

Winter Mitten Instructions



By: Kielyn and Dave Marrone
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<http://lureofthenorth.com>

Note 1 – Lure Mitten Making Kits: These instructions are intended to be accompanied by our Mitten 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 2 - 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 3 – Feedback and Further Help: Feedback is welcomed to improve clarity in future editions. For even more assistance you might consider taking a mitten 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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Table of Contents:

- 0.0 What Makes Winter Mittens So Great?.....4
- 0.1 DIY Benefits.....4
- 1.0 Getting Prepared.....5
- 1.1 Kit Contents:.....5
- 1.2 Items Not Provided.....6
- 1.2.1 BYO Insulating Layers.....7
- 1.3 Prepare Your Pattern.....8
- 1.3.1 Finding Your Size.....8
- 1.3.2 Doubling Up.....8
- 1.3.3 Outer Buckskin Layer.....8
- 2.0 Making a thimble (Aka. “The Basics”).....9
- 3.0 Making the Outers.....11
- 3.1 Inspect your hide and select a tracing location.....11
- 3.2 Trace and Cut.....11
- 3.3 Sew Thumb onto Palm.....11
- 3.4 Sew the Vamp to the Palm and Thumb.....11
- 3.5 Attaching decorative ribbon.....12
- 4.0 Sew the Inners.....13
- Appendix 1: Printing Instructions for Patterns.....14
- Appendix 2: Patterns.....15



0.0 What Makes Winter Mittens So Great?

Having comfortable and cozy extremities make all the difference when it comes to enjoying the frozen, sun-thirsty season. Warm hands and feet are of the utmost importance and using a combination of wool inner layers and a buckskin outer is a sure step in the right direction. Tried, tested and true, these mitts have travelled with us for over a thousand kilometres in Northern frozen landscapes. All the materials are entirely breathable, which keeps your hands dry even on the hardest days of work.



Illustration 1: Winter Mittens made during a Lure of the North workshop in Sudbury, ON.

0.1 DIY Benefits

Making mittens yourself gives you an opportunity to customize and personalize them to your heart's content. This can be elaborate ornamentation, including bead work, burning and the like, or simple elegance. The skills learned in making these mittens will give you the knowledge and confidence to repair them and other equipment in the field. And of course, this is an opportunity to connect with the heritage of our land and those that have travelled it before us.



Illustration 2: Happy mitt-shop participants from Sudbury, ON

1.0 Getting Prepared

1.1 Kit Contents:

Winter Mitten Making Kits from Lure of the North come in two different styles: Double Layer Wool Mitt Kit; and Single Layer Wool Mitt Kit. A full kit will include all of the items listed below:



Illustration 3: Everything included in “Mitten Making Kit”. Note: there are a variety of deerskin colours and decorative ribbons available.

- ~ 5 square feet of deerskin for the outers (available in a variety of colours);
- ~5 square feet of wool duffel for the inner mitt (10 sq ft for double-mitts);
- 2 x 1” x 1' decorative ribbons (available in a variety of styles);
- ~4 metres of yarn to reinforce stitching on inner mittens;
- 1 darning needle;
- Artificial sinew – enough for project, plus extra for repair kit;
- 2x “Glover's Needles” (Aka. “Triangular Needles” or “Leather Needles”);
- Extra deerskin scraps: enough to make a sewing thimble, and/ or use in repair kit;
- Paper patterns;

1.2 Items Not Provided



Illustration 4: You need only supply a few standard household items.

- scissors;
- pins;
- sewing machine (Opt: Only used for decorative ribbon);
- measuring tape;

1.2.1 BYO Insulating Layers



Illustration 5: Blankets Galore!~ Have a wool blanket that you don't mind chopping up? Use your own instead!

Things to consider when using your own blanket:

- Use the thickest portions of the blanket. If the blanket is well loved there may be thin spots.

1.3 Prepare Your Pattern

[**Note:** If you have not purchased a kit, the pattern is available at the back of this booklet as an appendix].

The pattern you will receive with your kit coincides with the sizing chart provided. The mitten is constructed from three pieces: The largest piece, referred to as the “palm”, a skinny long piece, referred to as the, “vamp” and the smallest piece, referred to as the “thumb”. See the illustration at right.



Illustration 6: Pattern pieces used for both inner and outer mittens. See appendix for larger images.

1.3.1 Finding Your Size

Using a flexible measuring tape, hold one hand out with your fingers straight and together with your thumb extended outwards. Measure around the widest portion of your hand, excluding the thumb.

