptable:* Buckled shoes, or souliers de bouef.

*Unacceptable:* Officer's boots, half boots or; Dyer, Arrow, Minnetonka moccasins, Shoepacks

## Arms

*Best:* French trade guns, Fusil de Chasse.

*Acceptable:* English trade guns, English fowlers.

*Unacceptable:* Blunderbuss, "blanket guns," cut down guns, rifles.

## Side Arms

*Best:* Neck-knives, Boucheron, or sheathed trade knife; Casse-tête or Hatchet, a curved sword, all carried on a simple leather belt or a sash.

*Unacceptable:* Bayonets.

## Shot Bag

*Best:* Quilled shot bag, and quilled slit pouch.

*Discouraged:* Plain shot bag, and plain slit pouch.

*Unacceptable:* Cartridge pouches and boxes, belly boxes.



## **Powder Horn**

*Best:* Native influenced horns.

*Acceptable:* Plain white powder horn slung on a small leather strap.

*Unacceptable:* Filled powder horns.

## **Capotes and Matchcoats**

*Best:* Hand-finished well-fit blue, grey, brown or white wool broadcloth capote with or without a contrasting color hood and buttons. Matchcoats adorned with ribbon

*Acceptable:* Well-fit blue, grey, brown or white wool broadcloth capote with minor visible machine stitching. Matchcoats adorned with ribbon.

*Discouraged:* Blanket coats or capotes from a white-bodied, blue or red striped blanket.

*Unacceptable:* 19th century trapper blanket coats; Blanket shirts.

## **Blanket**

*Best:* Matchcoat

*Acceptable:* 2-3 point check, Dutch, or rose blankets. Sewn Skin robes, and bear skin hides may also be used.

*Discouraged:* Plain white or Hudson Bay blankets.

*Unacceptable:* Civil War grey blankets.



## **Tumplines**

*Acceptable:* Hemp tumpline, moose hair embroidered or plain.

*Discouraged:* Jute, leather tumpline.

*Unacceptable:* Two-strap knapsacks, snapsacks, French haversacks.

## **Canteen**

*Best:* Gourd canteen slung over the shoulder on a hemp cord or leather thong.

*Acceptable:* Glass or ceramic canteen, slung over the shoulder on a hemp cord or leather thong.

*Discouraged:* Leather or tin kidney shaped style canteen.

*Unacceptable:* Wooden cheese-box canteens.

