

CALGARY SEWS

NEWSLETTER

Stay Home & Sew



Charity sewing

A LITTLE SELFLESS SEWING FOR 2026

There are several local charities in need of handmade items — and this is a wonderful way to put our sewing skills to meaningful use. We do receive requests for charity sewing or sewing supplies and keep updated details and opportunities on our website →

[CalgarySews.CA Charity Sewing](https://CalgarySews.CA/CharitySewing)

We're highlighting two charities for winter/spring:

- **Parachutes for Pets:** A Calgary charity that steps in when there is an emergency or an owner is unable to care for their pet for many different reasons, and they also help during disasters like wildfires. They are *always* in need of pet beds - any size to give some warmth and comfort to the tiniest kitten or the biggest dog. Great scrap buster project, and good mindless sewing when you've lost your sew-jo. Pet beds are also excellent learn-to-sew projects!
- **Good Neighbour:** Our members told us about this organisation. While many thrift stores don't accept me-made garments -- Good Neighbour does! If you're spring cleaning and have good condition, lovingly hand made garments that need a new home - think of Good Neighbour.
- Good Neighbour also has an ongoing need for shopping bags.
 - Meetup member Heidi shared with us an easy way to make shopping bags from old t-shirts. Instructions are [here](#) (links to our website).

We will collect pet beds at the Meetup on April 18. If you're not a Meetup member & want to contribute, please email CalgarySews@gmail.com

We will also collect dresses for **Project Dress A Girl** in August or September. More details on this in the next newsletter.

Would you like to join a day of charity sewing at My Sewing Room?

We're looking at a weekday in the first half of April. Email us and we'll send you the details.

Hot tips for sewists

TRICKS THAT MIGHT SAVE YOUR SANITY THIS WINTER

When sewing fleece:

- use a ballpoint or stretch needle
- use polyester thread and a slightly longer stitch length
- use a walking foot and zigzag stitch
- use clips instead of pins

When sewing flannel:

- pre-wash flannel as it shrinks significantly
- use a rotary cutter
- use a slightly longer stitch length (3.0 - 3.5mm)
- press, don't iron to avoid stretching
- clean your machine as flannel produces high amounts of lint



Finding new patterns

THE EDIT, A FEW CANADIAN OPTIONS, ON-TREND SHIRT

Are you looking for newly released patterns or inspiration for looks that are on trend? Each week, **The Fold Line (UK)** posts a [YouTube video](#) - The Edit - and it highlights new patterns with a nod to what is current. The videos are also a great way to find lesser known pattern designers!

Recently they highlighted a maker/designer based in Vancouver - **Sewing Therapy**. Sewing Therapy has some distinctive sewing patterns, and posts sewalongs and tutorials.

The February 8 version of The Edit also features the Carnation Blouse from Fabric Godmother (UK). If you're Gen X or older, you may remember wearing blouses like this - ruffles on the cuffs, front placket, or Princess seam lines. They're *back* and the **Carnation Blouse** is a current version of that look. Of course, you don't need to buy a pattern to get the look - just add a ruffle to a favourite woven shirt pattern that has a placket.



Threadloop is an app and website created by a Norwegian duo. On the website they highlight a long list of Canadian pattern designers — including adult and children's garments, accessories, lingerie, and more. Check it out [here](#).



Threadloop can also help you manage your fabric stash and sewing projects. Several of our Meetup members use it and highly recommend it.

Local Spotlight

RICK RACK TEXTILES

RICK RACK defines itself as a garment focused sewing store. The owner, Veronica Murphy, started the store to help Calgary sewists find the material they need to create a more thoughtful and sustainable wardrobe. Frustrated herself with not being able to find a good selection of garment fabrics and notions locally, she made a point of creating an inspiring atmosphere that carries a beautiful variety of fabrics, books and over 20 pattern companies. They also offer classes on site from beginner sewing to learning to use a serger.

RICK RACK is also able to print PDF patterns, help tune up your machines and sharpen your scissors.

Their website, rickracktextiles.com, allows you to purchase fabric and notions, register for classes and sign up for their monthly newsletter which features promotions and discounts. Shoppers can also save money by signing up for their rewards card.



And yes, they DO carry rick rack, and of course it's a gorgeous gold trim.

