



# United Colours of Fashion

2023  
Impact Report



**UNITED  
COLOURS OF  
FASHION**

# *Friday* **FASHION CLINIC**

**Are you looking to repair or retrofit old clothes  
of sentimental value?**

Visit the UCOF Sewing Hub to take advantage of our  
**Friday Fashion Clinic**  
(Fridays, 12 Noon - 3 PM)



[www.ucof-fashion.org](http://www.ucof-fashion.org)

165 Union St. 2nd Floor, Saint John

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# Table of Contents

## **I. Message from Our Managing Director**

## **II. The UCOF Sewing Hub Project**

- A. Significance of the project
- B. Objectives and approach of the Sewing Hub Project
- C. Impact on participants' vocational training, education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities
- D. Testimonials from program participants

## **III. The UCOF Fall Fashion Show**

- A. Importance and purpose of the annual fashion show
- B. Collaboration with established fashion designers/retailers
- C. Showcasing the designs and talents of program participants

## **IV. Empowering Newcomers and Visible Minority Groups**

- A. Addressing barriers and challenges faced by participants
- B. Providing a supportive and nurturing environment
- C. Diversity, inclusivity, and equal access to opportunities
- D. Building confidence and self-esteem among participants

## **V. Community Engagement and Support**

- A. Involvement of volunteers and community partners
- B. Recognition and appreciation for supporters and sponsors
- D. Collaborative initiatives with other organizations

## **VI. Looking Ahead**



# I. Message from Our Managing Director

*Dear friends and supporters of United Colours of Fashion (UCOF Canada),*

It is with great pleasure and excitement that I welcome you to the 2023 edition of our Impact Report. I am humbled and greatly inspired by the incredible journey we have embarked on together to empower self-identifying newcomers and visible minority groups in our community.

At UCOF, our mission is clear: to address the barriers that many individuals face when it comes to vocational training, education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities. We firmly believe in the power of inclusivity, diversity, and equal access to opportunities. The UCOF Sewing Hub Project lies at the heart of our efforts, serving as a catalyst for change and transformation.

Through the UCOF Sewing Hub, we have been able to create a supportive and nurturing environment for participants from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds. We have witnessed firsthand the incredible talent and potential that resides within these individuals, and we are committed to providing them with the resources, training, and mentorship they need to succeed in the fashion industry.

One of the highlights of our work is the annual UCOF Fall Fashion Show, where we bring together our sewing hub participants and established fashion designers/retailers to showcase their designs. This event serves as a platform for our participants to express their creativity, passion, and unique perspectives, while also connecting with industry professionals and potential employers. It is a celebration of talent, resilience, and the power of unity.



In this Impact Report, we aim to share with you the remarkable stories of the individuals whose lives have been transformed through UCOF Canada's programs. Their journeys are a testament to the impact we can make when we come together to create opportunities for those who need it the most, and when it matters the most to them- now. Through their achievements, we see a brighter future for our communities and a more inclusive fashion industry.

None of this would be possible without your unwavering support and dedication. Your contributions, whether through donations, volunteering, or spreading the word about our cause, have made a profound difference in the lives of many. Together, we are breaking down barriers, shattering stereotypes, and paving the way for a more equitable society.

As we reflect on the accomplishments of 2023, let us also look forward with renewed determination and ambition. There is still much work to be done, and we invite you to join us on this extraordinary journey as we continue to empower, uplift, and inspire.

Thank you for being a part of the United Colours of Fashion (UCOF Canada) family. Your commitment to creating positive change is truly commendable, and we are honored to have you by our side.

With gratitude and anticipation,

**Christine Eruokwu**  
**Managing Director**  
**United Colours of Fashion (UCOF Canada)**



## II. The UCOF Sewing Hub Project

### *Significance of the Sewing Hub Project*

The UCOF Sewing Hub Project which is primarily funded by TD Bank Group and supported by The Community Foundation Saint John holds immense significance in addressing the economic, social, and cultural needs of newcomers, self-identifying BIPOC and visible minority groups facing barriers to vocational training, education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities. It serves as a beacon of hope, providing a platform for individuals from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds to express their talents and pursue their passion in the fashion industry. By focusing on empowerment and skill development, the project aims to break down barriers and create a more inclusive and equitable society where everyone feels a sense of belonging.

### *Objective and Approach:*

The objective of the UCOF Sewing Hub Project is to provide participants with the necessary resources, training, and mentorship to succeed in the fashion industry. Through a comprehensive approach, the project offers vocational training programs, educational support, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

The approach is built on creating a supportive and nurturing environment that encourages participants to explore their creative potential, learn valuable skills, and gain industry knowledge. By fostering a sense of community and collaboration, the project enables individuals to develop both personally and professionally.

