

Traditional Workwear for Fishing

Fishing in Kushiro was tough work, particularly during the harsh winter months. Before modern thermal fabrics, fishermen kept warm by wearing short outer coats called *sashiko* (also known locally as *donza*). The coats were named for *sashiko*, or “little stabs,” a type of running stitch used to quilt together layers of indigo cotton or hemp. Featuring stitchwork patterns, these coats were practical but also decorative. Each coat was passed down through successive generations of a family.

Sashiko coats were shaped like a kimono, but with narrow cuffs and multiple layers to keep in body heat. It was usually the job of the fisherman’s wife to make and repair the coats during the winter, in preparation for the following year’s fishing season. *Sashiko* coats were common in Hokkaido from the Edo period (1603–1867) until imported woolen fabrics and cotton flannels became widespread in the Meiji and Taisho eras (1868–1926).