

# Hot fur fashions and record fur prices

*Northern fur and seal skin hit Montreal runways*

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It's plain to see why Nunavut seal skins and NWT pelts are demanding record auction prices. Northern fur fashions hit the Montreal stage last week, and they were a hit.

Northerners pitched tradition at the biggest fur fashion show of the year — the North American Fur and Fashion Exposition.

"The signature piece was a modern version of an amauti," said Nunavut Development Corporation's (NDC) Gunde Asbjornsen. An amauti is a traditional Inuit woman's jacket.

Furs and seal skins are getting higher prices than ever before — about \$90 for a premium seal pelt at fur auction — because fur is back in fashion. And fashion is where it's at during the most important fur show of the year. It's where retailers and wholesalers come shopping for future styles.

"There was a lot of interest, especially from Italians and Asians," said Asbjornsen, who organized production of NDC's eight-piece collection.

Arviat-based Kiluk, an NDC subsidiary, created jackets, vests and pants made from seal skin and muskox leather. Kiluk's staff produced the Inuit seal skin collection. It was the first time seal skin and muskox garments were displayed at the annual show by the Nunavut Development Corporation.

Kiluk is becoming a premier seal skin manufacturer and high-fashion producer. During the year, before the show, community members learned how to craft fur from a master Montreal furrier. Then styles were sewn by the Kiluk manufacturing studio in Arviat. "We hired a new



photo courtesy of Nunavut Development Corporation

**Sealskin was a hit in Montreal at the biggest fur fashion gala of the year.**

production manager who just happens to be a designer," said Asbjornsen.

Seal skin's popularity can be attributed to new tanning methods. It is more subtle than it used to be and the most popular fashions are made of dyed blue, red and coloured seal.

A new NWT fur collection was unveiled in Montreal as well.

"We've made arrangements with some distributors. We are getting good reactions from people," said NWT Development Corporation's Fred Koe explaining that fur buyers were at Montreal's show to hunt for autumn retail goods. "They are placing orders for next fall."

The Dene Designs 2002 collection of fur coats was presented by Arctic Canada Trading Company Limited, an NWT Development Corporation subsidiary.

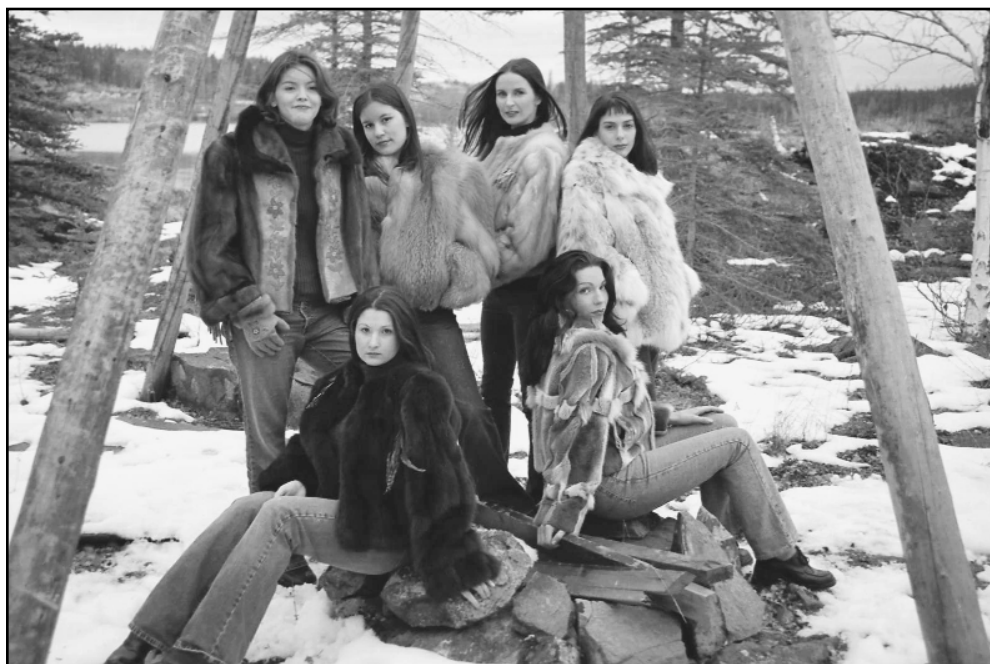
Aboriginal Dene styles combine beading and moosehide with beaver, sable, wolf and muskrat. The lush fur coats blend sparkling diamonds and gold in the centre of beaded Dene roses.

"There is some impact from Sept. 11 and also from the mild weather in the east," said Koe explaining sales are still unpredictable but, "the price of fur is better than in the past."

Breaking into Montreal's design world is a tough sell for Northerners.

"It's a close-knit community and we are trying to break into the market," said Koe. It is the first year for the development corporation to control the sale of NWT furs.

Fur knit creations from Fort Providence's Dene Fur Clouds and fur hats by Yellowknife's Just Furs are also at the Montreal fur exposition.



**Fur fashions by Fort Simpson's D'arcy Moses.**

photo courtesy of RWED