

OCTOBER 2025 SPEAKER, LAURA CRISTINZO
THE IMPORTANCE OF CIRCULAR FASHION

Laura is Circularity Program Manager at *Fashion Takes Action*, a Canadian organization founded in 2007 to promote “sustainability of the planet” in an age where everything including clothing has become instantly disposable. Circular fashion is like a revolving door- it starts with raw materials in the ground, goes on to be turned into synthetic fibres, revolves on as a piece of clothing, and then, unlike the usual fate of being rapidly discarded, is rethought in a variety of ways. “Good for the environment and community,” Laura said.

“Most people think disposable plastic bottles and packaging are the reason for the large amount of waste but in actuality textiles are the fastest growing cause. Every second the equivalent of a garbage truck full of clothes is trashed. *Every Second*. One hundred billion garments are made each year, twice as many as twenty years ago. Thirty percent never sells. Brands manipulate their marketing to make us want more.”

Laura used to be part of the world of brands. After taking fashion design and fashion technology courses at Humber College and George Brown College as well as the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City, she did product development for nearly twenty years for several brand-name clothiers. She didn't like the emphasis on consumption she told me after her presentation. “I saw the damage caused” and she switched to sustainability.

She encouraged us to follow the “**7 R's**” of circular fashion to do our part in reducing clothing wastefulness: (1) **Reduce**. Slow down consumption and look into the supply chain and labour information. Only buy what has been certified by reputable organizations as sustainable. Beware of “greenwashing,” brands that say their garments are good for the planet without proof. “Shop your closet. Twenty percent of the items tend to be used 80 percent of the time and you can forget what all you have.” (2) **Reuse**. Extend the amount of time you wear things or donate, give to a friend, or swap for something that will be new for you. (3) **Repair**. “Sew on a button, fix a hole, redo a hem, remove stains quickly and teach these to your children/grandchildren.” Increasingly communities are having free “repair cafés” where local “fixers” repair clothes and appliances, put in a zipper or patch while you watch and learn. The entire community benefits.” [The North York Central Library is a host.] (4) **Repurpose**. “Turn an old item into something new, for example, a T-shirt into a tote bag. YouTube has tutorials.” (5) **Rent** or borrow for special occasions. “Your wallet will thank you.” (6) **Resell**. “Give a second life through online buy and sell apps, eBay, or consignment shops.” (7) **Recycle** “Only when too damaged.”

As today's young people tend to “use and soon trash” Fashion Takes Action is educating them in the importance of circularity through workshops, discussions, a 7 Rs pledge. FTA is also doing a pilot project with major retailers on “practical mechanical changes.”

Members then pointed out that people of our vintage have long practised sustainability through reusing clothes for ten or more years, hand-me-downs, repairing. “Take a young person under your wing and teach them “thrifting,” Laura responded.

UWCNY members donate “gently used” clothes and volunteer at the sorting depot of New Circles, a North York organization providing clothes to the needy. There is a “means test.” Janet Gordon is in charge; contact her if you're interested. janetg8094@gmail.com

Susan Goldenberg