



# Lure Crafts

## Winter Moccasins

### Book 2: Canvas Uppers



**Note:** This booklet is a continuation of a larger moccasin making series. For all other publications in this series, please see our website at [lureofthenorth.com](http://lureofthenorth.com). Published instructional booklets can be found under "Info Hub" in the main navigation menu.

## Booklets in the Winter Moccasins Series

**Book 1:** Lowers;

**Book 2:** Tube-style canvas uppers (this booklet);

**Book 3:** Wrap-style uppers using boar, deer or other buckskin;

**Note 1 - Acknowledgements:** The original impetus for these instructions came from Garret and Alexandra Conover's excellent book "A Snow Walker's Companion". They are an inspiration in this field.

**Note 2 – Lure Moccasin Making Kits:** These instructions are intended to be accompanied by our Moccasin Making Kit, which is available through the “Store” section of our website at: <http://lureofthenorth.com>. Of course, you can also gather all materials yourself and simply use these instructions as a guide, modifying to suit your requirements.

**Note 3 - Distribution:** Feel free to distribute these instructions to anyone you please, with the requirement that this package be distributed in its entirety with no modifications whatsoever. Thanks!

**Note 4 – Feedback and Further Help:** Feedback is welcomed to improve clarity in future editions. For even more assistance you might consider taking a moccasin making workshop with us. These workshops are run throughout Ontario, and includes hands-on instructions and all materials. Again, check the website for more details and a current schedule.

**Our Philosophy:** This booklet describes our understanding of a traditional craft – these skills and this knowledge has traditionally been handed down from person to person and now we are attempting to do the same. We are happy to have the opportunity to share this knowledge with you, however, if you use these instructions and find them helpful, please give credit where it is due. We have worked hard to produce this package and would appreciate any acknowledgements given. Thank you.

- The Lure Team, Kielyn & Dave Marrone

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<http://lureofthenorth.com>

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## 0.0 About the Canvas, Tube-Style Uppers

The canvas, tube-style upper is the classic upper style described in the Conover's "A Snow Walker's Companion", and probably the style most often seen on winter moccasins these days. In this design the upper is sewn into a tube, and pulled on over the foot and calf just like a modern boot.

Canvas is a fantastic option for uppers as it is:

- economical;
- lightweight;
- durable;
- breathable;
- practically wind-proof;
- quick-drying; and
- easy to customize with the use of ribbon and/ or fur.



*Illustration 1: A typical wrap-style upper with decorative ribbon*

However, being a woven fabric, it does require finished edges, which are most easily done with a sewing machine, and it is less traditional than buckskin uppers. For those that want to make their moccasins in the field without a sewing machine, want a more traditional product, or simply prefer the look of a wrap-around style upper, please see the third booklet in this series entitled "Boarskin Uppers"



*Illustration 2: A bevy of canvas-upper winter moccasins*

# 1.0 Getting Prepared

## 1.1 Material Requirements

Canvas, “tube-style” uppers require the following materials:



*Illustration 3: All the materials needed to make the finished upper.*

- A completed pair of moccasin lowers (see booklet 1 in this series);
- 6 - 8 sq ft of tight-weave, 100% cotton canvas for uppers (or other suitable tightly woven, breathable material. A hard-finish wool could be very nice);
- OPT : 2 x 1" x 2.25' decorative ribbons;
- 2 x 1" x 2.25', light cotton tape for binding bottom edge of canvas;
- 2 x 1/2" x 3.5' light cotton webbing used as upper ties, ends sealed with beeswax;
- 2 x 1/2" x 9' light cotton webbing uses as wrap-around ties, ends sealed w/ beeswax;
- Artificial sinew – enough for project, plus extra for repair kit;
- 2x “Glover's Needles” (aka. “Triangular Needles” or “Leather Needles”);

## 1.2 Tool Requirements

- A regular household sewing machine with regular thread and denim needle;
- pins;
- scissors;
- measuring tape;
- ruler;
- paper for resizing pattern;
- large safety pin;

## 1.3 Insulating Layers

You should have all your insulating layers on hand to properly size your uppers. Insulating layers are covered in more detail in booklet 1 of this series.



