

Atkuk

How to Make an Alutiiq/Sugpiaq Parka

Developed with Susan Malutin



Snow falling parka from the Etholén Collection at the National Museum of Finland. Photo courtesy Sven Haakanson Jr.

Atkuk—Parka

Before the introduction of Western clothing, Alutiiq/Sugpiaq men and women wore *atkut*—parkas, long, hoodless robes made of fur and bird skin. Puffins, cormorants, and other sea birds often provided pelts for elaborately decorated parkas. Bird hides were not formally tanned like sealskins but they were scraped and cleaned to soften. The number of pelts needed for each parka varied by species and parka design. It took about 150 cormorant neck skins to create a snow falling parka, the style of garment worn by many Alutiiq people today. These black garments featured tassels with tufts of ermine fur that moved like snow when people danced.

In addition to providing protection from the weather, clothes symbolized an Alutiiq person's place in society. The animal skins and decorative elements in a parka reflected their wearer's age, gender, and social position. Members of the wealthy ruling class wore elegantly decorated parkas of sea otter, fox, or ground squirrel pelts, or furs imported from the mainland. In contrast, the less affluent wore simple clothes sewn from bird or seal skins.

Clothes also provided a spiritual link to the animal world. Putting on an animal's skin could give the wearer some of the animal's characteristics like swiftness or cunning. Clothes provided protection and enhanced skill. They were animals transformed into helpers.

By the mid-nineteenth century, imported, easy-to-maintain fabric clothing began to replace skin garments. Fabric clothes were often worn indoors and traditional parkas put on as coats. Today, skin sewers are reawakening the parka tradition, replicating garments preserved in museum collections and creating traditionally styled clothing for use in cultural celebrations.

The *Atkuk* Project

We think every Alutiiq/Sugpiaq person should have an *atkuk*–parka to celebrate their heritage. With support from Tanginaq Native Village and the US Bureau of Indian Affairs, we created this booklet and a set of video tutorials to help you make one. Inside you will find step-by-step instructions for making a contemporary Alutiiq-style parka with materials that are available from your local craft store. These instructions are supplemented by a set of three videos. Visit our website (alutiiqmuseum.org) to watch Susan Malutin demonstrate parka production.



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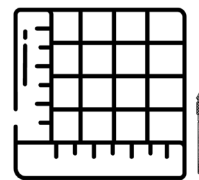
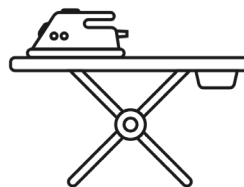
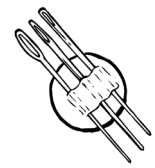
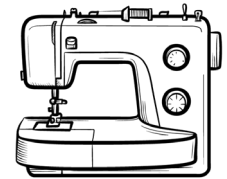
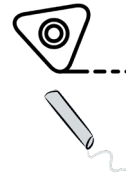
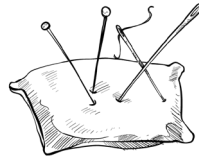
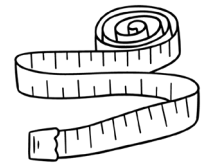
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Tools and Supplies

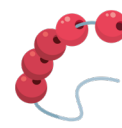
TOOLS:

- Scissors or Rotary cutter
- Tape measure
- Pins and pin holder
- Chalk or Wax Tailors Chalk
- Sewing machine
- Iron-on fusible interfacing (collar stiffener)
- Fabric glue or hot glue
- Needle
- Iron and ironing board
- Cutting mat
- Double sided tape
- Big tracing paper



SUPPLIES:

- Black thread
- Red thread
- Black polyester fabric ca.3 yards (choose a heavy fabric like velvet, suede, or upholstery drapery fabric)
- Red polyester fabric 1 yard
- Red grosgrain ribbon (7/8th inch)
- Beads, Fur, Yarn, etc. (whatever you would like to use to decorate your parka)



Step 1. Create a Pattern

Lay out a large sheet of paper, scrap cloth, or anything you can use as a pattern. Have another person help you.

Lay on the paper with your legs and arms slightly spread. Have the other person draw an outline approximately 2 inches from your body in a general parka shape.

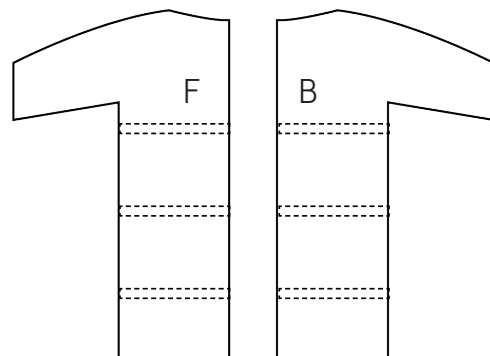
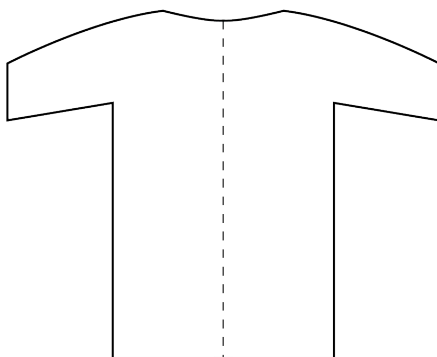
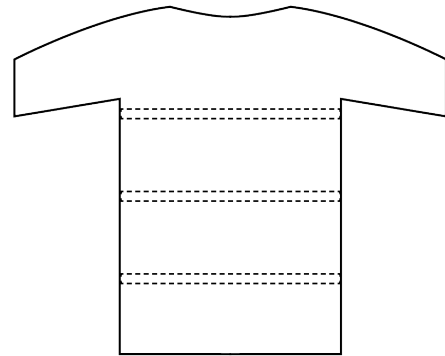
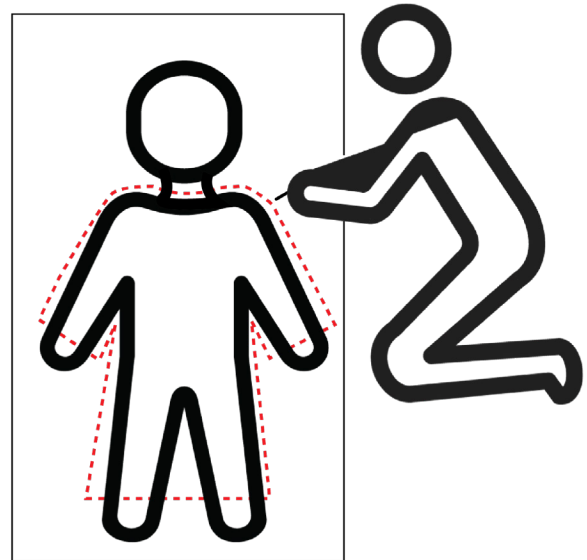
Cut out the pattern.

Mark the pattern with horizontal lines across the body to indicate the placement of the grosgrain ribbon. Start 9.5 inches below the neck and then add two more lines, each 9.5 inches apart.

Cut the pattern in half down the middle. Start from the center of the collar and work down the garment to the center of the hem. To do this precisely, fold the pattern in half first.

Now you have two halves of a pattern. Mark one with an "F" for front, and the other with a "B" for Back.

Set up your sewing machine. You will use a basic straight stitch. Use black thread to put the body of the parka together. You will switch to red thread later to add detail.



Create collar and cuff patterns.

Make a rectangle measuring: 24" x 3.5" on a piece of paper. Cut it out. This will be your collar pattern.

