American Indian Artist Angel DeCora: Aesthetics, Power, and Transcultural Pedagogy in the Progressive Era

Suzanne Alene Shope

The University of Montana

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation
https://scholarworks.umt.edu/etd/113

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at ScholarWorks at University of Montana. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Student Theses, Dissertations, & Professional Papers by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at University of Montana. For more information, please contact scholarworks@mso.umt.edu.
AMERICAN INDIAN ARTIST ANGEL DECORA: AESTHETICS, POWER, AND TRANSCULTURAL PEDAGOGY IN THE PROGRESSIVE ERA

By

SUZANNE ALENE SHOPE

Master of Science in Education, Alfred University, Alfred, New York, 1991
Bachelor of Fine Art, The University of Montana, Missoula, Montana, 1986

Dissertation

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education
Curriculum and Instruction

The University of Montana
Missoula, MT

May 2009

Approved by:

Perry Brown, Associate Provost for Graduate Education
Graduate School

David Erickson, Co-Chair
Curriculum and Instruction

Angelica Lawson, Co-Chair
Native American Studies

Rafael Chacón
The School of Art, Art History and Criticism

Jean Luckowski
Curriculum and Instruction

Darrell Stolle
Curriculum and Instruction
American Indian Artist Angel DeCora: Aesthetics, Power, and Transcultural Pedagogy in the Progressive Era

Co-Chairperson: David R. Erickson, Ph.D.
Co-Chairperson: Angelica Lawson, Ph.D.

This study looks at Angel DeCora, Winnebago artist and teacher (1871-1918) with regard to her visionary influence as an Indian school art teacher. By exploring interactions among DeCora, policy makers, and American Indians, this chronological study addresses: how DeCora’s Indian arts curriculum and aesthetics influenced her American Indian students at Carlisle; how DeCora used elements of her Winnebago culture, the Pan-Indian culture, and the Euro-American viewpoints to serve her purposes as an arts educator and activist; and what her aesthetic motivations were as embodied by her art, curriculum design, and students’ work. Educated on the Winnebago Reservation in Nebraska until age 12, she was taken to Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Virginia’s Freedman Bureau School also serving American Indians. She attended Smith College, studied at Drexel Institute becoming a professional artist before accepting her position as Director of Native Industries at Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The military barracks at Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 1879-1918, housed the first federally funded, off-reservation, secular, Indian Boarding School. Carlisle’s military structure and vocational curriculum influenced non-reservation boarding schools during the Assimilation era. Assimilationist Indian boarding schools coerced students in strict regimented methods to learn the English language, writing, culture, and vocations. Investigating this history is vital to understanding the two-way influence of Native American and Euro-American worldviews represented in art.

The sample student studies represent visual expressions of values and culture specific to the era. Images created under DeCora’s tutelage show cultural resilience and relationships between Indian teacher and student. Topics specific to her curriculum are revealed for the first time through student work. By validating female leadership as Director, she mirrored the shared gender roles in many Native cultures. DeCora affirmed the depth of student potential and cultural heritage while refuting the racial deficit model. She promoted expression of Native worldviews by emphasizing the unique contributions of Native arts. She foreshadowed postmodern, pluralistic rhetoric by elevating decorative design over the tenets of Western illusion asserting the holistic framework of Native aesthetics. DeCora used the cultural empowerment potential of art education within her pedagogy to strengthen cultural ties and create a small space for students to thrive.
For my daughter Angela.
Preface

I write about what I am close to, what I value and what I think will make a difference. So I write about art and the all encompassing impact it can have on lives. I am a woman artist and arts educator. When I became a teacher, teaching also became a passion. Applying the same artistry and passion to the teaching profession remains my priority.

The study of Angel DeCora’s influence as an art teacher in an off reservation boarding school followed my passion for arts education, multisensory education, dance education and culturally based aesthetics. DeCora entered my life during a course at the University of Montana, *Gender Studies in Native American Studies*. This study expanded my vision of art, culture, Indian education, and tribally specific women’s roles. I identified with her life and her work on many levels: an artist and educator, political activist and distant descendent of French mixed-blood as well as my daughter’s bloodline from her Annishinaabeg side of the family.

Teaching art ultimately translates into teaching worldview through the aesthetic choices made in the classroom. Therefore, it is of extreme necessity art educators understand the contextual history of the art they promote as valuable in the classroom and what effect this will have individuals in the multicultural, global society we live in.

This study differs from past research work in that I begin by attempting to convey DeCora’s aesthetic worldview developed in her early education and
upbringing. I assert this had as much to do with her aesthetic curriculum at Carlisle as her Western education. Another difference is the selection of individual student work to demonstrate the tribally specific curriculum as well as give voice to the community she was working with. Hopefully this study encapsulates a more holistic framework promoting cultural understanding and the importance of viewing education as a community and systemic entity.
Acknowledgments

Many thanks to friends and faculty who supported my research project and believed in me. Choosing the topic was inspired by committee co-Chair Angelica Lawson. Through her class “Gender Studies in Native American Studies” I grew to know of Angel DeCora. It has been through her encouragement, knowledge and willingness to devote time to my project that I was able to bring it to completion. My thanks go out to my co-chair David Erickson for his support.

I would like to recognize The University of Montana Excellence Fund, President George M. Dennison and Kathryn W. Shanley for believing in the project and finding funding for my archival research travel. I am grateful to The University of Montana Provost Royce Engstrom, Vice President of Research and Development, Dan Dwyer, and Dean Roberta Evans in the School of Education for providing additional funding. Thanks to Mansfield’s Ethnic Librarian Julie Biando Edwards who jumped started my research by giving me initial direction and on-going support.

Thanks to Wynne DuBray who told me the stories of her Mother, Lillian Rice, which made the student art work come alive. Thanks to all the scholars who consistently answered my phone calls and emails: Elizabeth Hutchinson, Rayna Green, and Anne Ruggles Gere.
Special thanks to Barbara Landis, the official biographer for Carlisle Indian Industrial School at the Cumberland County Historical Society in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Landis went out of her way to show me around the Carlisle campus, lead me to good food and listen to my ideas. Her dedication to the students and teachers of Carlisle provided inspiration for me to continue “digging” and writing. The librarians a CCHS took care in providing me access to archival sources quickly during my short visit. This service allowed me to develop my research findings.

Additionally, I would like to acknowledge Donzella Maupin of Hampton University Archives for her familiarity with the Angel DeCora files and expertise in archival protocol. Lastly, thanks to David Lee Smith, historian for the Winnebago Tribe, for granting me the honor of photo-copying DeCora’s letters and answering all of my correspondence.

A special thanks to Dave Barrett, Jonathan Hall, and Charlie Smillie for the patience and precision in proof-reading the work. Thanks to my daughter Angela, David, my mother Sharon and my dogs Stella and Asuka who provided needed walks and distractions.
Contents

Acknowledgments........................................................................................................................................ vii
List of Illustrations .................................................................................................................................. xiii
List of Abbreviations ................................................................................................................................ 230

Chapter I   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM ......................................................... 1

   Introduction and Statement of the Problem ......................................................................................... 1
   Research Questions .................................................................................................................. 3
       Questions and Sub questions: ........................................................................................................ 3
   Significance of the Study ..................................................................................................................... 5
   Definitions ........................................................................................................................................... 5

Chapter II   REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE...................................................... 7

   Biographies ........................................................................................................................................ 8
   Roles of Native Women .................................................................................................................... 10
   Art History and Native Aesthetics ..................................................................................................... 11
   Western Aesthetics and New Art History .......................................................................................... 13
   Indian Education, American Education, and Boarding School Experiences .................................. 14
   American Education History ........................................................................................................... 15
   Contemporary Indian Education ......................................................................................................... 16

   Theoretical Models and Research Methodology: Feminist and Critical Foundations

Chapter III   METHODOLOGY............................................................................. 20

   Limitations and Delimitations ........................................................................................................... 25
Charles Eastman and Angel DeCora: Aesthetic Systems of Design in American Indian Art.................................................................133

The Leupp Studio ........................................................................................................141

Leupp Photography Studio..........................................................................................145

Before DeCora: Art Curriculum-Examples of Student Work ......................150

Departure from Ledger Style Male Art in Boarding Schools ......................151

Student Writing Pertaining to Native Industries.............................................159

DeCora’s Pedagogy: Applications of Modern Indian Rhetoric ......................162

Tribally Specific Arts and Design and Pan Indian Lexicon .........................164

Indian Teachers in Boarding Schools .................................................................169

Contributions of DeCora and Zitkala Sa: Indian Teachers Among Indians .169

Applied Art at Carlisle: DeCora and Dietz: Covers and Illustrations for The Red Man.................................................................176

Chapter VII RESEARCH FINDINGS: STUDENT DESIGN .................182

Student Work .........................................................................................................186

Lillian Rice and Cora Battice ...........................................................................188

Conclusion .............................................................................................................211

Chapter VIII IMPLICATIONS ........................................................................213

Validating Women’s Roles .............................................................................220

Implications for Educational Practice and Further Research ..................224

Bibliography .........................................................................................................230

Art and Archival Sources ......................................................................................230

Primary Sources: Speeches by DeCora ..............................................................231
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articles or Illustrated Works by DeCora</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Primary Sources</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Works Cited</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeCora Chronology</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Illustrations

Figures

1. Winnebago Turban, 1880 ................................................................................................................................. 54
2. Heddle, Great Lakes Woodlands Tribe, 1900 .................................................................................................. 58
3. Twined Bag, Mesquakie and Winnebago, 1840-80 ...................................................................................... 62
4. Angel DeCora’s Illustration for her Original Story The Sick Child, 1899 .................................................... 64
5. Angel DeCora’s title page for Natalie Curtis’ The Indians’ Book, 1907 ......................................................... 78
6. Angel DeCora at Carlisle, Cover of American Indian Magazine ................................................................... 88
7. Making Medicine, Fort Marion Style Art, 1870s ........................................................................................... 91
8. The Red Man Cover, 1910 ............................................................................................................................. 142
9. Boarding School Art Examples Prior to Native Industries ............................................................................ 155
11. Angel DeCora’s Class at Carlisle, 1908 ........................................................................................................ 161
12. Uintah Boarding School Classroom ........................................................................................................ 172
13. Newspaper Photograph of Angel DeCora, Harrisburg Pennsylvania, 1910 ............................................ 174
14. Angel DeCora’s Illustration for Elaine Goodale Eastman’s Yellow Star, 1911 ........................................... 175
15. Angel DeCora’s “The Dancing Girls” ........................................................................................................ 180
16. Indian Schools Newspaper Covers Influenced by Carlisle ...................................................................... 183
17. Carlisle Rug .................................................................................................................................................. 187
18. Cumberland County Display Case with Carlisle Student Work, 1900 ..................................................... 196
19. Interior Photograph of the Leupp Studio Sales Room, 1907 .................................................................... 197
20. Postcard Depicting the Leupp Art Studio at Carlisle, 1911 ..................................................................... 198
22. Sioux Tobacco Bag, 1880 ............................................................................................................................. 206
23. Student Cora Mae Battice Red Diamond Design, 1910 ......................................................................... 210
24. Turban, Mesquakie, 1840 ............................................................................................................................. 212
25. Student Work from DeCora’s Design Class, 1910 .................................................................................... 214
CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

Angel DeCora – Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka “Fleecy Cloud Floating in Place”

Through her curriculum at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Hochunk artist and educator, Angel DeCora (1871-1918) sought cultural and economic validation for her students.¹ These objectives remain necessities for American Indian youth and colonized peoples in general. The purpose of this interpretive biographical study of Angel DeCora is to understand further the contributions and ideology authored and demonstrated by her art education curriculum implemented at Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania from 1905-1915. Through the stories of DeCora’s career as an educator and artist, the study intended to reveal how her Native arts pedagogy within a boarding school curriculum influenced the expression of Native American experiences through visual culture into the twenty-first century.

Following the legacy of her curriculum through her students extends theoretical and art historical studies on DeCora’s work and influence. An analysis of this legacy through material examples of her pedagogy could inform future generations to create visual representations and dialogue authentically, expressing contemporary experiences and promoting marginalized cultural beliefs, practices and life ways. In the words of

Jaune Quick To-See Smith, contemporary Salish artist, the purpose of investigating American Indian arts and educational history is: “To expand awareness of, and provide insights into, contemporary Indian life; to illuminate and erase the misconceptions and stereotypes that have burdened Native people; to provide useful strategies for cultural survival to our Native youth.”

Blending Euro-American art traditions with Native iconography and ideas, DeCora both asserted the constant dynamic and adaptive qualities inherent to colonized Native cultures and illustrated how visual art captures the nuances of historical experiences. This blending of traditions was seen in her teaching legacy as represented through a closer study of the artwork and interviews with her students. Through her teaching methodologies, she laid a foundation for cultural survival and expanded the awareness of her students setting a precedent for the next generations of American Indian artists and educators.

These studies looked at DeCora’s artwork, curriculum, student design art, correspondence and writing within school, especially under her tutelage in order to investigate further the Native Arts experience through the eyes of the boarding school student at Carlisle. An attempt to give a comprehensive picture of the student reaction to the Native Industries curriculum guided the study. This direction was needed as stated by Hutchinson, “First-hand accounts of the student responses to the ‘Native Industries’ curriculum and hard to find. Most appear in official Indian School sources and must thus be understood as being to some degree tailored to the Schools’ needs.” Through student accounts and correspondence as well as art and photographs, a clearer

representation of student experience was constructed. Elizabeth Hutchinson also commented on the earnest sincerity and care that went into work produced in the Native Industries curriculum as this “small chance to demonstrate the value of Indian culture was endowed with the power to legitimize the students in the eyes of Euro-Americans.”³ By illuminating the work of the students, the study focused on the generative influence of her legacy.

Research Questions

Questions and Sub questions:

How did DeCora’s Indian arts curriculum influence future generations of American Indian artists and educators? What were her teaching methodologies and how were these visually manifested in her student’s work?

Sub questions: How did DeCora use elements of her Hochunk culture, the Pan-Indian culture and the Euro-American viewpoints to serve her purposes as a Native arts educator? What were DeCora’s intentions as an educator during her years at Carlisle as demonstrated through her curriculum design?

