

Madeleine Shaw – Lunapads International Products Ltd.

When Madeleine Shaw first fell in love with the idea of re-useable alternatives to disposable pads and tampons 15 years ago she immediately understood the positive impact the products could have on women's lives and the environment.

Today the glowing praise her customers so enthusiastically share about making the switch to Lunapads (washable, reusable cotton menstrual pads), Lunapanties (padded underwear) and the DivaCup (a reusable, internally-worn silicone cup) is testament to her original vision of *"creating a more positive and informed relationship between women, their bodies and the Earth."*

Eager to follow her passion and find a flexible way to earn a living, Madeleine began developing Lunapads and Lunapanties and wrote a business plan as a participant in the BCIT Venture Program in 1994. She operated a retail fashion boutique and small garment production facility from 1995 to 1998 while developing Lunapads' wholesale sales across Canada. She closed the store at the end of 1998 in order to focus on Lunapads exclusively.

In partnership with Suzanne Siemens since 2000 (they met as participants in the Leadership Vancouver program), Madeleine says the business has changed over the years although the products and mission are much the same.

The initial business model for Lunapads was about getting the products into health food stores but, with the advent of e-commerce, they have now gone global and ship worldwide on a daily basis. Online sales are handled out of an office in East Vancouver while several distribution companies sell Lunapads products to health food and online stores across Canada, the US, Europe and Asia.

Knowing that great things come from real people sharing real stories, Madeleine says she is constantly inspired by other entrepreneurs and has come to know a lot of fantastic colleagues she can call on anytime to ask business questions. "I'm always learning" she says. Madeleine has also shared her experiences and business knowledge as a Mentor in Women's Enterprise Centre's Peer Mentoring program.

One of the greatest strengths in the business, according to Madeleine, is a fantastic relationship with business partner Suzanne and with financial partners Renewal Partners, a Vancouver-based alternative venture capital group.

Madeleine also knows how to tap into her personal strengths and focuses her energies on product development, visioning the future, marketing and communications, while Suzanne, a chartered accountant, manages finance, operations and HR. True to Lunapads' mission, Madeleine says she feels a sense of real connection to her customers. "There is great satisfaction in knowing we have created a community - a sisterhood - and established a sense of trust for women"

Madeleine, Suzanne and the five staff members at Lunapads recognize and understand the needs of women on so many levels. They share their personal stories and, through their blog and other social networking tools, are able to connect with their customers. Lunapads truly delivers to their target market and, after a visit to their website www.lunapads.com, you will clearly see what a positive impact they are having in the lives of women around the world.

Women's Enterprise Centre is the go-to place for BC women business owners for business loans, skills training, business advisory services, resources, publications and referrals. Call us at 1.800.643.7014 or email inquiry@womensenterprise.ca from anywhere in BC.