## 2.0 Measure and Cut your Uppers

The general shape of the canvas upper can be seen in the illustration at right (a larger version is supplied in the appendix at the back of this booklet). This pattern should be used as a guide to shape only, rather than as a strict pattern to be traced. Instead you will take measurements from your completed moccasin bottoms and your body and create a custom pattern directly on your canvas. The first measurement "A" (and "A<sub>1</sub>") is taken from your completed moccasins. The remaining two measurements "H" and "C" (and "C<sub>1</sub>") are taken from your body, while wearing all insulating layers you intend to have on in your moccasins.

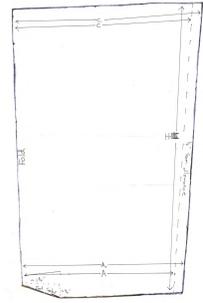


Illustration 4:  
Approximate shape

### The Three Key Measurements



Illustration 5: Ankle  
Measurement



Illustration 6: Calf Measurement



Illustration 7: Height

1. Measure the distance around the ankle opening of your moccasin lowers. Start at the heel seam and continue in a circle all the way around. Follow a straight line across the tongue of the moccasin, and finish up back at the heel seam. Try not to stretch the deerskin as you take your measurement. Divide this measurement in half to arrive at measurement "A" on the pattern.
  - a) Add 1/2" to measurement A. This is "A<sub>1</sub>".
  - b) **Note:** It is quite likely your two moccasin ankles will be different sizes (this is the reality of handcrafts, and not an issue). This means that each moccasin will have an upper created specifically for it. Take each different "A" measurement and create a custom upper. Be sure to identify your lower and upper pairings so that you can match them up correctly when it comes time to join the pieces.
2. Fold your piece of canvas in half and pin to ensure it does not move while cutting. Draw a straight line starting at the fold and ending at distance "A<sub>1</sub>". Also put a mark at point "A" (1/2" shy of "A<sub>1</sub>"). **Note:** This can be a straight line for now. The triangular cut-out labelled "foot contour" can be removed later.
3. **While wearing your insulating layers** (but without the insole), measure the height of your lower leg, from the top of your moccasin lower to the desired top of your finished moccasin (usually just above the calf). Add 1 1/2" to this measurement. This is "H" on your pattern.
4. Measure and plot distance H on the "Fold" side of your pattern (**Note:** for clarity due to the "foot contour" this is shown on the "Seam" side of your pattern, but works best to plot on the

- "fold" side for now).
5. **Still wearing your insulating layers** measure a comfortable diameter around the widest part of your calf. This should be comfortably loose around your insulating layers to allow you to pull your finished moccasin on and off. The best way to ensure a good final fit, is to form the measuring tape into a loop of estimated diameter and try pulling it on and off your foot. It should go on easily without being sloppy. Once you have settled on a comfortable diameter, divide this measurement in half to arrive at measurement "C". Add 1/2" to this for "C<sub>1</sub>".
  6. Plot measurement "C<sub>1</sub>" at the top of the pattern, parallel to "A" and "A<sub>1</sub>". Also put a tick at "C" (1/2" shy of "C<sub>1</sub>"). Draw a line to connect points "C" and "A", and a second, parallel line to connect "A<sub>1</sub>" and "C<sub>1</sub>".
  7. You're nearly finished pattern should now look like the template provided at the back of this booklet. Remember it should be plotted on a fold of canvas that runs the length of your pattern. In nearly all cases, it will have a taper, with the calf (or top) of your upper being wider than the ankle (or bottom).
  8. Cut your pattern.
  9. Draw the small "Foot Contour" seen in the template. On an averaged size upper, this should be about 1 1/2" wide and 3/4" tall. Snip this small triangle of material off.
  10. Unpin, and unfold. Your finished, cut upper, should be twice the width of your pattern piece and fit comfortably around your calf.
  11. Repeat for the second upper. **Remember:** If you have significant ( $> 1/2"$ ) differences in the ankle openings of your moccasin lowers, you will be creating two slightly different uppers, and should discreetly label them as such so they can be joined to their proper pair later.