How were these intentions reflective of her studies in American Western educational institutions? What are her aesthetic motivations and how are they embodied by her mature art work and that of her students? What were her political motivations and how are they demonstrated through her work and the work of her students?

This curriculum was visually embodied through DeCora’s illustrative design, art work and the work of her students. Focusing specifically on DeCora through her professional and deeply personal work in curriculum design immediately contextualizes

---

her educational philosophy into the material culture reflecting the inherent contradictions of the progressive primitivism movement. Through interpretive biographical methods, this study attempted to reveal inherent aspects of the aesthetic curriculum implemented by Angel DeCora in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School from 1905-1915.  

By taking a close look at her public addresses on “teaching of Indian Arts to Indians”, the methods and theory became illuminated. More specifically, Indian boarding school curriculum relied heavily on education to inculcate values necessary for “advancement” within the values of American culture within the racial beliefs and rhetoric of the time. Although the compulsory boarding schools were intended to immerse all Indian students in English, Christianity, and vocational areas of instruction, aesthetic education advocated Indian artistic traditions. The freedom to interpret experience through the language of visual art became a true means of expressing experience for the American Indian. While DeCora adopted Western materials and skills in visual arts, she also adapted tribally specific modes of representation and encouraged these practices while an instructor at Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

Furthermore, by viewing and interpreting DeCora’s art works, photographs, written correspondence, autobiographical writings and public addresses while an instructor at Carlisle, along with viewing student work and conducting interviews, an embodied pedagogy became clearer. Constant comparison of data was used to reconstruct her transcultural pedagogy. These material traces of DeCora’s intended

---

aesthetic curriculum are relevant in present day as marginalized peoples still find ways to continue traditional cultural beliefs and practices under pressures of assimilation by changes in power structures due to industrialization and colonization.

Significance of the Study

Researching the historical use of art education as an empowerment catalyst for marginalized peoples has never been so relevant. The study will serve to direct educational policy in terms of multicultural educational curriculum reform within local, regional and global communities where two or more cultures are involved in explicit or implied power struggles and developing “space” for coexistence. Formal documentation of the early experiences of a Native American boarding school educator and her students formed a framework for the material documentation of an art educational legacy. By tracing her legacy through her student’s work, we see the fragments of her original intentions and further close the gap on understanding the student experiences and expression.

Definitions

The study engaged in discourses of identity through the concept of transculturation. Ethnographers have used this term to describe how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. “While the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery (in the emanating glow of the civilizing mission or the cash flow of development, for example), it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the

periphery determines the metropolis.” The term “contact zone” exemplifies the actual two-way influence among the Native cultures and Euro-Americans. Pratt used this to describe accurately influences and “to refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.”\(^\text{10}\) Also, from the multicultural pedagogical viewpoint, multicultural education is defined as in James A. Banks’ *An Introduction to Multicultural Education* as curriculum that is more truthful and more inclusive reflecting the histories and experiences of the many diverse groups and cultures who represent the United States’ population.\(^\text{11}\)

This researcher uses the terms American Indians and Alaskan Natives to describe the indigenous people of this country. These terms are used in legislation and by organizations such as the *National Congress of American Indians* and the *National Indian Congress of American Indians* and the *National Indian Education Association*. In Canada, First Nations is the preferred term. When a particular tribe is not designated, American Indian and Alaska Native, First Nations, Indian or Native is used throughout the work except where otherwise noted in quotations.\(^\text{12}\)

---

\(^\text{10}\) Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 6-8.
\(^\text{11}\) James Banks, Multicultural Education, 35.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review is organized into six sections. The first section reviews historical biographical research on DeCora. The theories of Sara McAnulty, Elizabeth Hutchinson, Anne Ruggles Gere and Linda Waggoner are examined for research pertaining to instructional programs and practices implemented by DeCora at Carlisle.13 The above-mentioned authors briefly reference some students of DeCora and their later careers, yet do not talk about specific influences as demonstrated by artistic styles, techniques or culturally derived iconography. Through the scholarly research of McAnulty, Gere, Hutchinson and Waggoner it is suggested her pedagogy set a precedent and she, like her contemporaries, created a “place” for Indian art to carry authentic cultural merit and adapt to a mainstream economical context.

The second section reviews literature pertaining to the roles of Native women pertaining to the arts: pre-European contact through contemporary times. The third section looks into research related to Native aesthetics, Western aesthetics and new art history as the topics relate to DeCora’s experiences as a teacher. The forth section reviews research in Native American and First Nations aesthetics, basic foundations of

Western aesthetics and the arts and crafts movement. The fifth section is dedicated to sources used to create the context for Indian education and boarding school experiences as well as the development of Euro-American progressive education. The sixth section gives an overview of theoretical foundations used to frame the methodology.

Biographies

Among the scholarly research on turn of the century American Indian arts specifically documenting the contributions of artist and educator Angel DeCora, McAnulty, Hutchinson, Gere, and Waggoner have contributed in-depth biographical studies with brief mention of DeCora’s curricular work and students at the Carlisle Indian boarding school while she was Director of Native Arts 1906-1915.14 McAnulty characterized DeCora’s curriculum and the atmosphere at Carlisle, “The program which she was a part of at Carlisle was not only exemplary of Indian art but was a prototype for the much-expanded programs which followed.”15 McAnulty further described how her early education at Hampton Normal and Industrial School, her degree work at Smith College, and study at the Drexel Institute shaped her life and to help shape the discourse to the advantage of her people. These studies did not cover DeCora’s early years in Nebraska with her tribe.

Hutchinson extensively studied correspondence, speeches, transcripts, artwork and institutional records to document DeCora’s unique role in these movements as well as her contribution to help Indian communities survive economically and culturally and

to facilitate communication across cultures.\textsuperscript{16} Hutchinson briefly mentioned DeCora’s curriculum development at Carlisle Indian boarding school as exemplified in the following passage from DeCora’s speech \textit{An Effort to Encourage Native Art}\textsuperscript{17}, “When encouraged to be themselves, my pupils are only too glad to become Indians again, and with a little further work along these lines, I feel that we shall be ready to adapt our Indian talents to the daily needs and uses of modern life.”\textsuperscript{18} The above-mentioned scholars focused on the transcultural nature of DeCora’s curriculum from a Western point of view using few Native voices. Although they discuss women’s roles and her curriculum there is no attempt to associate meaning with gendered art or students’ work beyond simple tribal recognition. Hutchinson remarked on the challenges facing researchers focusing on her student’s work “First hand accounts of the student responses to the ‘Native Industries’ are hard to find.”\textsuperscript{19} Gere outlined the need for further research:

\begin{quote}

The figure of the Native-American teacher remains largely absent in histories of the teaching profession . . . it is especially important to consider the experiences of these teachers, their effects on students, possible explanations for their relative invisibility, and implications for historiography.\textsuperscript{20}
\end{quote}

Extending the research, Hutchinson and Waggoner documented DeCora’s life within the framework of social, aesthetic and political movements of the early 1900s.\textsuperscript{21}

During the time period these three areas blended into art movements such as the arts

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Angel DeCora, \textit{An Effort}, 205.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
and crafts movement and progressive primitivism in order to socially empower immigrant and Native populations. The literature demonstrates a need for further examination of how DeCora’s Winnebago aesthetic influenced her teaching and art, specifically her pedagogy. This gesture would negate the absence (deficit) of her Winnebago aesthetic upbringing in the literature by asserting it as a lens in which to view the discussion. Gere, Hutchinson and Waggoner cite Carlisle newspapers as sources validating student success in Western institutions. More research is needed to discuss DeCora’s student’s work and influence of returned reservation students.

Roles of Native Women

Rayna Green (Cherokee) launched the deconstruction of myths surrounding roles of Native women in societal settings, discussing the Euro-American myths that perpetuate stereotypes of Indian women as either the “Indian Princess” or the “squaw/drudge.” Green summarizes the confining elements of these stereotypes. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Standing Rock Sioux) wrote The Hidden Half that constituted a rare compilation of research from diverse disciplines related specifically to roles of Indian women in the historic period. Concerned with women’s roles and status of Plains Indian cultures, the studies give depth to the discussion of cultural changes, intertribal trade, ceremonies, and gender role equity as well as the effects of colonization and Westward expansion. In this volume, Schneider gave a concise breakdown of women’s roles in Plains Indian arts and crafts, detailing the value of their work and ways they achieved high status through the arts. This is substantiated by

documentation of equitable women’s roles in Lakota societies as well as other tribes reported by Marcia Clift Bol. Lillian Ackerman and Laura Klein shared a collection of anthropological research on tribally specific women’s roles that gave depth and breath to the discussion of individual cultural beliefs and practices within the arts and everyday life through the historic period.

Included in Rebecca Kugel and Lucy Eldersveld Murphy is a compilation of essays and research on Native Women’s History in Eastern North America: A Guide to Research and Writing. Within this collection, the seminal work by Lurie informed this study for specific women’s role changes within the Winnebago tribe in the translation of Mountain Wolf Woman’s oral autobiography. Erik Trump poignantly detailed how the reformer groups during the Progressive Era, such as the Indian Industries League impacted attitudes toward Indian women and assimilationist policies created a niche for their economic dominance as Indian arts and crafts became commercialized. As an extension of the research on women’s roles, Smith dedicated her research and theory development to ways in which women’s power in Native societies was violently undermined by white colonization in order to dissolve the cultural foundations for

further colonization of the Americas. Jane Simonsen offered a conceptual approach different from Hutchinson, Gere and McAnulty asserting DeCora promoted domestic arts and validated women’s work complementing the earlier studies within the feminist genre.

**Art History and Native Aesthetics**

Joan Vastokas defined a conceptual perspective outlining a needed paradigm change in order to view Native art within its own context and within the discipline of art history. Phillips dominates research and theory concerning Woodlands tribes prehistoric through contemporary times. Her findings include a detailed description of visual art collected in Canada, and Europe on which very little has been written. She called for a “new art history” specifically for the interpretation of Native American art. The new art history is inclusive not only of the historic context but also the performative and ceremonial contexts. In other words, a holistic view of the culture through arts and practices create more accurate, meaningful interpretations. Leroy Meyer discussed worldview application of an orientation to aesthetics without using the Western model to justify the contributions or significance of Native expressions. Emily Auger compared the categories of high and low associated with Western fine art

---

and crafts, respectively, to tribal values already present in all Nations. Eileen Boris provided the most comprehensive account of the arts and crafts movement related to all facets of American society including Indian self-sufficiency, curriculum development. Boris also ties in reservation and off-reservation boarding schools, settlement houses and mainstream curricular effects.

J. J. Brody shook up the status quo by documenting the early twentieth century relationships between white patrons and Indian painters in the Southwest. His work gave a historical context to the slow appropriation of Southwestern Native art into mainstream twentieth century “high art” categories. David W. Penney described the context and worldview shaping the visual art in the Chandler-Pohrt Collection as seen from the collectors, who were also close to many members of the originating tribes. This collection of research not only characterizes the complexity of cultural change from gender roles to the fur trade, but also has some of the most outstanding photographs of Native visual arts in print. Iconography from these illustrations is used to create a basis for the aesthetic discussion. Complementing the documentation of the past two centuries of Indian art, W. Jackson Rushing created a comprehensive collection of research and Native artistic voices that contributed to the research in terms

of conceptualizing persistent themes in Native arts. This collection informed the implications portion of this paper in explaining the directions Native artists have been taking in contemporary times. Ruth B. Phillips has also described examples of art, which shaped the formation of the aesthetic used to analyze the student work.

Joyce Szabo conveyed the development of viewpoints related to Indian arts and what was considered valued art forms for “collectors.” Supporting this “collector” model of the valuation of Native art past and present is found in Janet Berlo’s work tracing Indian art from the anthropologist’s artifact to “art.”

Nancy Perezo created a compelling model calling for the integration of Western disciplines in order to research Native aesthetics in a holistic manner. She asserted that in a “worldview . . . as well as in the realm of aesthetics that more work needs to be undertaken.” She continued to say “I do not know of a single anthropologist who does not feel his/her translations of artistic value are incomplete.”

Along the same lines, Phillips characterized the need for a more integrated aesthetic model to conceptualize and fully relate contextual interrelatedness of an object’s relationship to performative

---

Both authors agree that Native visual art is but one facet of meaning within an integrated approach to “utilitarian” object making found in Native worldviews.

**Western Aesthetics and New Art History**

Linda Nochlin asked the perennial Western question “Why have there been no great women artists?” in Euro-American and European art history. Nochlin answered it by questioning the assumption of the hidden “he” behind the gaze of Western art history. By shaking the status quo of the “white-male-art historian” she also asks “what is art?” and who defines it. The topic of power becomes the driving force behind feminist discussions focused on deconstructing the “gaze.” Other seminal work by John Berger further explained the need to redefine the gaze to more accurately document artistic contributions of marginalized people.

