

What is a Capote?

A capote is a hooded jacket, made from a Hudson Bay Company (HBC) blanket. It was a popular clothing item for those in the fur trade.

The blankets were graded on a point system from 1-6 points. Blankets went up in size based on the points, a one-point blanket was 2'8" in length. A three-point blanket was most common in size. Each point was worth the equivalent of one "Made Beaver."

A Made Beaver was one beaver pelt in excellent quality, typically a winter Beaver, that was skinned and tanned with no holes. Multiple, lesser quality, pelts would have been combined to equal one Made Beaver.

Métis women turned the HBC blankets into capotes. They would typically go to the knees and flare out, to allow for greater movement. They were tied together with a sash and often had a button on the shoulder to keep the top closed. Blue was the most common color for Métis capotes.

Gradually the capote transitioned away from being a symbol of the voyageurs to being a cultural unity for the Métis, much like the sash.

North Island Métis (NIMA) publishes a monthly newsletter.

Go to NIMA's website (www.nimetus.com/newsletters) to read current and past newsletters.

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North Island Métis

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Capote



Métis Capotes

While the original capotes would have had a blanket stitch, the Métis style would have been more tailored and sewn together with a running back stitch. The running back stitch would help keep the cold air out and give the coat a trimmer look. While nowadays it is most common to pick a thread color that matches, it would have been more common to have a contrasting thread color.

The commonly recognized white blanket with colored stripes was worn less commonly as they dirtied easily. These capotes were more frequently worn for special occasions.



History of Tufting

Toon zhilay kishka – put on your jacket

La lenn – yarn

Koovaart – blanket

Bleu – blue

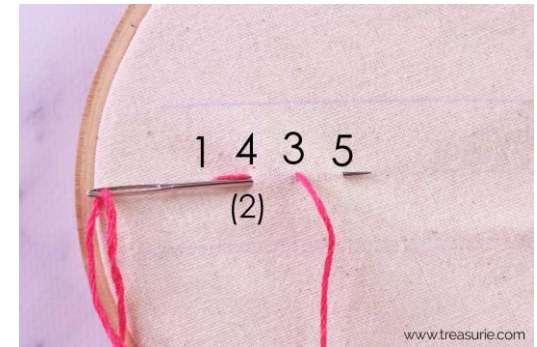
Kishitew – warmth

Aen bwatoon – button

Aen kaastor – beaver



McCord Stuart Museum



www.treasurie.com (running back-stitch)

Getting Started

- A wool blanket or Melton
- Yarn/embroidery floss or sinew
- Tapestry needle
- Pattern



McCord Stuart Museum