



Fredericton 2024



UCOF Volunteers

United Colours of Fashion

2024
Impact Report



**UNITED
COLOURS OF
FASHION**

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I. Message from Our Co-Founders

Dear Friends, Supporters, and Partners,

Welcome to the 2024 Impact Report of United Colours of Fashion (UCOF), where fashion meets transformation, creativity meets empowerment, and unity is stitched together through every thread we weave.

As 2024 draws to a close, we find ourselves reflecting on an extraordinary year—a year where fashion became more than just fabric and thread. It became a catalyst for change, an avenue for self-expression, and a bridge uniting communities from all walks of life. But the true beauty of this year’s journey lies not just in the stunning designs and collections we showcased, but in the untold stories of resilience, hope, and community that have been stitched into each one.

Fashion is not merely about trends or garments—it’s a dynamic force that unites us, that transcends borders and cultures, and that celebrates the rich tapestry of humanity. At UCOF, we harness that power, enabling talented individuals to innovate, create, and inspire. Through your support, we’ve been able to give voice to those who’ve long been unheard and empower those who’ve long been overlooked. Together, we’ve taken bold steps toward shaping a fashion industry that is as inclusive and diverse as the world we live in.

None of this would be possible without you—our partners, board members, volunteers, mentors, and supporters. Your commitment to UCOF’s mission has not only impacted the lives of our participants but has set in motion a movement that will resonate for years to come. Your belief in our vision has sparked change, and as we look to the future, we know that together, we can continue to create ripples of transformation that echo far beyond the runway.

As we step into 2025, we do so with renewed purpose and excitement. Our work is far from finished. We’re just getting started. Thank you for being part of this journey. Together, we’ll continue to stitch a future that is rich in creativity, unity, and opportunity.

Here’s to an impactful 2025!

Cheers,

UCOF Co-Founders



Christine Eruokwu
Managing Director



Rufina Ajalie
Board President

Key Highlights of 2024:

Christmas Makeover Project

The UCOF Christmas Makeover Project was a heartwarming collaboration that brought together community support to reignite hope and a sense of belonging. Through this initiative, lives were transformed, including that of Tre Miller, showcasing the profound impact of collective efforts in spreading joy and uplifting spirits during the holiday season.

[Read the full story here](#)



UCOF Awards and Recognition

The UCOF team was deeply honored to receive the NBMC CONNECT Award, recognizing our unwavering commitment to promoting multiculturalism and inclusivity across New Brunswick. Additionally, Christine and Rufina, were honoured with the International Alumni of Impact (IAOI) Award by ApplyBoard for their extraordinary achievements as international students making meaningful and transformative impacts in their communities.

The year 2024 was a time of recognition and celebration, shining a spotlight on the dedication and contributions of the remarkable individuals behind UCOF. From our passionate volunteers to our inspiring participants, their efforts were acknowledged with prestigious awards across diverse categories and cities, reinforcing our shared mission to drive positive change



Key Highlights of 2024 (contd.)

Multicultural Night at Princess Elizabeth School, Saint John

On Tuesday, May 14th, Princess Elizabeth School (PES) hosted its first Multicultural Night in several years. As a parent of mixed cultural and ethnic background, I was thrilled to see this tradition reignited!

[Read the full article here](#)



Holiday Season Sales

The UCOF Holiday Season Sales was an initiative that brought our community together to celebrate creativity. This fundraiser provided an opportunity for individuals to discover and purchase unique designs. The sales served as a platform for raising funds to support future initiatives, ensuring continued opportunities for local designers to thrive. It was a true celebration of creativity, collaboration, and community spirit during the holiday season.



Key Highlights of 2024 (contd.)

Cultural Club- UCOF School Outreach Project

Launched in March 2024, the School Outreach Project ignited a transformative journey by introducing children to the foundational techniques of sewing and essential life skills. Through engaging, hands-on workshops, we have sown the seeds of creativity that promise to flourish for years to come, inspiring the next generation of designers and creators. This initiative was led by our dedicated volunteer instructors—Bisola, Keziah, Olabisi, Rosemary, and Joy—whose commitment and passion were integral to its success.

We extend our deepest gratitude to Melissa Clarke for the opportunity to collaborate with Forest Hills School, making this inspiring project possible.



School Outreach Project at Forest Hills School, Saint John.

Key Highlights of 2024 (contd.)

UCOF Model Training Sessions

The model training sessions are a cornerstone of our mission to empower aspiring models with the confidence, skills, and professionalism needed to excel on the fashion runway. These sessions are designed not only to teach technical aspects like posture, walk, and stage presence but also to cultivate the right attitude, resilience, and self-confidence that are essential in the fashion industry.



