

## Beauty for the soul

These Indigenous-owned brands respect the earth and honour ancestral knowledge

BY KATHERINE LALANCETTE

Last month, Jen Harper, founder of Cheekbone Beauty, announced her makeup brand would be sold at Sephora Canada in the next year. “Dreams do come true,” she says, beaming in a video sharing the big news. “Our mission and vision of helping every Indigenous kid on the planet see and feel their value in the world will only mean so much more when they can grab our products in Sephora.”

The development marked a major milestone, not just for the St. Catharines, Ont. entrepreneur, but for the beauty industry as a whole, which has been slow to include Indigenous-owned brands as part of a greater push toward retail representation.

There are glimmers of change: In May, Sephora Canada partnered with the 15 Percent Pledge and committed to dedicating a quarter of its offering to BIPOC-owned brands by 2026. The number was chosen to represent the diversity of Canada’s population, roughly 25 per cent of which identifies as BIPOC.

Here, we round up eight brilliant products to shop from Indigenous-owned beauty brands.



In an interview with *The Kit* back in 2018, Harper, called the makeup brand “my reconciliation to my culture, my community, my family and myself, ultimately.” For years, Harper felt ashamed of her Indigenous roots. Now, she’s celebrating her Anishinaabe heritage with sustainability-minded makeup products.

**CHEEKBONE BEAUTY**  
SUSTAIN LIPGLOSS IN WILD BERRY \$24, CHEEKBONE-BEAUTY.COM



Founder Leigh Joseph is an ethnobotanist and community activist. Her botanical skincare line is formulated using organic ingredients and wild plants harvested in the most respectful manner. Each product bears a Squamish name “to honour the place where this plant knowledge comes from.”

**SKWÄLWEN KALKAY WILD ROSE FACE MASQUE**, \$39, SKWALWEN.COM



For more than 20 years, this Indigenous-owned company has been bringing life to the heart of the Yukon with its gorgeous handcrafted soaps, essential oil blends and more. Owner Joella Hogan is always seeking ways to uplift her community, whether it’s by having elders and kids gather botanicals together or by employing local youth in her workshop.

**YUKON SOAP COMPANY**  
PETALS + PATCHOULI SOAP, \$9, YUKONSOAPS.COM



It all started when Patrice Mousseau’s baby girl, Esme, developed eczema. Instead of using the steroid cream prescribed by her doctor, the Ojibway mother sought a gentler, natural solution to soothe her daughter’s skin. Eventually, she took matters into her own hands and founded plant-based Satya Organic Skin Care.

**SATYA JAR CZEMA RELIEF BALM**, \$30, SATYA.CA



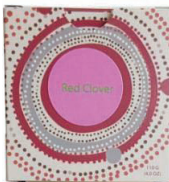
Founder Carrie Armstrong comes from a long line of Cree medicine women. Passionate about sharing her culture, she makes luxurious bath and beauty products inspired by traditional recipes.

**MOTHER EARTH ESSENTIALS** AROMATHERAPY MIST, \$20, MOTHEREARTH-ESSENTIALS.CA



Tara Tekahentakhwa Tarbell, the founder of skincare line Niawen, is an Iroquois Mohawk paramedical and oncology aesthetician. She hand-blends each of her botanical elixirs, which are rooted in sacred teachings.

**NIAWEN NURTURING CLEANSING OIL**, \$48, NIAWEN.COM



Sequoia started out in founder Michaelae Lazore’s kitchen back in 2002. Lazore, whose heritage is Kanien’ke:hà:ka (Mohawk) from Akwesasne and Northern Paiute from Nevada, quit her day job as an engineer to pursue her passion for creating beautiful soaps and Indigenous-inspired products. Many of her products feature sweetgrass, cedar and sage.



Born in Vancouver, Arianna Lauren says she’s a proud daughter of the Quw’utsun/Cowichan Tribes. She spent years travelling and connecting with teachers from different communities. Lauren’s line—which is made using 100 per cent renewable energy—aims to harness the knowledge she amassed and pass it on to future generations.

**QUW’UTSUN MADE** WEAVER FRAGRANCE, \$74, QUWUTSUNMADE.COM



## The gamechanger

Fashion designer Lesley Hampton has been championing inclusivity her entire career. She tells *Kelly Boutsalis* why it matters so much

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KRISTINA DITTMAR

Lesley Hampton is supposed to be vacationing with her parents in Prince George, B.C. Instead, the fashion designer is working full-time—think a partnership with Knix and a modelling gig for Nike—while accolades, like the Fashion Impact Award from the Canadian Arts and Fashion Awards and the Indspire Award Youth award, keep on coming.

