Textile Lab for Circularity Archived Blog Posts

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How Osei-Duro & Union Gospel Mission are Making the Business Case for Social Sustainability

November 28, 2022

Here at the TLC, we strongly advocate for environmental *and* social sustainability. Many of the same societal structures that put our climate in jeopardy (such as overconsumption and fossil fuel pollution) have also impacted the wellbeing of populations around the world. In order for environmental initiatives to be sustained, human needs have to be met. We are inspired by projects that beautifully weave together environmental initiatives with social justice action. This fosters a more regenerative environment where nature and humans can both thrive.

Environmental and social sustainability problems are interconnected, and so should be the solutions.

An incredible local example of this is Osei-Duro's RERUNS program. Osei-Duro is a Vancouver-born clothing brand, using traditional textiles to create contemporary garments. Currently based in the USA, Canada and Ghana, Osei-Duro aims to support local apparel industries in becoming more sustainable.

The journey to RERUNS started when Osei-Duro's co-founder Maryanne Matthias taught sewing workshops for Union Gospel Mission's (UGM) Repair to Wear program. This UGM program provides low-barrier employment for folks experiencing poverty, homelessness, and addiction. In Repair to Wear, damaged clothing from corporate donors is repaired and resold in UGM's thrift store with profits funding their social programs. Maryanne was inspired by the social enterprise model and saw an opportunity to design a similar program for Osei-Duro.

A participant in Union Gospel Mission's Repair to Wear program.

In 2021, with the help of a grant from the City of Vancouver, Osei-Duro launched the pilot for RERUNS. Osei-Duro customers sent in their worn garments in exchange for store credit and graduates of the UGM Repair to Wear program were hired to repair items as well as fulfill orders. Factory seconds, customer returns, and damages were also fed into the program, ensuring sufficient inventory to run the pilot and enabling a circular solution where there was none before. The pilot proved so successful that they ran it again in 2022 using the profits made the first year.

What does the RERUNS Program look like now?

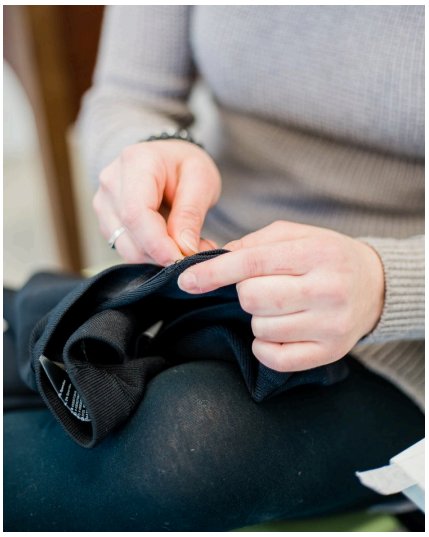
Osei-Duro now operates the RERUNS program two times a year. Participants attend workshops twice a week to learn how to repair, tailor, style garments, run e-commerce, manage inventory and fulfill orders.

2020 RERUNS program

The feedback Osei-Duro has received has been overwhelmingly positive. Participants have shared their gratitude for learning new skills in an environment designed to help them succeed while creating new connections and networks. Customers have appreciated the opportunity to get Osei-Duro pieces at a discount while supporting a sustainable initiative.

What is the Business Case for Running a Clothing Repair Program?

Developing a program like RERUNS closes the loop on waste, while building community resilience through job creation for marginalized communities. It is increasingly clear that factors like this are becoming more of a consumer priority; McKinsey reports that over 65% of emerging market consumers are seeking brands taking real action on sustainability. Further, repair programs such as RERUNS use fewer resources than more complex solutions like recycling; meaning simpler, more accessible solutions should be prioritized. Osei-Duro co-founder Maryanne also shared that from the start the program has paid for itself, showing that sustainability is just good business.



Participant of UGM's Repair to Wear program mending a garment.

UGM's Social Enterprise Manager Bobby MacDonald says programs like Repair to Wear and RERUNS demonstrate tangible pathways to provide those struggling with poverty, homeless or addiction an opportunity to participate in the circular economy. "Even on a micro-level, engaging in the circular economy is possible for non-profits and social enterprises." A new economic model like textile circularity requires new skill sets in the job force, and here is an opportunity to build those skills while also working towards poverty alleviation. These programs also show that there doesn't have to be a tradeoff between environmental stewardship and income generation.

Both Maryanne and Bobby shared that they hope more brands consider programs like this to do good in the world and for their businesses.

How to Support

Interested in learning more, or supporting Osei-Duro or UGM's work?

- Follow @oseiduro and @ugmvancouver on social media
- Read how UGM's Repair to Wear program changed this woman's life
- Shop at UGM's thrift store and FOUND Boutique

Written by Megan Bourassa

Circular Allies: Basecamp Repairs is Extending the Life of Outdoor Gear through Repair

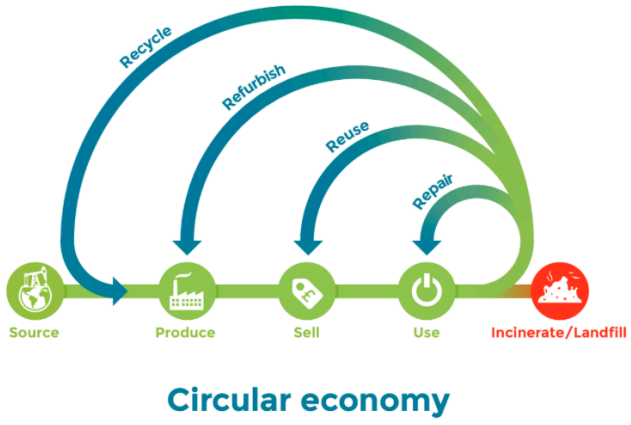
November 21 2022

Today we are introducing Basecamp Repairs, an exciting start-up in Victoria offering repair services for camping equipment and technical apparel.

Introducing Basecamp Repairs

Victoria-based Basecamp Repairs was born when Alex and Nic met working for a national outdoor equipment retailer and realized many products were being returned or thrown away when they could be easily repaired. They had already been repairing their own gear for years, so why couldn't they help others as well? The Basecamp mission is to reduce waste by extending the lifespan of outdoor equipment through repairs and maintenance.

Alex and Nic have capitalized on an important tenet of the circular economy; the tighter you keep your loops the more you conserve. Repair uses fewer resources and less energy than other options such as refurbishing and recycling.



In considering a circular economy, the goal is to keep the "resource loops" as tight as possible, so repair and extending a product's first useful life is the highest priority. Image from https://circulartayside.co.uk/what-is-the-circular-economy/

Making Gear Repair Accessible

Repair for a simple t-shirt can be tricky if you're not trained, let alone technical outdoor gear. Alex admits that items like tents, sleeping bags, rain jackets and backpacks each have their own set of nuances meaning almost no repair is the same, and at their current scale, some repairs are still out of reach. Still, Basecamp's services make this lofty task an accessible option for the everyday outdoor enthusiast.

In addition to reducing consumer waste through repair, Basecamp is also committed to reducing their own waste from the repair process. Where possible, they use materials harvested from “unfixable” items in their repairs. This reduces waste while recapturing the value and functionality of technical materials such as Gore-Tex. Basecamp stands behind the quality of their repairs, offering a 6 month guarantee on all services.

What’s Next for Basecamp?

Basecamp has built the bulk of their business so far through referrals from local outdoor retailers. In the future they hope to solidify these relationships by becoming warranty providers for these retailers. This could streamline the process for the consumer and reduce the impact of shipping back and forth.

Interested in learning more, or supporting Basecamp Repair’s work?

Follow Basecamp Repairs on Instagram
Get your gear repaired! Check out their list of services here
Contact info@basecamprepairs.com with your gear repair questions or collaboration ideas
Join the movement! Learn how to take proper care of your gear, to make it last longer. (For example, Arc’teryx has some great videos for care and repair of Gore-Tex!)

Written by Megan Bourassa

Fashion Takes Action's Mechanical Recycling Pilot is Paving the Way for Textile Recycling in Canada

June 16, 2022

The Fashion Takes Action mechanical textile recycling pilot is well underway, and many learnings have been uncovered so far building upon the initial Feasibility Study completed in 2021. For the textile recycling pilot, clothing donations were collected from consumers and corporate partners back in November 2021. Items collected were cleaned, sorted and trimmed (to remove buttons, zippers and adhesives), shredded and defibrized into a material suitable for felting, a mechanical process to change textile fibres into usable fabric. Material prototyping has recently been completed with textile-to-textile recycled polyester combined with more conventionally available recycled polyester. Fashion Takes Action's retail partner is prototyping a product to be sold in stores this Winter.

