

Guidelines for Native Men's Clothing and Accoutrement:

The basic requirements for an accurate portrayal of a mid-18th century southeastern native man are listed here. Also included are some basic ideas and suggestions for some items that are less essential but effective to add to your "kit" to improve your portrayal. This is **not** intended to be a complete analysis of the material goods of Southeastern Natives during the era, nor an analysis of differences between the native cultures of the Southeast. (although we will mention a few things that might be used to "differentiate" between a Catawba or a Cherokee portrayal). It is merely a starting point for you to build your "kit" from. If you have good period documentation for other clothing and accoutrements, appropriate for your portrayal, please use that as a guideline as well. We welcome documented suggestions for additions to this page.

In our guidelines, we strive to be "common, everyday, and plain" first and foremost. As we believe that this gives the public the best view of what natives of the period looked like. This does not mean that decorative (or decorated) or unusual items are not acceptable. It means that a convoluted excuse or rationale for using an object, including "spoils of war" should be avoided. We also need to remember that there were very few "Chiefs" and "War Leaders" and lots of Indians. As such, the portrayal of the everyday, common, plain Indian is what is most appropriate unless you are asked to portray one of those leaders. Remember, even the "Chiefs" and "War Leaders" only wore their highly decorated "finery" to major occasions such as treaty signings, major parlays, etc.

Basic clothes:

Trade shirt – White, natural, or navy/white checked linen "trade" shirt. Neck and/or wrist ruffles are a dress-up addition. It should reach to approximately mid-thigh, though there are texts and examples that suggest longer shirts are appropriate as well. You may follow tradition and use red ochre or vermilion to "paint" the shirt. If you're going to spend a lot of time in the woods and want to reduce the glow of a white shirt, soak it in tea or a mild sumac leaf bath with a cup of salt, or use a "Natural" linen material rather than bright white to make the shirt in the first place (although, over time this will sun-bleach out and become quite bright also). Don't go crazy with the walnuts though. There doesn't seem to be evidence of native people worrying about blending in; it came naturally 😊

Many sutlers and tailors sell these for a reasonable price for the effort involved in making one, or Beth Gilgun's "Tidings from the 18th Century" has an excellent pattern for a simple shirt. There are also good patterns for 18th century shirts available if you need a paper pattern. Hand sewing visible seams at the neckline and shoulder is recommended. You might want a thinner linen shirt for summer and a heavier, coarse linen for winter wear, as modesty and personal comfort allows.

Cotton began becoming available in the Indian trade towards the mid 1750s but mostly in the form of what was called "Indian Calicoe" and should only be used on a very limited basis and only after investing in your basic kit. 19th century and modern calicoes are not

appropriate for this time period, if you are not sure as to what the difference is please get with an experienced native reenactor to find out before investing in this option..

If you have the body and skin coloring for it, going shirtless is a good alternative, especially in battle scenarios.

Leggings: we highly recommend navy or red wool side seam leggings, with or without some simple silk ribbon decoration. Other colors of wool were available, most notably black and green, but navy/red seems to be most common. Modern native traditions suggest that red leggings are reserved for leaders. If you are going to portray a leader in formal settings, a nicely decorated pair of red leggings would suit.

Brain-tanned buckskin leggings are also acceptable, but are most appropriate for everyday/hunting/battle scenarios, and are also considerably more expensive and difficult to make.

Instructions for leggings, courtesy of Dave Mott, are available [here](#).

There is no clear documentation on the use of center seam leggings in the 18th century. Please use side-seam patterns until further research comes to light.

Breechcloth: at its most basic, a 12-16" wide strip of wool cloth (flannel or broadcloth in modern fabric terminology), the width of the bolt -- usually 56-60" long. You may line it with cotton if wool irritates your skin, but if you full the wool and use a quality material, this is often unnecessary. The 'clout should reach to about mid-thigh and be wide enough to cover what's necessary for modern decency (under your shirt). There's no reason to hem the sides; they'll fray a little and then stop. Instructions are available [here](#).

If you want a nicer look, saved list Stroud 'clouts are available from [Wooded Hamlet Designs](#) and a few other sutlers. You may also use 3/8 - 1/2" silk ribbon to decorate or edge a plain wool 'clout, or put silver ring brooches on it.

Belt/Sash: Leather belts with period buckles were traded to native people and were quite commonly worn. Native women wove sashes from wool yarn, using an oblique weave and often a single color of wool, with white beads to create the color pattern. Fingerwoven sashes are a very expensive item to purchase, so please consult with an experienced native reenactor or do a good bit of research before purchase.

There is little to no documentation to indicate that Inkle Loomed or Card-woven sashes were ever traded to native people by the whites so these should be avoided.

Leg Garters/ties: Like sashes, these can vary from a simple strip of wool cloth or leather to expensive fingerwoven articles. Start simple, and do your homework before purchasing the high ticket items.

Again, there is little to no documentation to indicate that Inkle Loomed or Card-woven garters were ever traded to native people by the whites so these should also be avoided.

Footwear

Center seam pucker-toe deerskin or elk skin moccasins are most appropriate, though shoes appear on gift and trade lists. Barefoot is also completely appropriate year-round, especially in the summer when it's comfortable.

A good moccasin pattern created by Dave Mott is available [here](#), or you can see the well-known "Darry Wood" moccasin instructions on [Native Tech's site](#). Dave's instructions are easier to follow though.

