



**SUPPLY
LINE**

During the Second World War, Canadians knitted many different items for service personnel and civilians overseas. These included turtleneck tuck-ins, also called “mufflers” or “dickies”. Navy blue examples like this one were made for the Merchant Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy.

Reproduction

Second World War Discovery Box

Artifact Background

Turtleneck Tuck-in



Turtleneck Tuck-in © Canadian War Museum

Meeting a Real Need

The military provided personnel with cold-weather clothing and equipment, but knitted items were useful and welcome. They included socks, scarves, hats, mittens and sweaters. Prisoners of war received them as well. So did civilians affected by the war, including air raid victims and refugees. Hospital patients also needed special knitted items that were comfortable to wear in bed.

The turtleneck tuck-in in the Discovery Box is a modern copy made by volunteers using a wartime pattern. In addition to being easier to wear than a regular scarf, it needed less wool.

Tuck-ins like these helped keep sailors warm in the wet and often cold and harsh conditions at sea. They were especially useful on the North Atlantic and Arctic Oceans.

Knitting for Others

Knitting was done by civilian volunteers in Canada. Individuals of all ages and occupations joined in. The time and work put into knitting (often in public) was seen as patriotic. Knitting was also encouraged as a way for women to support the war effort without challenging traditional gender roles.

Many volunteers participated through organizations, including the Girl Guides, the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire and the Canadian Red Cross. The Red Cross also helped gather and distribute knitted items from individuals and smaller organizations. People knit items to send to family and friends as well.

Patterns and Quality

Knitting patterns were standardized to military-approved specifications. This helped ensure that knitted items were useful, and avoided wasting wool, which was in limited supply.

Different kinds of wool were used for different items. Canada could not supply enough wool to meet wartime demands, so it had to be imported from other locations, including Britain and New Zealand, as well as South America.

Because knitted goods were handmade, quality control was sometimes an issue. This was especially true of socks, because lumps could cause blisters.

The Canadian Red Cross hired women to inspect and fix items that passed through their packing centres. The volume of items sent by individuals and organizations, however, meant that not all items were inspected.

Did You Know?

The Canadian Red Cross estimates that, during the war, 50 million articles were knit by more than 750,000 volunteers.