

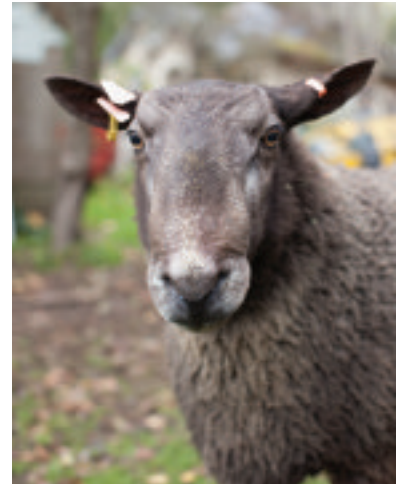


# Fabulous Local Fibre

**FIBRESHED HELPS  
SUPPORT AND  
ENCOURAGE LOCAL  
FIBRE, LOCAL DYES  
AND LOCAL ARTISANS**







STORY &  
PHOTOS BY  
**CHRISTINA  
SYMONS**

IT WAS THE WORK of internationally known educator, writer and natural-dye farmer, Rebecca Burgess that first inspired local spinners and weavers on the Sunshine Coast to look into Fibreshed. Today, Sunshine Coast's own Fibreshed project, the first of its kind in Western Canada, is growing and spreading passion for sustainable, local fibres, products and dyes.

Local artisan and guild member Deanna Pilling, who helped bring Fibreshed to fruition, explains her personal commitment to it.

"I thought, what can I do at this point in my life which is a good fit and puts my passion and past experience into purpose?" Deanna notes. "And this is it."

Fibreshed's mandate is to raise awareness and support sustainable textile systems, asking such questions as: "Where were your clothes ►

Left page, top: A basket of locally sourced, hand-spun fibre.

Bottom left: Fibreshed products are labelled for awareness.

Bottom right: Thormanby Island alpacas provide fibre for local spinners and weavers.

This page, top left: Lynda models her own Fibreshed felted vest.

Top right: A Sechelt sheep offers fleece.

Bottom right: A nuno felted scarf by Deanna.





Top, left to right: Sunshine Coast Fibreshed proponents Lynda Daniells, Heather Apple, Deanna Pilling and Merrily Corder.

Bottom: Hand warmers sourced, spun, dyed and knitted locally. Next page: Merrily's dress and leggings celebrate the concept of clothing "from soil to skin".

grown and sewn? Where were the yarns farmed? Where was the fibre ranched? And was the colour grown or was it mined?"

Answering these sourcing questions is critical to understanding the biological context and environmental and social implications of the raw materials and production processes used in our clothing.

"In the beginning, we weren't sure of the direction we'd like to take it locally," says local artisan and proponent, Merrily Corder. "As a project of the Spinners and Weavers Guild we can offer it to our members and the whole community."

Fibreshed is a non-profit organization functioning hand in hand with principles of ecological balance, local economies and regional organic agriculture. The goal here is to link skilled fibre artisans, spinners, dyers and fibre suppliers along the 100 miles of coastline from Langdale to Lund (including Gambier, Keats, Nelson, Savary, Texada, and Thormanby islands).

The group offers support and guidance to people and suppliers interested in local, sustainable products for fibre, wool, weaving,

textiles and garments.

Locals may become certified as Fibreshed suppliers and/or vendors, communicating the viability and quality of their products through a simple membership process and product awareness tagging.

"We hope to raise awareness but also to build and encourage people to raise the fibre animals locally," notes Heather Apple, another talented member of the guild and Fibreshed. "It's about llamas and alpacas and sheep and becoming aware of what fibres and dyes we can grow and work with here."

The challenge is in finding and connecting the local producers with fibre outlets and artisans.

"We'd like to put out a call to anyone on the Coast who is raising sheep or other fibre animals (such as llama, alpaca or angora rabbits)," Adds Lynda Daniells, artisan and guild member. "And also growers of nettles, hemp, flax, cotton or other sustainable fibres — any kind of fibre, please contact us."

In addition to outreach, public workshops and presentations are all part of the mandate.

"There are so many knowledgeable people



in our community," notes Merrily. "And there are so many uses for fibre."

The group notes that sometimes there is an unfortunate cycle of waste when fibre is not thought or known to be suitable for textiles. For example fibre from sheep raised for meat sometimes goes directly into the waste or compost.

"But we can actually use almost all fibre (in our craft)," adds Merrily.

Again, awareness is key.

Heather has recently reached out to the Sun Haven Waldorf School in Roberts Creek. A group of children and teachers toured her lovely property and gardens to learn about fibre and many things, including the rich blue natural dye colour of locally grown Japanese indigo.

"The children were thrilled when I brought out all the bags of wool to show them," notes Heather. "There are real benefits in reaching out to a community that is concerned about the environment."

Celebrating the concept "from soil to skin" ➤

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Heather shares Fibreshed knowledge and techniques with local school children.

is another philosophy at the heart of the Fibreshed movement and its local proponents heartily agree. Whether it is a child touching a silky bag of colourfully naturally dyed fleece or someone purchasing a pair of locally crafted, indigo-dyed jeans, the end result is the same.

"There is a subliminal benefit of wearing clothes that come from nature," contends Deanna. "And our bottom line is reducing our footprint on the planet."

On the radar for this inspiring group is to continue to connect with local vendors and suppliers, encourage the experimentation with growing local fibres such as cotton and hemp and inform consumers about their choices in terms of fibre and clothing.

"The dream would be to see a local shop with a sign that said, 'We carry Fibreshed clothing' much like they would a high-end designer line," says Deanna.

"We do have so many talented and aware people on the Coast and in the guild," says Merrily. "We'd love to get them some more great local fibre."

See the work of the Spinners and Weavers Guild and learn more about Fibreshed at their website [sunshinecoastfibreshed.ca](http://sunshinecoastfibreshed.ca). **CL**

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