

Good *Design*

A COAST SALISH DESIGN HOUSE HONOURS THE PAST WHILE LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

By Sheri Radford

Ay Lelum The Good House of Design does much more than release collections of stunning clothing seasonally. “The core and the backbone of everything is an integrated system of cultural and art learning that goes back generations,” says cofounder Aunalee Boyd-Good. “When you come from that many generations of art, you have a responsibility to carry it on.” She and her sister, Sophia Good, started the company 10 years ago in their hometown of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island. “We came into it as a second-generation Coast Salish design house.”

Their father, the late Dr. William Good, was a master carver, storyteller, and cultural historian as well as a Hereditary Chief from the Snuneymuxw First Nation. He passed away in 2025. When he was first starting out, Coast Salish art was “at the brink of extinction.” He, with the help of his wife, Sandra Moorhouse-Good—a painter and clothing designer in her own right—spent decades working to revitalize Coast Salish art. Boyd-Good calls her parents’ efforts truly innovative and groundbreaking. “They didn’t farm things out. They made everything themselves,” she says, including carvings, paintings, silkscreen prints, garments, jewellery, and pottery. “We grew up in an art studio. We grew up working with our parents.”

Moorhouse-Good is active in Ay Lelum today. “Mom mentored everything we’ve done in fashion,” Boyd-Good says. “She’s created some of our most iconic pieces.” Various family members are also involved in what Boyd-Good describes as a fully collaborative process. “I don’t really like to quantify who does what.” Working so closely with relatives can be challenging at times, but it also has advantages. “When we work together, we’re all trained the same way. It’s very succinct and intuitive, and we’re in a creative consciousness together.”

Designs incorporated into the company’s clothing were created by both the late Dr. William Good and Boyd-Good’s brother, the late master carver W. Joel Good, who passed away in 2024. “He very much had my dad’s ability to master Coast Salish art and my mom’s ability to paint and have impeccable spatial ability and fluidity and movement, so he was really a combination of the two of them,” Boyd-Good says. It’s vitally important to her that the legacies of her father and brother be carried on in Ay Lelum’s designs.





PHOTOS: PARIS FASHION WEEK WITH GLOBAL FASHION COLLECTIVE AND ANCOUVER FASHION WEEK COURTESY OF AY LELUM





And all of the clothing designs follow hul'q'umi'num' cultural protocols about what can and cannot be done with art. "We have to maintain the artistic integrity at all times."

Ay Lelum regularly takes part in Vancouver Fashion Week and Vancouver Indigenous Fashion Week, and they recently participated in Paris Fashion Week. Watching an Ay Lelum fashion show—several of which can be found on YouTube—is a fully immersive storytelling experience. "We write and record all our own music for our fashion shows, in English and hul'q'umi'num'," Boyd-Good says. "Sometimes when we're writing the song, we can envision the garment walking on the runway." She explains, "It all works hand in hand."

The music isn't limited to just the fashion shows. "We would take Dad in the recording studio and we'd record him singing, and then we'd remix it into beats, and then we would sing," Boyd-Good recalls. "We have a couple dozen songs on Spotify."

Boyd-Good enjoys the feeling of satisfaction that comes from successfully completing another couture show. "It's very fulfilling seeing a collection walk on the runway," she says. Several members of the family's younger generation walk the runway to honour their late grandfather and uncle, and additional models are often provided by Vancouver-based Supernaturals Modelling, the world's only all-Indigenous modelling agency.

On a day-to-day basis the logistics of Boyd-Good's job can be tricky, given the company's location on an island, far from any manufacturing district. Lately the biggest challenge for her—and everyone else in the family—has been grappling with grief over the twin losses of her father and brother. She says, "Our way of communicating is to bring out a collection of beauty or a collection of music, something that shows our feelings in the art. That's our way of processing the feelings, but also sharing where we're at so that people can walk the journey with us."

Despite so much loss, Boyd-Good remains optimistic about both the future and her family's legacy. Currently the family is working on a book with Sharon Fortney of the Museum of Vancouver that Boyd-Good started with her father. Her brother's artwork lives on in the Courtyard by Marriott Nanaimo hotel, and over the next decade all of the manhole covers in Nanaimo will be changed over to his art. As for Ay Lelum The Good House of Design, when Boyd-Good looks ahead she envisions "a beautiful balance of all of the family working together in all of the sectors of art." She sees her family "carrying it on and thriving and being successful" and "having a good life from it." A good legacy, indeed.

Ay Lelum clothing (in sizes ranging from XS to 5XL) and accessories are available in their storefront on Snunemuxw First Nation in Nanaimo and also online at www.aylelum.com.



All photos by Sean Fenzl. Opposite, top: Aunalee Boyd-Good and Sophia Good in the Courtyard by Marriott Nanaimo. Opposite, bottom: Manhole covers designed by W. Joel Good for the City of Nanaimo. This page, top: Spindle whorl carved by W. Joel Good. This page, bottom: Totem pole house posts at Departure Bay in Nanaimo carved by W. Joel Good and Dr. William Good.