Combining progressive education and aesthetics, Progressive educator John Dewey revealed his interpretation of Social Darwinism as applied to the psychology of “the savage mind.” This example illustrates the objectification of non-white people within the American progressive mindset. Other works by Dewey served to contextualize the curricular developments as a rejection of the passive model of education and at the same time demonstrate how this new progressive movement was

---

based on racialism.\textsuperscript{48} Recent scholars, Lomawaima (Creek) and McCarty published research that revealed how Superintendent Estelle Reel chose to use progressive education and Indian self-sufficiency as rhetoric for the promotion of non-academic or Industries curriculum development for Indian schools.\textsuperscript{49}

\textit{Indian Education, American Education and Boarding School Experiences}

Ella Deloria (Lakota) gave her female autobiographical account of her Lakota education in \textit{Waterlily}.\textsuperscript{50} Hoxie explored the pitfalls of assimilation, Indian education and policies within the Progressive era.\textsuperscript{51} Mary Lou Hultgren and P. Molin portrayed life at Hampton through an analysis of the complex relationship between Pratt and founder Armstrong.\textsuperscript{52} The work looked at philosophical differences that led Pratt to leave Hampton and open Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Adams and Bell wrote comprehensive histories of federal policy, Indian experience, and Indian boarding schools that were used to create a contextual framework for curriculum development.\textsuperscript{53} Jacqueline Fear-Segal studied Evolutionism versus Universalism that showed the premises behind Pratt’s departure from Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute under the auspices of racialism.\textsuperscript{54}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{50} Ella C. Deloria, \textit{Waterlily}. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990).
  \item \textsuperscript{51} Frederick Hoxie, \textit{The Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians 1880-1920}. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).
  \item \textsuperscript{52} Mary Lou Hultgren and P. Molin. \textit{To Lead and Serve: American Indian Education at Hampton Institute} 1878-1923. (Hampton, VA: Hampton University and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy, 1989).
\end{itemize}
Lomawaima wrote a groundbreaking work, *They Called it Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*, which chronicled the lived experiences of Indian children in assimilationist off-reservation boarding schools. Combining official records and interviews of students, the study balanced the first hand accounts with a tempered view of policy development and the implications for American Indian people. The study of Superintendent Estelle Reel is informed by Lomawaima through in-depth archival research that described her political motivations that led to the development of Estelle Reel’s *A Course of Study*. This opened the door for Native teachers like DeCora to teach Native Industries in boarding schools like Carlisle. The concept of embedded instruction in all aspects of Native art and societal relationships punctuates this work. Lomawaima and McCarty constructed a foundation for the study of embedded instruction and point out further directions for authentic Indian education. Lomawaima and McCarty gave voice to a Native perspective outlining the history and future of Indian education using indigenous worldviews and historical paradigms to articulate Indian education by Indians. Within this work the concept of “embedded instruction” was utilized to describe the influence of Native arts on the lives of the students at Carlisle.

57. Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961);
Seminal works by Lawrence Cremin and Steven Brint pointed out the precise historical and societal moments in parallel educational policy making in mainstream American educational systems. This is needed to contextualize the study of the purposes of schooling in America including overall assimilation in mainstream culture and Indian education.

Contemporary Indian Education

Contemporary research studies on “best practices” for the future of Indian education by Indians are best exemplified in Donna Dehlye and Karen Swisher (Standing Rock Sioux) constructed a meta-analysis of research findings by Native researchers advising self-determination and community authorship as the driving force behind Indian education. This is supported by Reyhner in his multifaceted compilation of research suggesting individual tribal cultures be used as a basis for educational practices as well as family involvement, Native teachers and community participation. An example of such research is Iris HeavyRunner (Blackfeet) and Richard DeCelles’ development of the Family Education Model, which has been implemented in tribal educational systems in Montana. Their work showed the successful community and family implementation of “best practices” in Indian education precipitated by the compiled research of the Task Force in 1992.

The interdisciplinary meta-analysis included in Catherine Bell and Val Napoleon (Cree, Saulteaux) made pointed suggestions for policy development and

future research noting the intersections among most issues facing First Nations and American Indian people: intellectual property rights, education, repatriation, and research ethics.\textsuperscript{61} The literature demonstrates a need to extend the current conceptualizations of DeCora’s students’ work to understand better her influence.

Within the previously mentioned biographies, gaps in the research literature have been revealed, where further study of DeCora’s historical and educational influences and her legacy with regard to her pedagogy would be beneficial. The analysis serves as a unique curricular study by a deeper investigating of student artwork, writing, Decora’s speeches and correspondence written during her tenure at Carlisle. Seminal accounts of boarding school experience are included in David Wallace Adams’ \textit{Education for Extinction}, corroborating evidence of how Federal Indian policies and political aspirations of individuals influenced what was taught in boarding schools.\textsuperscript{62} These accounts showed the influence of Roosevelt’s appointment of Francis Leupp as a Commissioner of Indian Affairs and subsequent shifts in policy resulting in DeCora’s freedom to teach and research tribal arts for her students. In 1907 Leupp stated “I have none of the prejudice which exists in many minds against the perpetuation of Indian music and other arts, customs and traditions…and it helps make easier the perilous and difficult bridge which they are crossing at this stage of their race development.”\textsuperscript{63}


The movement to incorporate a Native arts curriculum resulted from reformer group members like Nellie Doubleday. These examples complement the archival documentation Estelle Reel’s work as Superintendent of Indian Schools. She and commissioner Francis Leupp gave DeCora freedom to create a unique transcultural curriculum by appointing her to draft specifically an Indian Art curriculum for a Carlisle Industrial School. This became the first time an Indian teacher authored, directed, and taught Indian arts within boarding schools. Reel’s documentation of her views on Native arts and DeCora’s appointment was explored through her writings and correspondence with DeCora.

Contemporary views on indigenous models of education are presented through the writing of Gregory Cajete (Tewa, Pueblo), Robert Warrior (Osage), as well as the Indian Education for All curriculum authored by Montana tribes. Examples of Indian indigenous educational models can be found in Cajete’s work Look to the Mountain: Ecology of Indigenous Education. G. Mike Charleston summarized the findings of The Final Report of the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force Draft 3, based on input from tribal communities on the state of Indian education in the United States. Charleston provided an in-depth set of recommendations for future planning along with a model based on a Native worldview belief paradigm. Echoing the work of Charleston and Cajete, Deyhle and Swisher (Standing Rock Sioux), trace the American Indian and

---

64. Adams, Education for Extinction, 153-54.
Alaskan Native education from assimilation through self-determination expanding on the model put forth by the Indian Nations at Risk Task Force linking current research and policy change.

*Theoretical Models and Research Methodology: Feminist and Critical Foundations*

Gerald Vizenor (Annishinaabeg) explored the “postindian” experience by taking the “gaze” off the Native presence by Euro-American onlookers. The de-objectification of the image of the Indian parallels feminist and critical theory. The concept of Mary Louise Pratt delineated what she calls a transcultural view, which includes Vizenor’s two-way dialogue, was asserted as the necessary framework for Native critical theory. Elvira Pulitano articulates the blending of these theories into a workable Native critical theory framework.

Paula Gunn Allen, (Laguna, Sioux), used feminist and critical theory to frame her analysis of Indigenous aesthetics in the field of Native American literary theory and criticism. Allen compared Western and Native views pointing out basic differences in worldviews as they influence the creation and interpretation of literary works. Her theory found significant differences in the interpretation and definitions of “power” and “symbol.” She relied heavily on feminist theory to make a case for a Native based

---

framework for literary analysis. Dorothea Susag used Paula Gunn Allen’s framework to
analyze Zitkala Sa’s (Lakota) work. Zitkala Sa (also known as Gertrude Simmons
Bonnin, 1876-1928) was a contemporary of DeCora and taught at Carlisle before the
implementation of *A Course of Study*. Parallels were drawn between the two women’s
experiences as Indian teachers and artists. The tenets put forth by Allen and Susag were
used in the discussion of syncretism in boarding school narratives and art production.
Transfer of aesthetic definitions from literary to visual arts was drawn from Allen’s
theories.

Interpretive biographical methods defined by Norman Denzin rely on author
reflexivity when researching and interpreting lives. Interpretive biographical methods
allow multiple perspectives to inform the portraits as the author defines experience,
acknowledging subjectivity while analyzing data, oral stories, art and historic primary
sources.

Scholars of Native art history have stated that one major reason for the lack of
scholarly work in the area of Native art and history remains: many different disciplines
must be used in order to express the full aesthetic meaning; studies are complicated
because they do not “fit” into the art historical model based on European tastes and
movements. The definition of Native art as “craft” has been one exclusionary variable


discussed in depth in the work of Patricia Johnson as well as Phillips. Phillips focused on the myriad of reasons Native arts have been seen as crafts through the promotion of souvenirs leading to further exclusion from art historical study.\textsuperscript{75}

The work of twentieth and twenty-first century theorists created a dialogical “space” for a new conversation related to oppression and colonization.\textsuperscript{76} Art and the Western hierarchies associated with “high” and “low” categories were another form of oppression used to push the racist development scale for political ends. These constructs historically left women and minorities out of the Western fine art history books and museums. These political and theoretical topics criss-cross the interdisciplinary discussion of DeCora and her “confinement,” to use the racialized rhetoric of her era.

Research involves diverse ways of coming to understand the world as noted by Elliot Eisner.\textsuperscript{77} Research in the arts, through the arts and research using arts materials has been gaining receptivity in methodologies for research in education and social sciences.\textsuperscript{78}

All archival sources and abbreviations are listed in the selected bibliography.


\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 3.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The outline of this study follows methodological structures for qualitative biographic educational research leaving room for theme development as the data was collected. As themes developed, a discussion of DeCora’s pupils with regard to theoretical and aesthetic representational tendencies exhibited as a result of their tutelage with DeCora is reported. Interpretive biographic methods are used to create a middle ground by breaking previous boundaries set by historical ethnocentric hierarchical divisions common in Euro-American educational, art, and Indian histories. The integration of museum, archival and field research is fundamental in this approach. The creation of a middle ground viewpoint is the methodological challenge presented by a contemporary biographical study of a nineteenth century high profile Indian woman artist involved in Indian education, aesthetics, political activism and art production.

By viewing art work created by DeCora and her students, researching seminal writings, speeches, written correspondence, oral stories, videotaped on-site documentation of original art works, and student interviews, with The University of Montana Internal Review Board consent, a detailed description of DeCora’s pedagogy and legacy surfaced. A purposefully selected sample of DeCora’s students was created using archival materials and primary documents. Furthermore, descendents of the

students were added to the sample as interviewees with specific memories and internal perspectives important to validity and to avoid external definition of the ramifications of the Carlisle Boarding School experience. Drawn from emergent major and minor themes found in the above mentioned data collection, a semi-structured interview, interview protocol, cover letter and consent form was approved by The University of Montana Internal Review Board. The sample includes descendents of students who consent to voluntary interviews. Precautions were taken to ensure the privacy and protection of any human subjects interviewed in the project.

Each of these student experiences were shaped by a number of shared pedagogical influences as they began independent work in their unique artistic styles. As the research progressed, less weight was placed on interviews as it proved difficult to find direct links to boarding school experiences and individuals. However, the few that were conducted helped triangulate the extant data sources. The interviews were conducted in semi-structured and informal formats, allowing for the chosen preference of DeCora’s students or relatives of her students when contacted for an interview.

Respect for the oral tradition of story telling coupled with an intentional use of internal definition of boarding school lived experiences relying on the Indian perspectives are used to guide discussion and interpretation. Although this study was initially structured within the tenets of Denzin’s interpretive biographical methodology, the researcher framed the interpretation of primary sources, art, and interview data

---

80. Karen Gayton Swisher, 1996, quotes on page 7 from the 1989 *Report of the College Board and American Indian Science and Engineering Society* citing that research on Indian history and culture must consider Indian perspectives: “Methodology using tribal histories and other information about historical and cultural processes not found in primary and secondary source materials will avoid perpetuation of stereotypes.”
through the lens defined by Indian educators, historians and artists with a historical consciousness. The use of arts literature penned and spoken by Native artists and scholars are used to broaden rhetorical and interpretive frameworks. As Philip J. Deloria poignantly states “the most interesting new Indian histories …will come from individuals who are naturally positioned in and who will work to develop their narratives with full awareness of difference and ambiguity, change and timelessness.”

This is the place of listening and seeing “tradition” as innovation by removing the filter of frontier Romanticism. Cultural expressions need to be recontextualized even if they were created hundreds of years ago. By contextualizing and becoming cognizant of multiple voices and devaluing the normative this study, as Jane Duran points out, “valorized the particular, the contextualized and the polyvocal” implying a feminist aesthetic.

It was the intention of this researcher to begin from a view assuming that all Native art within given contexts are profound expressions (even if kitsch or souvenir) of philosophy, cultural commentary, spiritual gifts to supernaturals, expressions of the self, symbols of ethnic identity, historic documents, trade items, marketable commodities and humor without need for justification of values within a Western frame of

81. Nancy Perezo explains the need for Native scholars to discuss and research Native aesthetics in order to give a well rounded view of its multiplicity in “Indigenous Art: Creating Value and Sharing Beauty.” This article was published in Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury eds. A Companion to American Indian History (Blackwell: Malden MA, 2002): 209-33.


The historical narratives include the Winnebago creation story as told by Smith and oral contemporary interviews with people potentially influenced by DeCora’s teaching.

The narrative study of Angel DeCora’s influence also used interpretive biography as a conventionalized expression of life experiences further defined by Norman Denzin:

These conventions, which structure how lives are told and written about, involve the following presuppositions, and taken-for-granted assumptions: (1) the existence of others, (2) the influence and importance of gender and class, (3) family beginnings, (4) starting points, (5) known and knowing authors and observers, (6) objective life markers, (7) real persons with real lives, (8) turning point experiences, (9) truthful statements distinguished from fictions.

The utilization of this methodology includes triangulation verification methods by examining evidence from a multitude of sources to build and create a narrative based on coherent themes. Drafts of all interview transcripts were provided to participants and other for review and comment. An attempt was made to be as participatory as possible in action and attitude while being part of interviews and story telling. This resulted in reviewing transcripts, follow-up phone calls and emails, and collaboration of theme construction.

Interpretive biographical methods were used to investigate pivotal events in DeCora’s development as a teacher/artist while an instructor at Carlisle followed by descriptive case studies of two of her students and their influence either directly or

---

indirectly. Furthermore, by researching the artistic endeavors and influences of a sampling of her student’s work, themes emerged through with-in case analysis followed by cross-case analysis culminating with an interpretation of curricular influences and implications for art education, art history, Native American studies and anthropology.

Limitations and Delimitations

The study is limited by the inherent interpretive bias a historical narrative account must employ because of the philosophical nature of “truth” as told by historical documentation and material remains. The author tries to be self-reflexive in identifying personal biases with regard to the interpretation of art works, rhetorical documentation, worldview constructions and interviews when appropriate. Although this self-reflexivity becomes complicated by the “undoing” of Euro-American structures of inquiry in multiple content areas in order to construct a view more closely aligned with Native American women art teachers in federally funded Indian boarding schools at the turn of last century and their students. This became a primary concern and is aptly described by Robert Orsi with regard to worldview and scholarship “The job of critical self reflection and historical awareness incumbent on all scholars of religion is precisely to uncover the ways that their particular areas of inquiry...have been caught up in the political history of the Western study of religion in order to begin freeing themselves from it.”