Collection Process Learnings

The start date for the collection period was pushed back from September to November, due to a federal election that resulted in a funding delay. For the pilot to stay on schedule, this meant that there would only be 4 weeks for in-store collection of post-consumer textiles. While they did receive a decent amount of donations (51 kg from consumer donations at SportChek stores), this was not even close to the 1000 kgs required to run the pilot. Upon reflection, 4 weeks was not enough time to convey the messaging to consumers effectively, or troubleshoot logistics such as bin colour and location.

A collection program like this needs to be convenient and low friction for consumers to participate and there were several contributing factors that limited the pilot's full ideal outcome. Communication with consumers was tricky given the hyperlocal nature of the collection pilot, SportChek was not able to leverage its full marketing potential to promote it. Communication was limited to in store customers visually seeing the bins and inquiring about the program. Logistical details such as placement of bins, location of stores and time of year posed barriers to donation. Many of the participating stores were located in malls, where people often don't think to bring in big bags of donations nor logistically would manage getting the materials into the stores (vs. using a drive through donation option other systems use). The collection period also happened after most people had already done a pre-holiday clear out. Another big challenge was communicating that the specific material requirement for donations was only 100% polyester. Customers were eager to donate, but the details were lost, resulting in more sorting

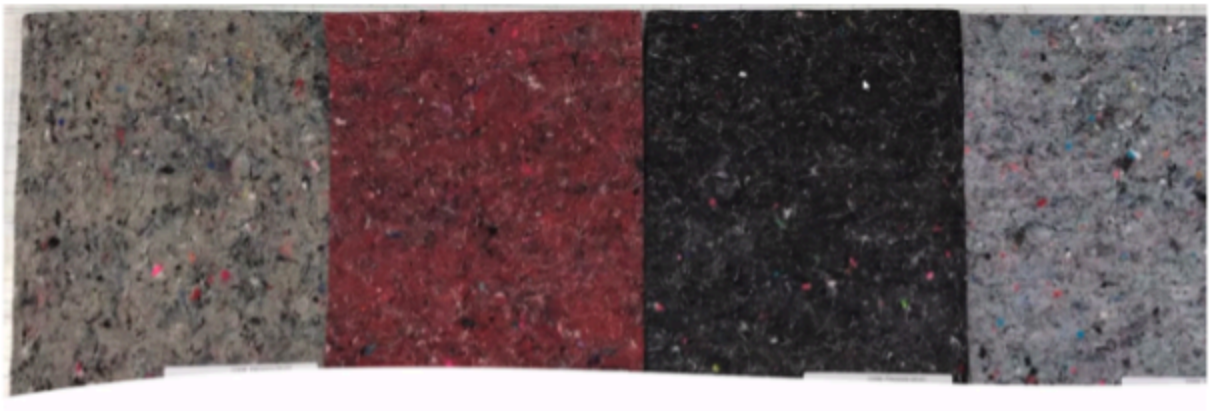
required as consumers donated all kinds of clothing materials. In the future, a longer education campaign with potential consumer incentives would be advised.

Sorting Process

Despite the in-store collection pilot's low returns, the pilot still forged ahead as fortunately, the other corporate partners and Goodwill (the sorting partner) were able to provide supplemental textiles in order to achieve the required 1000 kg. The sorting process was quite labour intensive, requiring workers to manually cut away trims and fastenings such as zippers, buttons and clasps and then run them through a metal detector to ensure thoroughness. Goodwill reported that trimming accounted for about 10.7% of the weight of textiles they processed. In future for this process to be viable, more sorting efficiency and potentially automation would be required.

Recycling Process

After sorting, Jasztex shredded the materials and passed onto Alkegen (formerly Texel) to card and needle punch the fibres into a felted material. The recycling partner reflected that it was difficult to manage the wide range of colours received in donations, as well as consistency in quality which is something to consider as the process is scaled up. The material needed to be aesthetically pleasing as it would be used for a consumer facing product. Despite these initial challenges, a final felt was developed using 90% recycled materials - 50% regenerated poly (from plastic bottles), 40% post-consumer textiles, and 10% low melt (virgin) poly. An important learning in this process was that the final recycled material could not be made from 100% post consumer textiles. A certain length of fibre is needed for the needle punching process, and every time polyester is recycled, its fibre breaks down to shorter strands. This also limits the amount of times polyester, including this felted material, can be recycled.



Next Steps

With the felted material finalised, the project is now in the product development and testing stage. A textile and product design expert is working closely with Canadian Tire and their product development team to design a consumer product that is useful and aesthetically pleasing, while also serving as an educational tool.

So far, this project has left all involved feeling optimistic about the future for textile recycling. We now know that it is indeed possible, so the question remaining is, why aren't we doing more of it? The most obvious answer at the moment is that without funding, costs for mechanical recycling are quite prohibitive and further investments need to be made to increase the manufacturing scale, efficiency and capacity across each step in the process. Other investments must also be made to provide consumer awareness and education should a full scale, all-store collection bin program be launched in the future with Sport Chek or other retail partners.

Stay tuned for our final blog post on this project, revealing the end product that goes to stores, and the overall learnings for the future of textile recycling in Canada!

Want to learn more?

- Read the Feasibility Study
- Follow FTA on LinkedIn

Written by Megan Bourassa

Circular Allies: Shyne Eyewear is Making Affordable Eyewear Using Textile Waste

June 6, 2022

Today we are thrilled to collaborate with another aligned Circular Ally, Shyne Eyewear and share their guest-written blog post! Read on to learn how this group of university students took action after being inspired by a plastic waste challenge they saw in their workplace and turned it into inspiration for circular eyewear fashion. We love how their solution touches on both environmental and social sustainability!

How Shyne Eyewear Began

Shyne Eyewear is a student-run social enterprise from the University of Ottawa that aims to build a community of change makers who can move fashion forward into a sustainable future.

Our story began in 2018, when we recognized the issue of plastic waste in Canada. We had never considered the amount of plastic waste coming from the fashion industry until we were personally confronted with it. Our story began when one of our friends working at a popular retail chain was instructed to throw away plastic hangers after just one use. He would see several garbage bags of full plastic hangers thrown out daily. This was not only a pattern exclusive to his chain but a common practice across millions of fashion businesses in Canada.

The Shyne Eyewear team

After learning about the plastic waste issues we face in Canada, we decided it was our time to help make a change. The vision behind Shyne was to create a product allowing the community to be involved in making a change in the world. We then found ECONYL®, a polymer produced from regenerated nylon sourced from textile waste. This was the perfect material to make our line of eyewear.

Shyne's vision is to provide a sustainable solution to the country's pressing issues and build a

community of conscious customers in the process. About two and a half million Canadians require vision care but cannot afford access to these services. The average Canadian spends a total of between $240-1000 on a pair of glasses per year. The goal of Shyne is to provide affordable, stylish glasses that also help save the planet, by shifting consumer behaviour.

Shyne Sunnies

Our Process

Our partner Aquafil collects the textile waste, consisting of plastic fishing nets and industrial fabrics from the ocean. AquafilSLO then uses the material collected from the sea to create their ECONYL® regenerated nylon. This ECONYL® is then sent to our manufacturer Danor. Danor brings Shyne Eyewear's vision to a reality by creating our frames. We then receive the packages and distribute our product to customers with 100% recycled packaging and a handwritten note on seed paper.

Our Future

Shyne continues to grow our brand with brand ambassadors, collaborations, and partnerships. The more we can grow, the greater impact we can have on behalf of our community. We are constantly finding new ways to support the environment and our community in Ottawa by working with and donating to charities. The more glasses we can produce, the more change we can make in the world.

