



CLASS OF

1973

KEITH BEAR

“The flute comes from the earth, it dances on the wind.
If you breathe life into these flutes, they will sing to you.”
- Keith Bear

Keith Bear (O’Mashi! Ryu Ta – “Northern Lights”) is a world renowned Mandan-Hidatsa storyteller and musician from the Three Affiliated Tribes in Fort Berthold, North Dakota. Keith graduated from Bismarck High School in 1973. After growing up outside the tribal traditions Keith returned to his people and reconnected through the “sacred branch of the Tree of Life,” the flute. Through extended family members, friends, and ceremonies Bear learned traditional songs, beadwork, porcupine quillwork, flute music, and traditional stories.

Keith has appeared as a solo presenter, performer and storyteller at the Smithsonian Folklife festival, the Kennedy Center, Lewis & Clark Bicentennial signature events throughout the US, the International Storytellers Festival in Wales, UK; for the North Dakota Arts Council, and in cultural programs throughout Europe. He has soloed with the National Symphony, The Bismarck – Mandan Symphony Orchestra, and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra in performances of the “Old Turtle Symphony.” His presentations include being a spokesperson for the National Education Association regarding Indian warriors and Indian leaders. Bear is also a pipe carrier and ceremonialist, and belongs to the Buffalo Dance Society. In 2009, Keith was recognized for his contributions with a fellowship from the prestigious Bush Foundation.

Keith Bear weaves a magic of story, song, history and personal reflection that enchants audiences of all ages. Reflecting the dignity and spiritual wisdom of his ancestors, he inspires reverence for the earth and all our relatives, gratitude for the diversity of the human experience, and appreciation of the beauty of the traditional Native American songs and stories, many of which have been shared for hundreds of years.

TO LIVE UPON THIS LAND
TO TAKE THE GIFTS SHE GIVES US
IS A GREAT AND WONDERFUL THING.
TO LISTEN TO THE RIVER
AS IT SINGS BEFORE IT FREEZES,
IT SOUNDS LIKE SMALL BELLS RINGING.
THAT WATER GIVES US
LIFE
(Keith Bear)