Refer to the sizing chart and find the number that closest matches the circumference of your hand that you just measured. Scroll across to see the pattern number and that is your pattern! **Note: if your hand isn't quite perfectly matching to one size, cut outside the lines of the pattern smaller or on the inside of the larger pattern. Use whichever one is closer. We usually recommend to cut on the outside of the line so that you have more wiggle room.**



Illustration 7: Measuring foot circumference ("C")

1.3.2 Doubling Up

If you have chosen to double layer the inside of your mittens, simply find the size of your mitten for the inside and use that size as your base layer. For the second layer, cut on the outside of the line for your next set which will allow for a snug fit for the two layers together.

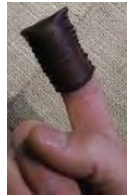
1.3.3 Outer Buckskin Layer

For the outer layer, use the same size as your largest inner layer. i.e. If you have cut on the outside of the pattern for your second layer of insulation then cut the buckskin layer on the outside of the pattern as well.

We use the same size for the outer as the inner because the buckskin will stretch out and the wool layer will not. So the outer may seem like it is a tight fit as first but wear them for a couple of days and they will become the perfect fit!

2.0 Making a thimble (Aka. “The Basics”)

1. Grab your leather needle. Notice the needle has a triangular tip with blades on each edge. This needle is designed to cut through your leather, and will likewise cut you if you're not careful. We will begin by construction a small leather thimble (or two) for protection.
2. Thread the needle. Depending on the type of thread you are using, you may need to split it down in thickness. The sinew we use and supply with our kits, **does** need to be split into thirds before it can be used. Our sinew will easily and naturally split into thirds. If you are trying to force it, try again until you find the natural split. **If your thread is too thick for your needle, you will be struggling with every stitch.**
3. The thread should be hanging unevenly from the needle – that is, one half of the thread should be longer than the other. Put a knot at the end of the long half of thread.
4. From your scrap pieces of leather, cut a rectangle ~ 1 ½” wide and 5” long. Fold this in half width-wise to form a thimble ~ 2 ½” x 1 ½” wide with seams on either side.
 - a) Adjust this size according to your finger... it should snugly fold around the finger you intend to use your thimble on, and reach beyond your first knuckle.
5. You will sew the seams of the thimble using the “Whip Stitch”. This is the same stitch (with some small variations) that you will use for almost every seam on this project. The whip stitch is done as follows:
 - a) Holding the thimble in your left hand and the needle in your right, you will stitch from one open corner up into the fold you have made. Begin by opening the two halves of leather, and push the needle down through just the bottom piece of leather. Pull all the way through to the knot. This initial stitch is placed between your two pieces of leather to hide your knot inside your thimble.
 - b) Bring your needle back up, fold your two pieces of leather back together and push the needle down through both pieces of leather. This is your first full stitch.
 - c) Bring your needle back up and again stitch down through both pieces of leather ~ 1/8” (2 – 3 mm) over from your previous stitch.
 - d) This is the whip stitch. If done properly your thread will lay over the open edge of the thimble. **The key to doing the whip stitch properly is to put every stitch down through the same piece of leather first.** For example, in the thimble you have already started you will continue by always pushing the needle down through the upper piece of leather first (except for your initial ½ stitch which is done to hide your knot...). Stitches continue: down and out, down and out, down and out...



*Illustration 8:
First stitch:
"Hiding the
Knot"*

Note – Whip Stitch Details:



Your deerskin is very forgiving material in terms of how you sew it together. Because the skin does not fray when cut, you do not have to worry about finishing edges. Likewise, you can place your stitches fairly close to the edge of the material without worrying about them pulling through. I like to keep my stitch depth (distance from edge of material) at about 3mm (or 1/8"). The stitch length (distance between each stitch) should also be kept fairly tight (again ~ 3mm or 1/8"). This makes a very nice, professional finish, and is particularly important when you are doing 'pucker' stitches in the toe of the moccasin. Finally, the key to a really nice looking finished moccasin is consistency. If you can keep your stitch depth and stitch length consistent from one stitch to the next you will do a very fine job. **IMPORTANT:** There is no need to place your stitches tighter together or closer to the edge than 1/8". Unlike woven fabrics, when sewing deerskin you are *cutting holes* in the material with each stitch. Place your stitches too close together and risk weakening your material.

Illustration 9: Appropriate stitch length and stitch depth.

