

SHINING LAMP

A Bahá'í who served humanity with radiance

Patricia Locke (1928–2001) Compassionate Woman



What if your family's religion was outlawed, and you could only worship in secret? Patricia Locke faced that challenge growing up as an American Indian.

She was born in Idaho, U.S., in 1928. Her mother was from the Lakota tribe and her father was Chippewa. At that time, Indian religious ceremonies were illegal. She couldn't tell anyone when her family went to a Lakota sun dance.

Among this intense prejudice, Patricia learned to stand up for justice. When she and her sister, Frances, went to the movies, American Indians had to sit in the back. But the girls were too small to see over the people in front of them. Hearing this, their mother told the theater manager to treat her daughters with respect, or the local Indians would boycott his theater. The girls never had to sit in the back again.

Education and Empowerment

Patricia studied education at the University of California, graduating in 1951. She married Charles "Ned" Locke and had two children, Kevin and Winona. When they moved to Alaska in 1966, Patricia started the Anchorage Native Welcome Center to help native people find jobs and housing and adapt to city life. It was the start of her work to empower indigenous people.

Patricia felt it was vital to preserve Indian culture, yet connect to the rest of society. She said, "We have to let the wisdom of the past . . . guide us and give us direction. We also have to have the means to cope with this modern world."

Patricia's Lakota name was *Tawacin Waste Win*,

or "Compassionate Woman." She was dedicated to service and the Lakota values of wisdom, courage, respect, and generosity. In later years, she made her home on the Standing Rock Reservation in South Dakota.

Patricia taught at the university level and helped establish 17 tribal colleges. She also met with leaders in Washington, D.C., and worked diligently to get laws passed protecting the rights of American Indians to practice their religion and speak native languages.

"Illumined Soul"

Kevin, Patricia's son, became a Bahá'í as an adult. In 1988, she joined him on a trip to South America, where native Bahá'ís shared their culture, including music and dance. She felt at home among the Bahá'ís and soon joined the Faith. Its teachings of unity were reflected in her motto: "All peoples have the same need to love that we do, the same family ideals, the same need for joy, the same need for understanding."

Patricia won a prestigious MacArthur Fellowship in 1991 for her activism in education and tribal rights. In 1993, she became the first American Indian woman elected to the National Spiritual Assembly, the guiding council of the U.S. Bahá'í community, and was a member for the rest of her life.

When Patricia passed away in 2001 at age 73, the Universal House of Justice praised her as a "highly devoted, self-sacrificing servant" of the Faith and offered prayers for her "illuminated soul."