



The 40 Mile Coat

Founded in 1978, the Heritage Weavers and Spinners Guild of Calgary (HWSGC) celebrated our 40th Anniversary with an all-guild project: ***The 40 Mile Coat***. Using material sourced within a 40-mile radius of the Calgary ring road, we created a wearable garment suitable for our Calgary climate and style. This project involved both new and longer standing guild members alike, and the sharing of ideas and expertise among our spinners, dyers, felters and, weavers engaged and energized our entire membership, highlighting our guild mandate “to provide a forum for creative inspiration and shared knowledge in weaving, spinning and related fibre-arts”. The learning and peer-to-peer mentoring reinvigorated our group and we saw growth in our workshops and course registrations as well as in our membership at large.



The 40 Mile Coat project involved four major phases:

- **Conceptual and Detail Design (August – September 2018).** The design concept for the coat was based on the guild’s 40th anniversary theme (“Looking Back: Moving Forward”) incorporating elements from the period of the late 70’s with many modern aspects added. This phase included garment design, sourcing materials, design of the yarn and weave structure(s), as well as any embellishments (braids, bands, linings, buttons, etc.).



- **Fabric Production (October 2018 – March 2019).** Entirely produced by the members of the guild, seven (7) thousand metres of yarn were spun from Alberta fleece and the yarn was custom dyed, and woven to create seven (7) metres of finished cloth. In addition, native Calgary plants were used to ecoprint the silk lining for the coat.





- **Coat Construction (October 2018 (muslin mock-up): March – May 2019 (finished coat)).** Guild members sewed the finished coat using a custom pattern designed by two of our members. In order to determine actual yardages needed and, as part of the design phase, the designers created a muslin mock-up of the final coat to confirm the construction sequencing.



- **Presentation, Exhibition and Permanent Home (June 2019 – July 2020).** A major component of the project was to share our expertise, experience and knowledge with other fibre artists/guilds throughout the province and country as part of our guild mandate *“to increase the profile and understanding of weaving, spinning and related fibre-arts in the community”* and it was our hope that this project would inspire other guilds to undertake such a project and of course, (through this sharing) to champion Alberta fine craft and to showcase our body of expertise!

Our coat was exhibited and celebrated through medals at the Association of NorthWest Weavers Guild (ANWG) in Prince George in June 2019 (Best Group Project and Best Spinning), at the Calgary Stampede Arts Showcase (Best Weaving and Overall Section Medal) and, at the Alberta Craft Council CSpace in September, 2019.

