



Leah Yellowbird Artist Statement

Closing the gap between cultures was my goal with this piece.

The original artworks first placed on these walls were true to the settlers' daily lives, from the point of view of the original artist. I designed my piece from the outlook of an Anishinaabe person who was born and lived in the area during the same time period as these murals. The design is what a native person would have focused on, the woodlands, where they live and how they live, and what they see and feel comfort in every day.

The inspiration for the piece is a pair of men's Anishinaabe leggings. The vintage leggings were made originally at about the same time the original paintings were done on the wall, so I wanted to use the patterns from them, and to make modern what is still true in native culture. When I found these leggings, I was so sad to see them for sale and I needed to bring them home. I purchased them from someone who had them packed away, and who told me that some relative had bought them on a trip to Minnesota during the 1930-1940s, which touched my heart. Many natives at the time sold beautiful powwow regalia to get by. The sadness I felt was made full circle when I was able to bring them back to Minnesota. I kept one legging and shared the other with a band member, and we both hang them framed in our homes.

This has been a very unique chance to cover the original with another original, two different views of the same place - one from the indigenous people, and the other from the men and women who settled here in Minnesota. My art is about holding on to traditional values and interpreting them in a more urban setting. It is important to me that the traditional won't ever be lost. No matter the changes in us as a nation we all have the common thread of nature to keep us grounded.

For more information on the Ramsey County Courthouse/St. Paul City Hall Council Chamber Art Project, full artists' statements and more, see <https://www.rchs.com/news/chamber-art/>