88. Norman Denzin, Interpretive Biography, 83.
89. Ibid., 84.
Furthermore, the purposive sampling procedure decreases the transferability and generalizability of potential findings. The discussion is delimited by these variants: initially, the stories are delimited to Angel DeCora, the students of DeCora or those of their students.

The limitations of this study are borne from the innate differences within the multiple worldviews involved in the interpretation of aesthetic and tribally specific experience. Additionally, the visual art forms, the rhetorical contexts of primary and secondary source material, and colonialism and assimilationist policy effects on interpretations of boarding school educational experiences are limiting factors. Furthermore, the key methodological issue when reconstructing the Winnebago aesthetic lies in Western assumptions relying heavily on written records to construct research context and meanings usually from a European-American anthropological point of view. This researcher relies on visual representations linked with worldview and oral recollections as well as first-contact descriptions sketching out the overall aesthetic in combination with careful acknowledgement of substitute material metaphorical innovations over time. This strategy removes the art historical myth of “traditional” arts materials being mistaken for aesthetic content. For example, the use of silver as a substitute for white shell wampum demonstrated transference of power and meaning to new materials within the same worldview set of symbols. Whereas collected memory of the culture is heard through oral story and performative concepts related to the all-encompassing blend of art objects in ceremony performance and dance, collective memories and individual narratives lend themselves to gaining an

understanding of the educational experiences of Native peoples. Johnston asserts, “Listeners are expected to draw their own inferences, conclusions and meanings, depending on their intellectual capacities.”\(^{92}\) Education is embedded in autobiographies, narratives, “myths,” material art, and oral performance as well as in the discussion of colonialism.\(^{93}\)

Many theoretical, political, and social histories overlap when discussing American education and the colonial educational experiences of Indians through narratives. The Progressive era was full of political and private interests corrupting the motivations of Indian educational policy.\(^{94}\) Progressives were not able to bring social justice into the curriculum of Indian boarding schools as it ran counter to assimilationist agendas.\(^{95}\) Within this paper, attempts are made to clarify the context of non-Indian American educational trends as well as the counterpart coined “Indian Education.”\(^{96}\) Again, the specific theoretical concerns of the experience of colonial education must be addressed within the overlapping. Philip J. Deloria reminds us that the blurring of the lines defining Indian and non-Indian experiences that began on first contact may be less blurry than non-Indian scholars suggest:

But except as they have included questions of ‘multiculturalism’ and educational representation, the so-called ‘culture wars’ being fought among non-

---


\(^{93}\) See K. Tsiianina Lomawaima’s essay “American Indian education: By Indians versus For Indians,” in Deloria and Salisbury, eds., *A Companion to American Indian History*.


Indian intellectual elites have often been irrelevant to many native writers. What has mattered has been the other context, that of postcolonialism (although one should note that many Indian writers hesitate over the term itself).97

DeCora faced many cultural barriers specific to women and more particularly Indian women. This analysis intends to look at these situations not as deficit situations but as cultural challenges that stimulated innovation and adaptation by DeCora and her peers. Stereotypically, Native women have been reduced to the idealized “princess” or the “squaw/drudge.” Rayna Green concluded in The Pocahontas Perplex, that in order for Native women to be “good,” they must “defy their own people” or “suffer death.”98 It is fair to note that Euro-American history and popular literature have promoted the idea that this “good” Native woman “cannot be perceived as truly Native.”99 In support of a methodological approach to the contemporary analysis of Native women within Western educational systems, Klein and Ackerman stated three issues of importance with the kinship and gender systems: the role of colonial contact and national intervention; the concept of gender reciprocity; the nature of kinship within the culture; and the interaction of kinship and gender systems.100 We see DeCora mentioning her responsibility for her cousins and half sister, who attend the school consistently throughout her writing during her lifetime and tenure at Carlisle.101 She became director

99. Ibid., 23.
101. Numerous family references are found in her letters received at HUA, which make reference to her cousin Oliver LaMere, sister Julia DeCora and other half-sisters and cousins. She mentions how she felt responsible for their well-being at Carlisle and other situations i.e. in Winnebago, Nebraska.
of Native Industries with her husband working under her in charge of the printing department. Gender reciprocity and interaction within the extended family was an integral part of how she constructed her private and professional life at Carlisle.

Furthermore, when conducting interviews this researcher intended to avoid the potentially harmful pitfalls of, as bell hooks put it, “concealing the woman into her suffering” by regurgitating the scarring and degradation of individuals and communities caused by Indian boarding school experiences. This was attempted by including the strategies of resistance and resilience of innovation and adaptation—the generative processes of individuals, families, and communities.

Framing the biographical methodology of the study within internally authored literature and Native Studies, “new art history,” multicultural education, feminist studies, and fourth world anthropology creates room for a richer discussion of DeCora as an Indian woman artist/educator as well as her curriculum and students. She had positioned herself within her tribe, American society, and among Indian intellectuals while her boarding school and Western educational training created ambivalence towards her belief system of origin. She also worked within internalized colonial views while her conscious and unconscious desire to assert the success of her people in the face of genocide and cultural genocide prevailed. She asserted inner confidence, self determination and a dedication to her race as well as art education.


103. The terms “insiders” and “outsiders” have been defined and discussed extensively by Robert K. Merton in his work especially “Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge” The American Journal of Sociology, 78, no. 1 (1972): 9-47.
CHAPTER IV
INTRODUCTION TO DECORA’S WINNEBAGO CULTURE AND FOUNDATIONS

“The change that American Indians have had to make in their mode of life, and the short time in which they have had to do it, are enough to shock any human mind.”
DeCora, 1907, *An Effort to Encourage Indian Art*, 206.

Angel DeCora has been described as “a Winnebago woman trained in Western fine art,” however, her experiences as a Winnebago child have yet to be investigated. 104 DeCora, or Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka, was born into the Thunderbird Clan of the Winnebago tribe in 1871. Her early education in the Winnebago tribe gave her the skills and cultural sensitivities needed to empathize with her students at Carlisle and to teach effectively in the off-reservation, federally funded Indian boarding schools. DeCora’s childhood Winnebago education began in Nebraska, not in boarding schools. She had already developed into an educated Winnebago adolescent; most likely involved in ceremonies, family and social structures, tribally specific values and aesthetic judgments.

The discussion begins with an interpretive overview of the Winnebago aesthetic. Angel DeCora’s early Winnebago education and boarding school experiences set the tone for a study constructed to create what Foucault calls a dispositif “a grid of intelligibility wherein power relations, knowledge, discourses and practices cross each other and make connections…the ‘said as well as the unsaid’.”105 This construct of interpretation is particularly appropriate because it includes “discourses, institutions,

architectural arrangements, regulations, laws, administrative measures, scientific
dstatements, philosophical propositions, morality, philanthropy, etc.”¹⁰⁶ The additional
Foucaultian framework works within the assumption that the removal of Indian people
from their geographical homeland becomes a spatial variable within the experiences of
Indian teachers and students in federally funded off reservation boarding schools.
Furthermore, the military barracks, dress, and regimented daily existence all create the
inevitable disempowerment of total cultural assimilation. This contextual addition and
physical dimension adds depth to the criss-crossing of disciplines needed in order to
pose new questions.

This paper asserts DeCora used strategies within her curriculum, pictorial
compositions, speeches, political actions, and life experience to integrate her
Winnebago worldview into the always emerging transcultural America. Through
examples of DeCora’s art work and students’ work a worldview and unique aesthetic
philosophy is demonstrated as DeCora consistently developed hybrid forms of art from
a Native American viewpoint. This analysis addresses and readdresses historical
documentation of the role American Indian teachers played in developing strategies for
cultural survival through generations. These continue to be an issue within multicultural
education and the advancements of multiple historical perspectives.

¹⁰⁶ Maria Tamboukou explains her Foucauldian approach to women’s narratives in education in “A
Foucauldian Approach To Narratives”, Chapter 6 in Molly Andrews, Corrine Squire and Maria
the inclusive nature of discussing educational narratives within the assumptions of Michel Foucault and
the construction of such narratives quoting frequently from Foucault’s, “The Confession of the Flesh: A
**Framing the Context: Worldview and new art history**

Historically, Native arts in American culture have been viewed and analyzed utilizing Western formalist aesthetic standards. Studies have been confined to categories such as “craft” and fine art, a point of view that most commonly, as Gerald Vizenor (Anishinaabeg) implies “reduced it to the mere evidence of culture.” A more accurate description of the processes are stated by Gerhard Hoffmann, “since the 1920s the hegemonic power of the dominant Western civilization has forced the peoples of the Third World to create their own identity and that conversely, their resistance has forced Western civilization to revise its claim to universality.” Native scholars and contemporary art historians have challenged the myth of universal aesthetic categories and valuation.

Through the supposed “Indian Art Renaissance,” beginning in the 1930s, patrons, art historians and mainstream American critics continued to place a value on Indian art from a colonial and ethnographic stance. In J. J. Brody’s book *Indian Painters and White Patrons*, not only are early American Indian artists like DeCora left out of the conversation, but motivations like resistance, innovation strategies and traditional intentions were devalued while the paternalistic nature of American and

---


Native relations were clearly emphasized.\textsuperscript{110} Although the book served to highlight new views on Native visual art and recognized as a groundbreaking work at the time, Brody again failed to see a history of Native people and arts prior to Indian expressive arts being encouraged by Dorothy Dunn in the ‘20s and ‘30s. Once again, Western written history was used as the standard to define and recognize Native arts and their roles in Euro-American society.\textsuperscript{111}

For the purposes of this paper the term “world view” is best defined by Alfonzo Ortiz (Tewa):

The notion “world view” denotes a distinctive vision of reality which not only interprets and orders the places and events in the experience of a people, but lends form, direction, and continuity to life as well. World View provides people with a distinctive set of values, an identity, a feeling of rootedness, of belonging to a time and a place, and a felt sense of continuity with a tradition which transcends the experience of a single lifetime, a tradition which may be said to transcend even time.\textsuperscript{112}

The first part of this paper includes a summary of the Winnebago culture with regard to materials, social structure and aesthetics fused with worldviews. As Ruth Bliss Phillips points out, Northern Woodlands artistic traditions were indeed an embodied symbolic system. “At the core of this achievement were the creation styles harmonious with the values of the worldview of the makers.”\textsuperscript{113} DeCora demonstrated the Hochunk aesthetic in her use of images, design style, color use, figure ground relationships and teaching style. She masterfully blended these as well as elements from Western aesthetics into


\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 152.

\textsuperscript{112} Alfonzo Ortiz, \textit{The Tewa World: Space, Time, Being and Becoming in a Pueblo Society.} (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1969), 5.

innovative expressive visual art, writing and pedagogy, appealing to the needs of her Native American students as well as a diverse audience. As stated by Hoffmann “These artists (Inuit) were asked to work on many levels of meaning, the primitive and elemental, the decorative and beautiful, the symbolic and mythical, in continuity of perspective none of which excludes the other.”

DeCora choreographed her pedagogy to include cultural complexity veiled in outward simplicity.

De Cora actively and publicly constructed the “new Indian,” giving speeches pertaining to the unique contributions of Native artisans to the truly American art: Native American art. DeCora’s curriculum reveals her active participation in “survivance.” The term, created by Gerald Vizenor, (Anishinaabeg) refers to actions by Native peoples initiated within their lives as culturally empowering strategies and tactics in dialogue with the colonizing presence “more than survival, more than endurance or mere response, the stories of survivance are an active presence” he continues to defeat the notion of a colonial passive process by asserting the active, adaptive and creative actions delineated by, “an active repudiation of tragedy, and victimry.”

Even with the steady pressures of colonization, removal, and assimilation, activists like DeCora creatively responded to the new influences with strength and clarity of purpose: a space of resistance. It would be impossible to discuss the art and transitions within Native Art without touching on some of the historical situations of the time.

114. For a synthesis of the historical transitions in Native arts in the context of Modern art see Gerhard Hoffmann, “The Aesthetics of Inuit Art,” a chapter included in In the Shadow of the Sun, 383-424.

115. Angel DeCora, 1908, 1911. Most of her public speeches made reference to the innovations of her race in the arts among other areas.

Early (pre-eighteen hundred) trade with other tribes and European colonizers brought new materials which were used and added to the existing material culture depending on their potential for power. For example, metal items were worn for adornment because of the shine or unique shapes. Trade items from European cultures were used in a myriad of ways and highly sought after. A passage from Robert Alexie’s book *Porcupines and China Dolls* offers a glimpse into how quickly new materials and tools of art making were absorbed into Native cultures. “The Fur traders also brought other things to the People: the fiddle and new dances called jigs, square dances and waltzes. The People took to these like they were born to them.”

The fact that cultures are quickly, instantly and slowly innovating resonates throughout the new American Indian art history and stated by Phillips “the vocabulary is different but the syntax is still the same.”

