
Salons embrace more 'green' products

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By Jennifer McDougall, For Neighbours



Shelley Lester, left, owner of Scissorworks and Company, talks with client Jennifer Elliott about products and developing processes that are safer for the environment and for the clients themselves. Lester brought in L'Oreal Professional's ammonia free permanent colour line 18 months ago, and says clients are thrilled.

Photographed by:

Lorraine Hjalte, Calgary Herald, For Neighbours

Thousands of women in Calgary rely on hair colour products, in spite of growing concerns around their chemical ingredients. For those of us who refuse to go grey, there is hope that we can also find products - and salons - that embrace the latest non-toxic trends.

More and more companies are looking for products that reduce risks to our health and the environment.

Scissorworks & Company salon director Shelley Lester was one of the first in Calgary to introduce an ammonia-free permanent colour product line by L'Oreal Professional called Inoa.

She says the odour-free product is attracting attention from a growing number of customers including women with allergies or sensitive skin.

Lester offers this line to all her clients but says it is particularly welcome to those women who have suffered from scalp irritation or headaches related to the strong odours of ammoniabased colour lines.

The benefits extend to her staff as well, who mix and apply colour all day long.

The ammonia in Inoa is replaced by mono ethanol amine, an alkaline derivative found in some non-permanent hair dye.

One of Lester's longtime clients, Bobbie Kennedy, became more conscience of the hair products she was using after she developed severe psoriasis.

Kennedy's sensitive skin and fine hair made her a perfect candidate for Inoa.

She can now avoid ammonia and, since the new product processes in the air, spend less time under the heat of a machine.

"Aside from the environmental and health benefits, the overall effect is the good feeling I have about myself," says Kennedy. "I receive compliments."

Kennedy, who is in her 70s, says the natural, translucent effect is superior to the matte looks of the past, making her look quite a bit younger.

Jennifer Elliott was one of Lester's first clients to try Inoa.

"I hadn't experienced any discomfort but I am always keen to try something new and interesting," she says.

"It was supposed to be easier on your hair and better for your scalp."

Elliott discovered that for her, the colour lasted longer and grew out softer at the root line.

"I used to have to have the colour brought through to the ends more frequently, and in the summer it would go brassy."

Getting by with root touch ups between colour appointments means a lower bill and less time in the salon, says Elliot, "even if it's just 15 or 20 minutes saved."

Many salons engage in the three R's, whether its reusing foils, recycling plastic bottles, or reducing cardboard waste, but Inglewood Beauty Bar owner Sharon Broda takes it one step further by collecting clean, dry hair for use in the oil industry.

The hair is used to make absorbent mats, which are used in the oil industry.

Broda has been proactive about uncovering environmentally responsible and health conscious business practices for years, and she owes part of that dedication to an accidental fall she had three and a half years ago.

Hitting her head set off a sacral cranial fluid leak.

"For 65 days, I couldn't stand without vomiting."

As Broda underwent tests, another even more serious health concern was discovered; a tumour in the centre of her head, behind her eyes.

Convinced the growth was the result of decades of working with ammonia based hair colour - often without the benefit of gloves - Broda stopped using hair dyes and began her search for a safer alternative.

"I thought 'there's got to be something better' so I went out to find a more healthy choice for women," she says.

Broda discovered Davines from Parma, Italy, a milkbased product line that uses only a small amount of ammonia.

She incorporated it into her business and has used it ever since. Meantime, her health improved.

Risks to pregnant women remain a sensitive subject and as a result, both salon owners say the decision to use colour is a personal one - but they will often recommend highlighting over full colour to ensure no chemicals touch the scalp.

Broda's next venture is a quick, touch-up salon.

Reminiscent of shoe shine stops, women will be able to "pop in" to get their hair touched up or redone.

"Remember when our mothers used to go to have their hair done every week?" says Broda, "It's coming back."

While in her chair, women will receive tips from how to properly hydrate their hair in our dry air city to how to maintain their styles overnight (hint: a satin pillowcase).

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