Written by the Shyne Eyewear team, edited by Megan Bourassa

Circular Allies: Up Pet is Making Pet Accessories out of Landfill-Destined Textiles

May 4, 2022

Up Pet founder Clavia Castilhos

Up Pet is a Canadian brand, creating upcycled accessories for pets and their humans. Up Pet officially began in 2019, while founder Clavia Castilhos was doing her post grad in sustainable fashion production at George Brown. She already had 10+ years experience working in the fashion industry in Brazil, and understood the nature of the industry's challenges, especially textile waste. She was excited to learn about the Salvation Army challenge encouraging designers to upcycle post-consumer textiles, particularly home textiles and linens, to divert them from landfills. Being a lifelong pet lover, Clavia had also noticed a gap in the market for sustainable pet accessories. And so Up Pet was born!

Clavia started creating product samples in 2019, with reclaimed textiles from The Salvation Army, and the support of her mentors at George Brown. Before she knew it, she was selling at local craft fairs, and in March 2021 officially opened her ecommerce store. Now she sells a full collection of pet accessories, including toys, poop bag holders, bandanas, and her signature designs, the shirt collar and backpack.

Pet Backpack

All products are made in limited runs due to the nature of her material sourcing, which has proved to be both a selling feature, and a challenge. Clavia claims that education around upcycled products is still the biggest hurdle for startups like Up Pet. Consumers are accustomed to having a wide variety of choice, and virtually unlimited supply. It will take some time to help customers understand and value the way circular products are made.

Circularity & Collaboration

From the beginning, collaboration was a key component in Up Pet's DNA. As Clavia says: *"We can change the world together, collaboration is the best part of humanity. We have the power to connect and help each other improve."* To this day, The Salvation Army is still her primary source for reclaimed materials, including bedsheets, linens, and bolts of deadstock fabric.

As her business expands she hopes to build partnerships with other local businesses that value the circular economy. This includes partners even outside of the textiles industry. While Up Pet's core product line will remain textile based, Clavia is interested in collaborating on other types of products, such as pet beds, and even homeware for pet owners. She has started exploring this area by upcycling reclaimed mugs from thrift stores with designs appealing to pet parents.

Written by Megan Bourassa

Roadmap for Building a Textile Recycling Pilot - Fashion Takes Action

March 14, 2022

Fashion Takes Action is running a mechanical textiles recycling pilot that started in Fall 2021, to show the business case for full-circle textile recycling technology in Canada. The pilot will recycle used 100% polyester activewear into a consumer facing product, which to our knowledge, has never been done before.

Building a recycling pilot is no small feat. As part of our collaboration with FTA, we are supporting them in open sourcing the learnings from the pilot project. This blog series will be one way we are sharing the tips and tricks gathered as the pilot progresses. Our goal at the TLC is to help map the path to creating more recycling pilots across Canada and elsewhere.

Steps to building a Mechanical Textile Recycling Pilot

This post will go over at a high-level the steps taken so far, and the projected next steps taken in creating this pilot project. Followup posts will dive deeper into the lessons and takeaways from each stage, as we learn about them in the Stakeholder Working Group.

Step 1 - Assess Feasibility
As we outlined in our last blog post, in 2020 FTA conducted an extensive feasibility study which resulted in this paper. Before developing a pilot project, it is important to have a robust understanding of the problem and evidence to substantiate the need for a pilot. Some key outcomes of the FTA Feasibility Study included: understanding the textile waste problem and potential solutions, developing industry recommendations, building a business case for the recommended technology (in this case, mechanical textile recycling), defining the pilot and beginning outreach for partners. The completed Feasibility Study was the perfect lead into the pilot announcement, and is a fundamental asset in moving onto the next step of securing pilot partners.

Step 2 - Secure Partnerships
While FTA is an expert in research and convening, they understood the need to bring on partners that held different areas of expertise, products and services for this pilot. They have built a model of what a textile recycling supply chain could look like. These are the partnerships FTA has determined necessary to run a textile recycling pilot:

- One or more retail partner(s) with the capacity and willingness to do front-end collection, product R&D and quality assurance on final product
- Collection partner to facilitate donations from consumers (could be same as retail partner)
- Partner to facilitate pickup from collection sites, and clean/sort

- Recycling partner to chop, shred and card material
- Mill partner to needle punch the material into a felt
- Prototyping partner to develop options for an end material (includes testing for tensile strength, durability, etc.)
- Retail partner (ideally the same as the collection site) to sell the end product (including development of packaging, labeling and marketing)

Step 3 - Source and secure funding
After developing the business case and a viable plan, the next step is to secure funding to make the project happen.

The bulk of the funding for this particular project came from the federal government, through Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC). There was significant in-kind support from some of the pilot partners themselves, and the stakeholder working group's participation fees are helping to contribute to the reporting and learning aspect of this project.

Step 4 - Collection Period
This is where the exciting part kicked off — the garment collection process! For FTA's pilot, the public could drop off used polyester activewear at one of the participating Sport Chek drop off locations through the month of November, 2021. During the collection period, Goodwill, the nonprofit collection partner, picked up donations, and sorted the items based on fiber content.

Step 5 - Sort, Clean, Ship
Goodwill sorted the items and sold or upcycled anything that required complex processing. If the project coordinator has secured a pre-processing partner, such as a certified destroyer, more complex processing such as de-buttoning and de-zippering could be feasible. Eligible items were then sent to the recycler for testing.

Step 6 - Prototyping Phase
Prototyping and Recycling partners then tested the materials, to provide several output options. The retail partner decided on an output material, and began product development.

Step 7 - Product Sold in Stores
A consumer product will then be developed from the recycled material, and sold in stores! The goal for the FTA pilot is to have a product on Canadian Tire shelves by Fall/Winter 2022

Step 8 - Learnings Shared Back with Industry
In an effort to share learnings back to the industry, FTA is facilitating a stakeholder learning group with diverse participants from across the country. The hope is that participants will take these learnings back to their regions, and run similar pilot projects.

Here at the TLC we are very excited to be supporting FTA with this open sourcing process.

Who's involved?

Pilot Players

- Nonprofit Coordinator — Fashion Takes Action
- Retail Partner — CTC's SportChek stores in southwestern Ontario
- Collection and Sorting Partner — GoodWill
- Recycling Partner — Jasztex in Pointe-Claire, QC
- Mill Partner for Felting, Testing & Prototyping — Texel, (now a subsidiary of Alkegen) in Saint-Elzéar, QC
- Product Development — Textile expert Marianne Mercier, and the CTC product development team
- End Product Retail — Canadian Tire stores

Stakeholder Learning Group

Brands, municipalities and other groups interested in observing and learning about the technology, and bringing learnings back to their regions are meeting every few months during the pilot. This group of 60+ individual organizations is following along.

Mechanical Textile Recycling Lifecycle

Want to learn more?

Read the Feasibility Study

Written by Megan Bourassa

Green Your Spring Clean with these BC Textile Reuse & Recycling Resources

March 7, 2022

Here at the Textile Lab for Circularity, we often get the question “What should I do with my old clothes/textiles?”

It is a great question, with a not so clear answer. Our first suggestion is always reuse or repair if possible (check out our last blog post all about that), but we understand that may not always be feasible. In this case, there are many great resources across BC for reuse and responsible disposal of textiles.

FABCYCLE
FABCYCLE is a textile waste collection and resale business with a mission to find creative solutions to divert textiles from landfill. They accept donations of textile scraps, offcuts, deadstock and sewing supplies for resale. Contact them here to organize a donation.

Our Social Fabric
Our Social Fabric is a non-profit fabric store selling donated deadstock, keeping textile “waste” out of landfill, and getting it into the hands of creatives. They currently accept unused fabric, quilting cottons, leather, sewing notions and tools. To donate, please email donate@oursocialfabric.ca to arrange a time for drop-off.

Revivify
Have you ever wished your apartment building had a bin for disposing of clothes, like it does for garbage and recycling? Revivify can help you make that happen! Their textiles program provides collection bins for high rise apartment buildings in Vancouver. Bins and collection service are free of charge, and donations support the Big Brothers’ and Sisters’ programs. Ask your strata or building manager to contact Revivify to set up your free bin.

Shred Neoprene
Got an old or worn out wetsuit lying around? Tofino based Shred Neoprene will take your old surf gear and either repair it for resale, or shred it down for recycling. They are currently innovating ways to use the shredded material for new consumer products.

Reuz Recycling Solutions
Reuz is committed to supporting the circular economy through innovative reuse and repurpose solutions. They run a storefront in New Westminster, and facilitate clothing donation pickups, or an event for your whole building! Contact them here to schedule a pickup.

