

What is a Fibreshed?

Definition of “Fibreshed”: A non-profit organization that develops regional fibre systems which build ecosystem and community health.

(Not the little building hiding your yarn & fibre stash)

Fibresheds promote: Climate benefitting agriculture — Regional manufacturing — Integration of producers with processors and end users of natural fibres through education and information events.

Fibresheds are involved in many aspects of fibre and textile production. These include but aren't limited to:

- Slow clothing which involves valuing quality & longevity over cheap & wasteful fibre products and procedures. It is the opposite to fast fashion featuring inexpensive, poorly made, almost disposable clothing made from petroleum-based synthetic materials, which overburden waste landfills.
- Valuing fibre arts that involve skillful handwork, mending quality pieces, recycling cloth and fibres, reusing clothing.
- Local producers of natural fibres and materials acquired by local makers to produce goods sold by local shops. Build and maintain local economies and communities.
- Support and build processes of restorative agriculture to enhance our ecosystems. Practice soil to skin to soil processes through the lifetime of fibre goods.

What is the Prairie Fibreshed?

Prairie Fibreshed Network Inc. is a membership corporation, which was established in November 2022. Our area encompasses the Province of Saskatchewan.

Our Mission Statement:

Uniting and supporting fibre producers and fibre users while promoting soil to soil processes within our region.

We are an affiliate of Fibershed , the umbrella organization, headquartered in California, USA.
<https://fibershed.org/>

There are nine fibresheds in Canada; all members of the Canadian Fibreshed Network:

<https://www.canadianfibreshed.org/>

Vancouver Island, Vancouver, Sunshine Coast, Salt Spring Island, Kootenay in BC; Prairie in Saskatchewan; Pembina in Manitoba; Upper Canada in Ontario; Quebec

We have a website: <https://prairiefibreshed.ca/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/prairiefibreshed/>

Contact us: prairiefibreshed@gmail.com

Subscribe to our blog and keep up with the latest news.

Prairie Fibreshed History:

Prairie Fibreshed Network Inc. began in the summer of 2022. A number of people supporting the notion of the Fibreshed got together to formally organize a not-for-profit corporation. We wanted to have a structure for governing our group, and to further our objectives of educating both producers and the public about the necessity of using natural fibres.

Prairie Fibreshed Network Inc. is a membership corporation, established in November 2022. Our membership includes natural fibre producers, processors, and community members who are users and supporters. Our area encompasses the Province of Saskatchewan.

Who?

Prairie Fibreshed website: <https://prairiefibreshed.ca/>

Facebook page: prairiefibreshed

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/prairiefibreshed/>

Contact us: prairiefibreshed@gmail.com

Subscribe to our blog for the latest news: <https://prairiefibreshed.ca/category/blog/>

Prairie Fibreshed Producer Members (\$45/year fee) include natural fibre producers, shepherds, farmers, fibre processors, fibre sellers, fibre artisans and artists who:

- Source fibre within Saskatchewan and Canada
- Source/hire labour within Saskatchewan
- Have processing of fibre and fibre products conducted within Canada
- Demonstrate three or more soil to soil processes on farm/acreage

Prairie Fibreshed Community Members (\$30/year fee) are people in our fibreshed region who want to support and be a part of creating a fibre economy in Saskatchewan. They include fibre artisans who favour natural fibres in their work as weavers, spinners, dyers, knitters, crocheters, felters, fibre artists, as well as the people who buy the fibres, yarns, and handmade products from Saskatchewan producers and makers.

How?

We encourage new members to join via our website. <https://prairiefibreshed.ca/membership/>

Producer Membership \$45.00/year

Community Membership \$30.00/year

We get together at monthly business Zoom meetings, social Zoom meetups, and meet occasionally in person.

Educational activities such as workshops, demonstrations, displays at appropriate venues introduce our goals, projects, and encourage membership.

Why?

Our Mission Statement: Uniting and supporting fibre producers and fibre users while promoting soil to soil processes within our region.

Prairie Fibreshed Network Inc. began in the summer of 2022, supporters of the idea of a fibreshed got together and formally organized a not-for-profit corporation. We wanted to have a structure governing our group, to further our objectives in promoting natural fibres with an environmentally ethical, local economy.

Where?

The region encompassed by the Prairie Fibreshed is the province of Saskatchewan.

Doing?

The aim of Prairie Fibreshed Network Inc. is to raise awareness for producers, processors, and users of natural fibre products. We educate our members about increasing the value of their products through workshops and on-line education programs. We promote our programs publicly with displays at fibre events and on websites.