Collar Pattern (24" x 3.5")



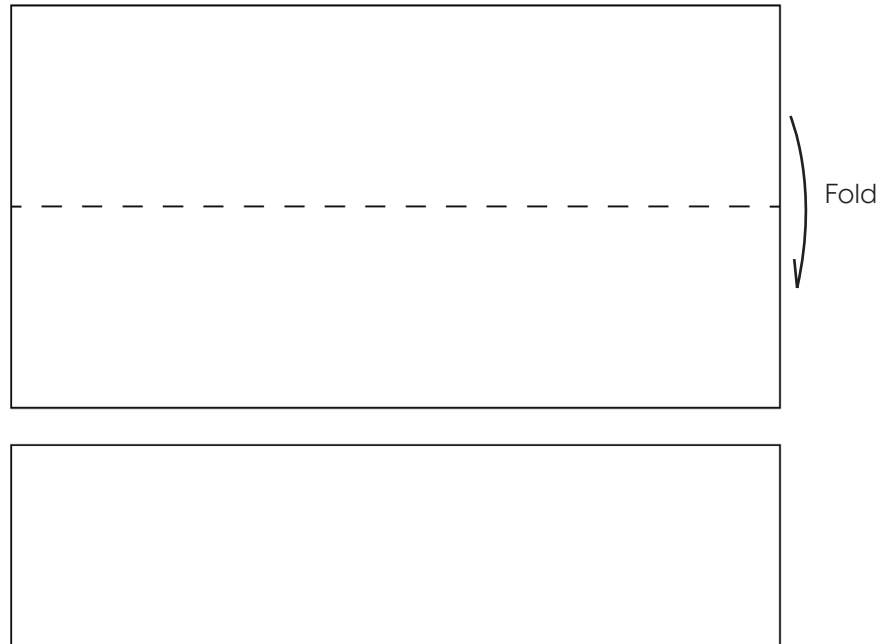
Make a rectangle measuring 11.5" x 3.5" on a piece of paper. Cut it out. This will be the pattern for both cuffs.

Cuff Pattern, cut two (11.5" x 3.5")



Step 2: Prepare the Fabric

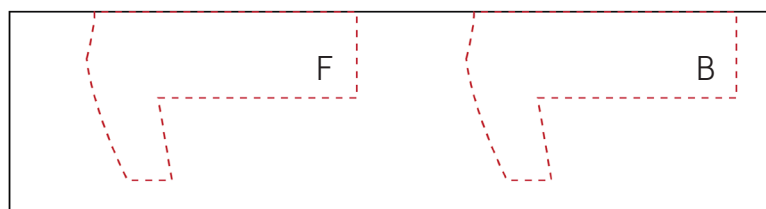
Fold the black fabric in half, long ways.



Place the two halves of the pattern onto the folded fabric, with the midline of the pattern along the folded fabric edge, as pictured below.

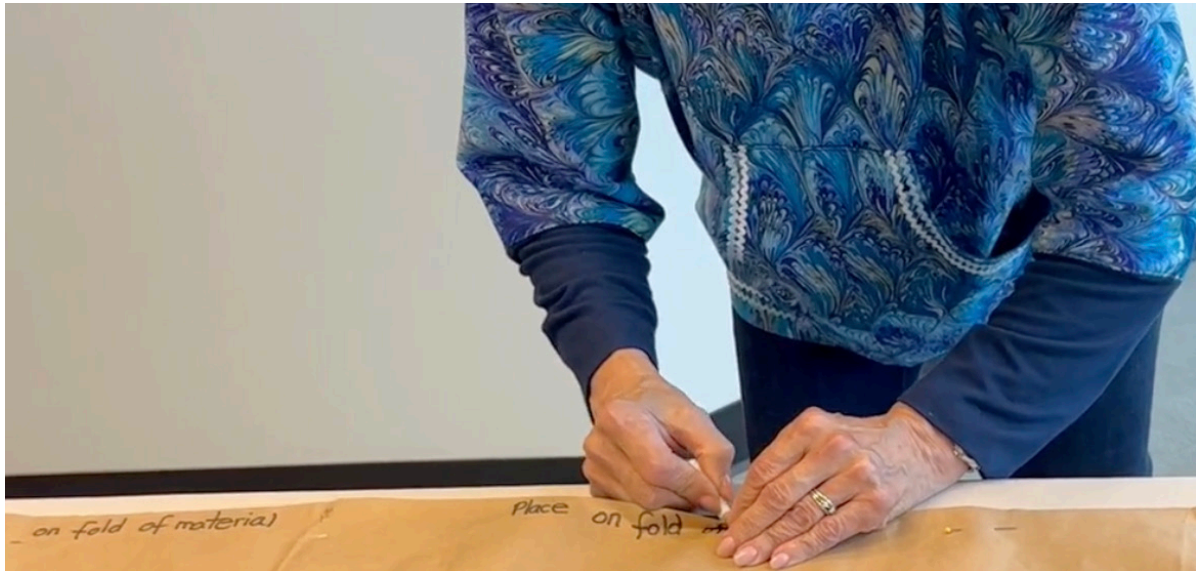
Pin both halves of the pattern to the fabric

Cut the fabric following the pattern.