Braintanned deer hide is a first choice, but commercially tanned elk hide can make excellent moccasins, especially if you rough the smooth side with sandpaper or a pumice stone. It would appear that, although elk is thicker than deerskin, the deerskin does tend to wear a bit better than the elk. Buffalo was also available to SE natives in limited quantities, and wears like iron, but it is very difficult to pucker due to the thickness of the leather so it is not recommended. Other moccasin styles are not clearly documented, so if you choose to use them, please be prepared to document their use in the time period and cultural group.

If using shoes, you should purchase a mid 18th c. shoe and either use buckles or lace them up. [Fugawee](#) make a very affordable (though not cheap) shoe that will last you for years. They run a little large and wide in many people's experience, so talk to the company before purchasing.

Outerwear:

Items such as blankets, cloth wraps/mantles known as matchcoats, waistcoats, and even full dress coats were traded or given to native people. The most common of these was the matchcoat. Luckily, this can also be one of the less expensive items as well.

Matchcoat: The simplest outerwear used by almost all native people was a blanket or matchcoat. A full-width piece of Stroud, duffel, or their modern equivalents that is as long as the person is tall (about two yards) makes an excellent matchcoat. You may hem the edges, let them fray, or bind them with wool tape or silk ribbon. Decoration with silk ribbon near the ends is one way to dress up as well. Wool colors most common were dark blue, red, and black, in that order. Ribbon/tape appeared in many different colors, but yellow, gold, red, and blue seem to be most common. One source for appropriate period ribbons/tapes is [Wooded Hamlet Designs](#). You can see instructions for matchcoat designs [here](#).

***Hint:** When you buy cloth for leggings and/or breechcloth, buy 3-1/3 or 3-1/2 yards and you'll have a matchcoat, 'clout, and leggings. Wash your wool in warm water and tumble*

it very briefly in a dryer after it has dripped dry to "full" it before you cut it or add ribbon decoration.

Hair:

Hair style varies by cultural group and age. Period accounts suggest that young men had very specific hairstyles that were shaved on the sides, leaving a scalp lock or hair on just the top of the head. Older men may have worn their hair long rather than in a young man's style. One can also find accounts of "bowl-cuts" (reminiscent of Moe on the Three Stooges).

Not all people have a lifestyle that will allow a totally or partially shaved head, so this is an area to make your own decision on. Slicking your hair back can both darken it and make it look more period, or you can shave the whole head and use a prosthetic (glue-on) scalplock. Check with one of the experienced native reenactors for sources for high-quality prosthetic scalplocks.

Hair decoration could consist of feathers tied in the hair, tubes made of river cane slipped on a lock of hair, fingerwoven hair fobs, and other feather/fur decorative items. Long porcupine and deer-hair Plains-style roaches and war bonnets are not documented in the period, so are not acceptable.

Headwear: Many early to mid century accounts state that native people went bareheaded all the time, but by the mid-18th century, it is clear that native people in the SE started wearing some sort of cloth on their heads, often called a "turban". It is not clear when this began or became widespread, but use of a turban or head cloth is acceptable. Use a solid colored silk or wool scarf, though cotton or linen may be substituted, as may documentable patterns.

Also appearing on some trade and gift lists on occasion are tricorn "laced" hats. We assume these were worn as traded. Fewer of these uncommon items is better, but may be appropriate sometimes.

Physical adornment:

Physical Adornment consists of jewelry and tattoos. Period accounts list ear splitting and piercing, nose rings, and tattoos as common among southeastern native men. For the Catawba, some accounts indicate that women wore nose rings as well. In village council or treaty event scenarios, jewelry would have been common. In a battle reenactment or hunting situation, it would have been simple and plain.

Jewelry: Ear splitting is probably not a good solution for most people, but ear rings of the closed-bottom ball and cone type are very common in 18th century archaeological sites. Many early examples are shorter and wider than modern reproductions. The "wheel" type earring is a late century item, (regardless of what you saw in Last of the Mohicans) and should not be worn for our time period.

Strands of beads, documentable to the period, are common for dress wear. "Pound" beads (approx 6/0 or 8/0) in white, dark blue, light blue, red, and black were common, though other colors show up as well. Also mentioned on period trade lists are "barleycorn" beads (red, blue, black and white) and wampum. Strands of beads are inexpensive additions to your outfit although you should remember that they would not likely wear many on a day-to day basis (or in a war scenario).

Brass welding rod bent into wrist bracelets are a very cheap method of dressing up. Round silver ring brooches are inexpensive, and were often used as "change" in trades. Other silver or brass items such as gorgets, pins, arm and wrist bands, etc. are high cost items that should be carefully researched and generally only worn for "formal" occasions.

Another item that appears regularly on period trade lists are rings. The lists regularly include brass rings, silver rings, brass-mounted stone rings and silver-mounted stone rings.

Tattoos are a personal decision, but were very common. This is a permanent thing, so research a period tattoo very carefully before getting one, or experiment with various temporary solutions. Tattoos of the period were blue-black or black and generally involved lines, geometric shapes, or stylized animal figures. Some temporary options are surgical markers (if you can find black) and "Sharpie" permanent markers (in black). Be sure to clean the area with rubbing alcohol before applying to remove body oils that will cause the markers to "bleed out" and not give you sharp lines.

Personal items:

Personal items such as pipes and tobacco, combs, small trade items, etc. appear regularly in accounts and lists from the period. These small, usually low cost items can be the added "bang" for little buck. Do research before you buy, even if inexpensive.