

Sovereignty Speaks © *Design*



Leslie A. Deer was born in Oakland, California in the 1960's and grew up in the San Francisco Bay Area until the age of 18. Throughout her life in the Bay Area, Leslie's family was active in the local Indigenous community and participated in several historical events including the Occupation of Alcatraz, the Longest Walk, and the first two 500 Mile Runs. Leslie also danced at intertribal pow wows locally and throughout Indian country. It was Leslie's love of dancing and a 12 year run with the American Indian

Dance Theatre that led her to her current profession.

Leslie is an apparel designer and artist who began her career by making her own dance regalia out of necessity while on tour. As her love for creating apparel grew, so did her clientele and Leslie decided to pursue a degree in apparel design to strengthen her skills. In May 2015, she received her Bachelor of Science degree in Apparel Design and Production from Oklahoma State University.

Although Leslie is a citizen of the Muscogee (Mvskoke) Nation of Oklahoma, she was introduced to traditional applique ribbonwork art over 20 years ago by two women in her Shawnee, Oklahoma community who were Sac & Fox. These women taught Leslie their traditional applique and patternmaking techniques, which Leslie incorporates into her artwork.

Today, Leslie's work is influenced by the motifs of her Mvskoke people and their ancestors, the Moundbuilders. Her designs also reflect her life experiences and travels; people, places, and events. She creates classic looks infused with Southeast iconography and colored with memories, experiences, moods, and nature.

Trademarks that stand out in Leslie's work include intricate applique, bright color combinations, curvilinear lines, Southeastern-Moundbuilder motifs, and traditional woodlands ribbonwork. Leslie prefers to use natural fibers and strives to be as sustainable as possible by producing limited editions of her garments and maximizing use of fabric scraps.

The first thing people notice about Leslie's artwork is quality and craftsmanship. Her work is often described as elegant, and is popular for the classic silhouettes that make the wearer feel confident and empowered. Leslie describes her garments as story tellers and envisions each garment being handed down from generation to generation. Leslie's hope is that people take away a sense of elegance, quality, and an appreciation for Southeastern art when viewing her artwork.