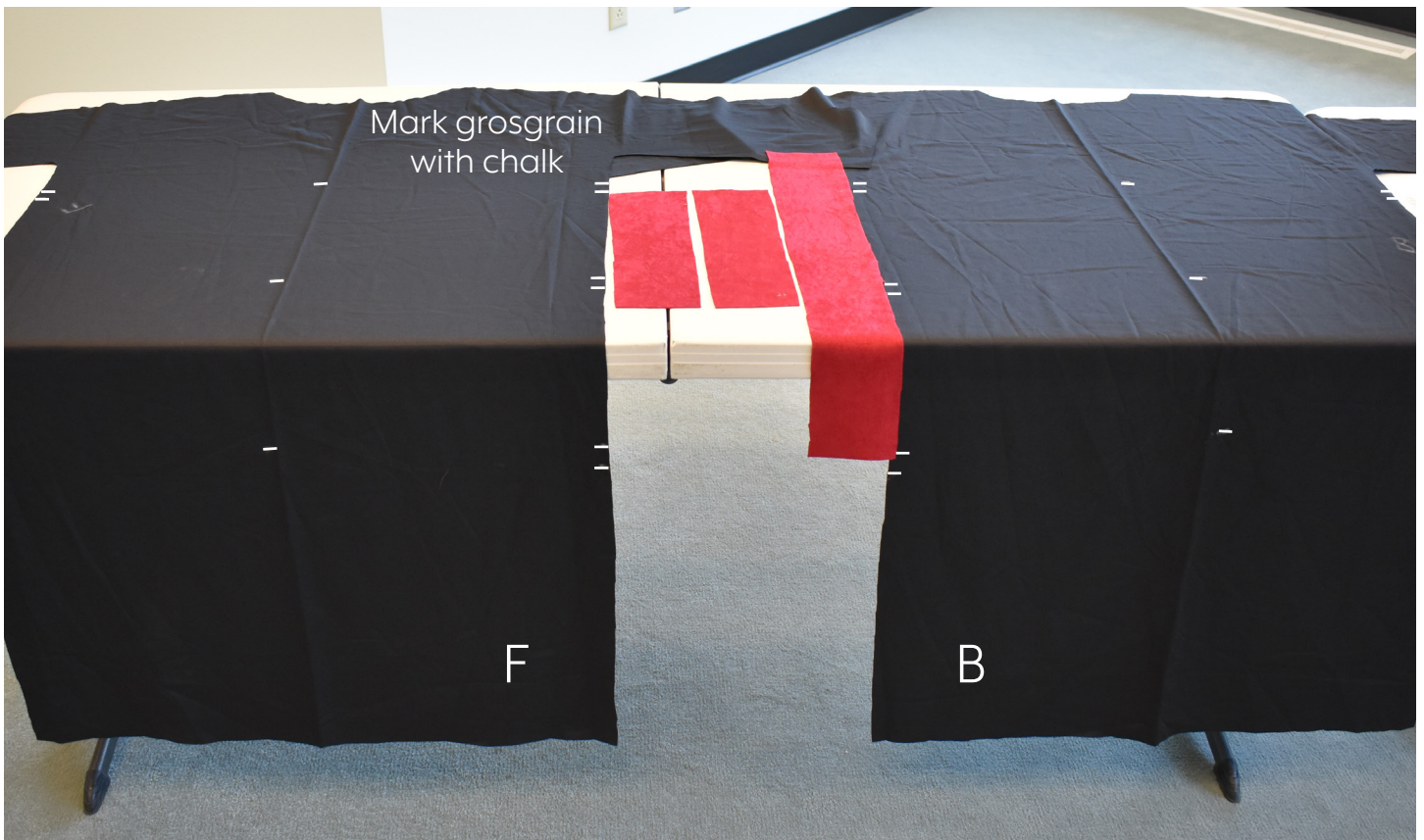


Mark the fabric with a “F” for Front and “B” for Back to match the corresponding pattern using chalk.

Slightly lift the pattern where you marked out the grosgrain placement so you can mark the fabric in the same spot. With chalk, make marks on the fabric that show the grosgrain placement.

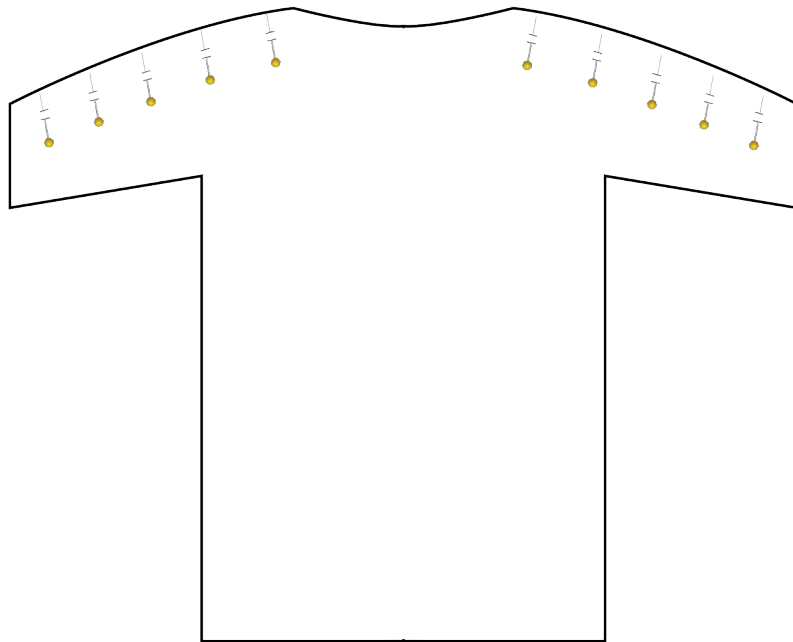


Once you have marked the grosgrain placement, unpin the paper pattern and unfold each parka half. You now have the front and back panels of your garment.



Step 3: Pin Sides Together

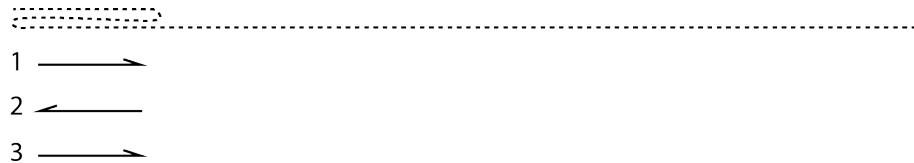
Lay both pieces of fabric on top of each other inside out. Match up the front and back pieces at the neck and pin them together. Then match and pin down the top of each arm.



Step 4: Sew the Shoulder Seams

Start at one side of the neck and use black thread to sew down the arm. Use your sewing machine guide to create a $\frac{5}{8}$ ths of an inch seam.

To secure your thread, start sewing a few stitches then reverse. This is called back stitching. Continue to sew.



Once you have made it to the end of the arm, backstitch to secure your thread.

Repeat on the other side of the neck, down the top of the arm.

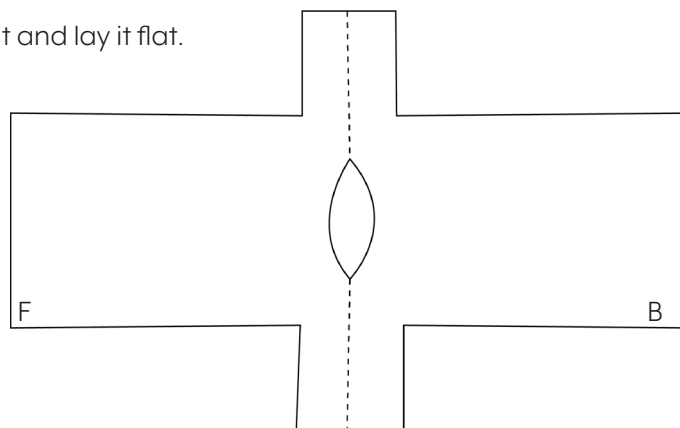


Helpful tip: Remember to backstitch at the start and end of each segment anytime you sew with the machine.

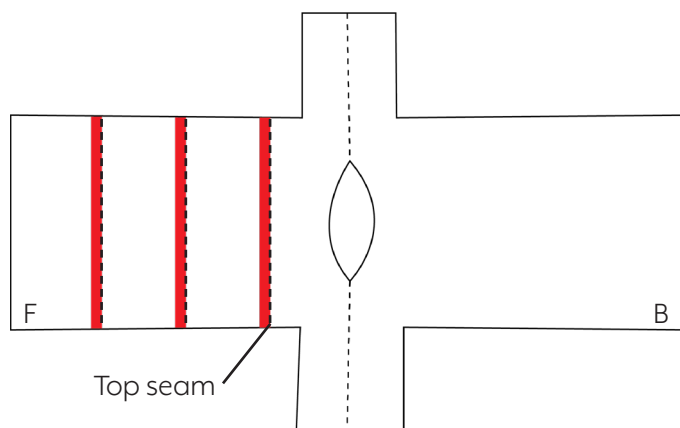


Step 5: Add Grosgrain

Turn the material right side out and lay it flat.



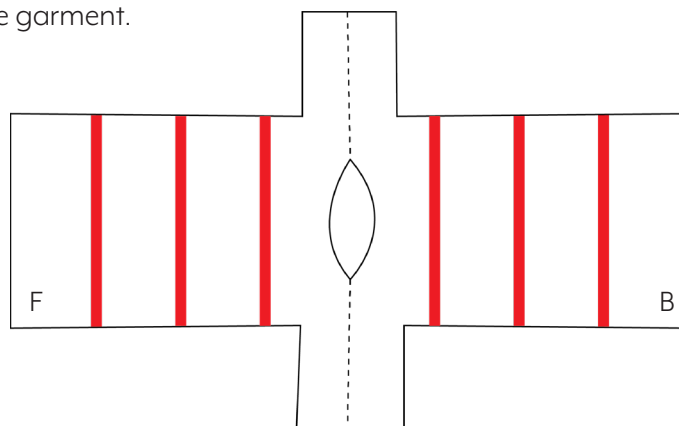
Start with the "F" Front side. Place the grosgrain across the chest where you marked out the placement. The first line of grosgrain should be about 9.5 inches below the neck. There should be three rows of grosgrain, each 9.5 inches apart. Lay the grosgrain flat and pin it to the black fabric.