Hampton, who is Anishinaabe and Scottish-Canadian, grew up in Australia, New Caledonia, Indonesia, England and Canada’s Arctic. She’s known for designing soft and pretty formal wear, as well as fun, vibrant athleisure, and she infuses her work with Indigenous stories. Her Eighteen Seventy Six collection from 2019 referenced the creation of the Indian Act. She launched that collection during Toronto Fashion Week with an all-Indigenous cast.

I first met Hampton after seeing her Lithium collection during the inaugural Indigenous Fashion Week Toronto in 2018. As her mom stood nearby, Hampton was radiating joy in the cleared-out room at the Harbourfront Centre, wearing a floor-length silver sequined gown topped with a black bomber. The back of her jacket read, “We are in control,” and profits from jacket sales went to mental health services in Indigenous communities. It’s just one example of the ways Hampton uses her platform to speak out about issues close to her. Inclusive casting, booking models of all sizes, genders and abilities are other parts of the designer’s ethos.

She’s also part of the slow-fashion movement, and I’m excited to own my first piece of hers, a Hampton x Wabano jacket my husband bought for my 40th birthday, which is currently being made to order. I reconnected with Hampton again to talk about her eventful year, Indigenous identity and why inclusivity is never a gimmick.

**You’re driving beauty and fashion into a new untapped vein of activism**

“With our new Aurora collection that came out in June, we really wanted to focus on cultivating wellness through body neutrality, as opposed to body positivity. We’re all getting out of our homes for the first time, and our clothes might not fit the same way. It’s an interesting conversation—we have this weird idea that we can go back to the old normal, but the new normal is going to be better than what we came from. Your body got you through a global pandemic, and it’s incredible. Coming out the other side you need to have your clothing work for you, as opposed to the other way around. That is something that everyone is probably experiencing at the moment, so getting that idea of body neutrality out there is going to be really major for everyone’s mental health at the moment.”

**How do you explain body neutrality versus body positivity?**

“The way I like to look at it is you can have a bad hair day, but you know that it’ll get better and it won’t always be like that. You can have a bad body image day, but you understand there’s a greater purpose to our body besides just how it looks, and the next day is a new day. It’s also about respecting your body, because this will be the only body you’re going to have, so try to develop a healthy relationship, as opposed to toxic positivity, where you think you have to be happy about it all the time. We see certain body types, skin colors or even skin textures in the media as we grow up, and we’re conditioned to think that’s the way we should be. Even though we all know in the back of our heads that it’s Photoshop and almost nobody looks like that.”

**How does the Aurora collection reflect this idea?**  
“We start with the colour schemes. We were inspired by Aurora Borealis, really light, airy happy colours like lilacs and mints. The shapes and the silhouettes of the collection are not skin-tight, and we have a

number of wrap skirt options, which are adjustable if you do gain or lose weight, so those will be a staple in your closet because they accommodate to whatever body shape you have. I think focusing on shapes and silhouettes like that will allow people to be reintroduced to the public space in a lot healthier way.”

**Shayla Stonechild is the model for your Aurora collection and portions of proceeds from that collection go to her Matriarch Movement.**  
“[Designer] Scott Wabano introduced me to Shayla, and I was just so inspired by the way she uses her platform for sharing voices about Indigenous rights. I didn’t grow up in an Indigenous community and I’m inspired by people who did and are living an urban Native lifestyle, and how they use both aspects of themselves to push forward.”

**Did modelling for Wabano and Nike Toronto give you insights on how you should work with models, since you’re usually on the other side of it?**  
“I’ve always been really intrigued by both sides of it. On

the designer side, I see the impact of making creative casting choices. At our shows, models literally came off the runway and started breaking down in tears because they were finally given that opportunity. I know what casting choices can communicate to the audience, but also the impact on the models themselves. After that fall/winter 2018 showcase, I reached out to an agency, B & M Models, to see if they would take me on as a model and I signed with them a few years ago. I wanted to be that curvy Indigenous person on their roster, and have that representation when the industry was ready for it. I didn’t get too many jobs over the first few years. Then, during

COVID and the Black Lives Matter movement, people finally started to take diversity and inclusivity seriously, and that translated into all these incredible jobs for me.”

**During one of your early shows, the focus on the all-Indigenous model roster almost overshadowed your designs. How can media do better when covering your work?**

“When I was starting out, every time I included a diversity aspect, it always became a headline or a viral story. You can see that with the all-Indigenous cast, and when we cast a Boston bombing survivor. We were still a very young brand then and we weren’t even selling work, we were just presenting. I was just doing what I believed in; it wasn’t for the headlines. I started my brand while I was still in school because I wanted to be at the forefront of pushing the industry in a better direction.”