Animal Shelters or Hospitals
Some animal shelters accept donations of towels, blankets and pillow cases to create comfy sleeping spaces for their furry residents. Be sure to call ahead of time to see what they are accepting. The BC SPCA also runs thrift stores which accept clothing donations.

Boomerang Bags Vancouver
Boomerang Bags is an international movement of sewing enthusiasts making bags to combat plastic pollution. Get in contact with your local chapter to see if they are currently accepting donations.

SUPPLY Victoria
SUPPLY is a nonprofit that redistributes used art, office and school supplies to artists, students and teachers. They accept donations of unused fabrics and sewing supplies. Contact them to schedule a drop off.

Working Gear Vancouver
Working Gear is a local nonprofit providing interview and industry appropriate clothing to low income individuals in search of employment. They accept new and gently used office attire and construction clothing by appointment.

brand "Take Back" programs
Many brands are launching take back programs to address the issue of textile waste in their supply chains. Patagonia led the charge with their resale hub Worn Wear. Other brands are following suit, including Lululemon, Arc'teryx, Adidas and The North Face.

Local Swapping Communities

One person's trash is another person's treasure! This sentiment couldn't be more true for growing swap communities such as Bunz and Swapsity. List what you are getting rid of, and what you are on the hunt for. These clever services will facilitate matches to help you close that loop. Refresh your closet, and maybe even make some new friends along the way!
Have you used any of these resources before? Please share how you like to reuse and repurpose your old clothes!

Written by Megan Bourassa

Reduce Your Fashion Footprint with these BC Repair and Alteration Resources

January 18 2022

Did you know, more than 20,000 tonnes of textile waste go to landfill annually in Greater Vancouver alone?*

This number is shocking, but also represents an opportunity. We each have the opportunity to take action in our own closets, by exploring options outside of disposal. According to WRAP UK's research, extending the life of a garment by just 9 months can reduce its carbon, waste and water footprint by up to 30%! That's an incredible impact that can happen right in our closets.

Before you donate or dispose of your clothing, consider whether it could be repaired or altered to extend its use. There are many great services locally to help you bring new life to your tired wardrobe. Support local AND reduce your closet's impact, a win-win! Check out some of our favourites below:

Making a Mends
Self proclaimed "pants mechanic", Making a Mends is a local Vancouver garment repairs and alterations provider, with a speciality for denim. Tears, rips and worn crotches, be gone!

Awl Together Leather
This queer owned repair shop in East Van specializes in leatherwork, shoe repair, alterations and redyes!

Renewt
Renewt specializes in repairs and alteration for technical apparel. Extend the life of your outdoor gear, and get back to adventuring!

The Kick's Doctor
Local Vancouver startup Kicks Doctor will bring your worn sneakers back to life! Those mud stained white shoes will look as good as new after a trip to the Doctor.

Think Thrice
Think Thrice is Metro Vancouver's campaign for reducing textile waste to landfill. Use their free online resource library to learn how to mend and alter your clothes.

Sateen Alterations
This humble repair shop in North Van is committed to helping you Repair, Recycle, Reclaim or Repurpose your old garments. They also offer a "Teddy Bear hospital" service for loved stuffed animals.

Nika Designs
Located in Gastown, Nika Designs is committed to preserving artisanal crafts such as

leatherwork, as a method to combat the rise of fast fashion. They can fix just about anything made of leather, including shoes, jackets, handbags and other accessories.

Frameworq
Frameworq is a nonprofit committed to combatting textile waste by building communities and education around repair. Check out their website for upcoming Textile Fix-It events near you!

How do you give your old clothing a new life? We would love to hear about your favourite resources.

Written by Megan Bourassa

Circular Allies: Shred Neoprene

October 1, 2021

Shred Neoprene founder Karen Hendry

Shred Neoprene is a social enterprise based in Tofino, BC with a mission to collect, grind and upcycle neoprene through innovative solutions and partnerships in Canada. Karen Hendry, Shred's passionate founder, started the organization in 2021 after working in the surf industry and volunteering with Surfrider Foundation for many years, and learning about the wetsuit waste problem. With Tofino being a popular surf destination for both locals and tourists, surf shops and resorts offer wetsuit rentals year round, resulting in a high turnover of wetsuits. While the Surfrider Foundation has been collecting wetsuits through their Wetsuit Reincarnation Program for recycling in California since 2017 (saving 4.5 tonnes of neoprene from landfill), Hendry saw the need for a more local solution.

Getting Partners on Board

With a background in and passion for partnerships, Hendry built Shred Neoprene with collaboration as a central value. She has already secured a recycling partner — Mattress Recycling in Hope, BC. Mattress Recycling is able to grind down neoprene wetsuits, booties and gloves, resulting in a fluffy ground material. Zippers and other hardware are either recycled, or sent to local businesses for reuse. Shred is currently testing the ground material with an eco-paving company in Vancouver; a partnership that would allow them to upcycle large amounts of neoprene at once.

Ground neoprene material

The surf community has reacted positively to the program so far, excited to have a local solution for recycling wetsuits. Hendry is currently collaborating with several surf shops to develop a “fee per wetsuit” recycling program to help fund Shred’s operations. The average weight of an adult wetsuit is 3-4 pounds and it costs an average of $10 to recycle each wetsuit. She is keen to get larger surf brands on board as sponsors to take the program to the next level. Far West Distributors has generously provided support with storage and island transport. So far Shred has collected over 1000 pounds of neoprene! In addition to their wetsuit recycling program, Shred also recycles surf rashguards, which are ground down and used as an alternative for kiln fuel in cement manufacturing.

What’s Next?

Alongside this exciting progress, Shred is actively looking for local manufacturers to produce mats from the ground neoprene. Hendry has developed several simple designs, including an interlocking puzzle mat and a doormat, that could be sold back to local surf shops and resorts. Hendry is motivated to bring the process full circle, to educate the community and prove to the industry that circularity can be profitable. Hendry hopes that by closing the loop on wetsuit waste, she can gain attention from larger businesses, securing long term support and sponsorships. Shred has expanded its wetsuit collection to the mainland of Vancouver, and hopes to soon

engage the kiteboarding community in Squamish. She envisions Shred's operations scaling beyond surfing, to reduce waste in other water sport communities in Canada.

Fall 2021 Workshop: Building Your Circular Strategy

August 10, 2021

Are you looking for a way to reduce your impact on the environment, build resiliency in your supply chain, and sharpen your competitive edge?

Have you set sustainability targets, but aren't sure how to take them from idea to innovation? Or maybe you are overwhelmed by concepts such as sustainability and circularity, and unsure how they fit into your business model?

We can help
Successful circular systems require strategic planning, and internal commitment. We are excited to offer you a unique crash course in strategic planning for circularity, at a fraction of the time commitment and cost.

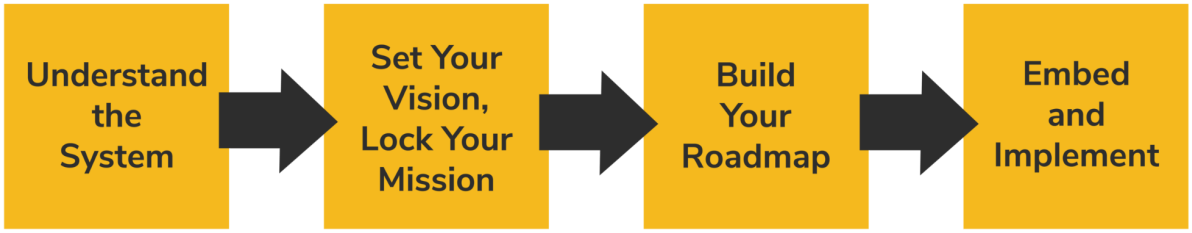
Building Your Circular Strategy
This Fall, the Textile Lab for Circularity is hosting a four-part workshop to help BC textile and apparel organizations develop circular strategies for long term resilience. You and up to 20 likeminded peer organizations will gather for half-day virtual sessions between October and November. Together, we help you understand your current system, set your circular mission, and develop a custom plan for embedding circularity into your business model. Your team will leave with your own internal Circular Strategy, and the confidence to implement and communicate it internally and externally.

