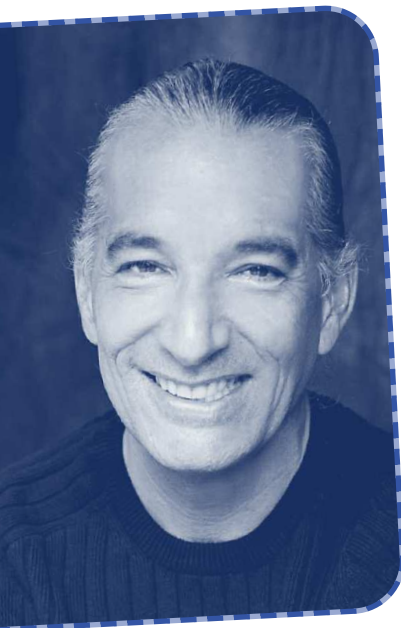


KEVIN LOCKE



When Kevin Locke was a teenager, he was given the Lakota name Tokeya Inajin (meaning “First to Arise”). Kevin *did* arise to help save the American Indian hoop dance, the Lakota language, and Lakota flute music from disappearing. If you attend one of his hundreds of inspiring performances, you’ll see Kevin twirl and step, forming flowers, globes, and wings with as many as 28 hoops. He’ll also play his handmade cedar flutes for you—he’s won nearly a dozen awards for his recordings.

Kevin has traveled to 84 countries, all 50 states, and more Indian Reservations than he can count. And though he could live anywhere, he chooses to stay on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota, where people struggle with problems like poverty and unemployment. Kevin says, “This is a special population . . . We’re seriously in need of human resources.” So when he’s home from touring, he helps his community by teaching children’s classes about the Bahá’í Faith.

Q. How did you receive your Lakota name?

My . . . great aunt . . . gave me that name . . . I was a teenager . . . about 18 or 19 . . . Basically, all the tribal people have that custom of giving names, and a person can acquire many names over their lifetime. And those names are used in devotional practices.

Q. What’s your favorite childhood memory?

Oh, wow. I think it’s just doing the same things that I like to do now . . . I’ve never outgrown it. Like doing stuff outdoors, swimming in the summer and sledding in the winter. Everything I loved to do when I was five, six, seven, I’m still doing it today. I’m just a big overgrown seven-year-old, I guess.

Q. What was a challenge you faced as a kid and how did you handle it?

Basically, I’d just take it outside. I have the same response now. Any kind of stress or anything, I just go out and run 10 miles or something . . . I’ll dance for



Left: Kevin, about 8 years old. He liked to be outdoors and knew how to catch rattlesnakes. **Right:** Kevin (left) dances during his Indian naming ceremony in South Dakota.

half an hour or an hour. I’ll do something. I’ll clean house. That’s what I would do as a little kid. And I’d do a lot of drawing, too . . . I was drawing all the time.

Q. Tell us about a time in your life when you investigated truth about an important issue.

Trying to look at the Message of Bahá’u’lláh is the biggest investigation of truth . . . Every time you read the writings . . . it will take on a fresh meaning, because the meaning

is inexhaustible. It’s just like pure light. As you’re growing, as you’re developing as a person, why, then it brings out a different aspect of your reality, your soul, your spirit.



Q. What are the most important things you'd like kids to know about Lakota people and culture?

I'm not really interested in conveying tribal-specific information . . . The only thing that's useful for me to do is to convey to [kids] something about the nobility of the human spirit. To convey to them the universal things that connect all peoples in the world. To show them through the arts, because the arts are like the highest form of heightened communication . . . Folk art is really the expression of that nobility . . . All peoples on the planet have folk art . . . [It] express[es] the beauty, the harmony, the balance which is innate within every human soul.

Q. Is there a general meaning to the hoop dance [that you perform]?

The hoop, as you might well guess, is the world's most pervasive, universal archetype. All cultures use it, and it has the same meaning for all people . . . The hoop represents peace, represents unity, represents harmony, represents balance, represents order, represents perfection, represents beauty, represents continuity . . . Everything in the creation forms that pattern, down to the smallest little proton or neutron or electron, or whatever it is, everything has a pattern that is the hoop of life . . . It's the sign of God in the creation.

Q. What's one of the great mysteries of life, in your opinion?

The thing for me to figure out is the tests. You know, the tests are induced by my own stupidity . . . I know that God always knows your capacity ahead of time, but then, knowing that [a] person has these certain inclinations or weaknesses, God will test you anyway. Then what happens is remorse or regret, all these

Q. If you had one wish for *Brilliant Star* readers, what would it be?

To reflect that beautiful light within themselves and that beautiful fragrance that they have, the beautiful colors that they have in them . . . Just like 'Abdu'l-



Top: In the hoop dance, Kevins spreads the hoops like wings. **Left:** Kevin's flute can sound like a bird, the wind, and a call to the nobility of our spirits. **Right:** Many circles can be joined to form a larger circle, much like the world we live in.

things. That's how a person grows. And of course, if a person doesn't catch that lesson the first time, they'll get it again . . . So that's a big mystery . . . Why does God send me all these tests and I keep failing them?

Bahá said, these children have a special destiny before God, and God has empowered them to fulfill this destiny.