### 3.0 Decorate

In this step you will pin on the decorative portions of the gaiter. The central ribbon is entirely optional (and may be replaced or supplemented by fur, leather fringe, etc). The lower bias tape is somewhat optional, but is highly recommended as a way to make a professional-looking finish to the bottom of your moccasin. The purpose of the lower bias tape is to finish the open canvas seam here to ensure it does not fray. You could accomplish this by 'over-casting' with a regular sewing machine, or using a Serger, but the bias tape does a really nice job.

1. Cut bias tape long enough to span bottom (ankle) edge of unfolded canvas;
2. Pin the bottom bias tape in place:
  - a) Fold the bias tape in half over the bottom edge of the canvas and pin.
  - b) Because the canvas is not straight at its bottom edge (having a dip at the foot contour) you are trying to force the bias tape into a line it would not naturally take... use care and lots of pins here to force the bias tape into following smooth curves along the bottom edge of the canvas.



*Illustration 8: A properly pinned upper*

- c) Ensure you have folded the bias tape fully over the edge of the fabric, so that when you sew, your stitches will bite into lots of canvas. Take your time. If your bias tape is only over a tiny edge of canvas, then the canvas will fray and your bias tape will pull off.

3. Pin the upper decorative ribbon in place approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  -  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way up the canvas (depending on aesthetic preference). This should be on the "right" side of your canvas (ie. the side without all the pen or pencil marks placed previously).
  - a) Fold the canvas in half and mark on both halves of the canvas where you intend the ribbon to meet.
  - b) Because the ribbon is following a straight line, fewer pins are required.
  - c) After pinning the ribbon, fold the canvas in half again and double check that the ribbon will meet itself properly once you sew your canvas into a tube, otherwise this will be a visible cosmetic flaw at the back of your moccasin later where these ribbons do not meet each other.
4. Using your sewing machine on a straight stitch, sew the lower bias tape onto each of your gaiters.
5. Again with the sewing machine on a straight stitch, sew down the upper decorative ribbon.

## 4.0 Complete the Tube

1. Fold you gaiters inside-out, along the pattern's original fold line. Pin in this position.
2. Using a straight stitch, sew along the first (inside) of the two parallel lines that you created in Section 2 (Ie. Line AC). Sew this seam completely from one end of the moccasin to the other.
3. Using a tight, wide zig-zag stitch, over-cast the open edge of the canvas (Ie. Line A<sub>1</sub>C<sub>1</sub>).

Your standard gaiter is now a decorated tube. All that remains is to create a tunnel for your cotton ties and sew in 'button holes' for these ties to emerge from.



*Illustration 9: A finished tube, just resting on the lower. Note: the upper tunnel has not yet been completed*

## 4.1 Create the Upper Tunnel

It is important that this section occurs after the moccasin has been sewn into a tube (which you did in the previous section). If done correctly you will have a continuous upper tunnel which goes all the way around the moccasin. Intuitively, many prefer to do this step earlier, but you will end up cutting this tunnel in half when you sew your tube seam if done this way.

As this tunnel is formed right at the mouth of your tube, you should have no issue getting this to work on most any sewing machine.

1. **Important:** If you know how to sew button holes with a sewing machine, now would be a good time to do this (see step 4). If you would rather hand-sew your button holes, this will be done slightly later.
2. Fold ~ 1" – 1 ½" of the top of the canvas down inside the gaiter and pin in place.
  - a) This will be the width of the tunnel through which you will run your upper tie. I most

commonly use 1" wide cotton ribbon as an upper tie, and thus create a 1 ¼" fold to properly accommodate both the seam and the forthcoming ribbon.