Reload the sewing machine with red thread.

Sew the top side of the grosgrain to the garment. Remember to backstitch at the start and end of the seam. Sew along the top of all three grosgrain strands. Do NOT sew the bottom seams of the the grosgrain yet.

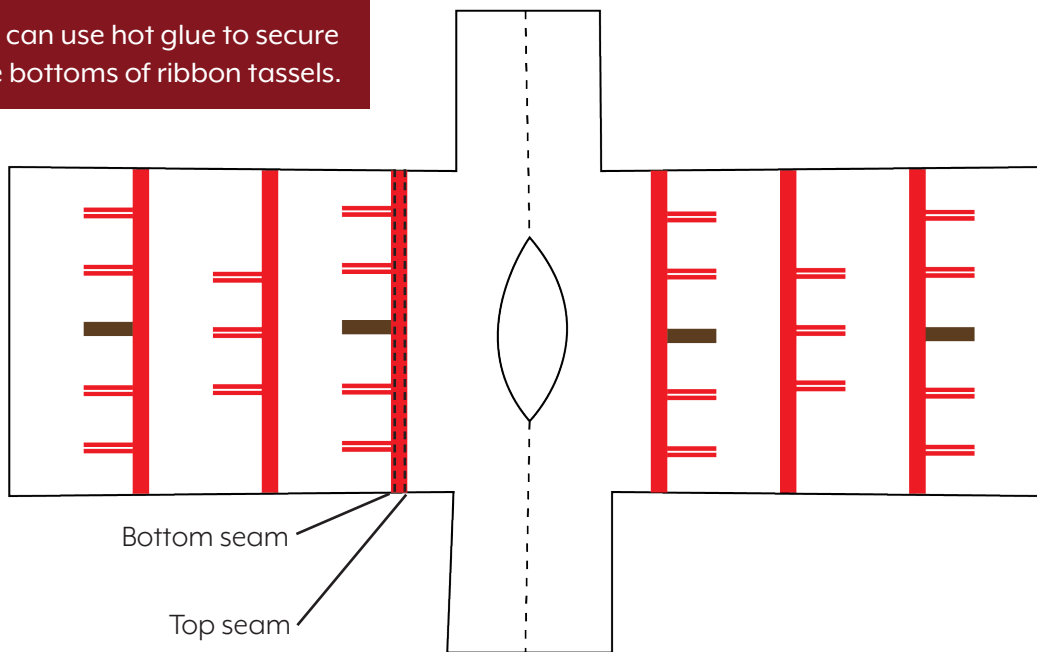
Repeat the process of grosgrain placement for the "B" back side of the garment – lay the grosgrain flat, pin, and sew the top of the grosgrain to the garment.



Step 6: Add Decorations

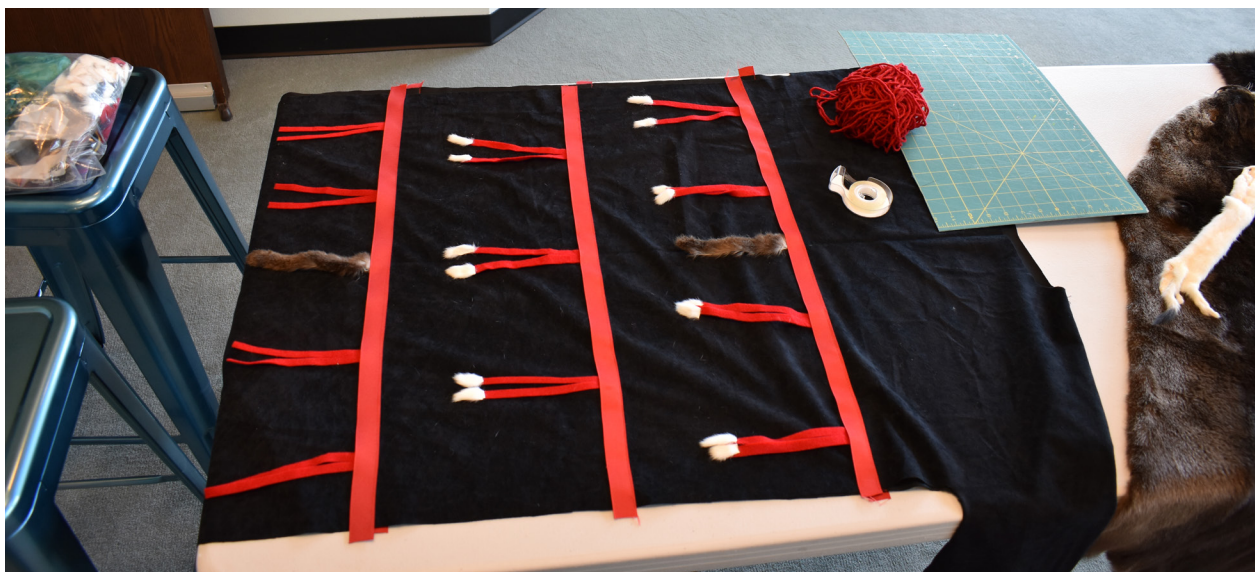
Plan the placement of decorative pieces. This is where you can add any tassels of fur, yarn, beads, etc. to the grosgrain. Create your tassels, then secure them beneath the grosgrain. Double-sided tape and pins are helpful to keep decorations in place until you sew them to the parka.

Helpful tip: You can use hot glue to secure fur pieces to the bottoms of ribbon tassels.



Sew the bottom seam of the grosgrain to the garment, sewing over the decorative tassels to secure them. Sew in the same direction as you did to secure the top edge of the grosgrain.

Continue down the garment, securing the second and third rows of grosgrain. Then repeat the process on side B.



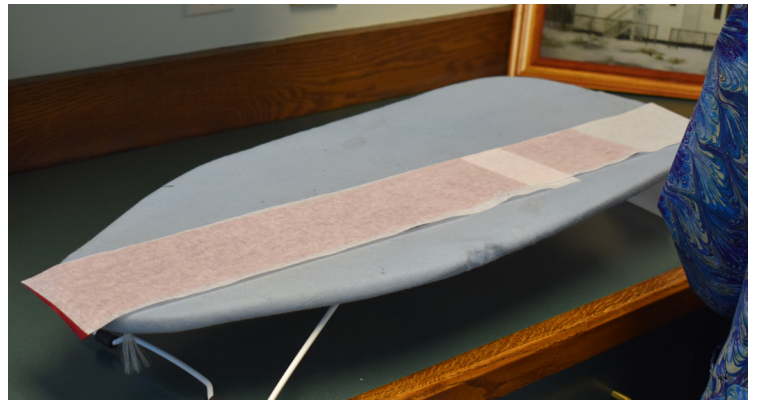
Step 7: Add a Collar

After all the decorations are added, add a collar.

Get your paper collar pattern and fold it in half. Place the folded collar pattern on a folded edge of the red fabric. Pin the pattern to the fabric and cut it out.



Cut the fusible interfacing (collar stiffener) to size and iron it to the back side of the red collar cut out. Use scissors to trim the excess stiffener material.



Fold the collar piece so that the stiffener side is out. Using red thread, sew the ends together to form a circle.





Pin the collar circle to the garment with the collar stiffener side facing out. Place the seam of the collar to the back and center of the garment. You want to have the right sides (the outer fabric) together and pin around the neck.