What you'll get:

- 4 live virtual sessions via Zoom between October and November
- 17 hours of strategy instruction and coaching from expert facilitator Sara Blenkhorn
- Networking and peer support with up to 20 likeminded peer organizations
- 10 hands-on exercises incorporating peer-to-peer review and feedback
- 6 assignments to activate learnings within your organization
- A custom roadmap to embed circularity into your organization

Your TLC Program

Here is how you will build your circular strategy:



Workshop 1 - Understand the System (Half-day)
In Workshop 1 you see the larger industry context, tangibly relate it to your system and explore how your organization impacts others. Using the science-based Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) we introduce you to core sustainability principles and explain the role of the circular economy to set the context for mapping your ideal circular system.

Workshop 2 - Set Your Vision, Lock Your Mission (Half-day)
After envisioning your ideal circular system, we help you develop a mission that can be embedded into your organization's DNA. Once you know where you want to go, you will measure your baseline of where you are today, and begin to see the gap between the two.

Workshop 3 - Build your Roadmap (Half-day)
In this key session, we begin building your roadmap to get from your baseline to your ideal circular system - your Circular Strategy. Through a proven process called Backcasting, and setting SMART goals, you will identify tangible action steps for your team.

Workshop 4 - Embed and Implement (Half-day)
Once you have developed your roadmap, we help you develop a 2 year plan for actually taking action. We guide you through a process of prioritization, and aligning your internal operations with your new circular strategy, to embed it long term.

Starting at only $1800 (sliding scale based on organization size and revenue), this unique learning experience can't be missed. We are committed to diversity and accessibility, and have a limited amount of needs-based grants available.

Circular Allies: Fashion Takes Action

July 28, 2021

Fashion Takes Action (FTA) is a non-profit organization established in 2007 to advance sustainability in the fashion industry through education, awareness, research and collaboration. They have gained global recognition over the last year through their successful WEAR Webinar Series, and the release of their latest report *A Feasibility Study of Textile Recycling in Canada*. Here at the Textile Lab for Circularity we are all about collaboration, and scaling existing projects that move the dial towards textile circularity. FTA Founder and Executive Director Kelly Drennan sits on the TLC's expert advisory panel, and when we heard they were running a textile recycling project in Eastern Canada, we knew we wanted to get involved. We are currently exploring ways to work with them, help them scale, and bring learnings back to the West Coast.

Fashion Takes Action's feasibility study makes a strong case for a mechanical textile recycling pilot project in Canada. We know the textile waste problem is severe in the Vancouver region, with 22,000 tonnes landfilled each year. The problem is only magnified nationwide, with conservative estimates suggesting 500,000 tonnes landfilled from Canada's residential sector alone. FTA's report outlines that while a large portion of this material can be reused or repaired, about 22% still requires recycling. That is enough material to feed multiple recycling facilities. Knowing all of this, FTA conducted a comprehensive technical review to compare potential recycling technologies. It was determined that mechanical recycling was the most feasible in the short term, when compared to other technologies such as chemical recycling and sorting. Mechanical recycling can be piloted at a smaller scale, taking advantage of existing Canadian infrastructure, and avoiding the use of harmful chemicals. *As of writing this, Fashion Takes Action has officially secured the funding required to facilitate a mechanical recycling pilot for polyester textile waste!*

Fashion Takes Action will be running a small scale mechanical recycling pilot for polyester textile waste, starting in Fall 2021 in Ontario and Quebec. This is the next step towards fully understanding the opportunity, getting clear on costs and potential end markets. The project will act as a proof of concept to encourage industry adoption of recycling, and inform future legislation. Alongside the pilot, FTA is convening a Stakeholder Learning Group of brands, textile collectors, sorters and municipalities from across the country, to disseminate learnings, and set a vision for scaling recycling technologies across Canada.

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Building Capacity and Taking Action: Our New Programs

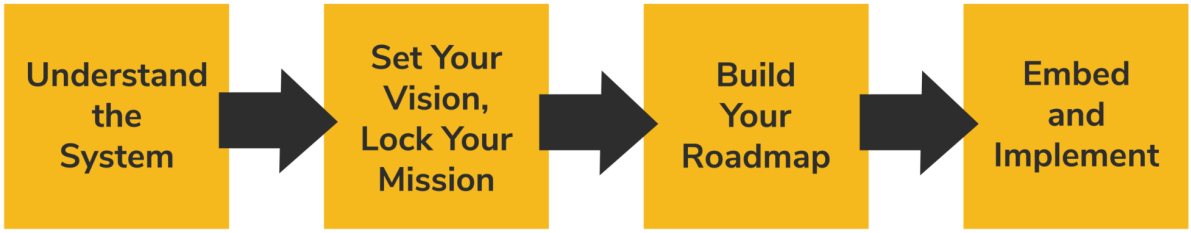
July 13, 2021

We've been listening to your feedback! As outlined in our previous post, we've refined our approach based on feedback we have received from our trusted industry network. We are in a unique position, building off of the results of the 2019 textile collaborative, which defined clear strategic leverage points. *We are excited to announce our new programming, designed to address key pain points of the industry, while taking tangible action on our leverage points.*

Redefining the Lab
We believe in taking an iterative approach towards innovation, building on learnings as we go. Therefore, we have modified the traditional social lab approach to take action more efficiently. Our refined programs are all working towards the same vision, but breaking the process into smaller steps to cater to specific industry needs. Organizations can choose to participate in one or all of our programs, and will be able to see how their involvement has moved the dial towards circularity.

Our New Offerings

Workshop series: Building Your Circular Strategy (Oct - Nov 2021)



We have heard a clear need for capacity building in the industry. Businesses need internal strategic direction towards circularity before they can commit to collaborative efforts. This important foundational work contributes to our vision of making circular business models mainstream.

In Fall 2021, the Textile Lab for Circularity is hosting a four-part workshop to help BC textile and apparel organizations develop circular strategies for resilience in a changing world. Using the science-based Framework for Strategic Sustainable Development (FSSD) we will help organizations understand their baseline, set their vision, and create a roadmap to take immediate action on what matters. Peer review throughout offers feedback along with opportunities for internal work to feed into collective action. By the end participants will have a clear vision, and a custom plan for embedding circularity into their business models.

Beyond a readiness for individual action, participants will be prepared to take a leadership role in collaborative solutions. The workshop series is designed to feed into our 2022 Working Groups.

Working Groups (Early 2022)

In 2022, the TLC will convene 3-4 defined working groups, with an overarching focus on the 4 R's of the Circular Textiles Economy; Reuse, Repair, Redesign and Recycling. The goal of these working groups is to convene folks across the textile life cycle to scale impact of existing projects, diffuse learnings and push forward innovation towards our shared leverage points. *Stay tuned for more information coming soon!*

HOW TO ENGAGE

Subscribe to our newsletter, and watch out for our workshop waitlist opening soon to get access to our early bird perks.

This Fall is an exciting time for the circular economy! Check out these events coming up:

- WEAR Webinar Series
- World Circular Economy Forum
- Join us on social for circular news and TLC updates!

Building Capacity for Collaboration

June 23, 2021

Since our CAMP at the end of March, the TLC team has been busy! While mapping the industry and doing preliminary outreach with industry, we had some important realizations that prompted us to pause and think.

We are listening to your feedback!

Through our outreach efforts with local industry, we've identified a common thread: organizations want to take action on social and environmental issues, but aren't sure how it fits into their business model. While pitching the original 2-year Lab, we heard folks asking for more individualized support embedding circular principles into their organizations. We see this as an important opportunity to build the capacity of the regional industry, and a key first step in fostering meaningful collaboration in the future. *Stay tuned for our Fall workshop designed to help organizations get clear on their internal strategies for resilience in a changing world!*

Leveraging our work so far

We are in a unique position, as we are building off of the results of Leverage Lab's previous textile collaborative. This has been an exciting challenge to tackle, requiring several rounds of feedback and refinement to get right. We are currently refocusing on the strategic leverage points that emerged from the first collaborative, and how our work can advance them. Our thinking has shifted from designing a new project with a singular goal, to a more iterative model to build on existing work, and move the dial on multiple leverage points. We feel we can provide the most value to industry by

redefining our role as convenor, connector and facilitator; helping existing projects scale, and supporting folks from all stages of the textiles lifecycle in their efforts towards circularity. Our long term vision is a thriving circular apparel industry in BC by 2031, and the best way to get there is to thread existing efforts together.

