



(L-R) Sketch for a spring design. Sewing a new creation. Patterns galore

# A Life in Design

Chloë Angus's winding path from small-town girl to fashion designer **BY SHERI RADFORD + PHOTOS BY KK LAW**

The best way to fuel creativity is to grow up without a TV, phone or electricity. At least, that's how it worked for Chloë Angus. What she did have as a child was a Singer sewing machine—and encouragement from her mother. “There were five kids in my family,” Angus says. “I think my mom was just happy to keep us busy doing different things.” Angus sewed clothes for herself and her dolls, along with “anything I could talk my brothers into wearing on Halloween.”

The family ran an organic seafood farm on the Sunshine Coast, 13.5 km (8.5 mi) by boat from the nearest small town, Egmont. When Angus was 12, she got a summer job working in a store in Egmont, but she earned more money selling t-shirts she'd designed than from her wage. “I would catch live fish and paint them with some fabric paint, and I would press them into the shirts.”

After graduating high school, the bright lights of the big city drew Angus to Vancouver. Almost on a whim, she started up a landscaping company and built it into a successful business. But as her 30th birthday loomed, Angus did some soul searching and decided it was time to revisit her first love: fashion. She signed up for a one-year program at the Helen Lefebvre School of Fashion Design. Angus credits her farming background with giving her the work ethic (and stamina) to juggle school, a landscaping business and a new

marriage. As a newly minted fashion graduate, Angus caught the attention of a buyer for The Bay (page 14), and she ended up designing several collections for them.

The rest, as they say, is history.

Over the past 11 years, Angus has gone from toiling in her basement, to a small office, to a larger studio, to her current 280-sq-m (3,000-sq-ft) studio. She makes everything from t-shirts to wedding dresses, and an extraordinary amount of time and care goes into each one: “We spend weeks on fitting a simple t-shirt.” Best known are her Spirit Wraps, the result of a creative collaboration with local First Nations artists Clarence Mills (Haida) and Corrine Hunt (Tlingit). Angus is also the fashion sponsor for the Leo Awards, and she recently had her first chance to design all of the costumes for a short film.

Even as Chloë Angus Design grows and evolves, one thing that never changes is Angus's commitment to staying in Vancouver. She loves the climate here: “I am a true Vancouverite. I own a nice collection of gumboots. I like umbrellas.” Plus she's inspired by the city's natural beauty.

Let's hope Angus continues to feel inspiration for many decades to come.

*Find Spirit Wraps at The Gallery Store (page 18) and the Museum of Anthropology at UBC (page 25). To see an array of Angus's creations, visit Chloë Angus Design (page 15). [W](#)*



Chloë Angus, hard at work in her gorgeous new studio and showroom on East 6th Avenue