







design seen

With the winter Olympics in Vancouver just a few months away, expect to see a lot more Canadian iconography. Graphic design based on First Nations art is showing up all over the place, and eyewear is no exception. This year we've already seen the Haida-inspired leather collection from Spectacle Eyeworks. Now a second collection, this time from Aya Accessories in Vancouver, is coming out with temples featuring designs by Corrine Hunt.

Aya launched this summer with a collection of readers that are being distributed in Canada by Suntech Optics. Leading the collection is Esme, which features Hunt's raven design on the temple. The pattern is carved into a three-tone temple, making the design pop out from a white background.

"When I had the idea, I kept my eyes open for an artist," says Claudia Alan, who designed the collection. "I came across [Hunt's] work at a gift show and...her art drew me to her. Personally we connected, and I moved forward. I did meet with other artists and didn't feel they were the right fit. Some people tried to do something and spin it off quickly. She's a smart woman and had an appreciation for what I was trying to do."

Most of Hunt's work is in

jewellery or furniture. Her imagery is strongly influenced by her Kwakiutl and Tlingit heritage. She is the first First Nations artist to have her designs adapted for use on spectacle frames.

Claudia Alan, who commissioned the designs and put together the eyewear collection, has worked in the eyewear industry for 16 years. She started her own accessories company, Aya, four years ago, after eight years with Suntech, most recently as vice-president of product procurement and marketing.

"I've always had an appreciation of First Nations art. I grew up in Australia with aboriginal art," says Alan. She noticed First Nations designs on jewellery in Vancouver, and "started to notice a trend that it was becoming a fashion trend...and thought it could be translated into eyewear."

Alan was born in Vancouver and spent her early years in Australia. Her parents had a handbag and shoemaking business, which she says probably is the root of her entrepreneurial spirit.

The collection includes four readers designed for men and women, ranging in price from \$35-60 at retail. Colours include lagoon blue and brown, deep red and cream, and black and white. Each frame shows off one of Hunt's designs.

The eagle and hummingbird designs come on three less-expensive

frames with +1.50, +2.00 or +2.50 lenses. The Esme frame, mentioned above, is the showcase piece, made of acetate or handmade zyl, and is striking with Hunt's eagle design. The collection also includes three sunglasses made of injection plastics with frosted design application.

Alan, who has a degree in fashion from Ryerson University in Toronto, says her company exists "To create beautiful products to make a difference."

For every frame sold, Aya will make a donation to ONEXONE, a charitable foundation that supports, among other things, a First Nations Breakfast Program that provides nutritionally balanced meals to 1600 children in nine communities.

Later this autumn, Alan plans to move beyond readers and introduce an ophthalmic collection, also featuring Hunt's designs.

"There's been great interest from the German market," she says. "A big part of it is because it has First Nations art in there and they're big followers of First Nations art."

The ophthalmic collection will launch with five frames for men and women. While it will have similar design themes, the application will be different, Alan says. The ophthalmic frames will have cutout temples, there will be metals as well as some acetate treatments, and the collection will include some semi-rimless frames. ●