Sew the collar piece to the garment using a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch seam. Sew all the way around the collar.

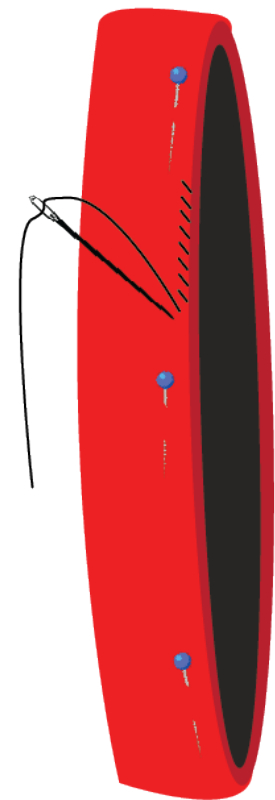


Fold the top edge of the collar piece inward by a $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and iron it in place.

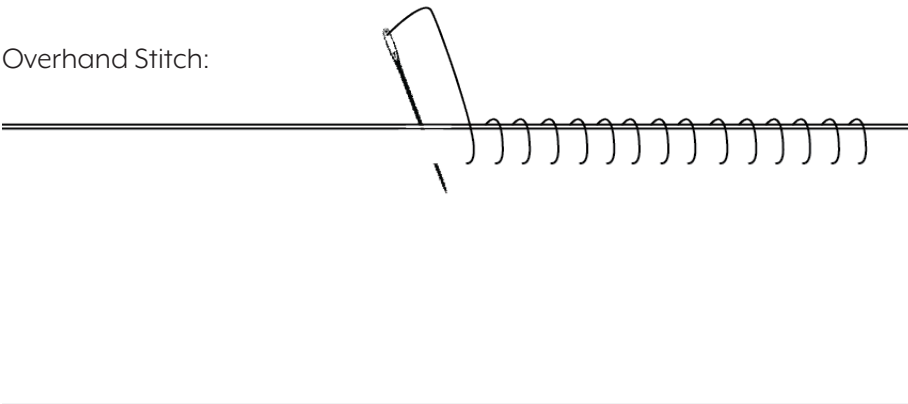


Then fold the collar piece in half and pin the edge to the seam line you made when sewing the piece to the garment. This will be a guideline to pin the edge down.

Hand-sew the pinned edge to the garment all the way around the collar using an overhand stitch.

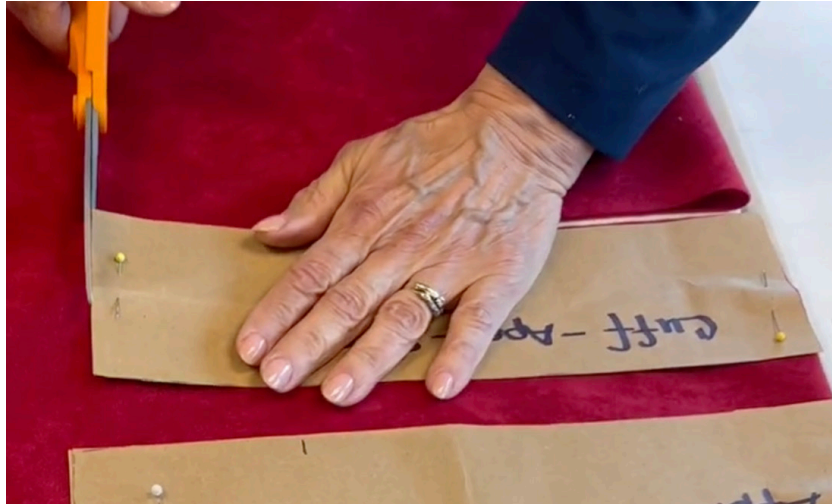


Overhand Stitch:

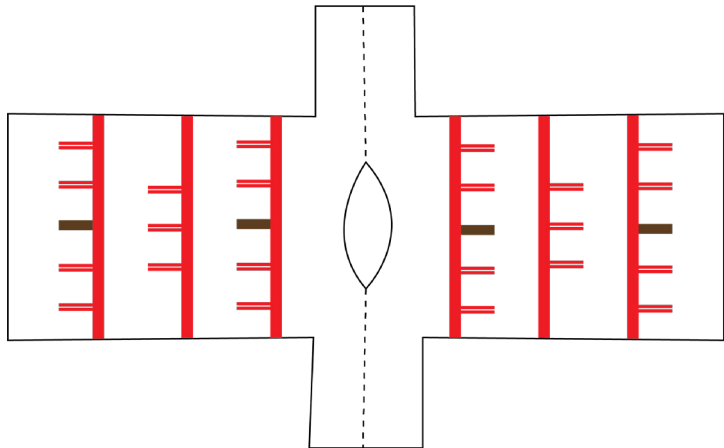


Step 8: Make the Cuffs

Place and pin the cuff patterns onto the red fabric. Cut them out.



Open the garment sleeve so that both sides are facing up flat.

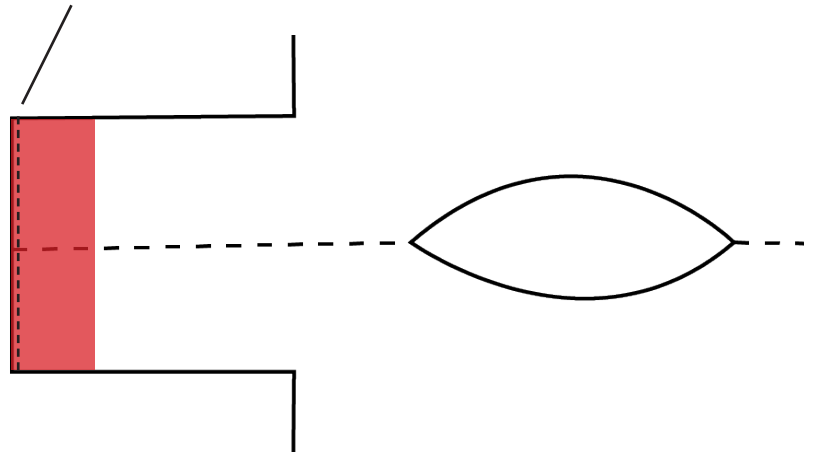


Place one cuff right side down and facing the outside of the garment.

