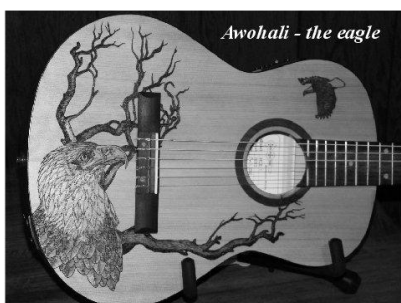
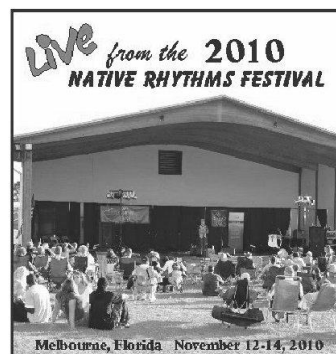




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John Ellis
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Playing the Native American Flute

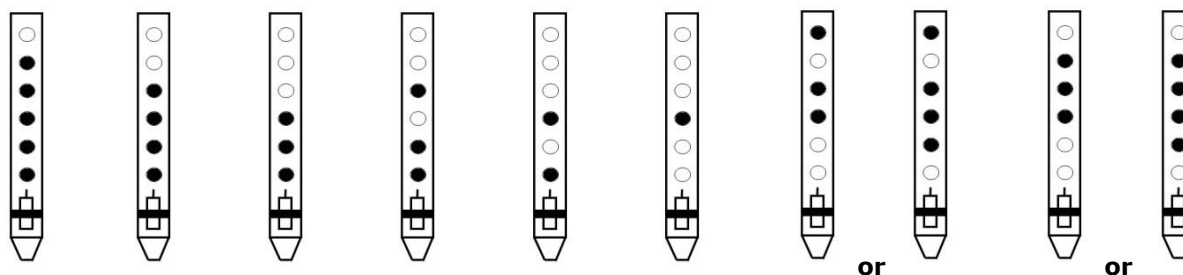
Part 4 – Going "Major"

by John Many Winds Ellis, Turtle Moon Band

One more little bit of theory from last time. There are many different scales made up of different combinations of notes from the chromatic scale. The two most commonly known are the "major" and "minor" scales. The "major" scale consists of the well-known notes you learned in grade school of: do, re, me, fa, sol, la, ti, do (like from the *Sound of Music*). The major scale is considered a "happy" scale (for lack of a better description) and encompasses most western culture music, including pop, country, hymns, etc. A slightly different scale that is not completely unknown to western culture is called the "minor" scale. Some say it conveys a "sad" mood. Common songs in a minor key that you may know include *Greensleeves* (also known as *What Child Is This*), *Scarborough Fair*, *Wayfaring Stranger*, *House of the Rising Sun*, etc.

There is a correlation between a particular major key and a specific minor key, called its relative minor scale, because they contain exactly the same notes. For example, the C-major scale consists of C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C (the key with no sharps or flats). If you begin on the sixth note of that scale, you have a scale that consists of A-B-C-D-E-F-G-A, which is the A-minor scale. Because of this relationship, A-minor is called the relative minor of C-major.

As we have described after all this theory, the *de facto* standard tuning of the NAF is a pentatonic minor scale. Let's now look at the major scale associated with that minor key. On the NAF it is easy to find because it begins with the note you play with the lowest hole (hole #1) uncovered. With a little cross-fingering and extending into the flute's second octave, we can now identify a (hopefully) full octave major scale on your flute. It looks like this:



For example, if you play this on an A-minor pentatonic flute, this will be the C major scale: C, D, E, F, G, A, B, and C.

Remember from the discussion in Part 3 of this series, not all NAFs will (1) play the cross-fingered notes in tune or (2) play the second octave notes in tune, if at all. So don't be discouraged if you can't play this major scale – it may be your flute. When you're ready to add to your flute collection, you might want to test candidates for playing the major scale shown above, if you want to play western culture "major scale" music on it.

(continued next page)