

Style Features | Georgia Straight Style

April 3, 2008

[Login](#) or [register](#) to post comments [email print](#)

Waterproofing is all in the family

By Pieta Woolley



The word no was pretty common around new mom Lara Leontowich's house. Her son, Ayden, was a typical toddler, into everything, and the struggle was frustrating both of them. Finally, one rainy day last year, Leontowich switched her approach. She dressed her son in rubber boots and wet weather gear, took him outside, and told him to jump in a puddle.

"He was shocked," Leontowich, who founded the Westcoast Moms' Network Inc. (www.westcoastmoms.ca), recalled to the Straight. "He was so used to hearing me say no. So I jumped in, and made a big splash. His face said it all. What is mom doing? But, once he started, it was fun. I tell this story to remind moms to get down to their kids' level, and allowing them to have that spirit. To allow them to get messy, to let go, and to let them do things."

On the wet West Coast, getting messy is a sure thing, once you head outside. Muddy trails, swampy fields, kelpy beaches, and constant spring drizzle can lead to chilly kids and loads of laundry, unless you dress for storm-season success. In toddler terms, that means head-to-toe waterproofing.

Fortunately, Vancouver has become a hub of locally designed, climate-appropriate gear. The ubiquitous Mountain Equipment Co-op Newt rain suit (\$49 infant, \$51 toddler, mec.ca/), a bright, made-in-Canada one-piece hooded coverall, set the standard back in 2001. Out of rainy Victoria, Tuffo's Muddy Buddy one-piece (\$29.95, tuffo.com/) also lets wee ones explore comfortably.

After wrapping her baby's feet in fleece scarves on a trip to Whistler, Lisa Will cofounded Stonz Wear baby booties in 2004. The company's soft-soled, weatherproof boots (\$44.95, stonz.ca/) fit over slippers, and won't come off, thanks to adjustable toggles. They're also made in Canada.

It wasn't always like this—though the weather is nothing new. When Kitsilano mom Ana Domingos started her company Lettuce Bee Kids Clothing five years ago, she wanted to make designer boys clothes. After approaching several Vancouver baby stores with her idea, she found they were lukewarm, but hungry for rain gear.

"So I started to make rain pants, and they sold very well," she told the Straight. "I changed the focus of my company to outdoor gear for babies and kids."

Now, Domingos designs Vancouver-specific rain-proof clothes for infants to 12-year-olds. Her rain jumpers feature reinforced knees as well as reflective tape for safety (\$78 lined, \$56 unlined, www.lettucebee.ca/).

She's recently expanded to encompass Vancouver's other watery reality, with clothing for wet summer days at the beach (see page 29).

With the opening of GumDrops (2029 West 4th Avenue, gumdrops.ca/) in fall 2007, the city finally has a go-to for rain gear for the whole family—including dog coats and matching wet-weather mommy and baby gear.

What should new moms look for in rain gear? Leontowich suggests searching out elastic-cuffed pants and jackets, with properly sealed seams so the water doesn't leak in. That includes inspecting rubber boots, which are not always watertight. As for umbrellas, she said, they're awfully popular with the toddler set, but can quickly turn into a weapon.

"If you're constantly saying no," Leontowich advised, "you don't let them take those chances, which are so important. Once he's dressed properly, you can do things together."