6. Continue sewing your thimble using the Whip Stitch until you reach the fold in the leather – you have completed one side, and now need to finish off your stitch.
7. Seams are finished as such:
 - a) After your final whip stitch, bring your needle back up, and stitch down through the exact same hole that you just made. This will lay a second whip stitch on top of your last one.
 - b) Bring the needle back up and make another stitch in the same hole – a 3rd stitch now lays on top of the first two.
 - c) Place a fourth stitch in the same hole, but do not pull tight. Pull the stitch most of the way through, leaving a small loop of thread. Pass the needle through this loop twice. Pull tight to knot.
8. Snip your thread close to your thimble to keep things neat and tidy.
9. Put another knot in the long end of your thread and sew up the second side of your thimble, following steps 5 – 8. Start at the open corner, hide your knot by starting with a ½ stitch (just through one piece of leather) initially, and then whip stitch up into the fold. When you reach the fold, stack four stitches in one hole, make a knot and pull tight to bind.

The thimble should fit very snugly on whatever digit you choose to use it on (force it on - it will stretch). Many people use it on their index finger and/ or thumb, while others find it most useful on the middle finger. This is a matter of personal preference. Make yourself a second or third thimble at this time if you feel you will want the extra protection (more thimbles are more cumbersome however!). Spice up your thimbles by drawing faces, cutting fringe or burning a design in them.

You are now ready to begin your mittens!!

3.0 Making the Outers

3.1 Inspect your hide and select a tracing location

[Note: The inside (fuzzy or 'suede' side) of the hide is known as the “flesh” side, the smooth side is known as the “grain” side. The grain side is the hair side or outside of the hide.]

For mittens we recommend using the flesh side of the hide facing in and the grain side out because we find that the flesh side grips the inner layers quite nicely whereas having the grain side in, the layers tend to slip apart.

Inspect your hide for any thin spots, holes, or brands that you may want to avoid. If in doubt, run your hands over the hide, push and pull on any spots you are nervous about.

3.2 Trace and Cut

1. Place the pattern pieces on the 'wrong' side of the deerskin (i.e. The side of the deerskin you intend to be the inside), and carefully trace the patterns using a regular pen or marker.
2. Cut the patterns using a sharp pair of scissors.

3.3 Sew Thumb onto Palm

1. Place the thumb on top of the palm upside down – wrong side to wrong side (Eg. Fuzzy side to fuzzy side if you are planning to have the smooth side out).
2. Begin to whip stitch at the tip of the sharp edge on the thumb piece, towards the centre of the palm. Don't worry about hiding your knot as you will be flipping the finished outer mitten inside out.
3. Stitch two reinforcing whip stitches on both sides of the slit.
4. Once you've reinforced the corner, swivel the thumb piece so that both thumbs match up.
5. Continue whip stitching around the thumb and down the wrist portion of the thumb piece.
6. Close the stitch in the same way as is done for the thimble.



*Illustration 10:
Thumb in reverse
position ready to be
sewn onto palm.*

3.4 Sew the Vamp to the Palm and Thumb

1. Thread your needle with a fresh piece of sinew – approximately an arm-span in length.
2. Line up the vamp piece with the swoop facing towards the thumb piece. NOTE: if you've cut and set aside each mitten as a separate unit, switch the vamp piece so that the same side of the hide is showing when the swooped portion of the vamp is facing the thumb piece.
3. Line the vamp piece up so that the top of the vamp is in the centre of the palm piece.

4. Begin to whip stitch towards the thumb piece, doubling up to reinforce where the thumb piece meets the vamp on both sides of the corner slit.
5. The pieces should all meet up at the end. If it doesn't not, check on your way down and stretch the hide to make them line up.
6. Finish at the wrist like you have been finished each row of stitching.
7. Start back at the top of the vamp and whip stitch down to the other side of the wrist. Finish the stitch and cut the thread.



Illustration 11: Vamp lined up on the palm

You are done one of the outer mittens!!! Turn the mitten inside out and push the seams open so that they lay almost flat. Put your mitten on and give your self a high-five!! Give a friend a high-five!! You are a quarter of the way done your mittens!!

While you're used to working with the leather, go a head and finish your next outer layer, buckskin mitten!

3.5 Attaching decorative ribbon

If you choose to add decorative ribbon it is easiest to use the sewing machine with the island removed so you can place the mitten onto the bar and rotate the mitten as you're sewing. Otherwise it can be tricky if you don't have that option so be careful you don't accidentally sew the two layers of hide together!!