**That leads us to the Indspire awards**

“I’ve dressed a number of their hosts in the past few years and I wanted to be a part of it, but I never felt like I was ready to apply. At the beginning of my career, coming back to Canada when I was 18, I struggled with my Indigeneity a lot, so I didn’t know if it was the right place for me to accept an award. I had to work through those issues and it’s such an honour, because it was such a journey to get to nominating myself. The impact that my work is actually having on Indigenous youth, and the Indigenous community and welcoming more Indigenous designers in the mainstream fashion scene is so inspiring that the push that I wanted to do at the beginning of my brand is being recognized.”

**I find the conversation about identity so interesting. We can be very critical of ourselves, particularly if how you identify with your culture becomes synonymous with your work. Where are you at with it now?**

“Given the platform that I have been given, with the privilege that I hold, as long as I’m always giving back and uplifting community members, that’s my place. Hopefully when I’m on the executive level of decision making, then I can always include the racial representation there.”

## Tie the knot

Who needs a shirt when a scarf can be worn in endless ways? *Emily Tamfo* takes the scarf top trend for a spin

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CELESTE COLE

Considering all the time I’ve had to stare at my unworn clothes and complain about wanting to wear them ASAP, you’d think I would have had my summer wardrobe ready to go at the first hint of Humidex. Instead, true to form, I had analysis paralysis and could not decide what to wear while I hop around to any patio that will have me. I scoured Instagram for inspo, and amid many early 2000s trends, one comeback look in particular consumed my thoughts: the scarf top. Or rather, a scarf that is tied, tucked, folded, pinned—you name it!—and worn as a shirt. Who can forget Mariah Carey’s car-stopping red bandana bra top in the “Loverboy” video of 2001?

As a fuller-busted girl (I’m a 30G—yes, G), I initially wrote off this styling trick that has resurfaced along with the popularity of other DIY fashions. I was convinced it wouldn’t provide enough coverage, or it would give me the maternity tent look I have spent my lifetime trying to avoid. I’ve never been one to hide my chest, but if I learned anything from Janet Jackson’s 2004 Super-bowl performance, it’s that there’s nothing worse than a poorly timed wardrobe malfunction. It didn’t help that most of the women styling this top online had much smaller busts, so of the “10 ways to wear it,” at best I could only get away with one, I thought.

But once the sun was out and the grocery store wasn’t the only place to see and be seen, I decided to risk it all and give the trend a chance. I must say, I was pleasantly surprised with how many options I had once I started thinking outside the box. At first, I gave the classic triangle scarf top a shot—folded into a triangle, corners tied behind the back. For me, this style just didn’t work—I had no issue tying it, but it made me look a bit boxier than I’d like. However, after some trial and NSF error, I’ve realized that with a little creativity and some good ol’ double-sided tape there are definitely ways that work, no matter your bust size.

The key is finding a scarf that is A) big enough for coverage and B) has a pattern you like enough to wear multiple ways. If you’re not sure how big of a scarf you need, measure around the fullest part of your bust, then add about 20 cm (this leaves 10 cm on each



**The look: Off-the-shoulder** This look makes me feel like I’m Carrie Bradshaw turning heads on Fifth Avenue in the *Sex and the City* opening credits. To make it, fold the scarf in two to make a triangle. Wrap the long side around your torso above your bust, with the triangle behind your back; tie the two corners together in front. Then, turn the scarf to one side of your bust, and wrap the loose ends around your arm and tie them. A little double-sided tape would go a long way.

**Wear it** This is my favourite look, but since my arm is literally tied down, I’d wear it for a sedate sit-down brunch.

side to tie, tuck or pin)—92 x 92 cm (or 36 x 36 in.) is the absolute minimum for me. If you only have one scarf, make sure it’s a lightweight (but not see-through) material that can be tied easily and carry you through those too-hot-to-handle summer days.

This trend is a great way to breathe new life into scarves that have been collecting dust in your drawers, but if you’re looking to shop, there are plenty of options. Lauren Nouchi, co-founder of New-York-based brand Apparis, saw the potential in the scarf trend and knew she had to include a large “vegan silk” scarf in a custom pink and yellow ombre print in the brand’s spring/summer collection—as well as a matching slip skirt. “We strive to create timeless pieces that can be worn over and over in multiple ways,” says Nouchi. “We had to make the measurements perfect, so that the piece works both as a top and accessory, as a head or neck scarf.”

Buying vintage or second-hand is an excellent option, and a sustainable way to try something new (if you go this route, check out the endless gems on Depop, like Versace-esque chain and rose print numbers). If you’re looking for an excuse to splurge, a silk scarf from Hermès or Alexander McQueen is a relatively accessible designer purchase. And if you can find a reversible scarf with different patterns on the front and back, you’ve just doubled your options!

