



Naomi Neilson Howard

Naomi Neilson Howard takes the road less traveled. In fact, she prefers it.

As a trailblazer in the kitchen and bath industry the founder and CEO of Native Trails helped introduce copper as stylish and functional design pieces. Naomi discovered her passion for diverse cultures, artisan craft, beautiful functionality and green practices while a Social Science major at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo in 1996.

Propelled by an insatiable desire for world exploration, Naomi spent a year abroad in Spain to solidify her Spanish fluency and wanderlust. While fellow classmates toured the region for fun and fanfare during scheduled breaks, she spent her time honing her eye for design, exploring artisan villages in Morocco and elsewhere. She sought out stunning crafts to bring to market in Spanish boutiques that were in search of original inventory.

She returned to California with a new respect for exotic artistry and began planning one of several trips into the remote mountains of Mexico, where she has familial ties, in search of undiscovered artisans of the region. Traveling far beyond the typical tourist path, she discovered remote villages with ancient craftsmanship traditions and quickly became enamored with and immersed in their culture.

As a champion for indigenous peoples and fair practices, she realized that with some design guidance, product development and distribution, the incredible handiwork of these particular artisans had great potential. This reliable revenue stream would significantly support their micro-economies and perpetuate the continuance of their cultural heritage.

It was here that Native Trails was born.

With do-it-yourself gumption, Howard set out to retail outlets and gift shops along the California coast armed with new designs - such as bowls, chargers and other decorative items. The beauty, quality, and practical functionality mesmerized buyers and early clients including Smithsonian Institute, The Field Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Princess Cruises and many smaller gift and home furnishings retailers throughout the U.S.

With swift success came the *ah-ha* moment: the coppersmithing techniques could be adapted to make functional sinks for the kitchen and bath space.

High-quality scrap and recycled copper could serve as raw material for contemporary designs using age-old processes. Naomi helped to write the copper basin standard for IAPMO, and Native Trails' copper sinks were the first to be listed in the category.

Now, fifteen years later, Native Trails is considered a pioneer and mainstay in the kitchen and bath industry. Their robust catalog of copper and nickel-dipped basins, tubs, vanities, mirror and accessories are featured in over 1,300 showrooms throughout the U.S. and Canada.

In 2005, Naomi received the prestigious Manufacturing Professional of the Year Award by the Decorative Plumbing and Hardware Association (DPHA). In 2009 she was named one of the 'Top 20 Under 40' by the San Luis Obispo Tribune for her leadership through 'Community Trails', a Native Trails initiative, which supports local nonprofits as well as the artisan villages and communities.

Today, Naomi lives in Shell Beach, California with her husband, Dr. Christopher Howard, two bubbly children, Braylon and Ania, and their loving golden retriever, Casimir. She is still exploring other cultures and traveling in ways to get to know the heart of each destination - now with little ones in tow - and continues to actively run the company and design new products.

Native Trails leads the industry in artisan crafted, eco-conscious furnishing and fixtures for high-end kitchen and bath design and uses every opportunity to use recycled, reclaimed, or green certified materials to bring eclectic sophistication to luxury living.

Native Trails, (805) 546-8544