“It ain’t about me, it’s about history, it’s about culture.”
-Chief Shaka Zulu, LEAF International NOLA Culture Keeper

Overview of LEAF International New Orleans:
For years, Chief Shaka Zulu, has been a LEAF Collaborator, ally and close friend. He has collaborated to help launch LEAF International programs in Haiti and Tanzania, been a strong support in connecting local LEAF Schools & Streets youth to the larger black Diaspora experience as expressed in New Orleans, and has been a shaker and mover in the revival and honoring of traditional black Diaspora culture in the United States. The culture of New Orleans is geographically part of the United States, yet in heritage, identity and history, New Orleans is unique and distinct from the larger American cultural experience. Their culture is a dynamic expression of the collision and collaboration between the indigenous people of Louisiana and the first escaped African captives on the American continent. As such, we at LEAF International, and our partner Burial Beer Company assert that this program should be seen as international in its inherent distinction from American culture.

“The more you learn about culture and differences, the more peace you will bring into the world.”
-Chief Shaka Zulu, LEAF International NOLA Culture Keeper
Program at a glance 2018-2019:

2018:

- Launch of the Golden Feather Pale Ale, Burial Beer Company’s second Mardi Gras Indian beer dedicated to New Orleans Culture. The proceeds from this beer supported feathers for more than 25 Mardi Gras Indians and supported the expansion youth masquerading & drum classes.
- In April 2018, Shaka’s theater production launched the first edition of the Voices of Congo Square ([https://www.facebook.com/voicesofcongosquare/](https://www.facebook.com/voicesofcongosquare/)). This production recreated the history of Mardi Gras Indians starting with pivotal touch points, such as the Haitians arriving to Louisiana via the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade and the upraising of African & Indian indigenous groups. The true success was the implementation of Shaka’s youth with lead roles in the production.
- The success of the Voices of Congo Square was quickly followed up by the annual Osun Festival hosted by Na’imah & Shaka Zulu. This festival was dedicated to honoring the orisa Oṣun and the Mississippi River, the largest river in the United States. The ancestors of the Africans in America and the Indigenous People of America that have relied on the Mississippi River and its spiritual power to liberate us during slavery and up till today were the honorees of the event.
- Shaka & Na’imah traveled to Tanzania to receive collaborative support on finishing the 2019 Mardi Gras Indian suit. While there, they connected with youth in the LEAF International Arusha program creating one of the most memorable cross cultural exchanges to date.
- After more than a decade, gentrification hit the historic Rampart Street causing Shaka to relocate his home & gallery. This sad transition turned into a moment of opportunity. Shaka relocated to Art Space. Art Space is historically renovated buildings that offer affordable live/work housing for low-to moderate-income artists, cultural workers, and families. With this new location, Shaka lives deeper into the Treme community where he holds weekly classes for youth interested in masquerading, drumming, stilt walking, or sewing—currently 20 youth in weekly classes with Shaka.
2019:

- Launch of Three Dimensional, Burial Beer Company's third Mardi Gras Indian beer dedicated to New Orleans Culture. This year, Shaka decided to dive deeper into raising awareness around Mardi Gras Indian Culture by having an official launch party to let the greater NOLA community know how feathers are supporter as well as the importance of supporting the preservation of the culture.
- Successful Super Sunday & St Joseph's day festivities. As Shaka continues to build his new brand, The Golden Feather Hunters, he is recruiting the next generation to create sustainability within his tribe. "I have to have someone to pass my work to." – Shaka Zulu

2019 Goals:

- Create a Golden Feather headquarter in Treme. This will be a multi-purpose place that will host classes & workshops as well as opportunities for youth/elders engagement.
- Create a dominate Mardi Gras Indian presence as a Cultural Immersion in the LEAF Global Hub (August). This will include a museum-like experience, showcasing several of Shaka’s suits. The hope is to spark conversation, educate on the culture, and provide economic opportunities for Shaka by selling suits.
- To take the Voices of Congo Square Production to several cities giving youth the chance & experience of being on the main stage as a tool for community empowerment.

Fun Facts:

- Check out some fun videos of Shaka in action - educating & representing his culture.
  - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuZxMFb4MS0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cuZxMFb4MS0)
  - [https://youtu.be/zR1unGLEa_o](https://youtu.be/zR1unGLEa_o)
  - [https://vimeo.com/294227005/06491a2919](https://vimeo.com/294227005/06491a2919)
  - [https://vimeo.com/292132231](https://vimeo.com/292132231)

Special thanks to Burial Beer Company for making this program dream a true reality!