UCOF Fall Fashion Show in Halifax:

The UCOF Fall Fashion Festival made its debut in Halifax this year, and the reception exceeded all expectations! UCOF showcased a spectacular lineup of exceptionally talented designers who unveiled their stunning collections, and dedicated models who graced the runway with poise and confidence. The electrifying performances by artists of diverse cultural backgrounds added an extra layer of energy and excitement in the room. The UCOF team is already looking forward to making next year's Fall Fashion Festival even more memorable, building on the incredible momentum and the vibrant community engagement experienced tyear.



II. The UCOF Sewing Hub Project

Significance of the Sewing Hub Project

The UCOF Sewing Hub Project 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 in the fashion industry. 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 clients with relevant 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.

Sustainability Through Friday Fashion Clinic

The Friday Fashion Clinic at the UCOF Sewing Hub is a dynamic initiative that empowers interns and designers from diverse backgrounds to give back to the community. Every Friday, from 12 PM to 3 PM, community members are invited to collaborate with our team to repurpose or recycle their old clothing into fresh, innovative designs. This collaborative effort not only extends the lifecycle of cherished garments but also fosters creativity and sustainability within our community.



By transforming pre-loved items into unique pieces, we celebrate the fusion of diverse talents and promote environmental consciousness. 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 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:

Attending my first UCOF Fashion Show in Halifax was a transformative experience. It marked my initial visit to the city and introduced me to a dynamic, DEI-oriented program that emphasized the intersection of fashion and inclusion.

Through this event, I made numerous friends and witnessed firsthand how fashion can serve as a powerful platform for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, creating a sense of unity and belonging among participants

Mike , Halifax Volunteer

I am really proud of my wife and all that happened because of UCOF Sewing Hub. She is always very interested in learning new things and UCOF has given her the opportunity to be a part of their team and provided the proper training and made her self-reliant. She wants to choose Sewing and Fashion as her career and my full support will be there for her new journey.

My special thanks to Keziah from UCOF who always supports my wife as a teacher, friend and career guidance.

Minhaj, Client's Spouse

Participating in the UCOF Fashion Show was an unforgettable experience for me and my team at Celebrate Your Curves. The event was impeccably organized, from the seamless coordination of schedules to the support provided to all participants throughout the process.

Winning the Viewer's Choice Award was a deeply meaningful moment for me and my team.

Navdeep, Halifax Designer

UCOF brought out a side of me I never knew before. I didn't know I could model, but UCOF showed me that I could do it.

This was really fun for me. I appreciate the leaders in this community.

Thank you UCOF

Praise, Volunteer Model (Fredericton)

III. The 2024 UCOF Fall Fashion Show


Purpose of the Fashion Show:

Now in its fourth year, the UCOF Fall Fashion Show has become a powerful platform to celebrate the creativity and achievements of our participants. More than a runway event, it embodies diversity, empowerment, and inclusivity. By showcasing the unique perspectives and designs of our Sewing Hub participants, this year's show, held across four cities, broke barriers and challenged traditional beauty standards. It provided participants with a stage to shine, gain recognition for their talent, and share their fashion-forward ideas with wider audiences, highlighting the transformative power of creativity and community.

Collaboration with Fashion Designers/Retailers:

This year, the UCOF Fall Fashion Show expanded its reach, holding events in four major cities: Saint John, Fredericton, Moncton, and Halifax. A standout feature of the show was the collaboration between our Sewing Hub participants and established fashion designers and retailers. This synergy brought together emerging talents and seasoned professionals, fostering invaluable mentorship opportunities and creating vibrant spaces for networking, growth, and creative exchange. These shows not only celebrated diversity and innovation in fashion but also served as a platform for our participants to showcase their skills and connect with the broader fashion community.

"This year, the UCOF Fall Fashion Festival lit up four cities—Saint John, Fredericton, Moncton, and Halifax—celebrating creativity, diversity, and the limitless potential of our participants."

**LEARN MORE ABOUT
THE UCOF FALL
FASHION SHOW** 

Showcasing the Designs and Talents of Participants:

The UCOF Fall Fashion Festival creates a magnificent platform where our participants proudly showcase their innovative designs and diverse talents to a broad audience of fashion enthusiasts, industry insiders, and potential employers. Each unique creation—rooted in rich cultural heritage and personal storytelling—comes alive on the runway with style, grace, and confidence. This empowering event allows participants to see their creative visions materialize, garnering positive feedback from the audience while simultaneously building robust professional portfolios that enhance their prospects within the fashion industry.

