

Local designer dresses up St. John's

Charlotte Street clothing line offers an alternative to the mall

By LANA MARTIN

In an industry flooded with screened T-shirts, trucker hats, and cropped jackets, it's hard to find a unique style. But, local fashion designer Charlotte Reid hopes she can help change that problem by offering an alternative to the mainstream.

Her line of women's clothing, dubbed Charlotte Street, has slowly woven its way into St. John's over the past year. Now, as her studio on Barnes Road prepares to open, Reid hopes her clothing can become an integral part of downtown shopping.

"The scene here is growing, but there needs to be more programs that can allow people to do this kind of thing," said Reid, who completed the costume studies program at Dalhousie University.

Reid has an impressive headstart, with a career in costume design that has led her through small films, museum contracts, and even *Trailer Park Boys*. But, after she worked on costumes for several years – travelling back and forth between Toronto, Halifax, and St. John's – Reid decided it was time to start her own line.

Although it was a gamble, she preferred the creative control, and she made the jump: "I just decided to put out my own line and see what happened."



SUBMITTED PHOTOS

Charlotte Reid's clothing line, Charlotte Street, looks like a million dollars, and it's made right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Charlotte Street currently has winter and summer lines, and Reid anticipates she will have another to follow the opening of her studio in late April. She gains inspiration from the industry, and also by looking at old fabric; she uses plenty of tweed jackets and jersey sweaters in her work. "You can't help but pay attention to what goes on [in the fashion world]," said Reid. "I usually just look at a fabric and think 'That would make a nice skirt.'"

As a skilled seamstress, Reid can often make a

piece in under an hour, but admits two or three mock-ups are common for an article to come together. "I prefer to go right to the cutting table and see things on the mannequin," she said. In order to get everything accomplished, Reid designates times during the week exclusively to sewing in order to get her clothing finished and ready for sale.

The Charlotte Street line showed at Grafenberg's in November, and some pieces are now available at August & Lotta on Water Street.

With her work, Reid hopes to not only produce desirable lines but also increase the awareness for creative arts programs in the province.

"The [Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters] and [the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency] are trying to start up a sewing machine operating course," said Reid. "It would be a dream to have [fashion] design programs here." As the creative arts sector gains ground, Charlotte Reid continues to produce funky and unique clothing sure to impress anyone with an eye for good taste.