



• CRAFT/PROFESSION

Suzanne KAI's ambition was to design vibrantly colourful dresses for her customers in Lifou, her native island. She has made a huge success of her design speciality: traditional Mother Hubbard dresses.

In 2006, she set up her own company, called "Eseka" after her first name in the Drehu language. Her dresses are utterly faithful to local tradition in their design and easily recognisable, with their broad swathes of colour embellished by Kanak cultural motifs. You can buy her designs from her Noumea studio, from retailers in the North Province or Loyalty Islands Province, or at markets, fairs and shows held all over New Caledonia.

• BACKGROUND

Suzanne is self-taught and relied only on advice from an old Lifou seamstress to start her dressmaking career. In 2002, she began designing dresses in the Hmelek tribal village, where female members of her family were her first customers. She quickly made a name for herself throughout the island.

More and more orders flooded in so she moved to more suitable premises, first in Lifou and, in 2008,

in Noumea where she set up business in a 300m² workshop in Ducos serving both as a dressmaking and customer reception centre.

• INSPIRATION AND ART/DESIGNS

The cut and colours of her designs are based on instinct. All her traditional Kanak ready-to-wear products are designed, dyed and made from start to finish in her workshop using craft methods. The clothes she produces are largely made to order and custom-made. Suzanne designs dresses, tops and sets for women and children, but also tunics and shirts for men.

Since 2012, she has been commissioned by the Miss Calédonie beauty contest committee to design outfits for the parade of contestants. An exciting and rewarding challenge which gives Suzanne the chance to explore new horizons.

"Eseka" is committed to encouraging all New Caledonia's ethnic communities to wear the traditional dress by giving style and colours a contemporary makeover and making it the distinctive national look for local women.