Here's what we've done to date (May 2024):

- Two day wool workshop designed to educate producers on improving wool quality, and grading and classing wool in Saskatoon, February 11 & 12, 2023.
- Display at the Saskatoon Spinners & Weavers Guild "Prairie Warmth, Prairie Fibre" festival, May 12-14, 2023, as well as a supporting donation (\$100)
- Displays and demonstrations at the Biggar Fibre Festival, June 10, 2023
- Displays and demonstrations of Prairie Fibreshed information and fibre arts by members at the Grasslands Sheep Show in Humboldt, July 21 to 23, 2023.
- Displays and demonstration at Queen City Fibre Festival in Regina, September 29, 2023.
- "All Things Alpaca" workshop presented October 15, 2023 at Canadian Fibre Mill, Caron, SK.

On-going projects include:

- Project involving fibre flax production and processing which started April 6, 2024, and extends into the fall of 2024.
- Prairie Fibre — Full Circles", an exhibition featuring fibre arts made from Saskatchewan natural materials, and representing collaborations between fibre producers and makers. Started October 2023, to show in the Saskatchewan Craft Council Gallery, January 24 to April 11, 2026.
- Monthly zoom membership meetups to share knowledge, questions and build community.

Future Plans:

- Fibre Trail involving promotion of producer members.
- Displays and Demonstrations at:
 - Biggar Fibre Fair, June 10, 2024
 - Grasslands Sheep Show in Humboldt, July 19 to 21, 2024
 - Queen City Fibre Festival in Regina, October 26, 2024
 - Silver Willow Fibre Festival in Saskatoon, October 5, 2024

What are Natural Fibres?

- Including but not limited to: Wool, mohair, alpaca, angora, flax, hemp, and other plant fibres, leather and furs.
 - Natural fibres have long been utilized to produce fabrics for clothing, blankets, art and shelter.
 - Natural fibres are reusable, recyclable, compostable, and can be returned to the earth and accordingly, they are wholly sustainable. Soil to skin to soil.
 - Many synthetic fabrics cannot be recycled and end up in landfills around the world.
 - Textile communities enhance regional economies. Connecting wearers and users to the local areas where textiles are grown and processed will help create a lasting system of localized fibre production. Think “Farm-to-closet” (like “farm-to-table”).
- Saskatchewan produces beautiful natural fibres however, many people are not aware of where to obtain them. Crafters, knitters, weavers, and artists are often searching the internet and purchasing products from websites such as Amazon or Etsy, when the opportunity is at hand to purchase Saskatchewan produced products.

Wool specific points:

- Sheep’s wool has been utilized by people for more than 8,000 years. The use of wool declined in popularity due to convenience because some care is required in the washing of wool products to avoid felting.
- Wool is known for its warmth. However, the fibre also is cooling to the skin as it wicks away perspiration from the skin without feeling damp.
- Wool is naturally fire-resistant making wool quilt batts a desirable choice for bedding.
- Sometimes you hear “Wool is “scratchy”. Not all wool is scratchy. Different breeds of sheep produce different types of wool, with some that is easily worn next to the skin.
- The thickness of wool fibres can make wool feel scratchy. Wool with thinner fibres can be very soft. The diameter of the fibres and scales on the surface of the wool shaft affect the feel of wool. Thicker wool fibres (higher micron count) can feel harsh. The itch felt by wearers can also be caused by an allergy to the lanolin in the wool.
- New treatments to yarn, which strip or dull the scales of the wool shaft, or the application of a polymer coating produces a wool fabric that can be machine washed. This produces “superwash wool”, which is becoming popular.

Alpaca specific points:

- Alpaca is a traditional fibre produced by alpacas, a species domesticated 6.000 years ago in the Andes mountains of South America.
- Alpacas have been raised in Canada since 1992 for breeding stock and fleece production.
- Alpaca shares many characteristics with wool including: warmth; comfort from its ability to breath and wick moisture; flame resistance; low impact of alpacas on the environment.
- A rare luxury fibre in the world textile market because of its fineness, soft hand and versatility as a textile.
- Contains no lanolin, so very few people have an allergy to alpaca.
- There are a number of Saskatchewan alpaca producers, and many sell yarns and other products made from their own alpaca fibre.

Flax specific points:

- The fibre and fabric made from the flax plant are referred to as linen, and has been used for thousands of years among many European peoples. It was the most common fabric used until the use of cotton boomed during the industrial revolution.
- Linen production died out in North America in the 1950s when synthetic plastic fibres and cotton became popular by seeming cheaper and easier to care for.
- Flax growing and linen production can be more environmentally friendly than most cotton production and synthetic plastic textiles.
- Flax thrives in our prairie climate.
- Linen is highly breathable and absorbs moisture making it popular for clothing in hot weather. It is more durable than many other natural fibres, making superior household linens. Linen softens and becomes more absorbent with use.
- There is growing interest, investment and research efforts to once again produce flax fibre in North America. The automotive, building, packaging, plastics, and erosion control industries are seeking natural fibres to replace ecologically harmful fibreglass and petroleum-based fibres.