Our volunteer models, hailing from a variety of ethnocultural backgrounds, wholeheartedly embrace the festival as a stage to express their passion for fashion. Their dynamic presence transforms each apparel piece into a vibrant celebration of art, culture, and community, illustrating the transformative power of creative collaboration.



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



More Testimonials

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 want to come back.

**Jeff Foster, CEO,
Cultural Center, Fredericton**

United Colours of Fashion - UCOF as an organization has greatly helped me build my confidence. They provided me with the platform to express my artistic talent, not only through modeling but also through singing.

They nurtured my talent for musical theater by giving me opportunities to showcase my abilities in their shows.

**Kaima, Volunteer Model & Singer
(All 4 Cities)**

Volunteering with UCOF has been an incredibly exciting and fulfilling experience that allowed me to develop essential skills like flexibility, time management, and teamwork.

From juggling tasks during fashion shows to working with an amazing multicultural team, I've learned so much—and had a lot of fun too! This role gave me the opportunity to make a positive impact in my community while contributing toward my professional growth as well.

Racheal, Volunteer

The UCOF show was much more than just an event for me—it was the foundation of my journey into business and fashion. As a new designer from Nigeria and a newcomer to Canada, I was incredibly proud to showcase my culture on such a prestigious platform. The festival marked a significant milestone in my life: my very first runway show.

Sharing the runway with nine other talented designers was inspiring. Each designer brought their unique perspectives and cultural influences to life, creating a vibrant celebration of creativity and diversity. Winning the 1st Runner-Up for the Viewers Choice Award felt surreal, and I am grateful for the support and encouragement.

Peace, Fashion Designer (Halifax)

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

More Testimonials

Participating as a model in the UCOF fashion show was a transformative experience that shaped me both professionally and personally over the 4 years I've worked with them. UCOF's emphasis on celebrating diversity, creativity, and individuality inspired me to embrace and carry myself with confidence on and off the runway.

The opportunity to collaborate with talented designers, stylists, and fellow models fostered a deep sense of community and teamwork, while also challenging me to step out of my comfort zone. UCOF reinforced the importance of using fashion as a platform to express identity and tell compelling stories, leaving me with valuable lessons and memories that will continue to influence my journey as a model.

**Hugo, Volunteer Model
(Saint John & Halifax)**

As a mature Designer living in Halifax I entered the UCOF show September 2024.

I had the most wonderful time from start to finish.

I will never forget the kindness, very funny moments, photos and videos I shared with the models, designers, organizers and all the people who put the show together.

Thank you UCOF family for a fabulous memory.

**Maria, Senior Fashion Designer
(Halifax)**

Volunteering at UCOF was a truly enriching experience that allowed me to connect with individuals from diverse nationalities, forge meaningful friendships, and gain a deeper understanding of different cultures. Among the students I taught, one stood out to me—a beginner with no prior knowledge of sewing. Her dedication, willingness to learn, and receptiveness to feedback were remarkable.

Within just a few months, her progress was nothing short of impressive. This experience reinforced my belief in the power of perseverance and reminded me that with determination, any goal is achievable. It also taught me the value of resilience, both in teaching and personal growth.

Rosemary, Volunteer Sewing Instructor

The UCOF sewing Hub is a really a great place for newcomers like me to get necessary training about sewing and fashion.

I joined as a beginner but after a few days of training with all the resources I became confident and I am able to do the cutting, sewing for pillow cover, table cloth, bed cover by my own.

My confidence level is now so high and I can choose Sewing and Fashion design as my career and I can support my family.

Nargis, Sewing Hub Participant

As a teacher, collaborating with the UCOF Sewing Hub Project has been an extraordinary experience. Their expertise and passion for sewing and community engagement added immense value to our school. They have not only taught my students the technical skills of sewing but have also inspired them with their creativity, patience, and dedication.

Beyond the practical skills, the sewing project has had a profound impact on my students' personal growth. I'm truly grateful to the UCOF volunteers for their generosity and commitment. I hope to continue working together to inspire even more young minds in the future.

**Melissa, Educational Support
Teacher-EAL (Forest Hills Sch.)**

I have loved modeling since childhood. I recall how, as a child, I would walk like a model whenever I got new clothes. People would tell me, "You will become a star model one day."

In 2023, while attending the Skills Launch Youth Program, our instructor, Clare, asked if anyone was interested in modeling. I was one of the students who showed interest, and it became an incredible experience for me.

I had the opportunity to participate in a fashion show by United Colours of Fashion, which was truly unforgettable. I hope UCOF continues to grow, as it always highlights the beauty of different cultures and promotes diversity and inclusion.