Innovation, adaptation and resistance all played out within expressive culture as well as the changing North American social organization. External definition of Native arts, culture, and people has led to condescension and misrepresentation by the Western colonizers. Internal definition and contextualization with the inclusion of Native aesthetics and creation stories has emerged as the new Indian art history. This concept is important in a contemporary analysis of American Indian art as contextualization and myth deconstruction can lead to an understanding of the dynamic, innovative elements

of all tribal cultures. “Traditional” Indian identity and arts has been fabricated to perpetuate the mythological failure of the Indian. Remnants of this “lost” romanticized identity proved helpful in oversimplifying art and life ways which led to the capitalization of pre-contact art and the valuation of artifacts and anthropological texts. Just as early Native art historians like Franz Boas studied the so-called “untainted” or “traditional” arts of Native peoples, he also perpetuated the myth of the “vanishing Indian.” Slowly this paradigm is being replaced. With regard to Boas work with Northwest Coast tribes, Berlo states:

Moreover, a contradiction exists that suit the interests of the ruling classes: an Indian people are seen as being unable to progress and change because of their very nature; if they do progress and change by selective (or even non-selective) assimilation of elements of white culture, they become unacceptable as Indians.\footnote{120}

Within DeCora’s lifetime, she would not see Boas’ students extend his research and ideas. Instead she grappled with how to present the specific tribal cultures as relevant historical studies not studies in evolutionism. Boasian scholars proposed that arts “were central to their theory of culture.”\footnote{121} In the early twentieth century, the work of anthropologist Boas laid a foundation for Western academic views of non-Western cultures defining culture as “an aesthetic system writ large – a historically constructed pattern of form and meaning.”\footnote{122} DeCora considered Boas to be a colleague, and they

\footnote{119. David W. Penney discusses these concepts in the preface of \textit{Art of the American Indian Frontier} (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1992). He states this book is part of a “few fledgling steps” exploring methods to describe the aesthetic nature of Native American Art.}

\footnote{120. Janet Berlo. \textit{The Early Years of Native American Art History.} (Seattle: University of Washington Press; Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1992), 48. This work provides an in depth discussion regarding Franz Boas and his student’s work in anthropology and ethnography in Native arts especially basketry.}

\footnote{121. Ibid., 48-9.}

\footnote{122. Janet Berlo, \textit{The Early Years}. 49.}
must have discussed culture at length. He gave a guest lecture at Carlisle in 1908.\textsuperscript{123} We may assume they conversed on the philosophical aesthetic system she began teaching at Carlisle, one that included “place based aesthetics” within the discussion of form and meaning. As contemporary visual artist Kay WalkingStick (Cherokee) explains, “I come to understand that the land is a stand-in for my body.”\textsuperscript{124} Walkingstick whispers the aesthetic of the Indigene of this continent; the people and the place are fused. Jungian psychologist Eduardo Duran stated “One of the first ideas to keep in mind when thinking about the Native American worldview … Western thought conceptualizes history in a linear temporal sequence, whereas most Native American thinking conceptualizes history in a special fashion.”\textsuperscript{125} This concept provides another overarching aesthetic reference point for contemporary Native artists. The attitudes of Euro-Americans regarding landscape as property, “uninhabited” before White colonization, is being deconstructed by Native artists. “By claiming their status as insiders, by personalizing events of nature, and by drawing analogies their bodies and the landscape, Lavadour, WalkingStick, and Heap of Birds...have chosen not to obscure their own agency.”\textsuperscript{126}

The new Indian art history includes old and new voices of the People weaving new materials into age old stories and songs.\textsuperscript{127} Contemporary artist Heap of Birds (Nambe Pueblo) acknowledges the new vocabulary and responsibility of the artist, “The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{123} Carlisle Arrow May 24, 1908.
\item \textsuperscript{124} Kay WalkingStick, “Seeking the Spiritual,” in Native American Art in the Twentieth Century, ed. W Jackson Rushing (London/New York: Routledge, 1999), 186.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, Native American Postcolonial Psychology, 14-15.
\item \textsuperscript{127} Gerald McMaster, “Towards an Aboriginal Art History” Harbour 3: 1993-94.
\end{itemize}
survival of our people is based upon our use of expressive forms of modern communication. The insurgent messages within these forms must serve as our present day combative tactics.”  

Furthermore, under the pressure of the Native artists themselves, along with other voices of marginalization, the new paradigms set by Boas continued the process of defining the rather indefinable “new art history” to include plural histories not centered on the European “Great Works.”  

DeCora’s “new Indian” could bring the form and content of Native arts into the modern context seamlessly.

**Western Constructs of “High” and “Low” Art and the Development of “New Art History”**

In order to begin the discussion of Winnebago aesthetics and history, the “new art history” must be defined. The paradigm grew out of feminist theories of the 1970s, multicultural and literary critical foundations and visual anthropology. As Phillips explains, much of the multicultural critical theory of art began with literary criticism. The theory parallels the contextualization of literary works. New art history attempts to erase the paradigm of the Western paternalistic “gaze” and occularism prevalent in European cultural studies. Within these roots of the new aesthetic theories, the doors

---


131. For Marxist and Feminist theory see the writing of John Berger, for example *About Looking* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980) and *Ways of Seeing* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977) and Patricia
opened for artists and art historians to view and analyze non-European art through the “matrix of social and economic factors surrounding the creation of art” without using the categorical model of “great works” by individual artists (usually male).  

Western capitalism, which drove colonialism and Western expansion, also defined how one viewed “nature” and land(scape). As John Berger posited: the objectification of nature as an owned commodity mirrored the philosophy, which defined “Indian-ness” as something equated with “naturalness.” Once the natural state was tainted by white influence, the state of “naturalness” would disappear thus defining the “vanishing Indian” as inevitable. The myth perpetuated by this vein of thinking assumed that once the “gaze” of Euro-Americans touched the “real” “savages” associated with the past, they would already be conquered by “civilization.”

As DeCora carved out her unique identity as an American Indian artist and educator, she also began an art historical and political discussion about the definition of art within her Native Winnebago community, mainstream America and the educational system. Alexandra Harmon points out in her survey of Indian identity by quoting Karen Blu (Lumbee) “what holds Lumbees together…their shared ideas about themselves as people.” Harmon continues to describe the living “traditions” as, “the very adaptations that have cast doubt on their credentials as Indians (The Five Civilized Tribes) have become tribal traditions.” DeCora embodied her own definition of “Indian” depending

---


134. Ibid., 261.
on political circumstance and her narrative continues to remind us that “Indianness is an ongoing process.” What art historians in the 1980s eventually labeled the “new art history,” mirrored DeCora’s early assertions; Native American art and industries were highly developed, individualistic and communal expressions developing constantly to meet the changes of the complex societies in America.

The term “new art history” refers to a revisionist history where the definition of art uses a multicultural contextual lens to disintegrate the European categories of “high” and “low.” In fact, it negates all dichotomies created to elevate European taste and history for the sake of justifying race “progression” and calls for them to be discarded or deconstructed. The art critic Lucy Lippard constructs her theory of what has shaped “taste” in art history. The social “progression” involves the assumption of an illusion of racial and ethnic hierarchies as described later in this paper. Lippard asserted:

The conventional notion of good taste with which many of us were raised and educated was based on an illusion of social order that is no longer possible (or desirable) to believe in….Such sheep-like fidelity to a single criterion for good art—and such ignorant resistance to the fact that criteria can differ hugely among classes, cultures, even genders—remains firmly embedded in educational and artistic circles, producing audiences who are afraid to think for themselves.

This approach challenges the preconception of the “progress of civilization” in American Indian art from handicraft as “low” and representational Renaissance

137. The term “new art history” is usually written in lower case letters for political purposes. For a discussion of the movement relative to Native arts see Ruth B. Phillips “Art History and the Native-made Object,” in Penney ed., Native American Art, 97-112.
standards as “high” thus creating standards and aesthetics from the context where the art was made. The study of Winnebago material culture gives a voice to expressive and ideological constructs of the marginalized. It reveals what is important to the people in a moment of history: what they valued and believed in. As Emily Auger emphasized in her discussion of the history of categorizing Native art as “low,” “The many forms produced by Native artists can be discussed with references to these categories and definitions (high and low) as effectively as those of any other people.” Auger continued to acknowledge the contextual nature of the art as it was and is involved in social hierarchies and ceremonies within the tribally specific culture. She asserted, “The masks and robes made by the Northwest Coast Indians for their winter ceremonies were clearly the privileges of the social and moral elite of the society and thus functioned as a kind of ‘high’ art.” Therefore, the placement of outside categories for monetary valuation denied the complex cultural values of each tribe.

Another facet of the separation of “high” and “low” serves a social purpose: the dichotomy continues to support social hierarchies attempting to maintain them through control of cultural expression and interpretation. Cultural evolutionists of the nineteenth century relied on reducing non-representational geometric Winnebago art to “degenerate” as exemplified in this statement: “such degenerate geometric forms as to be unrecognizable.” DeCora began her art “career” within the racialist context of turn of the century cultural politics. This investigation into DeCora’s own philosophical and artistic searching reveals the self conscious decision to ignore much of her formal

Western art training and teach Native Industries at Carlisle Indian Industrial School. Her pedagogy became a transcultural mix of her strengths within the constraints placed on Indian teachers in militaristic assimilationist schools.

When indigenous art is valued within its own context and mythical sphere, so are the traditions of respect, reciprocity and reverence to the spiritual. DeCora had many intentions within her art and activism, of these intentions, validation of her culture was paramount. These factors also guide research within indigenous communities.141

**Story as Aesthetic Primary Source**

Every indigenous culture has a creation story. From the time of first contact many “art” collectors, with rare exception, refused to acknowledge the importance of such stories of the mythology of place honored by indigenous people. As a result, the cultural significance of the artwork was irrelevant and inaccessible to the collector, who was initially enamored of its pure physical beauty.142

In order understand the aesthetics of the Winnebago tribe, one must begin with a familiarization of the complexity of the culture, their creation story, and how the meaning of images directly relates to cultural values and vice versa. DeCora incorporated a myriad of images and aesthetic choices into her art work. We can assume her Carlisle arts curriculum was influenced by her cultural upbringing. The Hochunk aesthetic weaves through Winnebago historian David Smith’s creation story, unveiling the meaning and power of the cultural expressions. All elements of the tribal culture explained through the Winnebago creation story deeply inform the arts as though they are one. Nora Marks Dauenhauer explains the holistic worldview defining

her Tlingit cultural view saying, “The form and content of verbal and visual art or
iconography are congruent with each other and with social structure. Stated simply, the
patterns of the visual art and oral literature follow and reinforce the patterns of social
structure.”¹⁴³

The intention of this research was to sit down and listen. Because of the
predominance of the Western written history tradition, much of the rich mythology
passed down in the oral tradition was not seen as a credible reflection of the culture.
This paper begins with excerpts from Winnebago tribal historian David Smith’s
Winnebago creation story. It is used to set the tone as a “sense-making system” and a
cognitive orientation. This system also framed the formal teaching or “system of
instruction.”¹⁴⁴ Grandparents were responsible for the formal teaching, Hoki-ku. They
“taught them the customs and legends of their ancestors; how to behave towards their
parents and relatives; the duty of fasting; and performing gender specific roles.”¹⁴⁵ This
paradigm shift simply stated by Hammel says: “These mythical realities—as paradigms
for thought and behavior—are compared for their congruence and interpretive utility
with the archaeological, ethnological, and historical records…”¹⁴⁶ Contemporary Salish
researcher Jo-Ann Archibald eloquently expressed the power and importance of the oral
traditions: “The teachings that I speak of have persisted since ‘time immemorial’ and

¹⁴³ Nora Marks Dauenhauer, “Tlingit At.Oow: Traditions and Concepts” in The Spirit Within Helen
Abbott, Steven Brown, Lorna Price and Paula Thurman eds., (New York: Rizzoli International
¹⁴⁴ David Lee Smith, Winnebago Tribal History: The Early History of the Ho-Chunk People From
Creation to 1816. Unpublished manuscript, 36.
¹⁴⁵ Ibid.
¹⁴⁶ George R. Hammel. “Strawberries, Floating Islands, and Rabbit Captains: Mythical Realities and
European Contact in the Northeast During the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries.” Journal of
were vibrant when contact with non-indigenous peoples occurred 500 years ago...the
citizens of indigenous communities share their perspectives, knowledge, and insights
gained from many years of learning, teaching and reflection.”

The social network and clan structure reported by Smith and Radin corresponds
with the oldest oral descriptions with a few exceptions. The Ho-Chunk Winnebago tribe
structured itself through the father’s lineage in a patrilineal manner. DeCora belonged to
the Thunderbird Clan. As told in Smith’s creation story, “Then the four Thunderbirds
threw lightening across the sky, and caused clouds to form, which brought rain to
Mother Earth. Everything started growing and it was wonderful.” From the four
brother Thunderbirds came the Thunderbird clan. The four brothers are also believed to
be the spirits who gave human man-beings the sacred herb tobacco. They are sometimes
associated with the four sacred winds and the symbol of the equal armed cross. The
Thunderbird clan is responsible for the tribe’s civil chiefs. Other clans have
responsibilities inextricably linked to the health, harmony and stability of the tribe. For
example, the Bear Clan is responsible for the land, its acquisition and where the tribe
resides. This is an important rule since during some important land treaties in
Washington D.C. no member of the Bear Clan signed the agreement, thus making the
treaty null with the Winnebago codes. Likewise, the Thunderbird Clan was responsible
for “life and death decisions” especially when “captives were taken in war.” For the
purpose of illustrating the connections, clans and images, this paper uses Smith’s

Winnebago Indian. (New York: Dover, 1963). Each discuss the clans and specifically the Thunderbird
Clan as the DeCora family lineage.
description in his interpretation of the Winnebago creation story to help explain the relative power of images through the belief system.

The following is intended to contextualize briefly DeCora’s work through Smith’s Winnebago creation story. Winnebago material culture includes: forms and materials, content and meaning many interchangeable, all related directly to the land, sky, animals, plants and water included in the Creation story. Smith conveys the Winnebago belief in the three levels of being-ness as a characteristic of his interpretation of the creation story with a description of the human and non-human spirit beings existing before the earthly human and animal relatives existed. The Spirit beings both human and non-human inhabit a realm different than the worldly realm. For example, the original Bear spirit beings would not be the same as the bear spirits on the earthly plane although related through time and space. The Winnebago or Hochunk tribe of the Great Lakes region categorized these beings in this manner: the existence of human man-beings who inhabit the center of the world on the human plane or earth plane are complemented by non-human man beings (animals) and spirit man beings who also inhabit the earth plane. Furthermore, beings are divided into underworld human beings and underworld non-human-beings (water mammals); upper-world-spirit beings, upper-world man-beings and upper-world non-man beings (eagles, hawks and other birds). At times, the translation for the non-man spirit beings in the upper and under and middle earth plane are referred to as relationships or _grandfathers_.

---

grandmothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins depending on the spirit. Smith’s narration illustrates the clan structure reflecting the non-human man beings or Spirit Animals, “After this, Earth Maker made the twelve Spirit Animals to be guardians of the Ho-Chunk people.” The twelve Spirit Animals: Thunderbird, Eagle, Hawk, Pigeon from the Sky Beings, and Bear, Wolf, Water Spirit, Deer, Elk, Buffalo, Fish and Snake make up the Earthly Plane Clans.