- Line up the ribbon onto the mitten in the position you would like it;
- Pin the ribbon, tucking the two ends under themselves to create a finished edge;
- Extend the stitch length on your machine to at least 2.5;
- Carefully stitch the ribbon on both sides.



Illustration 12: One outer mitten done with decorative ribbon attached.



Illustration 13: Wool Inner almost finished!



Illustration 14: Reinforced X's complete!



Illustration 15: Les Deux!!

4.0 Sew the Innern

1. Complete the exact same steps as sewing the outer layer!!
2. Cross-Stitch the inners:
 - Cut an arm's length and a half of the yarn and thread it into the darning needle;
 - Tie a knot in the end of the yarn;
 - Begin at the base of the wrist at the thumb by hiding the knot on the inside;
 - Stitch across the seem so the yarn is visible, then head back to the same location as the start point only across the seem and pull the need through;
 - Head across to the other side to form an X with the visible portion of the yarn;
 - Begin the next X by heading across the seem approximately half an inch in length;
 - Repeat above instructions all the way until you get to the thumb corner;
 - Finish the stitch by tying off as usual;
 - Begin again at the base of the wrist but on a blank seem;
 - Go up and around so that the mitten is cross-stitched at every seam.
3. Blanket stitch around the cuff for a finished edge.
 - Similar to the whip stitch but instead of pulling the stitch to the left of the loop every time, before pulling the stitch tight, swoop the needle into the loop each time and lay the stitch on top of the cuff.
 - Don't pull too tight to ensure a nice flat lined cuff!

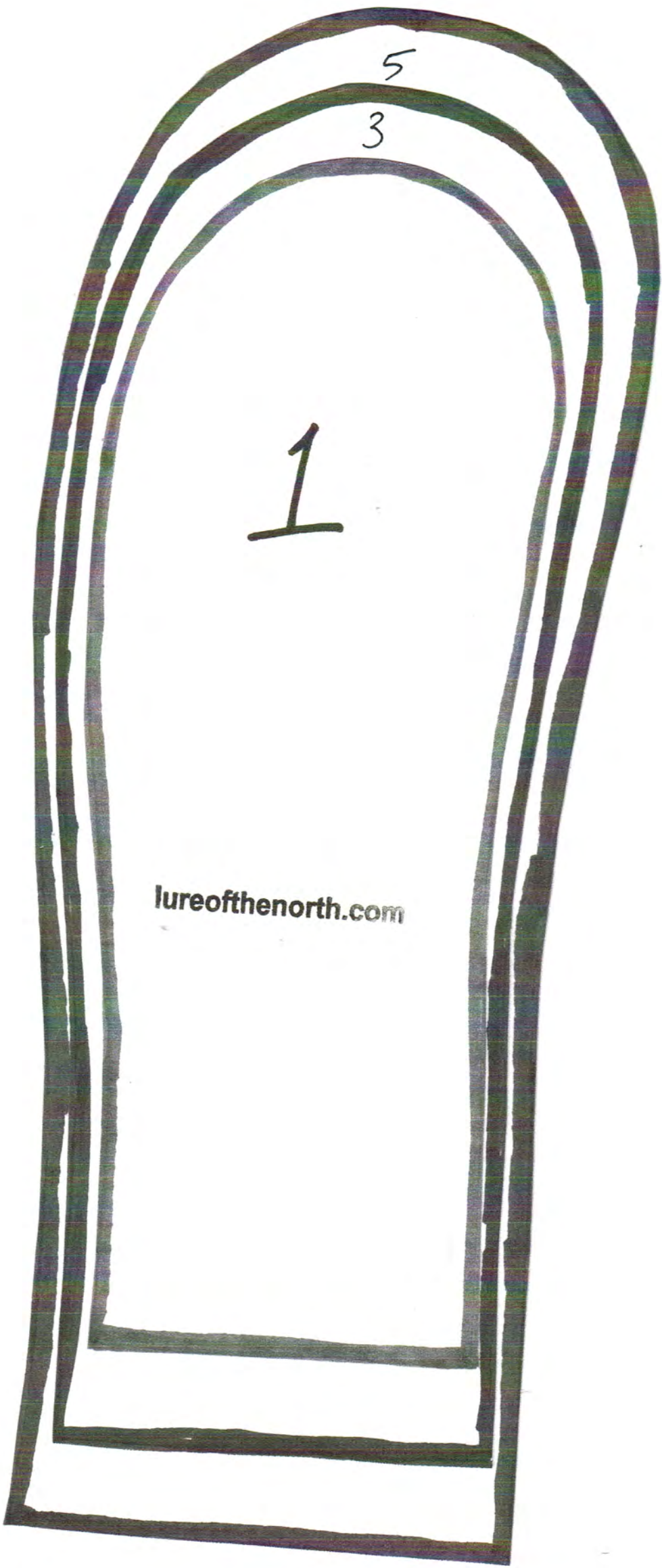
Appendix 1: Printing Instructions for Patterns

