

SYKA Textiles Introduces Eco-Friendly Fabrics to Canadian Fashion

Susan Gagnon is the first to admit that she has always had a strange attraction to natural fibers and an innate appreciation for high-quality fabrics.

It has also always been a lifelong dream of hers to be the president of her own company. So, three years ago when all the pieces came together, it was only natural for Susan Gagnon and her husband Yves to start SYKA Textiles Trading Corp. in Mission, BC.

Becoming the first company in Canada to wholesale eco-conscious fabrics, however, was not all that easy. "When we started SYKA we were the only ones in Canada who offered these fabrics," says Gagnon. "The downside of that was that almost all of the designers who we spoke with had never heard of bamboo or soy fabrics, so we spent a lot of time introducing them to these fabrics and the benefits of using them."

The effort Gagnon put into educating designers about SYKA's products has helped her to build a strong reputation for quality, fashion forward fabrics. With a reputation like that comes more referrals and a lot more demand from new clientele.

"Our business has grown and is continuing to grow very quickly, so The Women's Enterprise Centre stepped in and provided financial support which allowed us to meet our customer's needs," says Gagnon. "It is really helpful to get an educated and informed opinion from an outside source that forces you to take a step back. We are extremely grateful for the support we have received."

Last year SYKA's exclusive line of fabrics, Eco-Lux, were featured in L'Oreal Fashion Week's FutureFashion, a fashion show with outfits made from eco-friendly fabrics and materials. "The exposure from being part of Canada's largest fashion show was amazing. It has really created awareness of the importance of quality in sustainable fashion and brought attention to our brand."

It is this line of eco-conscious fabrics that connected SYKA to Earth Pledge, a New York organization that aims to promote sustainable development. Earth Pledge asked SYKA to contribute an entire chapter to their new book. "FutureFashion White Pages is a compilation of essays from companies and experts working within the industry of sustainable fashion. It's all about their experiences and where they see the industry going. We were included amongst other contributors like Diane von Furstenberg and Julie Gilhart from Barney's New York!" exclaims Gagnon.

Over the last three years Gagnon has learned a lot about business, but the most important lesson she has been taught by entrepreneurship is to never give up: "Patience and perseverance! It takes both these to build solid relationships and a solid business," acknowledges Gagnon.

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 info@womensenterprise.ca from anywhere in BC.