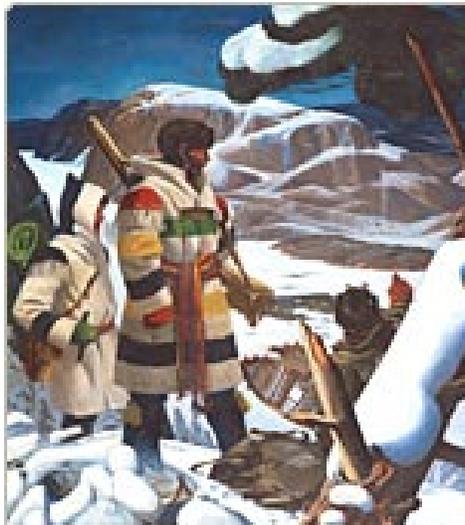


Capote¹

The Métis man's winter attire was the capote; a thigh length coat with full length sleeves which could come with or without a hood or cape. Most had small shoulder decorations made of red stroud. To keep the coat closed there were both thongs and buttons or a sash. The colour and style of wearing the capote and sash were indications of the cultural origin of the wearer. If the sash was worn under the capote, the wearer was Métis; if worn over, the wearer was of French Canadian descent. The blue capote was most popular with the Catholic Métis whereas Protestant Métis purchased 100% of the white capotes. The Hudson's Bay Company also sold a gray capote and this style was purchased by both the Catholic Métis (83% of sales) and Protestant Europeans (17% of sales). Capotes were made of both leather and cloth. Initially the Métis decorated the skin coats with painted designs. This gave way to quillwork and beaded floral patterns as well as intricate silk embroidery called "floss" work.

Métis men often wore capotes—coats made from thick, wool Hudson's Bay blankets and tied with a colorful hand-woven sash. They wore leggings, and their moccasins often were beaded with elegant designs. Painting by E. S. Paxson, 1905, MHS Museum.



R.M. Ballantyne, Clerk and Chief Trader George Barnston Arrive at Tadoussac, Feb. 6, 1846. Painting by Charles F. Comfort, 1941.

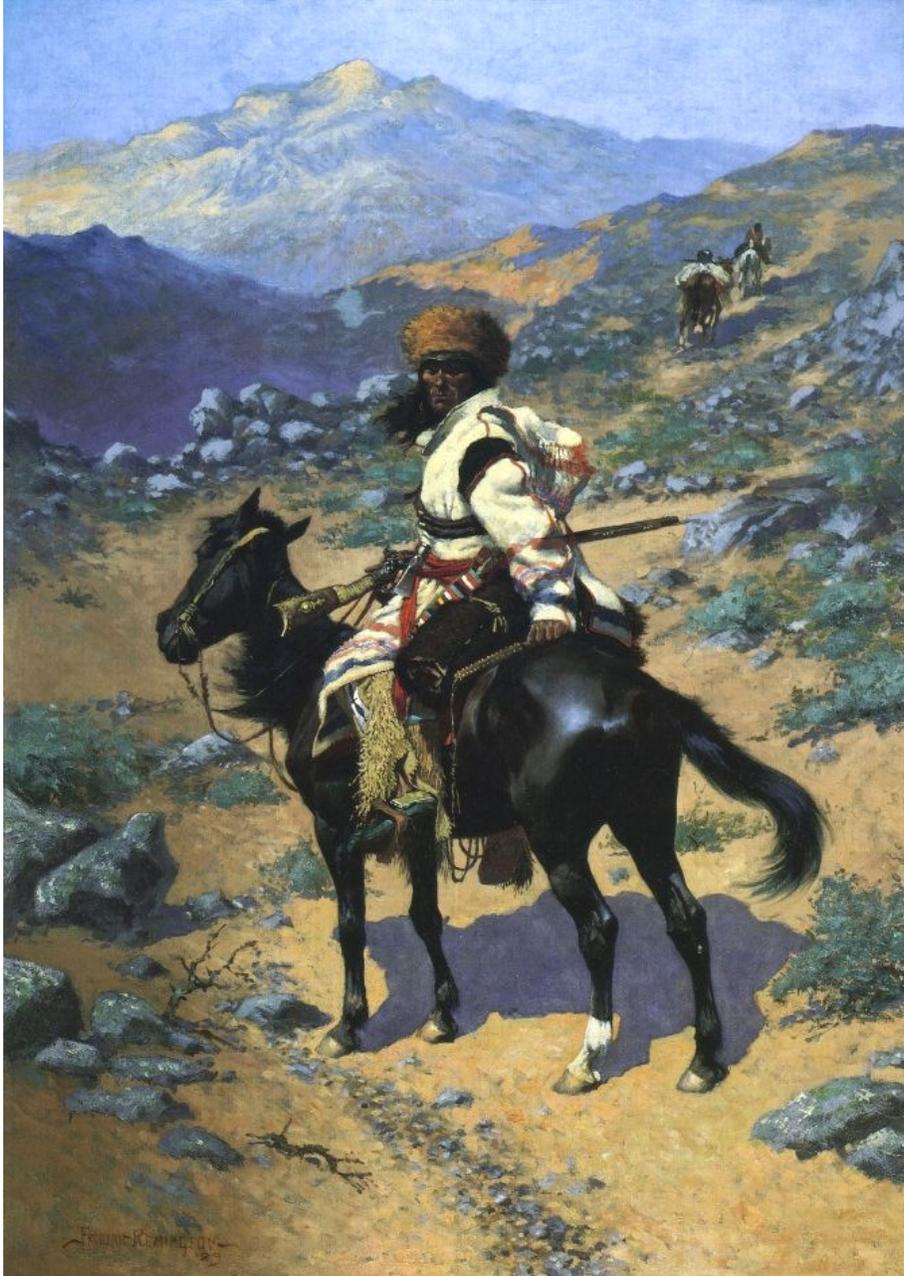
¹ Portions reprinted from L. J. Barkwell, L. Dorion and A. Hourie (Eds.) *Metis Legacy: Michif Culture, Folkways and Heritage*. Saskatoon: Pemmican Publications and Gabriel Dumont Institute, 2006: 109.



