



Guidelines for Basic Equipment used in Native Portrayals

This section is somewhat cross-gender, though women will likely not need to worry about the weapons and accoutrement section.

Food & Cooking Gear

Fire starting kit: flint, steel, tinder, and something to transport it in such as a leather bag.

Kettle(s) tin or brass - various sizes appear on trade lists, but not small "corn boilers" or "muckets". For a stationary camp representing a "town" setting, a limited number of cast iron items may be used.

Personal eating utensils: Bowls, plates or trenchers made of wood, tin, or pottery

Spoons made of wood, pewter, or silver.

Knife to prepare food or to eat with. You may already be wearing one.

Drinking vessel or noggin

Canteen, jug, or water gourd. While many accounts suggest that water wasn't carried, modern requirements win out in this case. Period bottles are more fragile, but acceptable, as are small kegs for group water storage. A large water gourd can be shared by an entire camp, and is relatively easy to make, if a little fragile to transport.

Ad-hoc cooking utensils: Natives made use of stone and other natural items to assist in food preparation. You may want to bring some of these along with you to ensure they are clean and useful. Cooking stones, river cane skewers for meat, wooden tripods for using over the fire, etc. are all important to have to make camp look lived in.

Pack and Bedding

The most basic pack method is a bed/blanket roll using a tumpline. Twined pack bags are also very well documented – see the von Reck images for ideas. For permanent camps, baskets and large gourd containers are good options. .

Woolen Blanket(s) appropriate to era.

Sleeping hide(s) (optional) a buffalo or bear hide or a couple of deer hides are good to have to sit and sleep on. They can be expensive or time consuming to tan yourself, so save them for after you've gotten most of your other material together.

Tumpline (Burden Strap) Twined tumplines, burden straps or hoppus were commonly used. Leather straps with either cordage or leather ties appear in collections and accounts from the period. Either are fine for our portrayals.

Small twined or leather bags for storage of your stuff when not rolled up in your bedroll.

Shelter and groundcloth: When you need a shelter, usually at an event versus a trek, we suggest a lean to made from treated sail, tarp, or oilskin shared among group or individuals. We realize that peeling chestnut, cypress or poplar bark isn't practical for events. Canvas used as a modern alternative is acceptable until better solutions exist. Please develop the most accurate lean-to style you can.

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. Be sure to do your research before you buy, even if the item is inexpensive.

Sewing kit: needles, thread, scissors, leather, various materials

Mirror, comb, paint kit

Period pipe and tobacco Period pipes could be native made or traded. Styles are variable, and trade pipes are very inexpensive. In our organization, we allow no modern cigarettes in camp/during events.. If you find yourself in need of a pipe, see a member; we can probably help.

Period gaming pieces such as gambling sticks, chunky stones, or ballsticks/ball can help to pass the time.

Weapons and Accoutrement

These are necessary for battle reenactment and hunting scenarios, but not needed for daily life sort of events, though a knife or hawk are useful if eating or demonstrating many skills.

Gun: The trade gun produced for the deerskin trade was the most common gun used by natives. Without getting into a lot of detail, the .58-62 caliber English and French smoothbore trade guns had walnut stocks and either brass or iron fittings, and are an excellent choice for a native portrayal. Rifled guns show up in some accounts, but were likely not very common. This is a very expensive item; possibly the most expensive item in your kit, so do your research first and remember that you can have an early gun at a late century event, but not a late century gun at an early century event.

Pistols were traded and given to native people. Do your research here as well. Some events discourage the use of pistols during live fire demonstrations, so don't select a pistol as your primary weapon.

Bow and accoutrement: Archery was still alive among native people during this time, but it is difficult to use a bow in a battle reenactment. If you have a period bow, arrows, and other gear, please feel free to bring it to discuss with the public or to private trekking type events.

Knives: the "scalping knife" was the most common knife on trade lists. This would have been a simple belt or neck knife with a half or full tang and a wooden handle, in what was commonly called "French" or "British" style blades. Many sutlers sell these knives. The sheath for a belt knife can be very simple, consisting of deer hide lined with rawhide. Highly decorated neck knife sheaths can cost hundreds of dollars, so make sure you purchase an appropriate item if you want to go this route.

Folding knives with brass and bone or horn handles, along with wooden handled "penny" knives show up regularly on trade lists, and are handy to have in your shooting bag.

Axes The round poll "tomahawk" and pipe hawk are most commonly found, though spike hawks appear in some images and descriptions. An inexpensive forged throwing hawk is a good starter that will last you for years. For safety reasons, you should make a simple blade cover before tucking it in your belt or sash.

Larger felling or "squaw" axes are appropriate for using to collect firewood. It's very handy to have one in camp.

Bag: Native people made small open bags of twined cordage, wool, deerskin, or cased animal skins. These can be time consuming to make or expensive to buy; consult a member or do considerable research before you invest. These are handy to have whether in a battle/hunting situation or not, as you won't have any pockets. Many events require a bag with a flap to keep cartridges in. A basic "white man" single compartment shooting bag will work fine. There is considerable discussion about whether or not more ornate twined or other decorated bags were used for shooting bags; please do your research and make an informed decision.

Horn: Even though you'll be required to use cartridges during battle reenactments, a horn is a necessity. Start with a simple white horn. Scrimshaw with a native provenance or traditional pattern can be a fun thing to do around the campfire, but is not necessary. A simple deerskin

strap will serve you well with a horn, or you may make or purchase a twined or fingerwoven one from wool and/or natural twine. Research patterns before investing time and money.

Shooting supplies: You should have the basic equipment necessary to keep your firearm safe and efficient. These supplies include: forged screwdriver and vent pick, wire worm, tow linen, cleaning/shooting patches, and a small container of grease.

Craft-related items:

There is much more to 18th century native life than warfare. Tools and materials to use for making native goods are a great idea; please think of the context the event is set when deciding what to bring to work with.

Modern Items

There are some things needed for events that may or may not have analogs in the 18th century. Unless you can find the proper period version of something, items like medications, shaving kits, personal hygiene items, etc. , should be stored in period containers whenever possible, and kept out of sight. If you must keep your cell phone and keys in camp, please keep them out of sight in some appropriate manner.