### *Empowering Saint John's Designers: Friday Fashion Clinic*

In Saint John, our Friday Fashion Clinic empowers interns and designers from diverse backgrounds to give back to the community. They offer much more than just alteration services. Every Friday from 12 PM to 3 PM at the

UCOF Sewing Hub, community members are invited to engage with our team to repurpose or recycle their old clothing into fresh, innovative designs through collaboration and co-creation efforts, thereby significantly extending the lifecycle of cherished outfits. This remarkable initiative not only amplifies the creative voices within our community but also serves as a strong pillar of support for our sustainability endeavours. Through our collective efforts, we are reshaping the landscape of fashion, cultivating an inclusive, vibrant community that values both creativity and sustainability.

### *Impact of the Project:*

The impact of the UCOF Sewing Hub Project has been profound. Participants have experienced transformative changes in their lives, acquiring essential sewing and design skills, building self-confidence, and gaining a sense of purpose. The project has opened doors to employment opportunities, with participants securing jobs in the fashion industry and launching their own projects. Moreover, the project has contributed to the participants' overall well-being, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment. Through the project, individuals have been able to overcome barriers and pursue their dreams in the fashion industry.

### *Testimonies by Participants:*

The UCOF Sewing Hub Project has been a life-changing experience for me. It provided me with the necessary training and mentorship to turn my passion for fashion into a career. I can now create outfits for my children and members of my ethnocultural groups during festivals. I am grateful to UCOF Canada for believing in me and giving me the opportunity to showcase my talent.

***Perla, Project Participant***

As a newcomer youth and high school student, the UCOF Sewing Hub Project provided me with a sense of belonging and community. It helped me develop valuable sewing and design skills, and I gained the confidence to pursue my dreams. Thanks to UCOF Canada, I showcased my designs at the 2023 Fashion show in Saint John. I was so proud to see models wearing my designs!

***Abdulkadir, Project Participant***

The UCOF Sewing Hub Project not only taught me the technical aspects of sewing but also provided me with a supportive network. The project empowered me to embrace my cultural heritage and express it through my designs. I am grateful for the opportunities it has given me and the friendships I have made along the way.

***Inna, Project Participant***



# III. The 2023 UCOF Fall Fashion Show

## *Purpose of the Fashion Show:*

Now in its third year of existence, the UCOF Fall Fashion Show serves as a vibrant and dynamic platform to showcase the accomplishments of our participants and highlight their creative expressions. It goes beyond just a runway event; it is a celebration of diversity, talent, and empowerment. The fashion show aims to break down barriers and challenge traditional beauty standards by embracing and celebrating the unique perspectives and styles of our participants. It is an opportunity for them to shine, gain visibility, and be recognized for their incredible designs and fashion-forward ideas.

## *Collaboration with Fashion Designers/Retailers:*

This year's edition of the UCOF Fall Fashion Show held in three major cities of New Brunswick: Saint John, Moncton and Fredericton. One of the key aspects of the UCOF Fall Fashion Show is the collaboration between our participants and established fashion designers/retailers. This collaboration brings together emerging talents and industry professionals, fostering mentorship, and creating a space for networking and growth.

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“This year's edition of the UCOF Fall Fashion Show held in three major cities of New Brunswick: Saint John, Moncton and Fredericton .”

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[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE UCOF FALL FASHION SHOW](#)



### Showcasing the Designs and Talents of Participants:

The UCOF Fall Fashion Show is a grand stage where our participants get to exhibit their designs and talents to a wide audience of fashion enthusiasts, industry insiders, and potential employers. Each participant's unique creations, inspired by their diverse cultural backgrounds and personal stories, are showcased on the runway with style, grace, and confidence. It is an empowering moment for our participants to see their visions come to life and to witness the positive reception from the audience. The fashion show provides a platform for them to express their creativity, skills, and passion, and helps to build their professional portfolios, elevating their chances for success in the fashion industry.

A majority of our volunteer models are drawn from the diverse ethnocultural groups and they have embraced the UCOF multicultural fashion festival as a platform to showcase their interest and passion in the fashion industry. The apparel are simply creative pieces until they are brought to life by the models.



Impact of the UCOF Sewing Hub and the Fashion Festival since its inception



**350**  
VOLUNTEERS



**4800**  
HOURS



**60**  
CLIENTS &  
INTERNS TRAINED



**45**  
DESIGNERS  
FEATURED

Testimonials by Venue Partners:

The UCOF Fall Fashion Show was a great success and we enjoy partnering with such groups and activities because it showcases our diverse cultures, showcasing fashion from around the world.