Frederic Remington "The Half Breed" 1902



Free Trappers, 1911, C. M. Russell, MHS Museum.

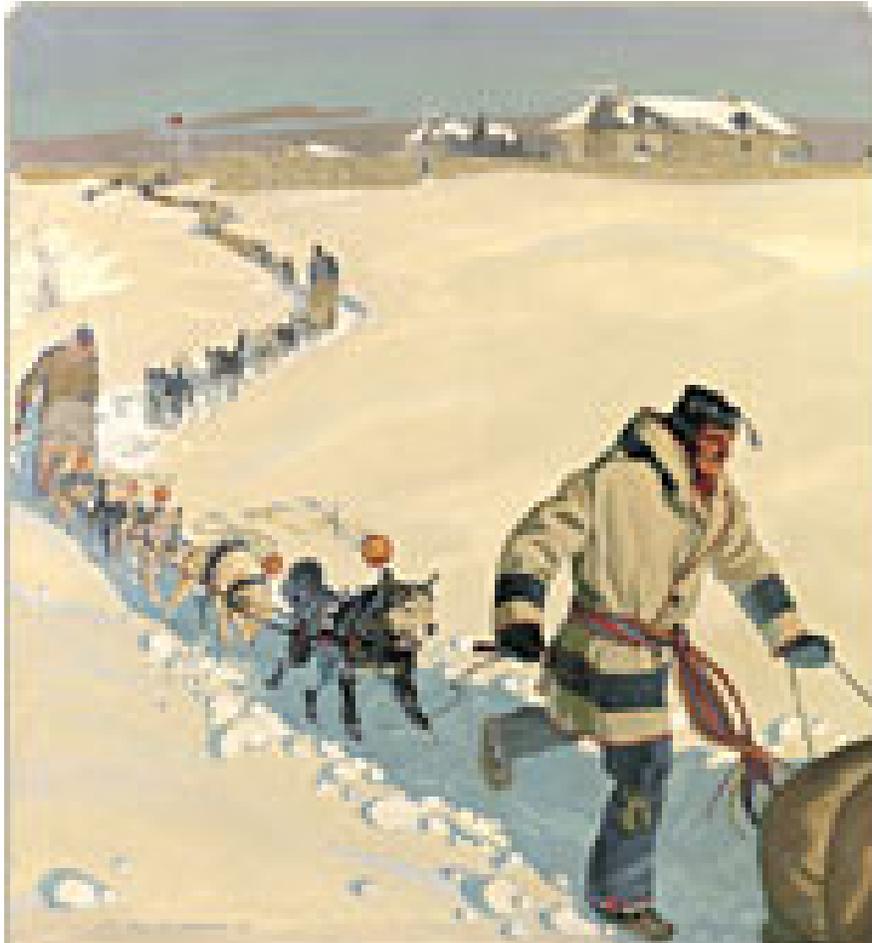


Frederic Remington, "An Indian Trapper"

Hudson's Bay Blankets:

Hudson's Bay Point Blankets were popular trade goods and often used to make capotes. They were manufactured in the late 1770s at Oxfordshire, England. There were also mills at Leeds and Manchester. The indigo blue lines woven into the side of each blanket identified the "points". These were intended to make known the size and weight of the blanket. A full point measured 5½ inches and ½ point measured half that length. The standard for a pair of 1-point blankets measured 2 feet 8 inches wide, eight feet in length

and weighed 3lbs. 1oz. each. By 1929, the standard blanket was white with single broad stripes at each end. Other popular colours were red and green. The so-called Chief's Blankets were white blankets with stripes of indigo, green, red and yellow at each end. These were introduced in the early 1800s and are the usual ones sold in Hudson's Bay stores today. Point blankets were also used as coats both premade as sold by the HBC or recut from a blanket. Metis and Plains Indians often wore blankets made into coats.



Last Dog Train Leaving Fort Garry, 1909 by Charles F. Comfort 1927.



Frederic Remington "A Half Breed" 1901.



Compiled by Lawrence Barkwell
Coordinator of Metis Heritage and History Research
Louis Riel Institute