Now that I’ve given the scarf top a chance, I wish I hadn’t written it off so easily. While I don’t think this is a truly effortless look for everyone (SO. MUCH. FOLDING.), once I found the styles that worked for me I started to see it as a summer staple. And there was no hiding how much I was feeling myself: Everywhere I wore a scarf top might as well have been the dock to my own imaginary yacht in Saint-Tropez.



**The look: Knotted bralette** This look takes a bit of origami, but it’s worth it. Fold the scarf in two to make a triangle. Wrap the long edge around the top of your bust and tie it at the back. With the triangle now covering your bust, hold the inside and outside corners of the scarf at the bottom, one in each hand. Take the inside corner and wrap it over the top, pulling it through. Then, take the outside corner and wrap it under the long edge, pulling the end up and out. For support, spread out the fabric as you go to create a cup. With the two free ends, make a knot. I’d wear a bandeau underneath and gather it in the middle with a clear tie so it doesn’t show.

**Wear it** A picnic or beach day, to get some extra vitamin D. Or throw on an oversized blazer and you’re basically a model off-duty on the town.



**The look: Cowl-neck crop** With the scarf spread out in front of you, take the top two corners and tie them behind your neck to create a cowl-neck effect. Then, take the bottom corners and tie them behind your back. That’s it! Now you have an open-back halter top. The key question is: to bra or not to bra? For those with fuller chests, I suggest wearing a bra (ideally flesh-toned) and tucking the back pieces around the straps.

**Wear it** I’ll be wearing this style for my next barbeque or shopping day (it’s easy to take on and off). It gives great coverage in the front, with an over-the-shoulder moment that screams, “Summer is in full swing!”

## Tie one on



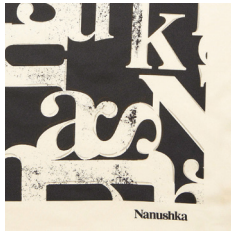
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## THE KIT X SHERKSTON SHORES

## Endless summer

Get out of the city to a beachy retreat that’s fun \*and\* chill



After more than a year spent staring at the same walls, nothing seems more thrilling than escaping for a summer vacay with family and friends. However, with travel restrictions and, let’s face it, a touch of post-pandemic anxiety, far-flung voyages aren’t so enticing just yet. The good news is you don’t have to hop on a plane to spend your days soaking up the sun while listening to lapping waves. Just an hour and a half outside the GTA is Sherkston Shores, a 560-acre beach resort and campground that spans over four kilometres of gorgeous Lake Erie shoreline.



Perfect for an easy weekend getaway, it’s virtually stress-free. You’ll skip the northern highway traffic and don’t even need to preplan meals as there’s an on-site grocery store, liquor store and Boston Pizza restaurant. Accommodation-wise, there are a variety of options to fit any budget—from luxe premium cottages to rustic cabins to RV and campsites. No matter how you decide to vacay, you’ll find yourself drinking your morning coffee outside with a beautiful view, reading a book on the sandy beach and lounging around a fire ring with friends. And when you’ve had enough relaxation—if that’s even a thing—the activity options are endless. For families with littles, there’s a waterpark, skate park and mini golf. For adults activities include boot camp fitness classes, watersports rentals, fishing, tennis courts, Pickleball and more. Plus, it’s pet-friendly! So start planning for your sunny days ahead.

### Contest alert!

The Kit has partnered with Sherkston Shores to create an unforgettable experience to thank our tireless frontline workers. Nominate a deserving frontline worker for their chance to win a Sherkston Shores getaway valued at \$4,000. Enter at [thekit.ca/life/sherkston-shores-contest/](https://thekit.ca/life/sherkston-shores-contest/)

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\*Some amenities in 2021 are currently unavailable pending guidance from Ontario Health and local government to ensure the safety of visitors.

No purchase necessary. Skill-testing question required. Contest open to residents of Ontario who are 25 years of age or older and are employed in First Responder, Medicine, Senior Long-Term Care, Education, Postal/Courier Services, Public Transit, or Grocery Store sectors. Limit of one entry per person. Odds of winning depends on the number of eligible entries received. One (1) prize available consisting of a premium cottage stay at The Sherkston Shores Beach Resort for select dates between May 1, 2022 and October 31, 2022 (ARV: \$4,000.00 CAD). Other restrictions apply. Contest Period opens at 12:01 a.m. ET on July 29, 2021 and closes at 12:01 a.m. ET on August 12, 2021. To enter and for complete contest rules and prize details go to [thekit.ca/life/sherkston-shores-contest/](https://thekit.ca/life/sherkston-shores-contest/). See contest rules for an alternate mode of entry.



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