- b) If you want a taller moccasin, you will make a narrower tunnel... if your moccasin is too tall, you can fine tune the height here by making a larger upper fold.
3. Using a zig-zag stitch, sew all the way around the edge of the tunnel.
4. Cut two button holes ~ ¾" to 1" tall in the front of your gaiter approximately 2" off centre. Hand sew these button holes using your sinew, a regular needle and the whip stitch. A 'button-hole' or 'blanket-stitch' can be used here to slightly nicer effect, but in the interest of simplicity the whip stitch will work just fine. *Sewing your button holes is necessary in the canvas to prevent fraying.*
5. Thread your upper ties!
  - a) Use a large safety pin ('blanket pin') to thread your upper ties through your newly created tunnel. If you are using cotton ties as I usually do, the best way to seal the edge is by dipping it in beeswax (Lure kits come with pre-waxed ties). If you are using a synthetic tie, you can seal the edge by melting it together.



*Illustration 10: The finished button holes*

Your uppers are now complete. You are in the home stretch. Put the upper on... slip your lowers back on, and strut your stuff. Resist the urge to duct tape the two parts together and go for a walk – it will come soon enough!

## 5.0 Final Steps

### 5.1 Add Lacing Tab to Back of Lower

Though your moccasins already have an upper tie, we like to further secure them with full wrap-around lacing for full days out in the bush. This lacing is removable if you are only using your moccasins for short forays around camp and prefer to just have the upper ties.

1. Cut a rectangle of deerskin ~ 1" x 1 ½".
2. Orient this rectangle horizontally, centered on the back of your moccasin lower.
3. Attach with a "closed whip stitch" along the upper and lower edges. This creates a tunnel with both sides open.
4. Repeat for other moccasin.



*Illustration 11: Simple lacing tab.*

## 5.2 Attach Upper to Lower

This step can be a bit confusing - lots of photos should help out here!

1. Remember that in Section 2 you may have labelled your uppers and lowers if the ankle seams on your lowers were different lengths. If this was the case, be sure to match up the proper lower with the proper upper at this point.

- a) If in doubt, measure the ankle seam on your lowers and the ankle seam on your uppers... Pair the ones which match best.

- b) **Note:** Before beginning to attach your uppers and lowers, you should always do a 'dry run' to test the fit. That is, place the rear seam of the upper against the rear of the lower and run your hand along both seams to ensure they line up properly. If your uppers are slightly bigger than your lowers, this is completely fine – you can stretch the deerskin lowers somewhat to match perfectly with the canvas upper. If your lowers are slightly bigger than your uppers, you will not be able to stretch uppers to accommodate, however a few discrete puckers in the lower may save the day. If the uppers and lowers are significantly different, you can add or remove some stitches from the lower to adjust the ankle opening to match the upper.



*Illustration 12: Almost there! Completed moccasins standing proud!*

2. **Turn both the upper and the lower inside-out.**

3. Align the upper and lower.

- a) This step is hard to describe, but if followed properly creates a nice hidden seam where the upper and lower attach.

- b) Align the upper and lower, so that the upper is inside the lower. Ie. the inside (or 'wrong' side) of the upper should be against the outside (or 'right' side) of the lower. The binding tape at the bottom of the gaiter, should hang just slightly below the upper edge of the lower.



*Illustration 13: Aligning the Upper and Lower*

- c) Fold the upper down, so that you form a bight, or bend of canvas, flush with the top edge of the deerskin.

- d) Line up the rear seam on the canvas with the rear seam on the deerskin.