Committed to Collaboration

We have heard from our network that several mechanical recycling pilot projects are moving forward in Canada. As we are committed to collaboration and scaling existing projects, we have shifted short term efforts away from running our own recycling pilot, and towards exploring ways to collaborate and increase impact. Saying this, our research still shows a longer term opportunity for chemical recycling innovation, once the regional industry is ready. Watch this space as we develop our collaborative partnerships.

Stay tuned for the next blog posts in this series. We will be highlighting several exciting Canadian circular textiles projects, and later next month will be announcing our new and improved programming to build capacity for collaboration!

What is a Social Innovation Lab?

March 22, 2021

What is a Social Innovation Lab?

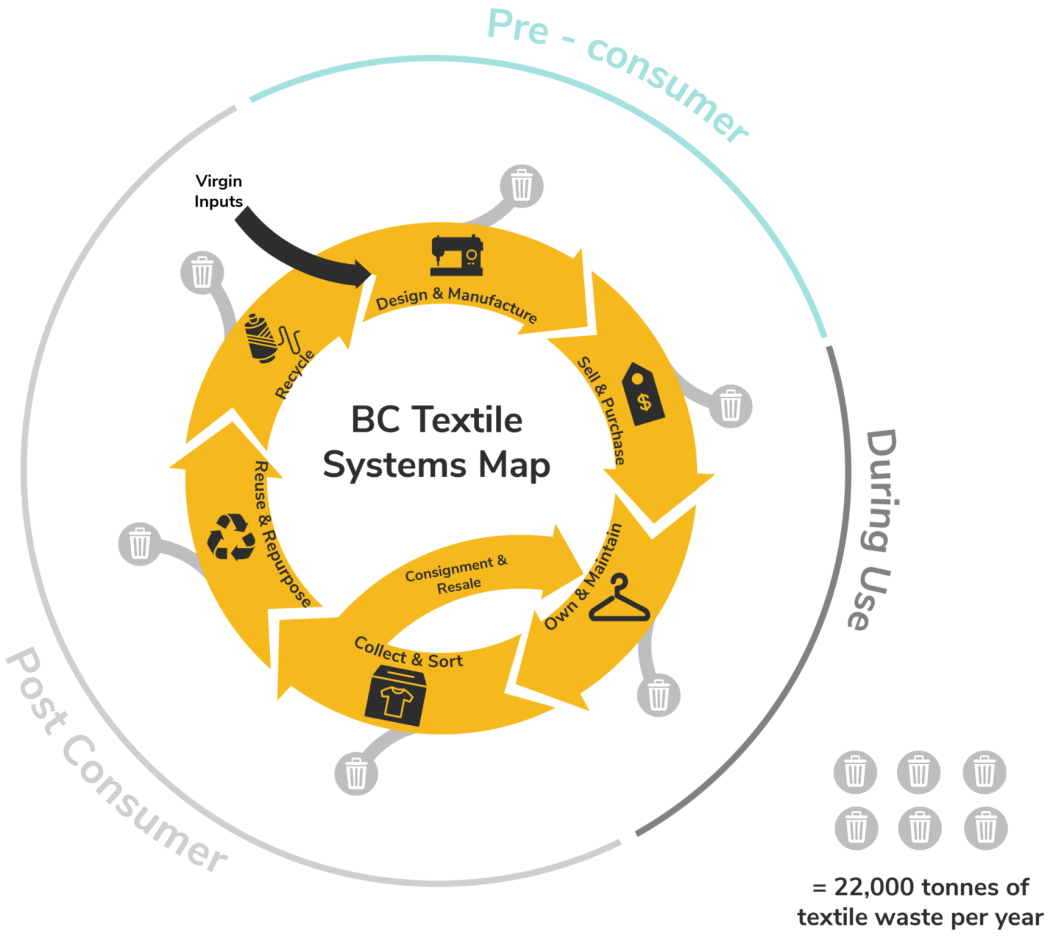
Social innovation labs are a growing global movement. They tackle complex societal challenges requiring deep systems change, by working cross- and inter-sector in new and disruptive ways for groundbreaking results.

Social labs are a leading edge method of stakeholder engagement, where “unlikely allies” are recruited and brought together in a space primed for collaboration. Through a series of facilitated workshops, the group develops a comprehensive map of the social issue in question, and identifies “leverage points” from which they can take action. Social labs are emergent in nature, and allow participants to pivot with the latest information rather than being tied to outdated plans developed in the past. Once the situation is adequately mapped, the group begins the iterative process of prototyping solutions.

Frances Westley of the Waterloo Institute for Social Innovation and Resilience, pioneered this method of engagement. She defines social innovation as “...any initiative that challenges and, over time, contributes to changing the defining routines, resource and authority flows or beliefs of the broader social system. Successful social innovations reduce vulnerability and enhance resilience. They have durability, impact and scale.”

Why do we need a Social Lab for Textile Waste?

Here in BC, we need a social innovation lab focused on textile waste because it is a complex challenge with many moving parts and players involved. Textile waste is an issue that was created collectively, and must be solved collectively. As shown in the diagram below, there is currently waste streaming from every stage in the BC apparel lifecycle. This is an apparel industry issue, but also an environmental, political, racial justice, economic and public health issue, among other things. Considering these complex intersections, we need a diverse team of players to address it with the scope and expertise it requires. In Canada, the majority of existing social labs are in the nonprofit space, and we see an important opportunity for collaboration in the for profit space. Learn more about the Canadian social labs landscape here. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the textile and apparel industry, and others, has only strengthened the need for collaboration. The Textile Lab for circularity is a natural evolution of the traditional social innovation lab, pioneered by local facilitator Sara Blenkhorn. Learn more about its origins here.



Above: diagram of the current BC textile system.

Bridging Gaps & Busting Silos

There are already organizations developing small scale solutions, however, these projects are fragmented in silos across the regional industry. It can be difficult for one organization to build the capacity of a project on their own, which is where a social lab structure can help. By breaking down these silos, we can pool resources to create an economy of scale, and go further, faster. It is clear that we need systemic change* to grow and connect these projects, while establishing a unified framework to transition the whole industry to circularity. We need accessible data, resources, and clear, consistent policy and regulation changes that direct all apparel stakeholders towards this new system. That is where we come in. The TLC is primed to build on and enhance the region's existing momentum towards circularity, becoming the glue the textiles industry needs to maximize the collective impact of many individual initiatives.

**systemic change: fundamental change of how a system functions, affecting how all stakeholders operate within that system. Systemic change is required when change to one aspect within a system does not solve the problem.*

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Opportunities for the Circular Economy after Covid-19

December 18, 2020

Now more than ever consumers and businesses are aware of the effectiveness of collaboration and the interconnectedness of our global economy. We are aware of the risks and lack of resilience in our economic structure and existing supply chains. The private and public sector alike are looking for ways to build a resilient, low carbon and prosperous recovery with over 50 global leaders signing an agreement with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to build back better with the circular economy. What does this look like? What opportunities are there for the circular economy in the post COVID-era?

Innovation & Investment in Waste Management

The pandemic has revealed an opportunity and urgent need for innovation and significant investments in the recycling, composting and waste management space. Not only will solutions be needed to manage existing downstream waste, but also to develop new upstream manufacturing systems to avoid future waste. Many organizations have already taken up this challenge:

- Terracycle has created collection boxes for used PPE waste, which will be cleaned, melted down and molded into new products.
- The Government of Canada has announced two new industry challenges to develop more compostable or recyclable PPE, as well as the systems to recycle them.
- New York based Zero Waste Daniel has begun making masks out of design room scraps. Small scraps that may be unsuitable for garments, can be sewn together to create unique mask designs, while diverting the waste from landfill.
- French startup Plaxtil has developed a way to recycle masks and PPE into new protective items such as mask fasteners, door openers, protective visors, etc.

Economic Opportunity for the Sharing Economy

With decreased discretionary spending during and post-pandemic, retailers will need to re-evaluate their business models. Circular business models that incorporate rentals and prolong the lifetime of a product can grow revenue streams, enhance customer loyalty, and allow retailers to tap into a broader customer base. For example, retailer take-back programs and resell allow brands to generate a second revenue stream from a single garment and access a price-sensitive consumer that they were unable to reach with the original sale of the garment. Rental and sharing businesses are already recovering, despite initial COVID-19 setbacks. Airbnb has experienced a fast comeback, with some experts predicting that it will be the preferred accommodation option over hotels post pandemic. China's YCloset, a clothing rental company has seen recovering sales as pandemic restrictions have eased up. This provides hope that other markets will experience a similar upturn as restrictions are lifted.