Materials and images created by artisans often carried symbols and abstractions reflecting the individual’s clan membership. In addition to the clan membership, the pre-contact power manifestation materials consisted of what is available in the Great lakes region and were said to have been handed to the tribe by “Ma-Ona” or Earthmaker and carried the potential for power within the material. For example, the four sacred herbs: tobacco, cedar, sage and sweet grass given by Earthmaker. Moreover, the four Thunderbird brothers related to the four seasons brought tobacco to the Thunderbird clan. The power of the materials relied on the sustaining power of the natural/spirit-world united inextricably with the same spiritual force. Copper, white shells, black shell beads, tobacco, reed whistles and parts of carnivore mandibles exemplify items placed in sacred medicine bundles.

Images were individuated and varied due to the personal spiritual experiences, dreams and visions as well as the clan and tribal iconography. The objects placed in medicine bundles and depicted on material culture most often reflected visions seen during fasting. There is an inextricable union of the mystical and the real within the

152. David Lee Smith, Winnebago Tribal History, 30-4.
153. Ibid.
worldview of most Native cultures. The mystical may be seen in visual form as the heightening of the physical reality to include the mystical-making—an expression more than “real.” Dream images were highly powerful and yet not easily valued by Western representational taste. As Leroy N. Meyer has pointedly stated “There is another, more profound aspect of individual expression in Native American art, …the most important source of artistic inspiration in Native American cultures: visions and dreams.”\footnote{154} This statement breaks with the common Western categorization of “traditional” Native art forms as being unchanging, repetitious, and communal. The Boasian theory suggested Native arts could not be individuated.\footnote{155}

Contemporary Native scholars and artists are decolonizing this approach by acknowledging the importance of visions and dreams and the artistic expressions shared by the community through the art.\footnote{156} Sharing visions and dreams usually incorporated a Shaman or a medicine person through a communal ritual.\footnote{157} Dreams revealed many images placed on medicine bundles. The images from visions and dreams also informed the owner what to collect and place in the bundle. Guardian spirits of the owners revealed in such dreams were also depicted on personal adornment. Women would create images found in dreams into head wear, garters and other personal belongs for their husbands and families.\footnote{158} Examples of medicine objects also had certain aesthetic attributes such as color, luminosity, and shine, possessing power potential.

\footnote{155} Janet Berlo. \textit{The Early Years of Native American Art History}.
\footnote{156} Marsha Cliff Bol, “Gender in Art: A Comparison of Lakota Women’s and Men’s Art 1820-1920.”
\footnote{157} Ibid.
\footnote{158} David W. Penny, \textit{Art of the American Indian Frontier}, 28-30.
The asymmetrical compositional spatial organization of contrasting forces is used in all areas of Winnebago material culture including, Thunderbird and Underwater Spirit, upper and lower. For example, wood-carved pipes usually had incised depictions of underworld (water) animal effigies, signifying specific powers used in combination with tobacco from the Thunderbird and creating power through opposition. Images and groups of images usually “allude to or make reference to stories already known…[they] allude to the entire spiritual tradition.”159 In combination with ritual and fasting in the correct way, these materials and medicine bundles could be activated for the intended use.

Red, blue-green, black and white served as important variables which denoted what kind of power potential was manifested in an object. Pre-contact Ho-Chunk/Winnebago material culture and aesthetics combined color and materials defined by the role these attributes possess in social as well as ritual aspects of the overall culture. These colors were also used to paint the body to express certain social, cognitive or emotional states.160 Material manifestations of these colors such as white shells, white wolf, and white otter connote “the purposiveness of mind, knowledge, and greatest being.”161 Other examples of color manifestations included black shell beads, annealed copper objects, white flint etc. First reported European contact descriptions note the Woodlands Native people painting themselves in these emblematic colors. They were especially interested in trading for European goods containing these sacred colors. Hamell points out colored beads were referred to by the Huron and Algonquin

tribes as *manto’minu’cts*: small spirit berries or “little spirits, power” denoting the material manifestations of the spiritual power of the color and shininess imbued within particular beads.162

Luminous, light-reflecting objects such as pure copper pieces had been found in the waters of the Great Lakes and surrounding areas. It was said that when people found the copper pieces shining in the water, they believed them to be luminous gifts bestowed on them by the Under Water spirit. Some say they were thrown from the tails of the spirits.163 The Under Water spirits could bless people with wealth or curse-like associated experiences. The value associated with shine was also related to the demand for European-made objects. The reflective qualities of metal objects quickly became “traded magic” when Europeans brought trade goods to the continent. The luster of the metal objects seemed to be fabricated by man-gods and therefore had innate spiritual power.164 Luminosity and shine seem to be attributes of the powers of the sun and the radiance of powerful manitos. Examples of highly polished stone, wooden objects and utensils carried the power of luminosity also.165 It has been well documented that shiny European trade goods were substituted for shiny objects. For example, when silk ribbon was introduced, Ho-Chunk women makers easily embraced the luminous colorful ribbon while designing, morphing the luminosity metaphor into the ribbon.166 Wealth was displayed vividly in vast amounts of adornment, in health of body, spirit, luck in

---

163. In a telephone conversation with the author on September 3, 2008, David Smith revealed the specific Water Spirit powers and historic oral story pertaining to copper gifts.
165. Ibid., 81-2.
hunting and planting, all manifested in material richness and intense sumptuous visual interest.

Many round fabricated objects were associated with the sun and luminosity: openness, peace, right conduct and power. First contact with the Iroquoians brought descriptions of great “plates” of wampum and medallions. Round objects made with white shell were said to, “dispel all darkness from our councils, and to let the Sun illuminate them even in the darkest of night.” as told by a Jesuit missionary in the 1700’s. An example of Winnebago wearable art depicting the radial projecting lines is commonly found on head turbans (see fig.1). Humans are rarely depicted in Winnebago art. This image is probably an illuminated sacred supernatural being demonstrated by a non-human earthly being image (see fig. 1). The sun and the being become one unit as the format remains round and all encompassing. The image of a human-like figure repeats itself in images with rays emanating from the heads of the beings. Phillip’s aesthetic discussion makes reference to the radiating lines and accompanying images reflecting illuminating bodies like stars.

Power as defined in this worldview was/is energetic potential. This power potential within the substance or object could be inherent or imbued through ritual. Specific images and materials were used because the tribe knew these objects had power: images, beliefs and materials interwoven into a complex system of ritual, ceremony and the intent to create balance and harmony as part of natural/supernatural

168. Ibid., 80.
169. This is the researcher’s emphasis: the materials being full of potential energy or power and the value imbued in this knowledge.
Fig. 1. Winnebago turban, 1880. Otter pelt, glass beads, cotton fabric. Courtesy Detroit Institute of Art.
order of things. The power of objects could only be evoked within a series of ceremonies or at least by culturally correct use in daily life. The “new” Indian art history relies on the acknowledgement of the powers inherent in the sacred; scientific reason does not carry the same power of the worldview belief system. Many Native scholars and artists now write and create works referring to the art as given by the divine. This affirmation of worldview in academia has broken new ground usurping the nineteenth century scientific paradigm used to explain and systematize art historical aesthetic research.

Another guiding concept of the Winnebago worldview was complementarianism, or the belief all powers were needed to create harmony, completion and balance. This worldview asserts itself clearly by the consistent use of asymmetrical designs and composition found in the Winnebago visual aesthetic. Images representing the upper and lower worlds are juxtaposed on two sides of objects or on either side of the body when on clothing. This sometimes came as a surprise to early contact Europeans seeing the lack of symmetry as “barbaric”[sic]. Europeans accepted and valued symmetrical patterns imported from the Orient, Persia and from European folk arts. The practice of splitting panels and decorating clothing with four distinctly different patterns and images led to the early European view “in the care with which everything like symmetry or harmony in form or colors was avoided, there was

something evidently studied and artistical.”¹⁷² This comment actually affirms the aesthetic as deliberate, purposeful and thoughtfully conceived. There was a greater appreciation of the aesthetic by Europeans in early contact times.¹⁷³ Later observers would categorize the use of asymmetry as “barbaric,” disregarding the geometric designs as “degenerate.”¹⁷⁴ Pressure to sell objects found palatable by Europeans began to influence traded items. This example shows the worldviews in conflict as European “taste” would begin to make its way into Native art through contact and commerce.

The use of split panels which quarter the earth constitutes an orientation of a central axis with four different powers—seasons, directional winds—to frame the individual spatial orientation.¹⁷⁵ The spatial arrangement is equally divided yet the content of each panel exhibits different images and patterns in order to create balance and harmony between different power forces. Phillips points out the designs of the four directions and the heavens and earth were sometimes used when setting out to hunt in a certain direction. Personal awareness of the spirit beings prompted the use of certain images to appease and please these spirits.¹⁷⁶

The Winnebago worldview was indicated in the use of “positive” and “negative” space. This is referred to as figure ground relationships, foreground and background elements in Western art history and criticism. The pictorial device of reversing the figure and ground relationship becomes apparent when viewing pre-contact Woodlands art, a carved heddle (see fig. 2). Western conventions usually have the figure, person,

¹⁷⁴. Ibid., 92
¹⁷⁵. Ibid., 90.
¹⁷⁶. Ibid., 91.
animal or object framed by a less important background. In undoing this, the Native artist creates a figure ground relationship where they become interchangeable. The culture dictates the forms, materials and colors, and what prevails is the sense of balance the human/figure and the environment or ground around it, thus revealing a view of the importance of the reciprocal relationship between animate and inanimate. The balancing of the figure and ground reflects the worldview values of interrelatedness and harmony. This concept is in contrast to Western views of individuality and the separation on the human from all other beings and the environment coinciding with the Christian worldview.

For the Winnebago and the other Great Lakes cultures, the Thunderbird (and Thunder beings) and the Water Spirit were fundamental elements found in all expressions of the culture from social networks and structures to the images woven into the twined bags. Members of the tribes knew the power of the deities which were found spiritually imbued in the materials as well as the images. The tribe “agreed” on the power potential. This is part of understanding tribally specific aesthetics.

There were no clear dichotomies made between good and evil with reference to the spiritual powers given to the Water Spirit and the Thunderbird. Both deities were to be feared and at the same time could bestow incredible blessings. Complementarianism defined much of the stories related to the two forces; two elements juxtaposed together to bring harmony, balance and stability. There were no clear dichotomies made between good and evil with reference to the spiritual powers given to the Water Spirit and the Thunderbird. Both deities were to be feared and at the same time could bestow incredible blessings. Complementarianism defined much of the stories related to the two forces; two elements juxtaposed together to bring harmony, balance and stability. 177 Thunderbird and Water Spirit images usually

Fig. 2. Heddle, c.1900 (walnut) by John Young Bear (1883-1960) / The Detroit Institute of Arts, USA, Founders Society Purchase, The Bridgeman Art Library / Nationality, copyright status: American in copyright until 2031.
appeared together as complimentary and as needed to create balance. There are many iconographic examples found pairing these two images together on opposing sides of fiber bags (see fig. 3). It was thought that the images on the outside of the bags would give a hint to the power of the contents yet not tell exactly what was contained. The medicine would then be carried in the two images of the deities. The middle realm also symbolized the human plane.

Furthermore, Waterspirits induced fear and could bring great gifts and benefits to humans. Art historical interpretations make reference to the Thunderbird as having a counterpart called the underwater panther, while this is the case within the Annishinaabeg belief system the dualities are certainly not the same for both tribes. Within the text of Radin’s (1916) ethnography, obviously written from a Western point of view, there is no mention of the Underwater Panther as the water spirit. Many subtleties are lost in linguistic translation and one may assume some things which may be held most sacred are not revealed to outsiders. David Smith, research historian for the Winnebago tribe spoke only of Water Spirit with an incarnation of the water lizard. Smith emphasized the need to use the Water Spirit as the correct name for the deity. What is now written with regard to “traditional” iconography carries connotations of early Christian influence and change in the landscape that accompanied relocation, removal and land allotments.

From earlier periods into the 1700s, contact with other tribes, the French and English revealed dramatic shifts in iconography, materials and uses. As the encroachment of Europeans increased in the late eighteenth century, the fur trade became a huge new economic force. Not only did it mean extensive trading with Europeans, it forever and dynamically changed the roles of women and men in tribal society.\textsuperscript{182} In Western culture the patriarchal system of property ownership and the male dominance over women became a value linked to the fur trade. Although the Winnebago tribe was patrilineal, it was not patriarchic. Power was shared and each gender valued for the roles and duties involved in day to day life, ceremony, ritual, object making. Of the many social structural results of this European projected power shift, included was the loss of traditional roles for women and men; women took on the burden of dressing the hides and furs which took away from the day to day household and economic duties; men engaged in trade with Europeans (women had also dealt in trade prior to European contact); trading of objects such as guns, colored yarn and beads began to rapidly change the cultures.\textsuperscript{183} Woodlands tribes continued to create ethnically vital clothing and wearable objects incorporating the new factory made materials in innovative ways (see fig. 1). As a consequence of the decline of the fur trade and the allotment act among other variables, annuity-payments for lands were sometimes made in trade goods.\textsuperscript{184} The materials were readily welcomed as metaphors transferred into material meaning. Just as colored glass beads were called “little spirits” depending on their color, so were fine made fabrics, silk ribbon and worsted colored yards transferred

\textsuperscript{182} David W. Penney, \textit{Art of the American Indian Frontier}, 34-5.\textsuperscript{183} David L. Smith, \textit{Winnebago Tribal History}, 88-9.\textsuperscript{184} David W. Penney, \textit{Art of the American Indian Frontier}, 33-9.
into the belief system via the color or luster. As Phillips explains, “Although the syntax changed, the vocabulary remained intelligible.”

In the nineteenth century, the cash-value of high-quality Indian made goods became an important part of tribal self sufficiency. Women’s roles, in economic terms, became more important, and outside interest were reinvigorated by Native women and field matrons from reformer groups. These women field matrons validated the culturally significant social importance of women’s activities in various tribes. Their first hand view of tribally specific cultural practices inspired their avid support as their leaders lobbied policy makers. Field matrons also recognized the technical virtuosity and cultural meanings of the objects as well as the importance of hiring Native women as teachers of the arts. The female field matrons representing Indian reform influenced attitudes of Euro-Americans developing into a slightly more equitable cultural exchange, mostly driven by capitalism, which eventually led to the political climate in which DeCora’s curriculum was born.

