



Carwest News Service

As the reporter for Canada's Next Top Model's website, Sheri Block got to be a top model — if only for a day.

Top model for a day

Reporter experiences high-fashion photo shoot first-hand

SHERI BLOCK

FOR CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

Standing on a New York City rooftop with the Empire State Building in the background, wearing a \$15,000 couture dress and posing for a famous fashion photographer — I had my own diva transformation in the Big Apple and it was more than I could've ever imagined.

As the reporter for Canada's Next Top Model's official website, I spend my days writing about what it takes to be a top model, but I never thought I'd actually get to become one myself.

I showed up to the photo shoot location early in the morning, set to do my usual round of interviews with the finalists, creative director Note Marin and that week's photographer. I found out the finalists would be doing two photos — one as a meek assistant and the other as a supermodel diva. The two shots would later be put together to show the two extremes and I was looking forward to talking to them about the experience.

Wearing jeans and a simple shirt-dress, I hadn't spent much time getting ready that morning and wanted to concentrate instead on my busy day ahead.

But when one of Canada's Next Top Model's producers told me they were short a couple of models for the photo shoot and wondered if I could stand in, I knew things were about to take a dramatically different turn.

Of course that was also the day the blow dryer at the hotel had broken down and I was hardly

was time to head upstairs for the photo shoot.

There was so much to worry about. Watch the gown. Don't trip. Pretend like you know what you're doing. But my top-model moment almost ended in disaster when a member of the crew accidentally backed into me and nearly knocked me over. Everyone froze as they watched me do everything I could to stay standing and not rip the dress in the process.

Once outside on the rooftop, I took in the breathtaking view of the Empire State Building and almost pinched myself that this was actually happening.

I was helped onto a two-foot-high cubed box on top of a four-foot high mirrored riser by two male assistants. I couldn't believe how high up I suddenly was! It was freezing cold out there, especially with my very exposed legs. And every time the wind blew the box wobbled along with it.

Oh my gosh, I thought, what if I fall back and step on the dress? Or fall right off completely? How do real models do this? It's a lot harder than it looks and it gave me a new-found respect for what the Canada's Next Top Model finalists have to do.

I looked down at Meaghan, who was playing the role of the diva's assistant and tending to my dress with a lint roller.

"You're doing great," she said with a smile. "Hold onto me if you need to."

Photographer Amber Gray snapped away as Marin called

out instructions: Move your hand back. Move your face this way. Don't look down or you'll lose your centre of gravity.

I took a moment to look out at the city and felt exhilarated. Even though I knew I wouldn't make it into the final photo, I felt like a model and worked it as best as I could.

The next outfit I posed in was a long ruffled designer dress with an exquisite short dress worn over top worth \$10,000 alone. This time I was sitting on the cubed box and finalist Lindsay was brushing my hair.

By now I was an old pro and arched my back just like Marin instructed.

"You did absolutely fabulous, and actually I was getting confused between you and one of our top model girls," said Marin, following the shoot. "And your legs are hot."

That gave me more goosebumps than standing outside in the freezing cold did.

It was then time to change back into my regular clothes — and back to real life.

Even though I may never wear such beautiful dresses or pose in a high-fashion photo shoot, the whole experience has made me walk a little taller with my head held high and shoulders back, knowing that I rocked it as a top model — if only for a day.

SHERI BLOCK, REPORTER FOR CANADA'S NEXT TOP MODEL'S OFFICIAL WEBSITE, IS A FORMER REGINA LEADER-POST REPORTER WHO HAILS FROM INDIAN HEAD, SASK.

Wearable art

CHANTAL EUSTATE
CANWEST NEWS SERVICE

design that represents the beauty and wonder of the Pacific Northwest.

A Vancouver-based company has turned sunglasses into wearable art that is both stylish and smart.

Claudia Alan Inc.'s new AYA collection features frames etched with works created by B.C. First Nations artist Corrine Hunt.

For instance, the women's Althea sunglasses (\$35) feature oversized frames decorated with Hunt's eagle design.

And the men's Brody (\$35) features her wolf design on a wrap-style frame.

Carla D'Angelo, Claudia Alan Inc.'s founder and president, said she's happy with the results.

"(Hunt's) work really spoke to me and caught my eye," says D'Angelo, adding she is a "huge fan" of the Vancouver jewelry artist.

But there's more to these shades than simply looking good.

Buying a pair of these fancy squint-proofers helps to feed children in need: \$2 from every purchase gets donated to ONEX-ONE's First Nations school breakfast programs.

So yes, you can feel good about splurging on a few pairs — one for the car and one for your purse. They're also good gifts, practical and unique.

D'Angelo answers some questions about this hot new line, available at claudiaalan.com.

Q. Describe your new AYA line.

A. All glasses in the AYA line showcase an original First Nations

Q. What is the inspiration for working with artist Corrine Hunt?

A. I have always loved First Nations artwork and Corrine Hunt's work really appealed to me. As soon as I saw her work, I knew I wanted to work with her. I find her art inspiring; I wanted to incorporate the beauty of her art with the stylish glasses that we produce.

Q. How has the AYA line been received since launching a few weeks ago?

A. The launch of the new line has been exceptional — better than we even hoped. The style of the line appeals to both men and women and all ages. ... We have received interest internationally from Japan, Germany and the U.K., and the First Nations community is thrilled.

Q. Tell us about the charitable aspect to AYA and why this is important.

A. It took a long time to find a charity that really resonated with me, so I was very excited to find ONEXONE, a non-profit foundation committed to supporting, preserving and improving the lives of children at home in Canada, the United States and around the world.

At Claudia Alan, we believe in giving back to our communities. ... This program is helping (more than) 1,500 children get a nutritious breakfast.



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The AYA Collection's Althea model features a bold eagle design.

Relationship isn't lifeline



ELLIE
SAVVY
ADVICE

Q: I'm in my early 20s and unhappy regarding my home, boyfriend, work and education.

I have no motivation and suffered verbal and physical abuse for years. Counselling helped little.

I love my boyfriend of eight months, but my insecurities in-

trade. We've been fighting about our future, yet we're extremely attached and agree to disagree.

What should we do to improve our relationship? Are we ready for a long-term commitment?

— Unsure

A: One thing's certain: you are not ready for long-term decisions, while you're so dissatisfied. Work on your own future. Only when you address personal roadblocks, can you also confront relationship problems. Try counselling again.

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