Resilient Supply Chains

Just-in-time supply chains traditionally strive to balance cost with responsiveness and resiliency tends to fall to the wayside. However, the global pandemic has brought to light the risks associated with these just-in-time models and the need to increase resilience. While there is certainly opportunity to bring supply chains closer to home reducing transportation emissions, perhaps an even more powerful outcome will be increasing collaboration with suppliers to build a more resilient system that emphasises worker health and safety and environmental performance.

Social Impact Business - B Corps, etc.

The social economy focuses on economic practices that are sustainable and inclusive.The social economy has played a significant role in mitigating the economic and societal impact of COVID-19 by providing innovative solutions that complement government initiatives. The demand for this economy has never been greater as the post-pandemic need for innovations that contribute to social and economic transformation will be significant. With increased governmental support and financial tools available to the social economy there is an opportunity now for businesses to step up, and join the growing group of social enterprises.

If the pandemic has done anything, it has woken us up to the reality we are facing. Beyond the pandemic is a looming climate crisis begging for immediate action. Climate change will only increase the risk for future disasters and public health crises. We need to take immediate action, and the transition to a circular economy is a crucial step. Going back to our initial question: Can we continue to advocate the transition to a circular economy during a global health crisis? Yes we can, and must. It's time to build back better, not only to get through this pandemic, but to help prevent future public health and environmental crises.

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Covid-19 Waste and the Circular Economy

November 25, 2020

by Megan Bourassa

DISCLAIMER: Research and health guidelines regarding masks are constantly changing and improving. Please look to your local health authorities for the most up to date information.

Despite Covid uncertainty, it is clear that new habits such as social distancing and wearing face masks are here to stay. While there is no doubt that face coverings help prevent the spread of the virus, we can't help but wonder what the long term implications of mask-wearing are on our health, and the health of the environment. Is it possible to navigate the global pandemic safely, while also continuing ahead with waste diversion measures? Can we continue to advocate the transition to a circular economy during a global health crisis?

What are masks made of?

According to thomasnet.com, disposable single-use masks can include materials such as Polypropylene, Polystyrene, Polycarbonate (which can contain BPAs), Polyethylene, and in some cases, formaldehyde resin (for anti-wrinkle properties). These materials can irritate the nose, eyes and throat. Formaldehyde has been labelled as a probable carcinogen by the EPA. There is not enough significant scientific research to know the long term effects of having these materials on our faces, and breathing them in everyday. We also know that these plastic derived fibres are not biodegradable or compostable, so once these masks are used and tossed, they will be in landfills for centuries to come.

What is the environmental impact of face masks?

Photo via OceansAsia - Naomi Brannan

Worldwide, it is estimated that 129 billion disposable face masks and 64 billion gloves have been used and thrown away each month since the Covid-19 pandemic began. That's a lot of garbage, in addition to the already overwhelming ~150 million tonnes of single use plastic disposed of per year. Ocean plastic pollution is up 30%, according to Dave Ford of the Ocean Plastics Leadership Network. This issue is already global, with OceansAsia and French nonprofit Opération Mer Propre reporting masses of surgical masks and PPE in Hong Kong's Soko Islands, and the Meditteranean respectively. Given these overwhelming figures, it is no surprise that the pandemic has felt like a setback for environmentalists. On top of PPE waste, many businesses, such as Starbucks and several grocery store chains, have reinforced the same single use plastics that had previously been banned or discouraged.

However, actions are being taken to allow waste diversion and public health measures to coexist. Back in June, over 125 doctors, academics, and scientists from around the world signed a statement confirming that reusables (such as bags, cups, etc.) can be used safely during the pandemic, given basic hygiene procedures. This begins to prove that public health measures and action towards climate justice can and must exist simultaneously.

Disposable masks have a lifespan of up to 450 years in landfill, considering their plastic derived materials do not biodegrade. While they are technically plastic, they should not be recycled. Attempting to recycle used masks can contaminate the rest of the recyclables, and pose a health risk to sorters. Some municipalities have reported masks being flushed down the toilet, which is also a bad idea, since they can clog the sewage systems. Hospitals have proper disposal procedures for contaminated PPE, but these waste streams are not typically available to the general public. There is currently no good way to dispose of these single use items.

Are there better options?

It is clear from an environmental perspective that single-use masks should be reserved for medical personnel, and the general public should wear reusable masks. This has been reiterated by Canadian health officials, who have recommended non-medical face coverings, including reusable fabric masks, for situations where social distancing is not possible. (Update: in Canada it has been recommended that filters be added to reusable masks.) The UN Trade body UNCTAD has been encouraging governments to promote the use of natural fibres such as rice husk, hemp, jute, and natural rubber for more sustainable alternatives. This would not only help the environment, but also create new jobs in developing countries where these materials are produced. "We can invest in a future of reduced waste, better health outcomes, greater job creation, and a cleaner and more resilient environment for both people and nature" says Tom Dillo, VP of Environment at The Pew Charitable Trusts.

This has already started happening. Researchers at UBC are developing a mask made from wood fibres. A French manufacturer has also created the first compostable face mask made of hemp meant to replace single use poly masks. Dorma Filtration has developed a Health Canada approved reusable N99 mask, which will be widely distributed this winter. The mask is more efficient and more eco-friendly than its disposable counterparts; being effective for at least 30 wears, with recyclable parts.

Photo via: CNW Group/Dorma Filtration

Solutions do exist, they just need more research and more funding. The United Nations has reiterated this by urging governments to treat waste management as an "urgent and essential service" for addressing the pandemic, and to prevent further negative effects to the environment.

Circular Economy moving forward

If the pandemic has done anything, it has woken a lot of people up to the reality we are facing. Beyond the pandemic is a looming climate crisis begging for immediate action. Climate change will only increase the risk for future disasters and public health crises. We need to take immediate action, and the transition to a circular economy is a crucial step. Going back to our initial question: Can we continue to advocate the transition to a circular economy during a global health crisis? Yes we can, and must. It's time to build back better, not only to get through this pandemic, but to help prevent future public health and environmental crises.

What You Can Do

Think critically about which masks you choose to purchase and wear. If possible, choose a reusable mask. Consider how you care for your masks, in order to make them last. Regardless of which type of mask you choose, please dispose of them responsibly at their end of life, according to recycling and waste regulations in your region. Let's do our part to keep mask and PPE waste out of our environments!

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Introducing the Textile Lab for Circularity

August 28, 2020

What is the TLC?

The Textile Lab for Circularity is a Social Innovation Lab*, with the goal of eliminating textile waste from landfill in the Greater Vancouver Area by 2040. Businesses tend to approach sustainability challenges individually, and miss out on the benefits of cooperation. By facilitating cross-sector collaboration within the textiles industry, we make large scale systems change possible. We break open innovation for the development of a circular textiles economy.

The Textile Lab for Circularity was born out of Sara Blenkhorn's combined passions for sustainability and collaboration. It is now a joint venture between the non-profit charity SPEC and the BCorp, Leverage Lab.

