

Designer Cher Thomas Will Share More Than Just Fashion Sense in 2016

Native American fashion designer Cher Thomas (Gila River Akimel O'odham/Cocopah) introduces Cher Shares, a charitable program associated with her fashion label.

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- GILA RIVER INDIAN COMMUNITY, ARIZONA

As the New Year chimes in, a new era for Gila River Indian Community based Cher Thomas Designs also begins, "I'm most excited to read the proposals!" Cher Thomas (Gila River Akimel O'odham/Cocopah) exclaims when asked which facet of running a non-profit she looks forward to the most. "I just want to help people," she states. Fashion designer Cher Thomas of Cher Thomas Designs has changed her business to be less like Tom Ford, and more like Tom Shoes. The Cher Shares program is an extension of Cher Thomas Designs, which enables the designer to share her profits and her personal experiences navigating the fashion industry with established non-profit and educational programs.

Cher Thomas Designs is a fashion label started by designer Cher Thomas that creates traditional regalia for O'odham and Yuman natives and an annual contemporary collection. Cher Thomas' designs have been featured in magazines and runways around the world, most notably, the Melbourne Fashion Week's Indigenous Runway Project in Melbourne, Australia and the 2015 Indigenous Music Awards' Red Carpet in Canada.

After 4 years in business, "I am taking a portion of my profits and using them to fuel the Cher Shares program." Says Thomas. Cher Shares is a philanthropic endeavor that is dedicated to community improvement, helping non-profit organizations, and educational programs raise funds or educate young people about Native American culture and the misappropriation of indigenous culture by the fashion industry, according to the designer's website about the program.

The Cher Shares program will be in full swing starting on January 1st, 2016; when established non-profit organizations and educational programs can start submitting grant proposals for the first round of grants given away by Cher Thomas Designs. Academic Institutions and conference organizers may also begin collaborating with the Akimel O'odham fashion designer on creating an exciting interactive experience for students throughout 2016. "I want to help teach our young people the importance of leadership and entrepreneurship in Indian Country. It IS possible to follow your heart, turn your dreams into a reality AND give back to your community. And I am here to share exactly how I am doing just that!"

For more information, please visit: www.cherthomasdesigns.com/chershares or email chershares@cherthomasdesigns.com