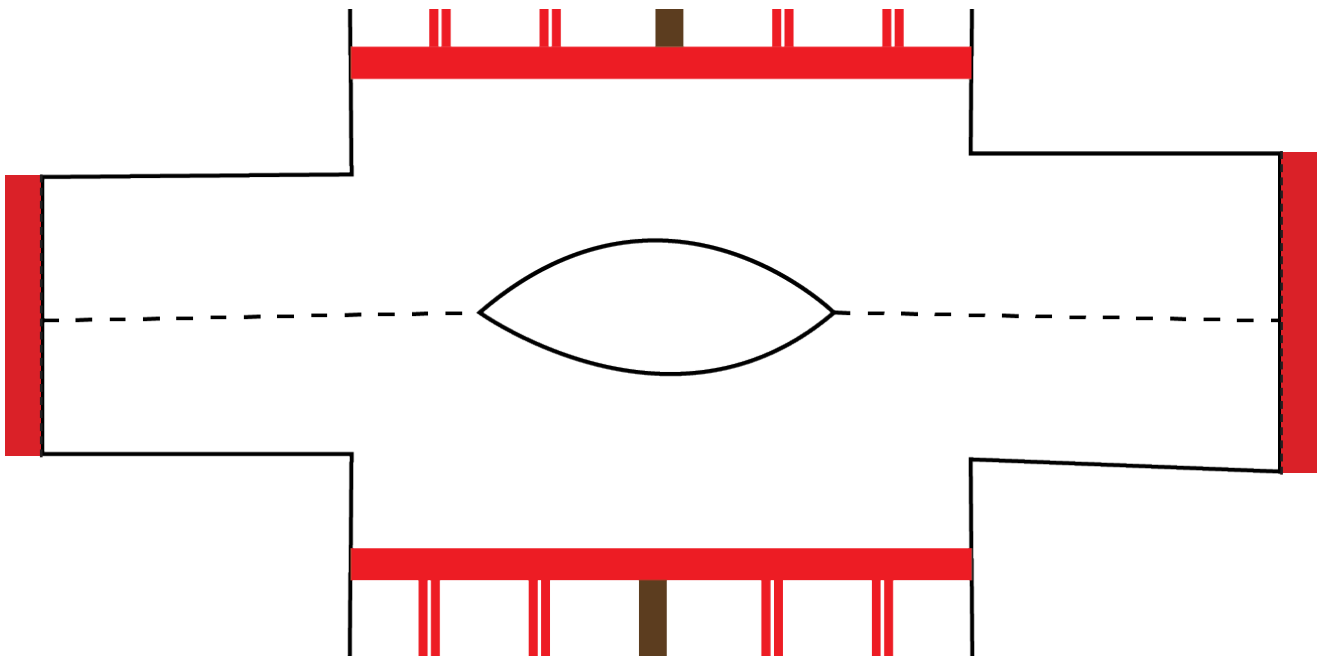
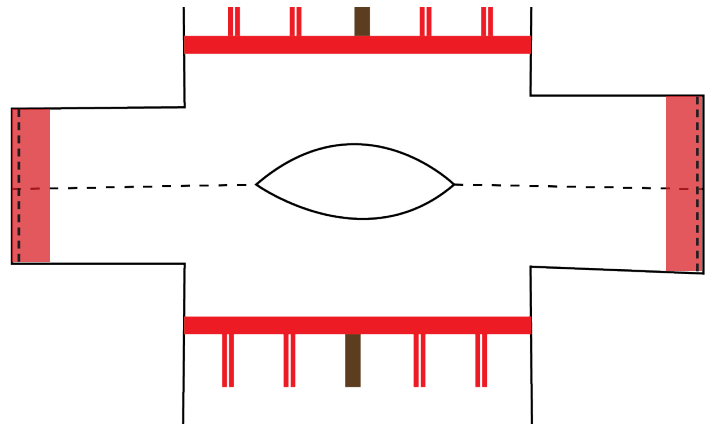


Pin the edge of the cuff to the edge of the sleeve.
Sew the cuff edge to the sleeve edge using the
sewing machine.

1/4 inch seam allowance



Repeat the process on the other sleeve and cuff.



Step 9: Sew the Sides of the Parka

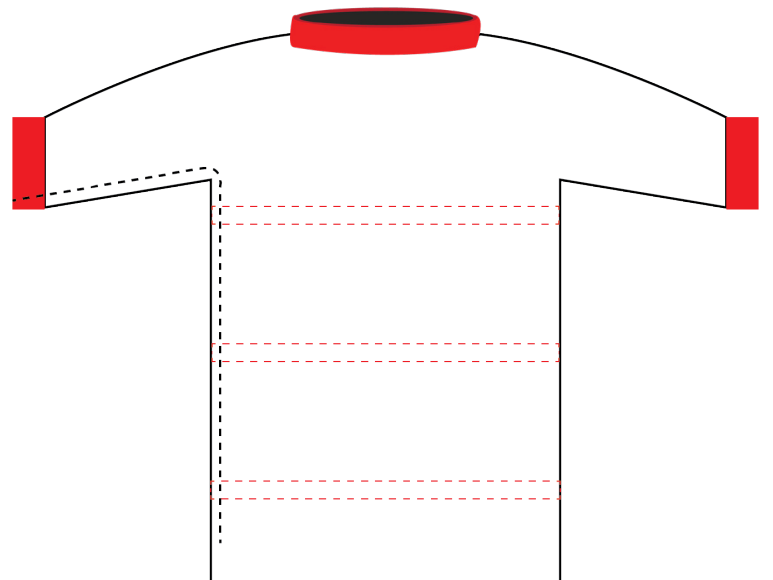
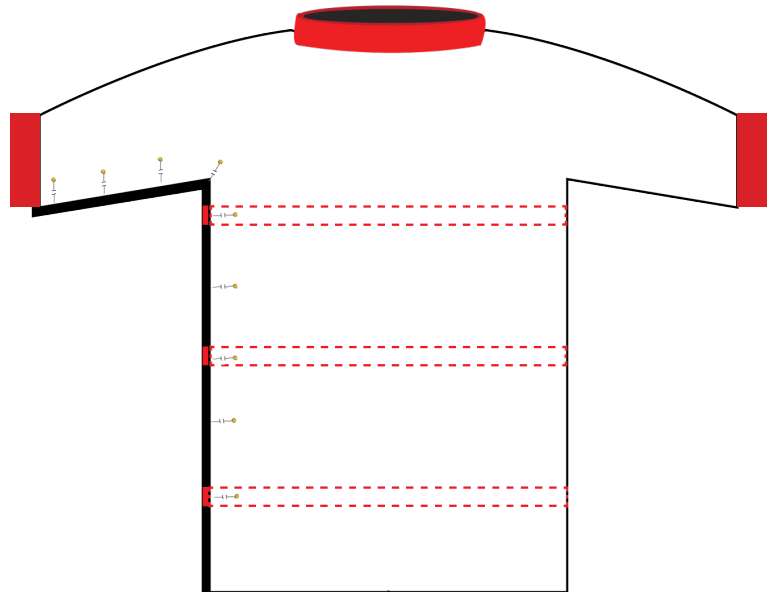
Pin the sides of the parka, inside out all the way from the bottom of the garment, down the sleeve, and to the cuff. Start by matching up the grosgrain first.



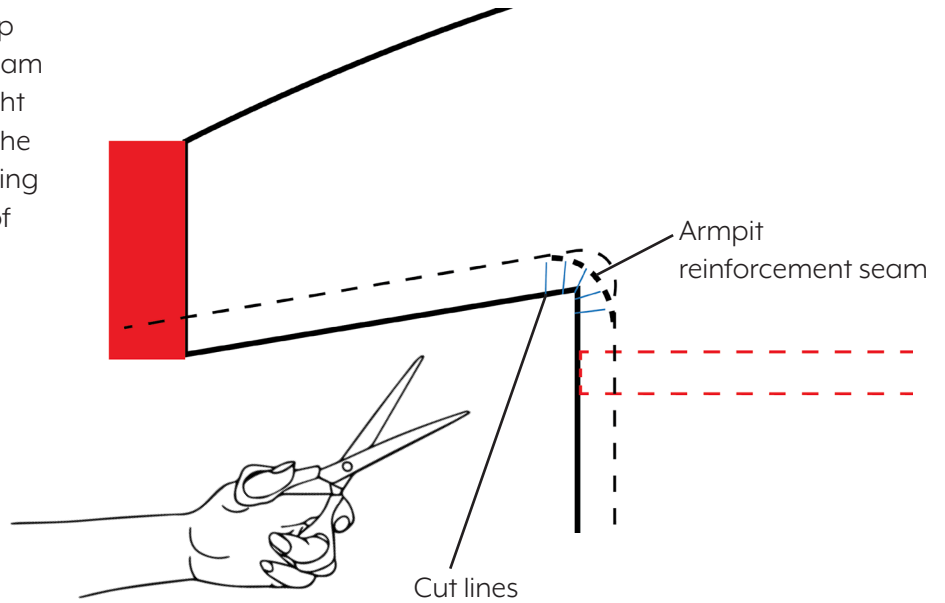
Leave 7 inches from the bottom of the garment for the hem and side slits.