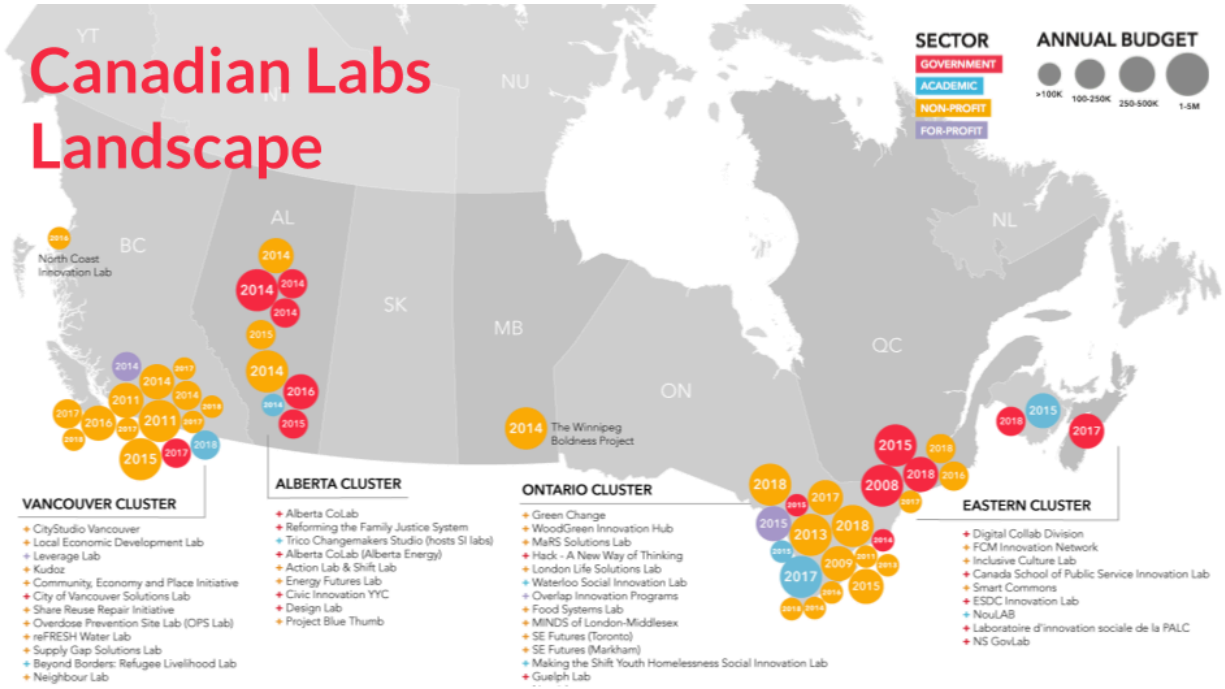
Sara's Background

Sara has always been passionate about sustainability. When she was 16, she moved to Mexico with her family, and became fascinated with a local lake restoration initiative. She watched as a non-profit assembled stakeholders from across industries to take a holistic, collaborative and systems approach to solving the problem. After witnessing the success of this strategy, Sara saw the power of collaboration, and its potential for powering systemic change. Collaboration, while it isn't always easy, it often allows initiatives to go further. More folks are invited and engaged in the process and therefore feel a shared sense of ownership over the outcome. You may recall the classic saying: "If you want to go fast, go alone, and if you want to go far, go together". From building shared community houses to network to businesses, Sara has been developing her ability to help groups of people collaborate for 15 years now.

After graduating with a degree in International Development, and a Master's in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability, Sara worked with a leading consulting firm in Stockholm called The Natural Step. She began to understand the life cycles of business, and how sustainable practices could be embedded into those systems. She brought this thinking to Vancouver, where she started her own sustainability consulting firm. Besides lab development and facilitation, Sara's services include BCorp consulting as well as Strategic Planning.

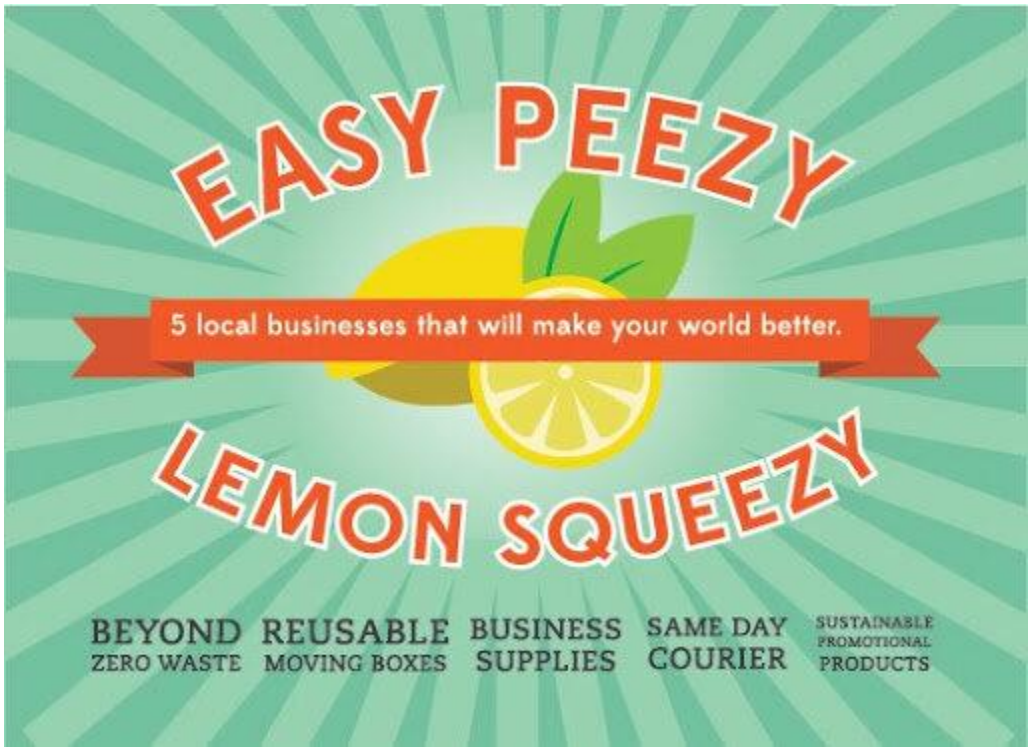
The Birth of the Lab

Initially, Sara applied the idea of cross-sector collaboration in her Peer Mentorship Exchange program, where groups of 5-7 values led businesses would form "pods" to share knowledge and and push each other's thinking for greater impact. One day, it occurred to her that convening groups around the same problem might have more power for impact. The first Leverage Lab was born, putting it on the map as one of Canada's first Social Innovation Labs. The 2 year Lab was centered around helping values-led businesses differentiate themselves in the marketplace from the competition. It was a successful endeavor and the beginning of something much bigger.



(This slide was created by RADIUS SFU as a knowledge product of CONVERGE 2018 for the benefit of the Canadian Labs community. It is published under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License Agreement)

Here is an example of one of the initiatives created together during the first Lab:



Sara took her learnings from this experience along with a curiosity for what larger wicked problems needed solving, to form another Social Innovation Lab. This lab connected 25 groups from across the Vancouver textile and waste diversion sectors, to research, map and prototype solutions on the issue of textile waste. Together, the participants were able to quantify the problem and developed a white paper called “Unraveling the Problem of Apparel Waste in the Greater Vancouver Area”. Other invaluable results of the Lab were the relationships formed between groups who never before had the opportunity to connect. This only confirmed the need for collaboration within the industry, and solidified how Sara and the Leverage Lab could be involved in facilitating collaborative change.

Leverage Lab to Textile Lab for Circularity - The Next Chapter

Sara and the Leverage Lab are excited to announce a partnership with Canada’s oldest charity SPEC (Society Promoting Environmental Conservation). Having sat on the SPEC board for 10 years, it was an obvious partnership for Sara, with an established relationship of trust - the main ingredient necessary for collaboration. This represents the next phase of the Leverage Lab, which will increase the Lab’s capacity for impact.

The lab now functions under the name Textile Lab for Circularity (TLC), with Leverage Lab as the Creative Innovation Partner, and SPEC as the Fiduciary Partner. We are excited to reveal our unique collaboration structure and Charter agreement, which we believe can pave the way for future social labs to follow.

After receiving funding from the Vancouver Foundation, Leverage Lab and SPEC partnered to develop an innovative structure for the TLC. The aim was to build a set of agreements as well

as a governing structure for the TLC, but also for future labs to run. All agreements have been documented in a Charter Document. The Charter serves as the backbone structure for the lab as well as any future labs. It has a modular format allowing parties to swap in and out as needed. All players sign onto the Charter and adhere to the same agreements. This structure allows the lab to be both collaborative and flat. Governance of the project is overseen by the oversight panel and industry connections and insights are made through the expert advisory committee.

We are excited to introduce Sophia Yang as Project Producer for the TLC, who will be taking over operations, allowing Sara to focus on the facilitation and strategy aspects of the project.

Get Involved

Learn more about the TLC, and how to get involved here at our website, labforcircularity.com

The Textile Lab for Circularity is actively looking for members for its Expert Advisory Panel. Please get in contact if you would like to get involved!

Donate to our project through the SPEC Canada Helps page (choose TLC from the dropdown). Learn about the Leverage Lab's B Corp Consulting services at theleveragelab.com