4. Starting at the rear seams, whip-stitch all the way around the ankle. Always going through 2 layers of canvas, and 1 layer of deer. **Pull these stitches very tight to create a nice, hidden seam on the outside of your finished moccasin. If you do not put enough tension in these stitches, the seam will be more visible with use.**

- a) It is easy to confuse this step and install your gaiter on inside-out, or hanging inside your moccasin instead of on the outside of the moccasin. If this happens, it is an easy matter to pull stitches out and start again. To avoid going too far, after you have made 6 – 8 stitches, open your project up... turn everything right-side-out and look at how things are laying. The ribbon on your canvas upper should hang just below (and cover) the top edge of your deerskin lower. The seam which you are creating in attaching the two parts should be hidden inside a fold of canvas (provided adequate tension in the stitches).



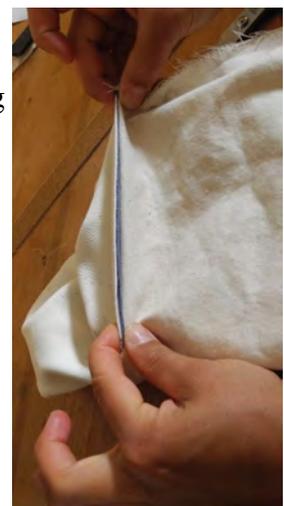
*Illustration 14: Double check after the first few stitches!*

5. Continue whip-stitching around the ankle until you hit the 'tongue' of your moccasin at the front. Right down in the corner where the tongue begins, be sure to a tight double stitch, as this is a high-stress point, and loose stitching will reveal itself as a gap down the road.
6. Continue whip-stitching straight across the tongue, because you no longer have an open edge to whip-stitch over, you will need to use the modified "closed whip-stitch" described in Booklet 1, for use in sewing the heel crescent. Now you will go down through 2 pieces of canvas and 1 piece of deerskin, and come up through just one piece of deerskin (no canvas).



*Illustration 15: Whip stitch straight across the tongue*

- a) **Note:** This is a great opportunity to check alignment. The middle of your "foot contour" on the upper should align with the middle of the tongue. If it does not, try to stretch things to fit. If you did your 'dry run' earlier, things should not be too far off that they can't be reconciled with a bit of tugging, but if the fit is way off, you may need to back up a few steps and adjust the ankle opening of your moccasin lower by adding or releasing a stitch or two.
7. Whip-stitch across the tongue into the remaining corner. Again place a tight double stitch in this corner to keep everything neat and secure.
8. Finish off by continuing back around to the rear seams.
- a) Once you start in this 'home-stretch' you should check that the canvas and deerskin are lining up correctly. Make sure that there is no extra material. If there is extra material in the canvas just be sure to gradually stretch the deerskin while you sew it to the canvas, so that everything lines up perfectly by the time you reach the rear seams. If the extra material is in the deerskin, you may have to put in a couple of puckers to ensure everything lines up.
9. Turn everything right-side-out. Your moccasins are finished!



*Illustration 16: Checking the alignment in the 'home-stretch'*

10. Thread your wrap-around lace through the tab you have installed at the rear of your moccasins. Slip on all your insulating layers, slide in your insole, and put on your finished product. Prance around a little. Do a jig. If you are lucky enough to do this in the winter, then play in the snow. Things will probably feel quite tight right now, especially if you have your insole in, but the deerskin will relax.
11. Enjoy!
12. You can later turn your moccasin inside-out and trim off any excess 'tongue' material that remains on the inside. We often skip this step and have never noticed the tongue getting in the way.

Happy Crafting!



*Illustration 17: Our finished moccasin. Congratulations on your own!*

## 6.0 Final Words

Now that your mocs are done, its time to get out and use them! At Lure of the North we are passionate about making aesthetically beautiful, natural handcrafts, but all of our items are also designed to be functional gear that can be used in the bush. There is no better way to truly appreciate your new craft than getting out and using them, so please, tie them on your feet, and take a hike!

[www.lureofthenorth.com](http://www.lureofthenorth.com)



# Appendix 1: Pattern