UCOF will be back next year in Fredericton in this venue as long as you're wanting to come back.

Jeff Foster, CEO,  
Cultural Center, Fredericton

Magma is so happy to partner with events like this because it gets to showcase so much talent from such a diverse group of individuals who get to spread joy through what they do and so much knowledge.

Cody Smith  
MAGMA, Moncton

We're so pleased to be able to host this event in Saint John this year. I think it's the third annual and we're very pleased to be able to bring the show here to the Waterfront.

Sarah Tippet, Director of  
Marketing and Events, Area 506



# IV. Empowering Newcomers, Self-Identifying BIPOC and Visible Minority Groups

## *Addressing barriers and challenges faced by participants:*

The UCOF Fall Fashion Show plays a crucial role in addressing the barriers and challenges faced by participants from diverse backgrounds. Many of these individuals often encounter limited access to opportunities within the fashion industry due to systemic inequalities and socioeconomic factors. By providing them with a platform to showcase their designs alongside established fashion designers and retailers, the fashion show breaks down these barriers and creates a level playing field for all participants. It opens doors to new possibilities, networks, and exposure that would have otherwise been difficult to attain.

## *Providing a supportive and nurturing environment:*

The UCOF Fall Fashion Show goes beyond being a mere entertainment event; it creates a supportive and nurturing environment for all participants. Recognizing the unique experiences and backgrounds of each individual, the show fosters a sense of belonging and encouragement. Participants receive mentorship, guidance, and constructive feedback throughout the process, helping them refine their skills and grow as fashion designers. The show's organizing team, volunteers, and industry professionals work together to ensure that every participant feels valued, supported, and empowered to express their creativity.



*Diversity, inclusivity, and equal access to opportunities:*

Originally conceived as a response to the growing needs of the influx of newcomers in the bilingual province of New Brunswick, the UCOF Sewing Hub has flourished into a dynamic centre for cultural exchange and skill development.

One of the fundamental principles of the UCOF Fall Fashion Show is to promote diversity, inclusivity, and equal access to opportunities within the fashion industry. The show actively embraces participants from various socio-cultural backgrounds, celebrating their unique perspectives and talents. It serves as a platform where participants can express their individuality and cultural heritage through their designs. By providing equal opportunities to showcase their work alongside established designers and retailers, the fashion show challenges traditional norms and fosters a more inclusive and diverse fashion industry.

*Building confidence and self-esteem among participants:*

The UCOF Fall Fashion Show plays a pivotal role in building confidence and self-esteem among participants. Many of them have faced adversity, discrimination, and limited opportunities in their personal and professional lives. The show provides a transformative experience, allowing participants to see their designs come to life on the runway, receive recognition for their talent and hard work, and gain validation within the fashion industry. Through this process, participants develop a sense of pride in their abilities, strengthening their confidence and self-esteem. It becomes a stepping stone for their continued growth and success in the fashion industry and beyond.



# V. Community Engagement and Support

## *Involvement of volunteers and community partners:*

UCOF Canada is deeply grateful for the invaluable support of volunteers and community partners who play a pivotal role in our mission. Through their dedication and selflessness, these individuals contribute their time, skills, and expertise to uplift and empower participants in the UCOF Sewing Hub Project. Volunteers provide mentorship, training, and guidance, fostering a nurturing environment where participants can thrive.

The City of Saint John, PRUDE Inc, Saint John Newcomer Centre, YMCA of Greater Saint John, BOTA-NB, local ethnocultural associations and other community partners collaborate closely with us, sharing resources and networks to create even greater opportunities for program participants. Together, we are making a profound difference in the lives of individuals and strengthening the fabric of our communities.

## *Recognition and appreciation for supporters and sponsors:*

At UCOF Canada, we recognize and deeply appreciate the unwavering support and generosity of our sponsors such as TD Bank Group, Government of New Brunswick (GNB), and community partners including but not limited to The Community Foundation Saint John, The Imperial Theatre, Area 506: The Container Village, Saint John, The Cultural Centre, Fredericton and The Multicultural Centre, Moncton. Their contributions, whether financial or in-kind, enable us to continue our vital work of empowering individuals facing barriers to vocational training, education, employment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.



We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our supporters and sponsors for believing in our mission and for their commitment to creating a more inclusive and equitable society. Their support not only transforms the lives of participants but also inspires others to join us in our journey towards empowerment and social change.