Replace the sewing machine with black thread.

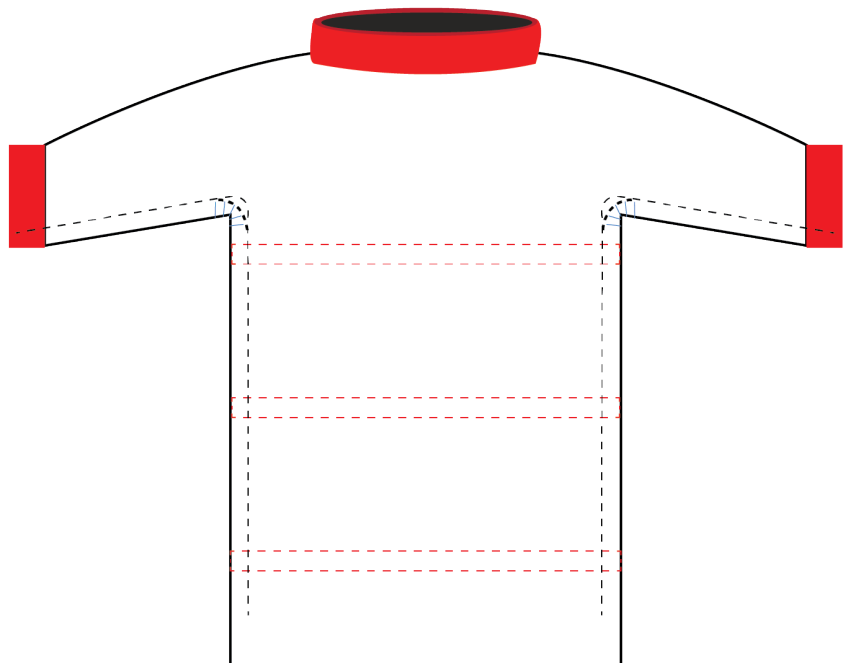
Sew one side of the parka together all the way up to the sleeve using a 5/8ths inch seam. Take extra time around the armpit area to make that curve just right. Sew all the way down the cuff.



With scissors make slits in the armpit to help with mobility (lines in blue). Sew another seam in the armpit to reinforce the area. Start right under your stitching, closer to the edge of the fabric, and make another straight stitch using the sewing machine to make a small row of reinforcement.



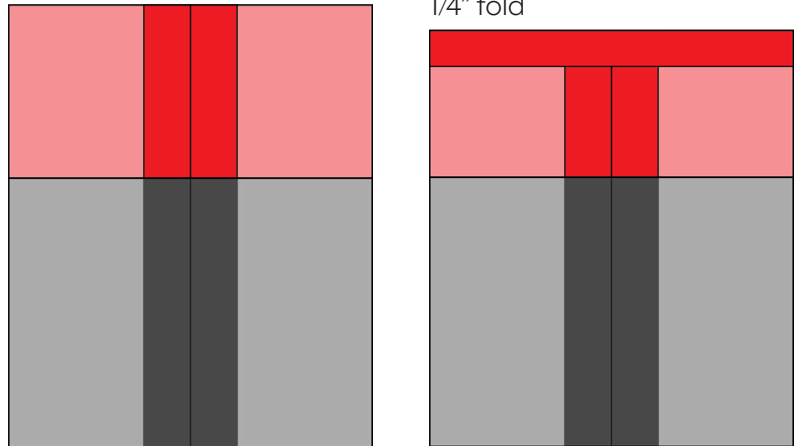
Repeat the process on the other side of the garment.



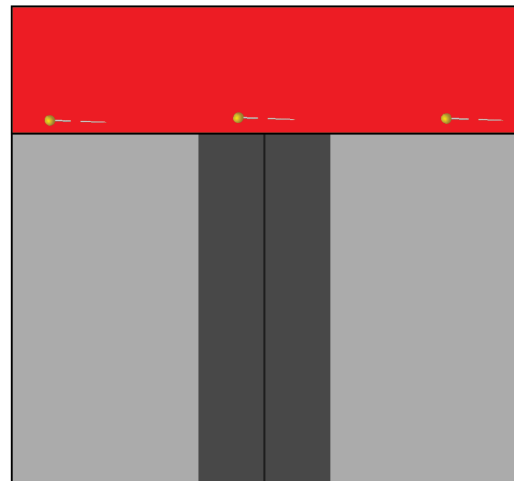
Step 10: Finish the Cuffs

Iron the cuff seam allowance, pressed apart.

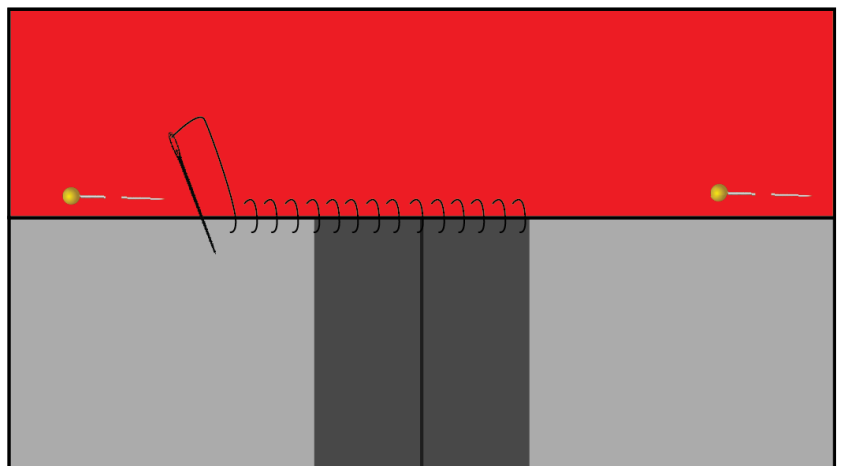
Fold the outer edge of the cuff in $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and iron it in place.



Like the collar, fold the cuff in half and pin the edge to the seamline.

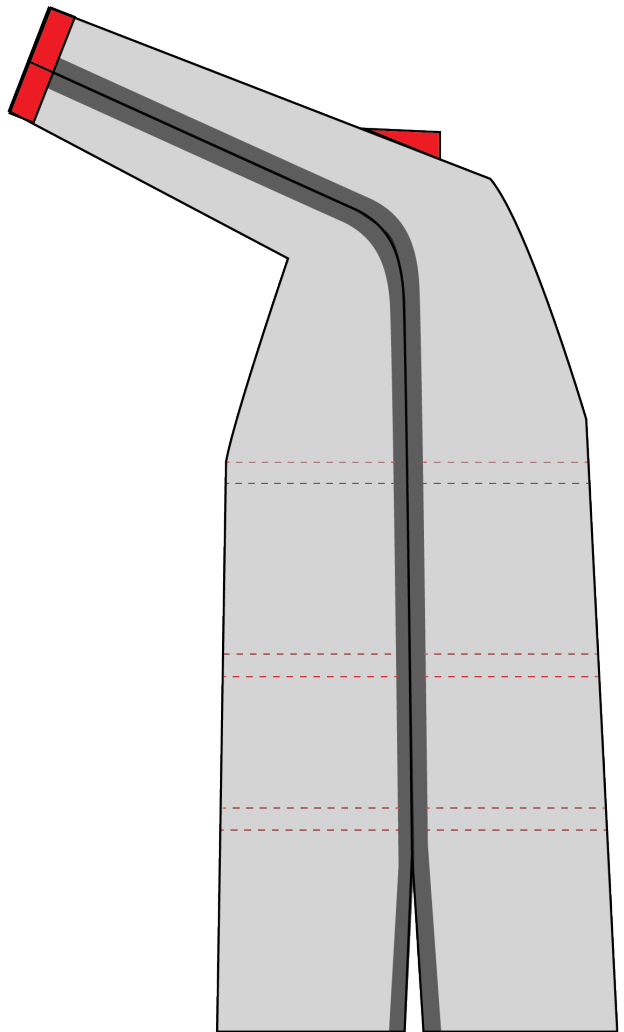


Hand-sew the pinned edge to the garment. Sew all the way around using an overhand stitch.

