



Photos by Charles Walsh & students of the Solstice Flute School

Solstice Flute Camp INSTILLS HEART

BY TIM LOFTUS

The late great Lakota flute player Thokéya Inázhin once said: "The flute maker has to take that cedar, split it open and remove that beautiful, straight-grained, aromatic, sweet, soft, deep-red heart of the cedar. And then they will re-attach both halves and put the holes in. And so, the covenant or reciprocal agreement is that the flute player will instill the heart back

into the wood (by putting their own) heart back in there."

Solstice Flute Camp, held Aug. 18 to Aug. 24 at the Chapel Rock and Conference Center in Prescott, taught 40 students of the Native American flute just exactly how to do that — put their own hearts into their flutes.

With a vision to build a community inspired by the heart song of the Native American flute, Solstice Flute School became a reality in 2013. It offered an annual weeklong series of classes and workshops in Utah. In its tenth year, 2023, Solstice moved to Chapel Rock in Prescott, which allowed for the opportunity to offer a totally immersive flute experience.



It was such a success that Prescott became the new home of Solstice, and the name was changed to Solstice Flute Camp.

Who attends Solstice? Adults of all ages and levels of ability. From those who have never played a Native American flute to those who are advanced players. They all come for their own reasons, to learn, to improve their skills, to see old friends and make new ones, to connect with and honor the Native American flute and discover its healing powers.

This year a few students came from Prescott and across Arizona. Most were from different parts of the United States, and one hailed from the Netherlands.

Each morning, students and teachers gathered for music, fellowship, shared information and to borrow flutes if they didn't have their own from one of the half dozen flute makers who had set up shop at Solstice.

Beginners learned the very basics of playing the Native American flute from Rona Yellow Robe (2014 and 2016 Native American Music Award winning Flute Player of the Year) or Shelley Morningsong (2019 Native American Award for Artist of the Year and Grammy member).

Intermediate players and advanced players learned aspects of

performing from stage presentation to chord progressions and to the application of other music theory by a team of extraordinary award-winning performers: Suzanne Teng (endorsed artist for YAMAHA), Joseph L. Young (2016 and 2018 Triple Silver Global Music Awards for best Album, Composer and Instrumentalist), and Kalani Das (who has performed with Yani, Kenny Loggins and Barry Manilow, among others).

Afternoon workshops included flute-making with Brent Haines of Woodsounds Flutes, buckskin flute bag making with Fabian Fontenelle, masterpiece recording sessions with Suzanne Teng and Gilbert Levy, flute circles and guided classes on music presentation.

Nightly activities included the opening Solstice Blessing Ceremony around a communal fire pit, a high energy drum circle, students busking in downtown Prescott, and a student concert. Solstice week culminated with a teacher concert at the Trinity Presbyterian Church in Prescott.

Solstice Flute Camp, in all that it does, is truly a place where passion meets purpose. Everyone — beginners, instructors, school staff and even the flute makers plying their trade — left Solstice at the end of the week with a little bit more of their hearts in their flutes and with a new or rejuvenated heart song to sing.

The next Solstice Flute Camp will be Aug. 17 to Aug. 23, 2025, at Chapel Rock Conference Center. For more information, please visit www.solsticeflute.org.