### Collaborative initiatives with other organizations:

UCOF Canada believes in the power of collaboration and recognizes that collective efforts yield greater impact. We actively seek out partnerships with other organizations that share our vision of empowerment and inclusivity. Through these collaborations, we amplify our reach, leverage resources, and pool our expertise to create meaningful opportunities for program participants. By working hand in hand with like-minded organizations, we can address the multifaceted challenges faced by newcomers and visible minority groups more effectively. These collaborative initiatives strengthen our collective impact and create a supportive ecosystem that fosters growth, success, and opportunities for all.



QIPAO Group, Saint John

## VI. Looking Ahead

Buoyed by the resounding success of the sewing hub and the triumphant showcase of the tri-city UCOF Fall Fashion Show in August 2023, our unwavering dedication is now directed towards extending our achievements. Looking ahead, our primary objective for the upcoming fiscal year is to replicate the thriving model of the UCOF Sewing Hub in Moncton and Fredericton, fostering a broader sense of community and creative exploration. Additionally, with an eye on further amplifying our impact, plans are underway to expand the celebrated fashion festival to encompass a fourth city in the captivating landscape of Atlantic Canada.







 UNITED COLOURS OF FASHION SAINT JOHN #UCOF23



 UNITED COLOURS OF FASHION FREDERICTON #UCOF23



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UCOF Volunteer Appreciation and Award Ceremony in Saint John





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# VII The Team

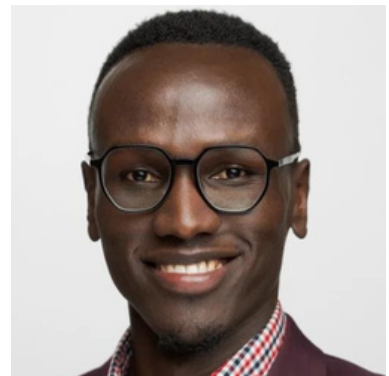
## BOARD DIRECTORS



Hieu Pham



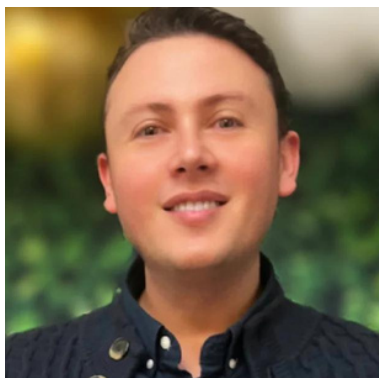
Zac Black



Ivan Bello



Kateryna Omelianchenko



Willinton Vega

## CO-FOUNDERS AND MANAGEMENT TEAM



Christine Eruokwu



Rufina Ajalie

[LEARN MORE  
ABOUT OUR  
TEAM](#)





OPERATIONS TEAM



**Elena Luciani**  
*Sewing Instructor*  
UCOF Sewing Hub



**Chidinma Moses Oshiokenoya**  
*Admin. Assistant*  
(Volunteer)



**Khaileb J.E. Land**  
*Fall Intern*  
Harbour View High School, Saint John



**Abdulkadir Mohamed**  
*Summer Intern*  
Saint Malachy's High School, Saint John



**David Nicholas Msheliza**  
*Project Coordinator*  
MBA Intern (Fall)  
UNB Saint John

What started as a modest initiative to provide a safe space for immigrants to learn and hone sewing skills, empowering them to create and repair their own garments, has now expanded into an all-encompassing haven of creativity and education. The UCOF Sewing Hub has not only been instrumental in fostering economic empowerment for the adult immigrant community but has also found a meaningful way to engage the younger generation. Through our summer programs and internship opportunities, the sewing hub has seamlessly integrated K-12 students into its vibrant tapestry, providing them with a nurturing environment to explore their artistic inclinations.

With a diverse array of hands-on activities, these budding designers and creators are guided through the fundamentals of fashion design, pattern making, and the intricacies of garment production. This immersive experience serves as a bridge, connecting these young minds with the rich heritage of textile arts while equipping them with practical skills for the future.

# VIII Thank You

*Thank you to our funders, community partners and supporters*

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our incredible sponsors, dedicated community partners, and unwavering supporters. Their generosity and commitment are the driving force behind the success of UCOF and its vital programs. Together, we are shaping a more inclusive, vibrant, and creative world of fashion. Their belief in our mission fuels our passion, and we look forward to continuing this remarkable journey hand in hand. Thank you for being the pillars of strength that make it all possible.

## OUR SPONSORS



## COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS







# UNITED COLOURS OF FASHION

*Express Your Talent & Pursue Your Passion.*



## SEWING CLASSES

## FASHION CLINIC



## UCOF FALL FASHION FESTIVAL



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