

# 1759 BATTLE ON SNOWSHOES CANADIAN MILICE GUIDELINES



According to Aide de Camp, Antoine de Bougainville, on November 5, 1758 the Marquis de Montcalm left a party of Canadians along with the guard of regular soldiers at Carillon for the winter. Bougainville wrote, "There remained there also, some sixty Indians, as much for hunting as for scouting, and about the same number of Canadians." By Robert Rogers' journal, "eighty Canadians and Indians pursued us closely," after the Rogers' party sprang their ambush of the French working party on March 7, 1759, across from Lake Champlain from Carillon. On October 8, 1758 Bougainville described the Canadians arriving at Carillon.

*"...950 Canadians, and this detachment is composed of the good kind, almost all voyageurs. One recognizes them easily by their looks, by their size, and because all of them are tattooed on their bodies with figures*

*of plants or animals. The operation is long and painful. The figure is outlined by pricking the skin with a needle and printed in by burning powder in the holes. One would not pass for a man among the Indians of the Far West if he had not had himself tattooed."*

Lieutenant Jean-Baptiste d'Aleynac of the Languedoc regiment described Canadian clothing in his memoirs of his service with the French Army in the defense of Canada.

*"It is true that the Canadians are obliged to go to war to defend the country when it is attacked. Meanwhile, those who remain in the parishes must cultivate the fields of those who are at war for free. Moreover, those who go to war receive a capote, two cotton shirts, a breechcloth, a pair of leggings, a blanket, souleirs d' boeuf, a wooden handled knife, a gun worm, and when they don't have a gun they are given one. The breechcloth is a strap of wool that is passed between the legs in the manner of the Indians and whose two ends*



*are attached to a belt; it is put on without breeches to march more freely in the woods. The leggings are a type of very broad gaiters whose two sides are sewn together, about four fingers from the edge without buttons or buttonholes. This is another native invention. The souliers d' beouf are made entirely different than those in France, they have a sole as thin as the uppers that surrounds the entire foot, to the height of the quarters; then, we sew another smaller a strip of leather upon them which covers the top of the foot; this fashion allows marching more conveniently in the woods and mountains."*

Jean Baptiste d' Aleyrac left a more detailed description of the Canadian capote.

*"The average Canadian hardly wears French clothing, but one species of, capots overlapping in front with lapels. The buttons and collars are of another color. A sash around the capot: simple and impractical clothing."*



The few Canadians posted at Fort Carillon in the winter of 1759 served with few personal comforts beyond the bare essentials. Travelling light, in the manner of Native Americans, they put their native inspired, issued clothing to hard use. Individual milice may well have brought extra *gilet*, *veste*, and *capote* from home on account of the season. These extra layers over their breechcloth, leggings, and a shirt added a little warmth for men well accustomed to Canadian winters.

## 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



## Neckwear

**Best:** Silk, linen, or cotton neckerchief

**Unacceptable:** Leather neck-stocks

## Hats and Caps

**Best:** Knit red yarn *bonnet* or *toque*.

**Unacceptable:** Fur cap, voyageur cap

## Vestes

**Best:** Hand-finished and well-fit, sleeved veste made of blue, red, grey, brown, drab, or light colored woolen cloth.

**Acceptable:** Well fitted sleeved veste made of blue, red, grey, brown, drab, or light-colored woolen cloth with minor visible machine stitching

**Unacceptable:** Extremely long or baggy veste or modern upholstery materials.



## Gilets

**Best:** Hand-finished well-fit, square-cut *gilet* made of red or blue broadcloth or similar material, made with or without sleeves.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit Square-cut *gilet* made of red or blue broadcloth or similar material, with minor visible machine stitching

**Unacceptable:** Extremely long or baggy gilet or modern upholstery materials.

## Breechcloth

**Best:** Undecorated wool breechcloth or *brayet* of red, blue, white wool.

**Discouraged:** breeches

**Unacceptable:** trousers



## Capote

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

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

**Discouraged:** Blanket coat or *capote* from a white-bodied, blue or red striped blanket

**Unacceptable:** 19<sup>th</sup> century trapper blanket coat; Blanket shirt



## Legwear

**Best:** Well-fit, unadorned blue, red, or white wool *mitasse* with plain wool or Native garters.

**Acceptable:** Well-fit white linen gaiters small black leather buttons and leather garters worn in and around the barracks.

**Unacceptable:** Buckskin leggings, gaiters, or baggy wool leggings.

## Footwear

**Best:** Vamp or pucker-toe styled *soulier savage* or moccasins

**Acceptable:** *Soulier du beouf*

**Discouraged:** Half boots or buckled shoes

**Unacceptable:** Modern shoes, boots, or Dyer, Arrow, Minnetonka moccasins, Shoepacks

## Mittens

**Best:** Wool *mitaines*

**Unacceptable:** Modern gloves or mittens

## Arms

**Best:** *Fusil de chasse* or *fusil de traite*

**Acceptable:** French Military Muskets of 1728 or earlier pattern

**Discouraged:** British arms, Anglo-American fowlers

**Unacceptable:** Canoe guns, Blunderbusses, rifles

## Side Arms

**Best:** Sheathed trade knife or *Couteau Boucheron*; Sheathed *casse-tête* or hatchet, all carried on a simple leather belt or a sash.

**Acceptable:** trade knives carried in a neck sheath.

**Discouraged:** Bayonets, swords



## Shot bag

**Best:** Leather slit pouch, simple drawstring leather pouch

**Acceptable:** shoulder slung shot bag

**Discouraged:** Cartridge pouches and boxes, belly boxes

## Powder Horn

**Best:** Empty, plain white powder horn slung on a small leather strap

**Acceptable:** Native influenced horns reflecting Abenaki or Nippissing culture

**Unacceptable:** Filled powder horns

## Canteen

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

**Acceptable:** Leather or tin kidney shaped style canteen

**Discouraged:** Wooden cheese-box canteens

## Knapsacks and Tumplines

**Best:** Hemp tumpline or single strap snapsack

**Acceptable:** Jute or leather tumplines.

**Unacceptable:** two-strap knapsacks.

## Blanket

**Best:** 2-3 point check, Dutch, or rose blankets.  
Bear skin hides may also be used.

**Acceptable:** Plain white or Hudson Bay blankets.

**Unacceptable:** Civil War grey blankets.