4704 Manhattan Road SE, Calgary

(403) 263-8088

10 am - 5 pm daily except Mondays (noon - 5 pm)

rickracktextiles.com

Upcoming Meetups

March 21 - Projector Sewing

April 12 - Outing to a fabric store

April 18 - Bodice Fitting

May 23 - Sewing Western Wear (Stampede is around the corner!)

*Topics subject to change. Events are open to members of the Calgary Sews Meetup Group.

Your voice in the Calgary sewing community

This is your newsletter! Have a favourite fabric store, indie designer, pattern, or local sewist to spotlight? We'd love to hear about it. You can also share a short story, review, or reflection on your own sewing adventures — no need to be a professional writer, just share what you love!

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Artificial Intelligence and the home sewist

BY NORA CRISTALL

Many home sewists are eager to access information quickly and find out what's new in the sewing world. We are also interested in digging deep to find vintage techniques, out-of-print patterns, and instructional material on obscure techniques. These are a few good reasons to explore Artificial intelligence (AI) — this is just the beginning of an expansive list on what we can do using simple AI searches.

In this new frontier it is important to know some of the roadblocks, ethical considerations and reasons for scepticism. Let's open the dialogue in this area and explore the pros and cons of use and to also learn how to make AI work for us as home sewists. As a start, here are some of the reasons for trepidation and the potential benefits.



Cons:

- AI can yield errors, poor technical quality in content that requires expert oversight
- AI's impact on employment is a common concern. While home sewing won't shift the job market, job displacement is often discussed as a downside of AI.
- AI can generate plain, widely available options if not prompted to create new individualized techniques.

Pros:

- There are fewer traditional resources for sewists such as quick access to the original big four pattern makers.
- The sewing community has grown world-wide and AI assists access to unique, less traditional resources.
- AI can assist home sewists by providing virtual examples of hard-to-explain concepts such as fabric drape and movement.
- AI can help identify ways to reduce waste and identify more eco friendly resources for sewing and patterns.
- AI can help creatives explore ways to modernize or repurpose old garments.

To get started, consider whether your sewing question is exploratory, looking at what is available, or generative, creating content. The AI guided enquiry can help you in both directions. Are you trying to find a resource or product? Or, are you trying to use AI to create something new like a line drawing, fabric pattern, monogram, label or pattern?

How to explore:

There are many AI platforms available. There are free options such as ChatGPT and a number of monthly subscription plans. There are also sewing specific products for more advanced application in pattern making and 3D avatar for garment mock ups. We can explore this new frontier together and help advance our creativity as a community.

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AI GUIDED TIPS FOR PURCHASING A NEW SEWING MACHINE

As an example, I'm currently shopping for a new sewing machine and used ChatGPT to help narrow down options that meet my needs. It provided a surprisingly detailed and comprehensive response. An excerpt is below:

“Here are some great intermediate-level sewing machines under \$1,000 USD that are especially good for clothing and garment sewing — with enough power, stitch options, and reliability to grow your skills beyond beginner projects:

✂ Recommended Intermediate Sewing Machines (Great for Clothing)

📖 Janome Skyline S3

Why it's great: ~200 built-in stitches, automatic needle threader, drop-in bobbin, and smooth fabric handling — excellent for garment sewing (tops, dresses, pants).

Skill level: Intermediate — plenty of flexibility without being overwhelming.

“Janome Skyline S3” is often highlighted in round-ups of intermediate machines under \$1,000. “

ChatGPT listed several other sewing machine options in a similar manner.

“What Makes These Good for Clothing

Intermediate garment sewing involves:

Automatic buttonholes and adjustable stitch width/length — important for collars, waistbands, and hems.

Variety of utility & stretch stitches — to handle woven garments as well as knits.

Drop-in or top-loading bobbin systems — easier tension control and fewer jams.

Compared with beginner machines, these models give you more stitches, better controls, and smoother handling of a range of fabrics, which is key as you sew garments instead of simple projects.

💡 Tips Before You Buy

✓ Try out machines in stores if you can — feel the pedal, listen to the motor, and try stitching fabric similar to what you'll sew.

✓ Consider accessories like extra presser feet (zipper foot, walking foot) and quality needles — they make a big difference in clothing results. “

Have you experimented with AI in your sewing or crafting practice? We're collecting real experiences—good, bad, and unexpected.

Email us and we'll include responses in the next newsletter, or share on Instagram and tag @calgarysews.

WISH TO UNSUBSCRIBE?



Email CalgarySews@gmail.com