DeCora gained recognition through connections to reformers like Alice Fletcher and Natalie Curtis during the late nineteenth century, leading her to have work published in Harper’s New Monthly Magazine. Her illustrations and text provide a view into Winnebago culture using Western tools of art. In “The Sick Child”, narrative

187. Ibid.
188. For an in depth discussion of the field matrons and role of reformers in political policy change, see Eric Trump’s The Indian Industries League.
Fig. 3. Storage bag, Winnebago, c.1890 (cotton twine & wool yarn) (see also 340992) by American School (19th century) out of copyright. The Detroit Institute of Arts, USA, Founders Society Purchase, The Bridgeman Art Library.
tonal scenes of women’s culture set in the twilight give rise to the feeling of performance by obscuring fine detail, allowing the transient flickering light to emphasize the relationships of figures and potential for movement. Woven mats and well ordered surroundings enclose the female figures as they lean over the sick child’s cradle. Circular forms are repeated in the foreground bowls and basketry suggesting the sacred circle of life and may allude to the vessel/mother metaphor. The text and drawings literally illustrate the elements of Winnebago aesthetics as defined by the worldview.

In order to re-imagine the embodied unity of the worldview, quotes and illustrations from DeCora’s “The Sick Child” are used to weave the culture, materials and medicine together (see fig. 4). DeCora described the process of making a sacred offering of tobacco and red feathers to save the life of a young child in her illustrated short story “The Sick Child” for Harper’s New Monthly Magazine in 1899. The following discussion shows her strategies of communicating her tribal customs for cultural validation. Her use of color and symbol are consistent with the creation story and aesthetics drawn from the belief system. Through the voice of an older sister, the narrator relates her devotion, doubts and faith in her belief by setting out in the winter with tobacco and red feathers to make an offering to the angry spirit who made her little sister gravely ill.

There are three known versions of DeCora’s “The Sick Child” story. Hampton University has on file the original handwritten copy which is DeCora’s voice from her experiences without the veil of editors or the ethnocentric filter later used for the printed edition.

Fig. 4. Angel DeCora’s untitled illustration in “The Sick Child,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* (February 1899): 447.
version. The Cora Mae Folsom files at Hampton have a version typed and edited by Folsom. DeCora’s text is meant to be seen with the illustrations as one “piece.” The illustrations of women attending the child are rendered in the tonal style she studied at Smith College under Tyron. The milieu of the handwritten story echoes a deep reverence for the ritual she is to perform. As the narrator begins her task, she does not complain about the late time of day, the snow level, or the difficulty of finding a bare spot in the deep snow. She follows the directions of the “attending medicine woman” until she completes the task.

She begins her story. “It was about sunset that I was sent out with a little handful of powdered tobacco leaves and red feather offering for the spirit who caused the sickness of my little sister.” 191 Romanticism of the time does not color this story as a melodrama, however dramatic, she keeps the reader guided to an interior place by confining her expressions to thoughts or “meditations” and “conscientious search” with restraint representative of her personality and Winnebago women’s roles. 192 “It was a hard winter…tho’ the attending medicine woman must have realized this; her directions were that the offerings must be placed on a bare spot and that in my search I must ever face westward.” During the journey into the darkening land, she “meditates” as to whether to place the offering in the water, constantly reminding herself of the specific ritual and the bare ground she searched for. 193

Acknowledging the important role of the medicine woman reveals the shared roles of men and women in the spiritual healing traditions. Because DeCora belonged to

the Thunderbird clan, the carriers of tobacco, performing the ritual may have been a privileged role because the four Thunderbird brothers gave the tribe tobacco. By mentioning the color red and significant westward direction the reader becomes informed of the powerful materials needed to ensure the restored health of the sick child.

Her wavering feelings surfaced as she pondered whether her offering dropped in “the bare earth” would benefit her sister as she contemplates her actions “the tobacco and red feathers disappeared in the hole but no sooner the act was done than I began to feel somewhat doubtful.” She talks about being metaphorically “blind to the earth” but knowing “The reed must be rooted to the ground and the hole must follow the stem to the ground.” DeCora seems to seek ground or “groundedness” through the harsh conditions as the only way to make the offering into “medicine.” The medicine had to touch the ground and become part of the Underworld-spirits because she was requesting the blessing of health. She implied having doubts about the power of her act. This may have been a reflection of her doubts of the tribal traditions retaining the power they once had. The medicines when ritually consecrated gave the individual or community assurance of physical spiritual or social well being.

This story was written after DeCora had been through at least ten years of Western education and had been living in metropolitan New York. She may have wanted to express elements of her cultural practices without revealing too much yet also showing the “religion” of her tribe and the humanity of their lives though visual illustration paired with her short story.

195. Ibid., 448.
She gave specific details for the audience to gain access into the complexity of the cultural practices and worldview. Again, DeCora’s character brought red feathers, probably woodpecker tail feathers, with her as her offering to the angry spirit to bring her little sister good health. The color red as Hamell noted, “Was a socially-ambivalent color, connoting the animate and emotive aspect of life. It was a socially-positive (constructive) color when connoting life in contrast to death.” Her reference to following “the direction West” demonstrates yet another health bringing manifestation related to the seasons as this direction is thought to have the regenerative potential of the seven directions. The piece visually and literally creates a window into Winnebago culture and aesthetic utilizing the English language and Western representational imagery.

Her prose reflects her experiences in the tribe and the situation of forced assimilation. In 1871, DeCora entered the world as a member of a politically high ranking family in the Winnebago tribe in what is now the Winnebago reservation in Nebraska. When the French and Winnebago tribe first made contact, relationships developed and the cultures appropriated objects, food and formed bonds within genders and generally blended culturally. Radin and Smith shared the story of the Frenchman DeCora marrying Hopomkaw who was the daughter of an early eighteenth century Winnebago chief. Hopomkaw’s marriage to the Frenchman DeCora became the first with a European in Ho-Chunk history. It is important to note Angel DeCora identified herself as three quarters Winnebago. This suggests her grandmother on her father’s side

---

196. For the most comprehensive discussion of the socially cognitive role of the colors: red, white, blue-green and black within the Great lakes tribes pre- and post-contact, read George R. Hamell, “Strawberries, Floating Islands, and Rabbit Captains,” 74-7.
was Hopomkaw, however, the lineage probably refers to her mother also having French ancestry.\textsuperscript{197} The DeCora family had been alluded to as the “smartest” of the Winnebago people as Radin said “His (DeCora’s) descendents are the most intelligent of all the people and they are becoming more intelligent all the time. The ways of the white men are best. This is the way they were brought up.”\textsuperscript{198} Radin also describes the marriage of the Winnebago Chief’s daughter, Hopoekaw to the Frenchman “Joseph des Caris” and the establishment of the DeCora family as an “important trading lineage.”\textsuperscript{199}

Although the marriage was well before her tribe had been forcibly removed, the tribe was deeply impacted by the union. A faction of the tribe had also chosen to leave some of the federally assigned places they were relocated to in the mid-eighteen hundreds. The French commonly intermarried with women of the Great Lakes tribes. When she was born into the Winnebago tribe, one can assume the tribal members, mainly women, were producing and using images and materials in everyday life reflecting the cosmology of the tribal belief system while blending European materials and ideas into a transcultural material culture. Alliances with the French formed much of the fur trade culture. Although the disintegration of subsistence food gathering and the cultivation of corn had been disrupted by wars and trade early in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century, the Winnebago tribe, as DeCora experienced, kept elements of the belief system.\textsuperscript{200} The cultural innovations were accelerated with pressures from missionaries, the fur trade and relocation.

\textsuperscript{197} Linda Waggoner, \textit{Firelight}, 12.  
\textsuperscript{198} Paul Radin, 1916, 69.  
\textsuperscript{199} See Paul Radin, 1923; For a complete discussion of the history of the DeCora family lineage with regard to Angle DeCora’s ancestry and lineage, see Linda Waggoner, \textit{Firelight}. Waggoner researched the death records and also the rolls of the Winnebago tribe extensively.  
\textsuperscript{200} David Smith, \textit{Winnebago Tribal History}, 22-3.
Pre-contact life-ways, places and beliefs dictated the making of all material culture, or what is commonly referred to as “art.” Interrelatedness of all things inextricably tied the Native worldview to the land, water, animal, and plant life. Therefore the images depicted on woven bags, garments and cultural objects reflected the sacred, extraordinary and everyday life. Woven bags, clothing, medicine bags and various personal items would have carried the artistic values and symbols and been considered the art of the culture: the everyday and ceremonial meshed together. We can see a glimpse into this culture and her early education in “The Sick Child” her story and illustrations for *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*.201

She indirectly wrote about the early aesthetics or arts influence making reference to her preference for the older geometric motifs in her curriculum development: “I discourage any floral designs as seen in Ojibwa beadwork. Indian art seldom made use of plant forms…using animal forms and symbols of human life.”202 DeCora would also use these symbolic images and materials in her work, sometimes altering the images of her tribal cosmology for a hybrid or “modern” use in her teaching and illustration. On the chapter page for the Winnebago Lake Indians chapter in Curtis’ *Indians’ Book*, DeCora asserts the geometric tradition of her tribe as well as the well-developed quill and beadwork mediums. The designs, a balanced manipulation of triangular shapes, show the commitment to the original design of the tribe before European influence.203 The geometric traditional design motifs would surface again in

---

202. Angel DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” *The Southern Workman* (1907): 528. DeCora gave this speech after teaching at Carlisle for six months and developing her initial Indian Arts curriculum.
DeCora’s systemization of the abstract images in her Native Indian arts curriculum at Carlisle as discussed later.

DeCora was a member of the Winnebago tribe as it was in the 1870s. Selections from the material culture of the Winnebago tribe during the second half of the nineteenth century show European American influencing rapid modifications of material use and more geometric patterns on many of the fiber bags and wearable garments. Physical representations of these beliefs can be seen clearly on the fiber panel bags made by Winnebago peoples for centuries, used for storage, hulling corn and medicine bundles (see fig. 3). It is not possible to date these bags because they were extremely durable and lasted many decades with considerable use.

Stylistic changes in the twined bags developed over the centuries, especially with the increase in trade and acquisition of colored yarns. It is evident DeCora was well versed in the Winnebago iconography as she spoke of the stylistic changes and used examples of both representational and geometric images in her teaching and illustration. Examples of ubiquitous images used by Great Lakes tribes included that of the Thunderbird and the Underwater Spirit as discussed earlier. These images have been found on many Winnebago material items, both pre and post European influence. The images represent general beliefs within many of the Great Lakes tribes. The Lizard Water spirit (used interchangeably for Underwater Spirit by Smith) may be the

---

204. The Chandler-Port Collection housed at the Detroit Institute of the Arts contains many nineteenth century examples of Winnebago woven bags. The images lose their recognizability as representational later in the century as Ruth Bliss Phillips concluded in Dreams and Designs: Iconographic Problems in Great Lakes Twined Bags, 1989, Penney ed.
207. DeCora, 1911, 87.
image depicted on the woven bags with complimentary images of Thunderbirds on the other side.

Manitou are mystical beings and forces in the spiritual life of the Winnebago people.\textsuperscript{209} Although the term Manitou is from the Algonquin languages, it is readily used when discussing the spirit beings in the belief systems of the Great Lakes tribes. The Winnebago (Hochunk) related the Thunderbird to Eagle Manito, the upperworld deities.

Also, the concept of beauty has different connotations within Native cultures directly related to the social purposes of the “art” and the cultural values surrounding the making of material culture. Rarely is/was an image made for purely aesthetic purposes in isolation, all marks contain meaning and the meaning usually involves performative ceremony.\textsuperscript{210} The difficulty in interpreting non-Western visual images in isolation lays in the fact “(they) are imbedded in ritual, performance, and expressive contexts whose meaning can only be apprehended through a multisensory . . . holistic framework.”\textsuperscript{211}

The essence of a “holistic framework” can be felt in cultural descriptions from many tribes. The Navajo talk of walking the beauty path, one of harmony and of the balance among contrasting elements. Part of the overall guiding worldview can be felt in this statement by artist Kay Walkingstick, explaining balance of apparent opposites, “It is as if the two sides of reality are shown – the inside and the outside of perception – both are mysterious. Neither is fully clear, neither is sharply defined. It is all part of the

\textsuperscript{210} George R. Hammel, “Strawberries, Floating Islands, and Rabbit Captains,” 74.
great mystery of consciousness.” This integrated worldview defines the character, meaning and inevitably the perceived cultural power of the objects.212 Objects within medicine or war-bundles, for example, do not possess power but contain powerful substances that may be activated by ceremony or ritual.213 There is no separation between the spiritual power of the image on an object or the object; the combination is an all encompassing thought.

It is important to interject the context of the performative nature of object use. This concept is in stark contrast to the practice of isolating one object from an entire ritual or ceremony which reduces the object to the visual aesthetic familiar to Western thinking.214 As emphatically noted by Phillips:

I have also stressed, however, that although critical aspects of meaning were expressed through the oratory, dance, music and ritual performances that animated these presentations, non-Native practices of visual and textual recording radically reduced these expressive complexes to one-dimensional forms...Worldviews lost in translation further confused by condescension, misunderstanding and incomplete translations based on the limited English vocabulary when expressing tribal terms and cognitive constructs.215

Acknowledgement of power potential through performance permeates and deepens the meaning of objects. Vietnamese writer, composer and filmmaker, Trinh T. Minh-ha, explains this as a relevant starting point in the departure from the conventional categories of Western arts aesthetics “subject/object” in her statement “it-speaks-by-itself-through-me.”216 Lame Deer (Cheyenne) succinctly states:

215. Ibid., 610.
We Indians live in a world of symbols and images where the spiritual and the common place are one, to us symbols are part of nature, part of ourselves, and we need no more than a hint to give us meaning.\textsuperscript{217}

On the other hand, viewing Indian art within the paradigm of Western art history leads to seeing it as an artifact and the artifact can only be “authentic” if it resembles the material culture before European contact along hierarchical divisions.\textsuperscript{218} As far as using the Western dichotomy of formal and iconological analysis, shifting views is necessary to see the meshing of form and content and their relationship within the larger, ever changing Winnebago culture. DeCora embraced the changing times through art. However, her application of Winnebago images, tribally specific symbols and teaching, promoted an Indian visual culture that could be taught to the Indian students as well as enrich the greater American public. Seeing DeCora’s work through the changing Winnebago aesthetics and the Western standards enables a view similar to hers and reveals the constant dance and power relationships among the colonizing culture and the adaptive resilience of the Native culture and peoples.

