



Sew & Sew: A Skills Program For Northern Schools - Update

In 2018 I Love First Peoples (ILFP) and The Art for Aid Project (AFA) began working on a plan to put sewing machines into the Mushuau Innu Natuashish School in Northern Labrador. With the help of some invaluable volunteers and efficient fundraising, we were able to send 3 adult-level sewing machines and a generous helping of material and peripherals to the school, with the intention of following up on their supply needs in subsequent years.

This year, at the request of the school, we began searching for an affordable and suitable sewing machine to support a learning program for elementary students in the Mushuau Innu Natuashish School and for Jens Haven Memorial School in Nain, Labrador. We identified Janome Canada as a potential supplier because of their excellent reputation and quality of their products. We began fundraising for 30 machines to be divided between both schools.

Josee Lusignan, President of IFLP, contacted Janome Canada about a possible partnership to help build the program. The result... something really wonderful: compelled by the cause and vision, Janome joined us as an official partner of Sew & Sew! They explained that the machines we initially requested would not be sufficiently sturdy for the rigors of elementary school education. They offered to donate 30 professional-level machines, fitted with child safety guards. These upgraded machines are significantly more expensive and will enable us to expand the program to more schools in the North! In addition, Janome Canada will also lead a sewing supply drive this spring – more details to come!

How this translates for previous donations: The initial ask for donations to the Sew & Sew Program were \$160.00 per machine, to which 33 generous donors responded! Because Janome Canada has offered to upgrade the machines, we will convert these 33 donations to 10 machines of the same model being provided by Janome Canada. These superior quality machines will ensure that students can access their skills labs for years to come. In the end, we will be installing 15 machines in Natuashish and 15 machines in Nain, with 10 machines to be issued to a school to be announced later this year.

Transportation: It goes without saying that shipping will be a significant factor in getting the machines and supplies to the schools, and ILFP and AFA will be exhausting all avenues of support for this. We will continue to run the fundraising platform through spring in anticipation of significant expenses to ship and install this program.

The first Sew & Sew project: As part of the program, we will be inviting students to make a quilt that will be gifted to a local Elder. We will partner with Janome Canada and Indigenous cultural learning specialists on the development of this initiative, to be revealed in June.

Sew & Sew Program start: Because of the Covid 19 lockdowns and restrictions for shipments to remote communities, this outstanding program will be a bit delayed. Machines will be shipped in May and June, in time for the start of the following school year.

We are so grateful to all of you who support the Sew & Sew Program. If you wish to contribute to this wonderful learning experience for Indigenous youth, please visit www.ilfp.ca and donate to the Sew & Sew program to help offset the shipping costs.

For more information on this and other programs for remote Indigenous schools, please visit I Love First Peoples: www.ilfp.ca or Art For Aid: www.artforaid.ca