

Documentation on Mitasses and Brayets

The use of breechcloths and leggings took on common use by the Canadiens and are mentioned as early as the 1650s. In the 1740s and 50s they were issued to the Canadian militia and in 1755 they even tried to issue them to soldiers from France.

“with only their shirts on, wearing no breeches and no underpants during the summer in order to alleviate the heat” - Bishop Saint-Vallier, 1719, answered the complaint of priests, who complained of their parishioners going to work in the fields

“During their travels across Canada, the French [Canadiens] dress as the Indians; they do not wear breeches.” – Peter Kalm 1749

“1 breechcloth, 1 pair of leggings”-Bourlamaque, 1750’s, list of supplies issued to Canadian militia.

“1 pair of wool leggings, 1 breechcloth”- Antoine Bougainville, 1750’s, list of supplies issued to Canadian militia.

“Those who go to war receive a capot, two cotton shirts, one breechclout, one pair of leggings, on blanket, one pair of souliers de boeuf, a wood-handled knife, a worm and a musket when they do not bring any. The breechclout is a piece of broadcloth draped between the thighs in the Native manner and with the two ends held by a belt. One wears it without breeches to walk more easily in the woods.” - d’Aleyrac, 1755-60

“The mitasses are some kind of very wide gaiters with the two sides sewn together approximately four fingers from the edge with no buttons or buttonholes. - d’Aleyrac, 1755-60

“...& about sixty militiamen with a kerchief on their heads and wearing shirts and their backsides bare in the Canadian style.” - Pierre Pouchot , 1755-60

“The brahier (brayet or breechclout) is a piece of deerhide or broadcloth that Europeans give them, it is a quarter or third (of an ell) of broadcloth that men pass between their legs as if they were riding a horse; this piece of cloth passes on a thong tied around the hips, the two ends hanging in front and in the back, the front is longer than the back.”

-J.C. Bonin, 1750’s.

“What are called mitasses or mitassonnes in Native language are some kind of stockings that Canadiens make with two half-ells of broadcloth, or one ell of molleton cut in two, for each leg and sewn the length of the leg and the width of half the width of the calf so that the leg can get in, with an excess of four or five inches wide that is left free along the side of the leg, the bottom can be put in the shoe and the legging can be held in place with a garter tied above the calf. When one wants to be more fancy, one trims these with straight or wolfe-tooth pattern, along the edge.” -J.C. Bonin, 1750’s.

“To this end, I laid aside my English clothes, and covered myself only with a cloth, passed about the middle; a shirt, hanging loose; a molleton , or blanket coat; and a large, red, milled worsted cap.” - Alexander Henry, 1761, disguising himself as a Canadian voyager.

“It is not uncommon to see a Frenchman with Indian shoes and stockings, without breeches, wearing a strip of woolen cloth to cover what decency requires him to conceal.” – Jonathan Carver in Detroit. 1766