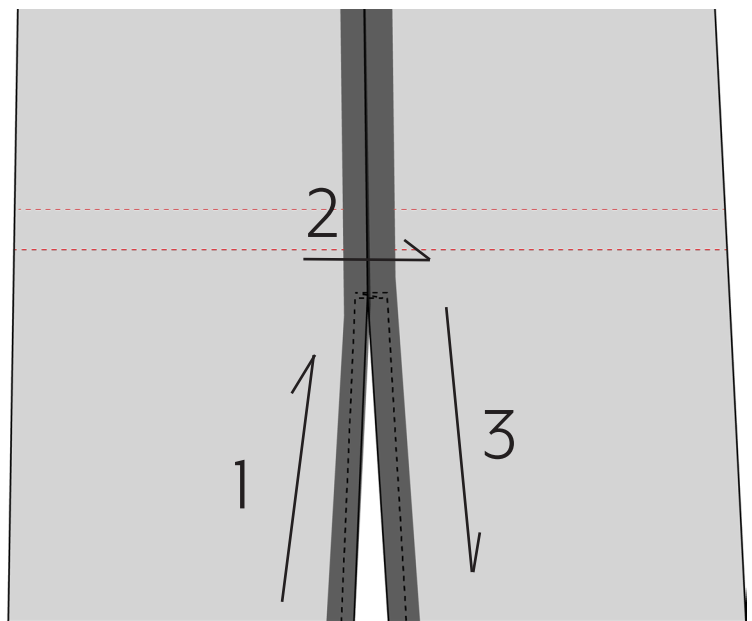


Step 11: Finish the Slit and Hem

Turn the garment inside out. Iron the side seams to lay flat. At the slit, fold in each edge to match the seam width. Pin the fold in place.

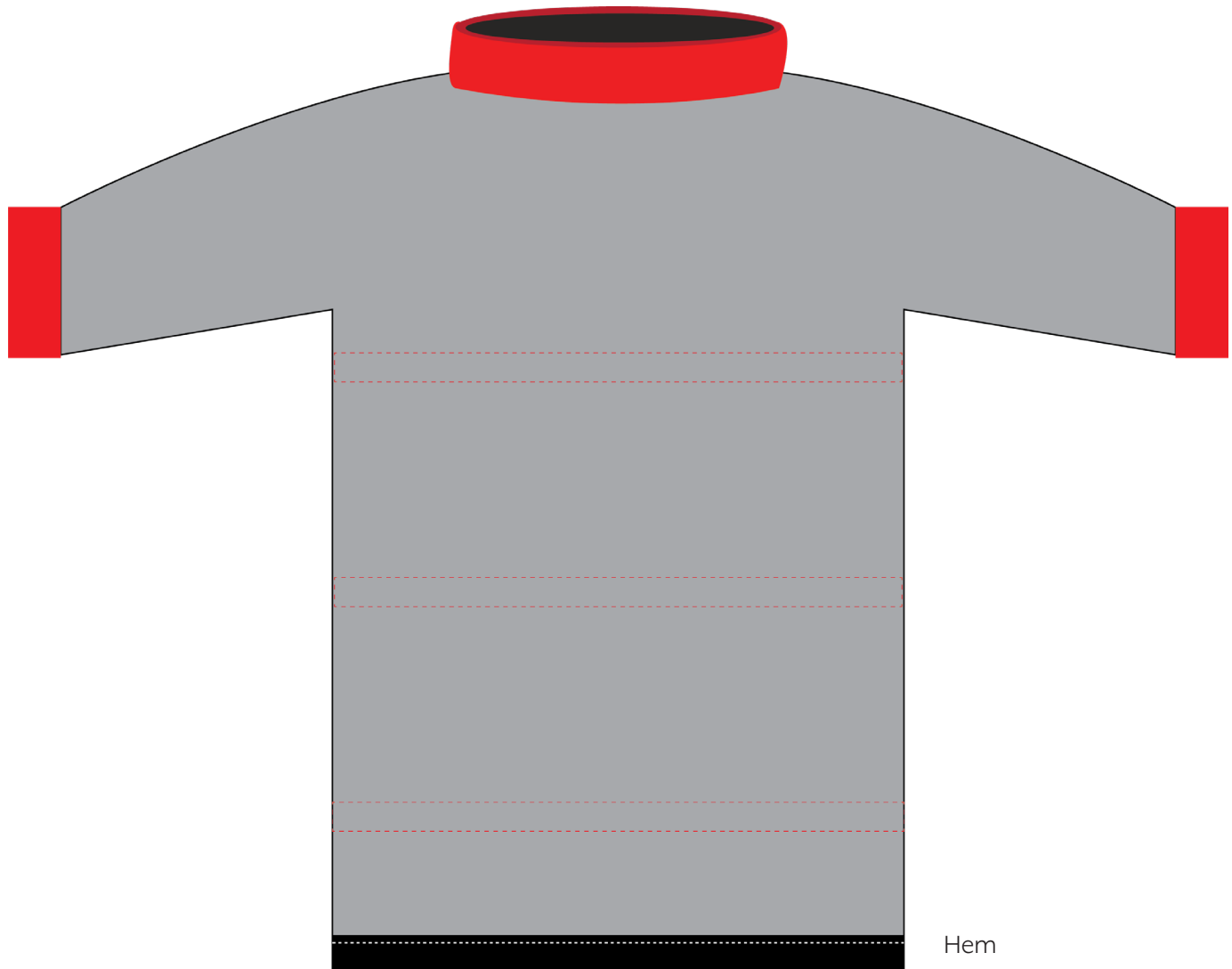


Sew each side of the slit on both sides of the garment. To sew the slit, start with a back stitch, then go up the slit. At the top of the slit, turn the material and sew directly across. Back stitch at the top, to reinforce the top of the slit. Then turn the material again and sew down the other side of the slit. Repeat this process on the other slit.



Fold the hem at the bottom of the garment to the desired length. Iron it flat. Pin it in place. Do this to both side “F” front and “B” back of the garment.

Sew the hem 1/8th inch down from the raw edge of the fabric.



Turn your parka right side out. It is complete.



Chyian Heine in a parka by Susan Malutin.



Susan Malutin with Threads of Remembrance, an atkuk commissioned for the Alutiiq Museum collection with support from Rasmuson Foundation, AM1049.

The snow falling parka is an iconic piece of Kodiak Alutiiq clothing. For hundreds of years, Alutiiq people have worn black garments, decorated with red bands and tufts of white fur. Now you can learn to make a fabric version. Open this booklet for step-by-step instructions. Find a supply list, measurements, and sewing directions. It's all provided by Elder Susan Malutin and accompanied by online video tutorials at alutiiqmuseum.org.

