

Dingo Brown



Do you enjoy exploring a forest, floating on a lake, or walking under the stars? Lloyd "Dingo" Brown loves the outdoors so much that he's made a career of helping kids discover nature. He says, "When you slow down, you can start to hear the messages from God, because you're basically meditating and praying in nature."

Dingo turned to nature for comfort when he was growing up in Australia. He studied biology and education at Curtin University and Edith Cowan University in Perth. After teaching in Tanzania, Macau, and China, he came to the U.S. Today, he's a middle-school science teacher in North Carolina, where he keeps wildlife on hand for kids to experience. He lives by a lake with his wife and two sons, and he spends as much time as he can outdoors.

Q: What's your favorite childhood memory?

A: In my early teens, going with my mate . . . We'd wade waist-deep in this big swamp with the leeches and the tiger snakes and the birds and the foxes and the tadpoles and the frogs, wading through the bullrushes . . . [We'd] come around a corner and then a flock of birds would fly up in front of [us], egrets.



Dingo spent his youth in Australia, near the city of Perth. Nearby was Herdsman Lake, one of his favorite places to explore the outdoors. PHOTO BY ARIETT IWANOWSKI, ART BY C. AARON KREADER

Q: What was the most challenging experience for you as a kid, and how did you handle it?

A: Being raised by a single dad and not having a lot of money had challenges. And what saved me was . . . the love of nature, because my mate and I weren't worried about parties and smoking and fitting in and trying to be cool . . . I wanted to [be] pure and in touch with nature, so I didn't want to deaden my senses with alcohol or drugs or smoking. So it saved me from doing any of that.

Q: What's the "Environmental Stewards: Champions of Justice" program that you do at Bahá'í schools?

A: [We] engage the [kids'] senses . . . to look at the world closely, to not become afraid of it, to go out and . . . touch and smell and hear.

Q: How did you decide that you wanted to be an educator?

A: I realized I had a gift for sharing and teaching people. But it's funny, because . . . I blamed people for all the problems of the earth . . . [But] I realized the only way I was going to save the wildlife was to educate people about it and have them understand the importance of it. And I realized that education had to start with the young people.

Questions and
Answers with an
Inspirational Bahá'í



Left: Dingo with his sons, Ben and Daniel, and wife Lisa, at Uluru, an aboriginal sacred rock in the heart of Australia. **Below:** In his classes, Dingo uses American Indian traditions to encourage appreciation of nature.

Q: When things are so critical in the environment, how do you bring hope to the junior youth?

A: We don't stop at the doom and gloom . . . When I was in college, I was so depressed about the state of the world. And it wasn't until I became a Bahá'í that it helped get me out of that, because the Bahá'í Faith has the optimism for humankind . . . Bahá'u'lláh says we're going to go to a Golden Age. We're going to get through this. But what does it take for us to get through? What are we going to have to do? And then we tie it in [and tell kids]: You can take this back to your junior youth group.

Q: One of your interests is in the wisdom of indigenous people. Can you share a favorite story or teaching?

A: I tell the story of the first flute that came from the Cherokee. It's about the boy who found the first flute . . . He Who Causes Trouble. He was always getting in trouble. And so he ran away, and the creatures . . . gave him the gift of the flute. He brought the flute back to his people, and the chief asked him to play this every morning and evening, because it filled the hearts with joy . . . And the moral of the story is: everybody has a gift. And your journey, and the role of your mentors and your parents and teachers . . . is to help you . . . find what your gift is.

Q: In this issue of *Brilliant Star*, we're exploring climate change and nature. How can kids help with such a big issue as climate change?

A: One of the big factors that affects climate change is combustion of fossil fuels . . . [which] goes into manufacturing stuff. Reducing the amount of stuff that we consume goes a long way to helping the environment . . . Pay a little bit more for organic materials. Buy local. But just basically, buy less stuff . . . Young people have . . . consumer power . . . The choices in what we buy and how much we buy, everybody can be involved in that.



Dingo lets his students learn about animals first-hand in his classroom in North Carolina.

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

A: You've got to follow your passions and your dreams, but you've got to stay connected to nature. Keep that connection to the natural world . . . The Bahá'í teachings are more significant than you probably realize right now. So keep those in your life as well. Never let those go.