

Iti Fabussa

Choctaw Cold-Weather Clothes

As we get into shorter fall days, we know that colder weather will probably be coming soon. In preparation, we check out our furnaces and pull our winter coats out of storage. During this time of year, our Choctaw ancestors, many generations ago, also prepared themselves for colder weather. Part of this involved getting out their winter clothes.



Figure 1

The two images above were created by the Choctaw Nation Historic Preservation Department to show the cold weather wear that would have been worn by Choctaw men and women in the late 1600s. All of the clothes and other items that are shown would

have been made by Choctaw people from natural materials, and are a small testament to the knowledge, skill, and creativity that our ancestors put into their daily lives.

The Choctaw woman (Figure 1) is depicted wearing a warm cape made of soft turkey breast feathers attached to a net liner. This article of clothing was known as “kasmu” in the Choctaw language. Around her waste is a skirt, or “vlhkuna”, made of twinned fiber that was processed from the inner bark of the mulberry tree. Women’s style moccasins, “tvlhko shulush”, made of braintan deer hide protect her feet and lower legs. Her necklace, “oksup inuchi”, is made of whelk shell beads from the Gulf Coast. She is carrying a pack basket, “kishi”, made of split river cane, supported by a trump line across her forehead. Her facial tattoos, “in chuwa”, made with pine soot, were worn as marks of beauty.

The Choctaw man (Figure 2) is pictured

wearing a painted robe, “anchi”, made from a softly tanned fur-on bison hide. A buckskin breechcloth, “apokshiana”,

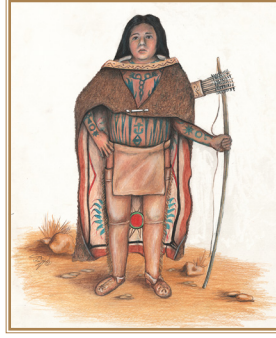


Figure 2

hangs from his waist, and buckskin leggings protect his legs. He wears short, male-style moccasins, “tvlhko shulush”, on his feet. His tattoos, “in chuwa”, earned by valor on the battlefield, distinguish him as a successful warrior and a respected man in Choctaw society. He wears his hair long. This set Choctaw men apart from the men of other Southeastern Tribes of the time, who kept their hair short or shaved. He carries a quiver, “oski naki ailhto”, full of arrows and a bow, “iti shibata”, for the fall deer hunt.