

## Melissa Lea

Melissa Lee (Beasley) was born and raised amongst the limestone filled hills of Scenic Southern Indiana. Local quarries and caverns that dotted the area made for a unique playground during her childhood. Throughout her 20's, she resided in Chicago where she became deeply involved with the Native American community. Taking in their various traditions, dress and way of life, Melissa soon found her spirit there amongst them.

This native spirit and love of nature was first revealed through her clothing and accessory designs created while attending fashion design school in Chicago. Melissa won numerous awards for her designs. She was the only one to win both top design awards in a single competition: Best of Show and The Rita Johnson Award/Scholarship at Fashion Group Internationals 1998 design competition. These awards presented her the opportunity to study abroad where she also traveled extensively throughout parts of Europe.

Giving herself a rest from clothing for awhile, Melissa focused more on her jewelry where her inspirations while traveling continue to reveal themselves among her endless unique designs. Her specialty is a knotting technique and usually features her signature "circle" stone as a focal piece. Melissa prefers natural stones and materials as her medium whenever possible with a fondness for wampum, moss agate and Mahogany turquoise.

While residing in Nashville Tennessee, her designs gained positive notoriety for the Country Music Industry. Melissa has designed pieces for such artists as Tim McGraw and Faith Hill as well as other entertainment elite.

Melissa feels her talents are a way to give people a piece of nature they can keep with them in whatever environment they find themselves living. Melissa expresses, "We are all related, including our relationship to Mother Earth and all that lives on and within her. I like to have parts of her near me at all times. It helps me feel complete and connected. Hopefully my creations will make others feel complete as well...or at least at peace. creations will make others feel complete as well...or at least at peace." Melissa now resides in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