**Muna, Volunteer Model
(Fredericton)**

IV. Looking Ahead

Building on the tremendous success of the UCOF Sewing Hub and the highly acclaimed UCOF Fall Fashion Festival, which captivated audiences across four cities in 2024, we remain steadfast in our commitment to expanding these accomplishments. Looking ahead, our primary goal for the upcoming fiscal year is to launch a dedicated modeling club in each of these four cities. This initiative will serve as a platform for aspiring models to receive mentorship, guidance, and the skills needed to excel in the fashion industry, while also fostering a stronger sense of community and encouraging creative expression on a broader scale.



Saint John Fashion Festival



Fredericton Fashion Festival



Halifax Fashion Festival



V. The Team

BOARD DIRECTORS



Rufina Ajalie



Willinton Vega



Venn Habiya



Hieu Pham

LEARN MORE
ABOUT OUR
TEAM



OPERATIONS TEAM



Christine Eruokwu



Keziah Akagwu
Vol. Project Coordinator
UNBSJ MBA Intern (Fall)



David Nicholas Msheliza
Vol. Project Coordinator
Special Duties

VI. Our Volunteers

Our Volunteers



Josue Arce Arzola



Chidiogo A. Ezenwaka



Chidinma
Moses-Oshokenoya



Morris Etatuvie



Virginia Adam



Chisom Ezeh



Yaw Fosu Mensah



Rachael Eruokwu



Michael Chukwubuikem

Our Volunteer Sewing Instructors



Joy Airiavbere



Rosemary Udofia



Olabisi Ogunbusuyi



Bisola Ogundowo



Modupe Igbide



Winnie Nabakooza

We are immensely grateful to the Board of Directors for their visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to UCOF's mission. Their guidance and dedication empower our initiatives and create transformative opportunities for our community.

The UCOF operations team is the heartbeat of our organization, ensuring that every project runs seamlessly. Their dedication, strategic planning, and relentless behind-the-scenes work turn our vision into reality. Through unwavering focus and collaborative teamwork, they drive impactful initiatives that empower communities and create opportunities. We deeply appreciate their outstanding efforts!

Equally, our volunteers have been instrumental to UCOF's success over the years. Their tireless contributions—from coordinating events and capturing memorable moments to mentoring participants—form the backbone of our mission. With steadfast commitment, they have fostered creativity, inclusion, and empowerment, leaving an indelible impact on countless lives and communities.

VII. Thank You

Thank you to our community partners

With the generous support of The Community Foundation, the UCOF Sewing Hub successfully trained over 20 women and 10 school-aged children, equipping them with valuable sewing and fashion design skills. This initiative not only empowered adult participants to pursue their passion in the fashion industry but also contributed to the economic and cultural enrichment of our community.



United Colors of Fashion

UCOF Sewing Hub

United Colours of Fashion (UCOF Canada) is a nonprofit entity committed to the empowerment of newcomers, as well as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) and visible minority groups who face challenges in accessing vocational training, education, empowerment, and entrepreneurship opportunities.

Thanks to the Community Impact grant, we were able to hire a full-time sewing instructor for a year. The instructor played a pivotal role in mentoring over 30 immigrant clients, including high school students keen on pursuing careers in fashion design and garment production. Some of these emerging designers will be showcasing their designs at UCOF Fashion Festival this August. Additionally, she provided valuable support to elementary school teachers in the Anglophone School District-South, assisting them with their Cultural Literacy program for children.

\$35,360

COMMUNITY IMPACT

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Building a greater world of hope

Thank you to our community partners

In January 2025, ConnexionWorks welcomed United Colours of Fashion (UCOF) into its collaborative space, marking the beginning of a promising partnership. This alliance aims to leverage our combined resources and expertise to create a greater impact within the community. By working together, we are committed to fostering innovation, supporting local talent, and enhancing the cultural fabric of our region. We look forward to the positive outcomes through this exciting collaboration.



Thank you to our funders, community partners and supporters

In 2024, your generosity and dedication were the backbone of UCOF's impactful programs, driving our mission forward. Together, we've empowered communities, celebrated diversity, and inspired creativity in fashion. Your belief in our vision continues to fuel our passion as we look ahead to even greater milestones in 2025. Thank you for being the foundation of our success and for helping us create a more inclusive and vibrant world of fashion. Together, we are making a lasting difference.

OUR SPONSOR



COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS





UNITED COLOURS OF FASHION

Express Your Talent & Pursue Your Passion.



SEWING CLASSES



FASHION CLINIC



**UCOF FALL FASHION
FESTIVAL**



Friday FASHION CLINIC

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

Book an appointment today to take advantage of our
Friday Fashion Clinic at the UCOF Sewing Hub

Brought to
you by:



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