- The following four files include all pieces and sizes for the mittens.
- Print all four pages on **ledger** paper (use Staples or other commercial printing services)
 - To check proportions simply measure the width of the palm piece from the corner of the slit to the outside of the palm and add it to the width of the vamp piece at the same location when the tops of the two pieces are lined up together.



**Thank you again for your patronage and
Happy Crafting!!!**

<http://lureofthenorth.com>

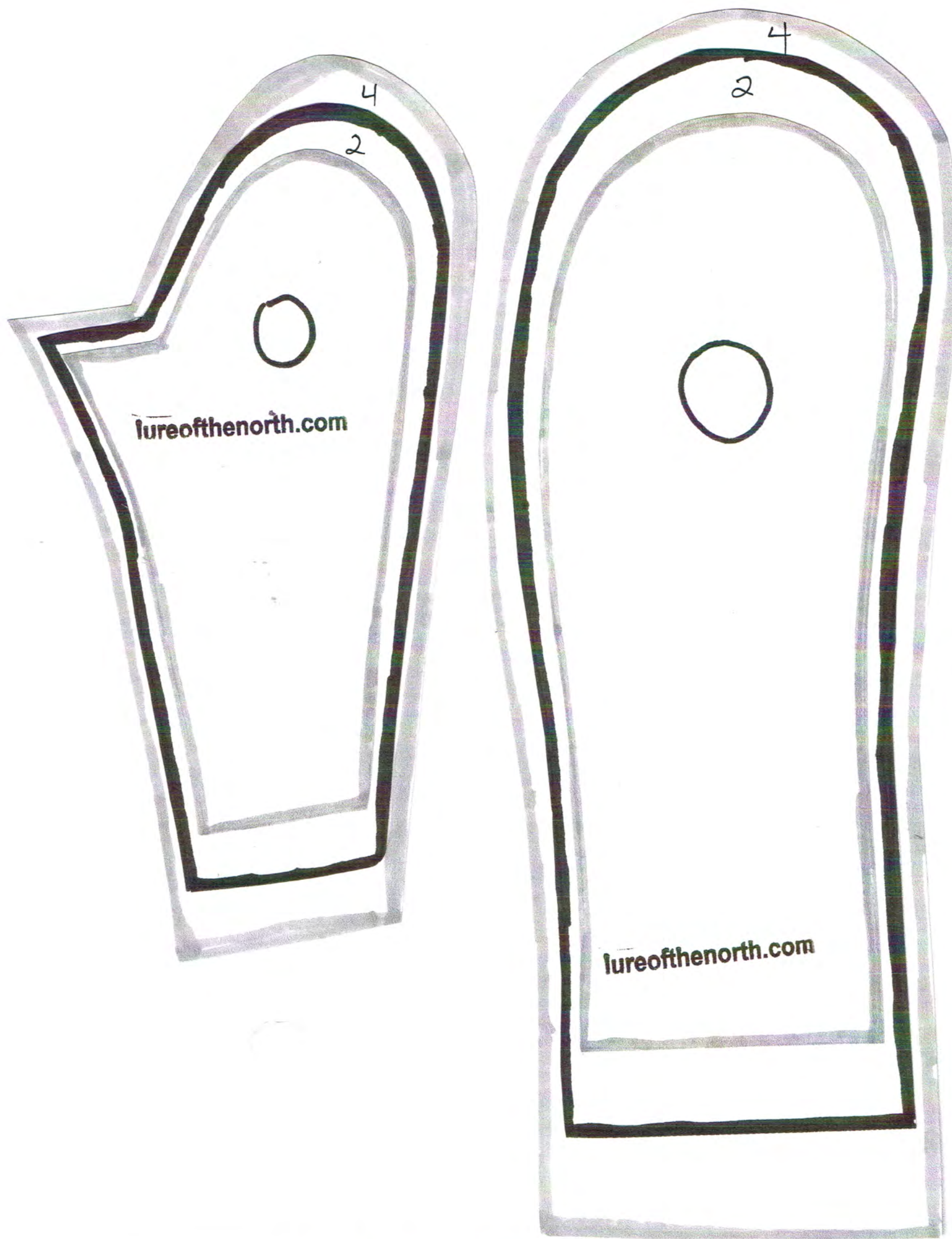




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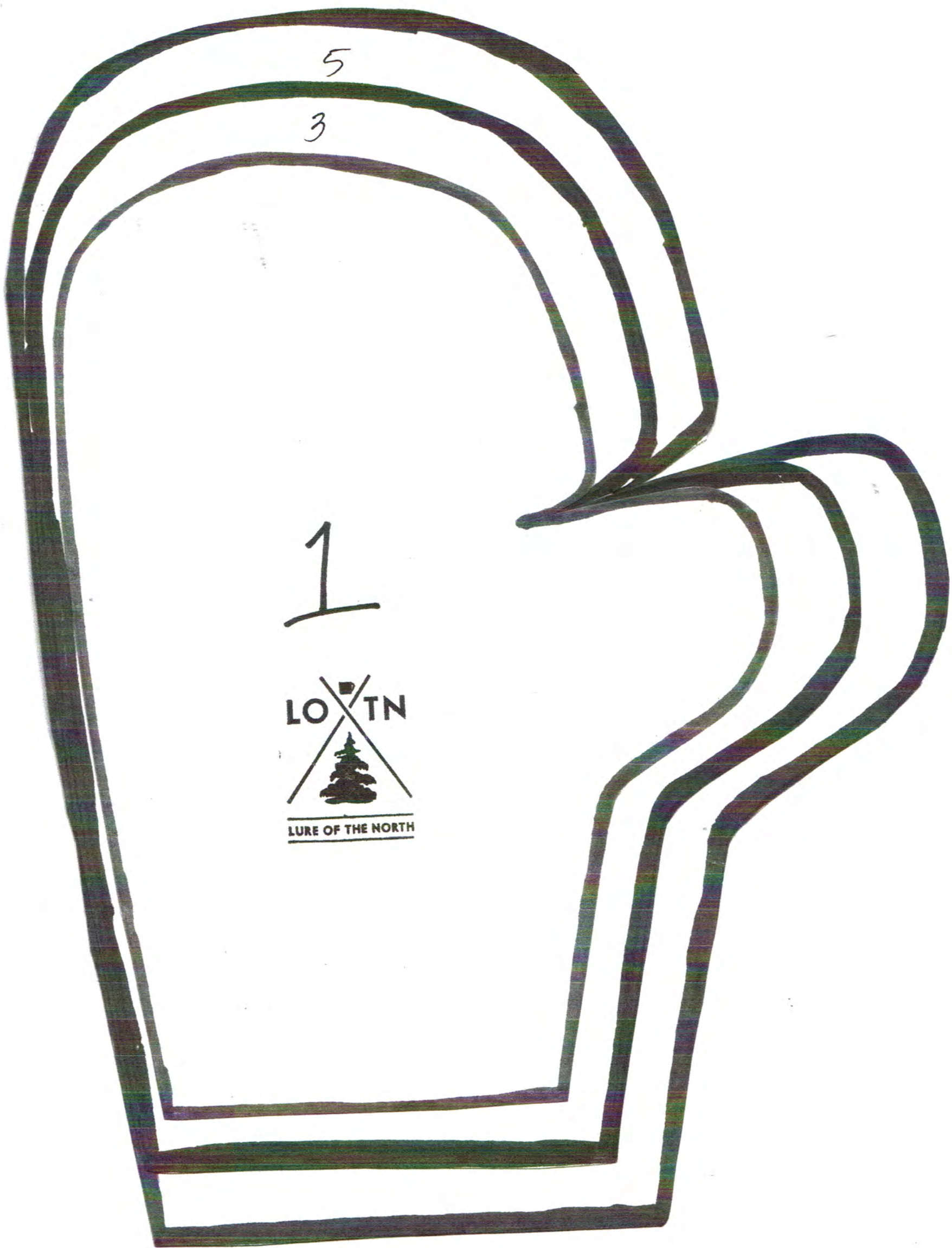
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Mitten Sizing Chart

Diameter of Palm	Mitten Diameter	Pattern Number
19.50 cm	21.00 cm	0
21.00 cm	22.50 cm	1
22.50 cm	24.00 cm	2
24.00 cm	25.50 cm	3
25.50 cm	27.00 cm	4
27.00 cm	28.50 cm	5



1

3

5