As exemplified in this discussion, cultures are dynamic and constantly changing as revealed by the changes in forms and materials in the Winnebago objects influenced by intertribal trade and European contact. Vastokas points out in \textit{Native Art as Art History}:

\begin{quote}
(Native) Art history of the historic period faces another special problem: it must take into account the fact of European influences as a consequence of the fur trade, missionary activity, the reservation system, and the tourist trade. So influential in the introduction of new materials and new techniques, the fur trade
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{217} John Lame Deer, quoted in W. Jackson Rushing III, ed., \textit{Native American Art in the Twentieth Century}.

affected native art from its outset...Missionaries undermined traditional religious belief and practice, for which many art works were required...The tourist trade was responsible for a major shift in native forms of expression...to cater to the taste of their customers.219

As Penney asserted “formal polarities are culturally relative.” In other words, as the social network and structure changed due to European contact and the booming fur trade, so did the forms and content of the material culture.220 An analysis of an object produced mid nineteenth century from the Winnebago tribe helps shed light on the essence of their lives. Phillips has acknowledged the lack of formal image interpretation. “In comparison with our knowledge of technique, however, our ability to interpret the images woven into the bags is inadequate.”221 Using David Smith’s creation story and history of the tribe, the following is an attempt to interpret images on a twined bag circa 1850s.

Portable objects and transportable art were commonplace necessities as the tribes moved during the seasons depending on hunting, fishing and gathering opportunities. Although rock art and mound building appear in the areas inhabited by the pre-contact Winnebago, the viability of objects used in ceremony and daily life are used next to show common aesthetic tendencies as well as a concrete “feel” of the belief system.222

The utilitarian fiber panel bag example (see fig. 3) demonstrates how designs related to the two deities are said to be placed together to balance power. In this case, the Thunderbird and the Water Spirit were placed on either side. They are referred to as

222. Lynn Mackenzie, Non-Western Art, 156.
panel bags because the clearly representational images of the animal-like deities form a central panel flanked by simple bands of color woven into the fiber. The bags, woven of nettle fiber and buffalo wool are by women employing a weaving technique called “spaced alternative paired weft twining.” This technique created a warp faced design by alternating nettle fiber and buffalo wool warps from interior to exterior.\(^{223}\) This design, having the powers represented on either side of a container, can be seen in the general structure of Winnebago war-bundles also. Other purposes included hulling corn inside the bags and storage of food and medicine. The most prevalent theme on the Winnebago containers is the powerful and opposing deities of the sky and the water. The juxtaposition of the two powers was thought to create harmony and balance. The outside of the bags or bundles carried clues to the powerful contents inside yet did not literally represent the contents.\(^{224}\) War-bundles and their contents were the most prized objects in Winnebago society as they utilized the object in ceremonies. Tribal historian Smith explained, “The bundles represented a complex of blessings received from various spirits who were supposed to control the fortunes of war.” Bundles were passed down within clans and were part of the complex structure of power and clan membership.

Around 1812, the unified Winnebago tribes threw away their war bundles to show their belief and trust in the Shawnee Prophet.\(^{225}\) This eventually led to a division in the tribe and an abrupt change in the rituals, object making, and social structure of the tribe. Many factors changed the dynamics of the tribe as they focused their belief

\(^{223}\) David Penney, *Art of the American Indian Frontier*, 84-85.
\(^{224}\) Ibid., 84.
system around war and religion. Because of this, they had both peace and war chiefs. Most decisions being made by the peace chiefs prior to the historic arrival of the Shawnee Prophet. As a result of the tribal split and the discarding of the bundles, the propriety of the clan structure broke down. This led half the tribe to flee to Indiana and face starvation because they did not have the staple hunting and harvesting areas. Hence, the reasons to make objects of religious and utilitarian purposes changed.²²⁶

As this cultural change occurred, Phillips has noted, it was accompanied by a change in the images and the aesthetic of the relocated Winnebago tribe. “A dramatic change in the style and technique of twined bags may have begun as early as the mid-eighteenth century and seems to have been stimulated by the increasing supply of colored yarns (trade)…” This coincides with Smith’s account of the move to Indiana and the use of European materials. Another transformation which occurred across all object making was the more geometric and metaphorical use of the Thunderbird and the Water-spirit images. They became more abstracted, and many bands of color and geometric patterns outlined the repeated simplified images. The Thunderbird was simplified to an hourglass form while the Water spirit became symbolized by a simplified hexagon or “otter’s tail shape. Phillips goes on to say “…This later type of bag no longer exhibits the bold, clear images of mythological beings that can be found on many of the pre-eighteen seventies fiber panel bags.” This shift alludes to not only an aesthetic disruption but reflects the cultural disruption initiated by contact with Europeans and the dissolution of the ceremonies of the war-bundle.

Of course this is a simplification of the historical background of images over the period of about one hundred years beginning with initial European contact through the mid 1800s. It is interesting to note that Phillips had not found any research related to the later geometric designs and their specific cultural meanings. These geometric, abstracted images are what DeCora used as the template for her Winnebago aesthetic as well as the older stylized Thunderbird and Water-spirit images. She was well-versed in the emblems, beliefs and history of her own tribe.\footnote{227. Ruth B. Phillips. “Dreams and Designs.” Phillips noted there has not been a thorough analysis of the later geometric art of the Winnebago tribe in the nineteenth century.}

An example of DeCora’s transcultural application of the Winnebago Thunderbird motif is seen in her collaboration with Natalie Curtis on the title page of Curtis’ \textit{The Indians’ Book}, 1907 (see fig. 5). One cannot know if she was implying a syncretic tradition or expressing a Pan-Indian motif popular at the time. Curtis’ intentions as stated at the beginning of the book were “an offering by the American Indians of Indian lore, musical and narrative, to form a record of the songs and legends of their race.”\footnote{228. Natalie Curtis, \textit{The Indians’ Book}, (New York: Dover Publications, 1907), title page.} Native American world-view, as seen in the arts, possesses a unity and harmony of symbol, structure, and articulation that is peculiar to the American Indian world. An excerpt from Curtis’ \textit{The Indians’ Book}, which is illustrated by DeCora began with this quote from “an old man.” Curtis chose to complement DeCora’s frontispiece into the tribally distinctively designed book: “There are birds of many colors-red, blue, green, yellow—yet it is all one bird…So men: in this land where once were only Indians are now men of every color-white, black, yellow, red—yet all one people. That this was come to pass was in the heart of the Great Mystery. It is right
Fig. 5. Natalie Curtis, *The Indians Book*, 1907, title page.
thus. And everywhere there shall be peace.”\textsuperscript{229} This may have been Curtis’ way of blessing the book and her hope for greater cultural understanding through sharing its contents.

DeCora’s frontispiece may well have been a powerful statement of Pan-Indian solidarity and may represent the kind of symbolic coalition later found in the organization The Society of American Indians. Nonetheless, DeCora created the title page in a geometric motif resembling a Thunderbird, with outstretched wings and tail-feathers spanning the top and bottom of the page. The sides are flanked with slender geometric and straight lines with a highly stylized otter-tail pattern ending with geometric stair-steps designs touching two smaller thunderbird figures. The Thunderbird motif repeatedly touches the symmetrical stair-step pattern as it seems to emanate from the beak of each bird. This placement may indicate the power which is associated with the Thunderbird or Manitous in general, and thus the book begins with a visual prayer of protection and empowerment.

The stair-step motif accompanying the stylized Thunderbird can be seen on the traditional twined bag. The stair-step pattern is turned in the direction of the bird to follow the contours around the upper portion. Some have interpreted this as analogous to the zigzag pattern related to the lightning that is said to shoot from the eyes of the Thunderbird.\textsuperscript{230} This seems to be reflection of a sky power in the form a of a “sky dome” potential symbol, as explained earlier.\textsuperscript{231} To do this means to analyze the iconographic similarities linking DeCora’s Winnebago culture, complete with symbols

\textsuperscript{229} David Lee Smith, Winnebago Tribal History, X.
\textsuperscript{231} Ibid., 60.
and beliefs, to modern mainstream applied art. DeCora stayed true to these deep-seated aesthetics in her curricular promotion of similar tribally specific iconography for modern use. She began her self-education in Native aesthetics and tribally specific symbols around 1900 and continued this study as she entered Carlisle consulting with Franz Boas and the Smithsonian in following years.\textsuperscript{232}

Her application of Winnebago aesthetics in Natalie Curtis’ \textit{The Indians’ Book} served as a landmark feat in Euro-American publications. This application created a bridge of cultural integrity by increasing visibility of the Native aesthetic system in a widely circulated, well known book. Within Curtis’ book, DeCora took this use to a new level; each tribe was represented by graphics of English words styles after the distinct tribal symbol systems. The tribally specific art introduced the music and stories of each tribal culture. This type of tribal integrity and creative innovation had not been seen before woven throughout an entire book. In her article on DeCora, Natalie Curtis reminisces about the publisher’s enthusiasm for DeCora’s graphic motif saying, “Our designer looked at the page and gave a low whistle. ‘I never saw anything like this in my life before,’ he said. ‘Whoever did that lettering is a genius! Don’t ask me to make letters like that…” ‘You would be surprised to know that the genius is a young Indian girl’…he thought a minute, ‘Well no, I am not surprised, because no white man could have done this.”\textsuperscript{233} Although the published article and quotes were meant to validate DeCora’s “genius”, the remarks placed her into a racial category revealing the double edged sword of racialism’s capability theory: Native Americans could contribute to a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{232} Linda Waggoner, \textit{Firelight}, Introduction.
\end{itemize}
truly American art yet they could only go as far as their ethnic rung on the ladder of race development as commonly believed by the Euro-American population.

Cultural Contrast: Western Aesthetics and Native Arts

The concept ranking art as defined by post Renaissance “high art” was introduced through the eyes of the colonizer to the North American continent. Problems arise when classifying Native utilitarian art as “art” in the Western sense and concisely stated by Vastokas, “the majority of Western art historians, conditioned as they inevitably are by nineteenth and twentieth century aesthetic preferences, art must be non-utilitarian.” Many other considerations surface when the majority of Native history is passed down in the oral tradition “But most of all, the writing of native art history is thought to be impossible because of the lack of written documents.” She further discusses problems within the profession of art history saying “Western art historians as a profession are to a large extent still decidedly ethnocentric.” Art historians are still influenced by the evolutionary perspective that art evolved through stages, “culminating in the post Mediaeval Western tradition whose foundations are traced back only as far as Classical antiquity.” The worldviews, values and aesthetics of Western and Native nineteenth century peoples could not have set the stage for a simple or equitable relationship.

As baffling as it may seem to Western art historians, Native art has its own set of elite values within the tribal social structures. As Emily Auger discusses, the

---

234. Joan Vastokas was one of the first scholars to discuss the need for Native art historians in “Native Art as Art History,” 7-34.
235. Joan Vastokas was one of the first scholars to discuss the need for Native art historians in “Native Art as Art History,” 7-34.
decategorization of Native arts has begun to emphasize the relative categories within the tribal cultures. Western societies have traditionally placed some types of art in the category of crafts and some in the higher categories of sculpture and painting defined by societal values and social mores. Auger concludes Native works, both past and present, can be categorized within their own societal contexts. This may not be helpful in the initial physical movement of Native works from the Museum of Natural History to an art museum context, as the works would then need to be recategorized in a tribally specific manner. However, the reality stands that for the past four hundred years of colonial domination, Native arts have always been designated as material culture and part of the artifacts of the “vanishing race” mythology. With that premise in mind, a standardized interdisciplinary study of Native art as “art” is in its infancy, especially from the native point of view. The Native viewpoint of art history calls for the acknowledgement of the need for a holistic interpretive framework taking into consideration that, “Many traditional non-Western objects and visual images are embedded in ritual, performative and expressive contexts whose meanings can only be fully apprehended through a multisensory range of experiences.”

The interpretation of the objects is only partially based on the visual. It demands an interdisciplinary approach and even the inclusion of the oral traditions supporting the uses or meaning.

In Western categories, crafts and utilitarian material culture or “folk arts” have been seen as “low” art as opposed to the traditions of “art-for-arts-sake” such as oil painting and bronze sculpture, mediums learned in an academic setting in the tradition

---

of the Renaissance. Western categories after the Renaissance maintained self expression as the highest goal and self expression using classical ideals as the highest. These categories are essentially ethnocentric as they were developed and firmly established in Western art academies between the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries. As democratization of the populations increased, so did the popularity of “taste” associated with the appreciations of such ideals. As Auger points out, “The academy upheld the belief that the representation of such ideals would improve society as a whole.”

Eighteenth century philosophy was strongly influenced by popular philosophers such as David Hume (1711-1756), who was also at the forefront of Western aesthetic theory. Within the context of European colonization and new markets loaded with a vastly new array of materials and “artifacts” from places outside of Europe, a new sense of human passion was legitimized in his *Treatise* “…avidity alone, of acquiring goods and possessions for ourselves and our nearest friends, is insatiable, perpetual, universal.” The universality of taste in aesthetic judgment led Hume to write of universal aesthetic standards. His overarching philosophical theme gels quickly into what became common practice within the Anglo system of colonization and assimilation tactics. Under the conception of universal standards based on colonial markets and the hierarchies developed during the eighteenth century in Europe, “civilization” and its “tastes” were proclaimed to be the highest achievements in human

---

potential any culture or race could aspire to. This translated into political policy marked by Indian removal, assimilation, allotment of lands and the development of the federally funded Indian Boarding school. Prevailing thought envisioned America as a “civilized” country of unified people who understood the “standards” of the rankings of races and cultures would civilize Native peoples and absorb them.\textsuperscript{240}

Materials associated with “high” and “low” arts were also clearly divided by the hierarchical system of Western thought.\textsuperscript{241} The influence of studying at art academies and institutions like Smith would have given DeCora a thorough immersion into the hierarchies, trends and “civilized” tastes of Western art and also the tools for deconstructing and commenting on the universal standards of taste. It was those European premises which she later commented on in speeches, curriculum development and her own art work. As Herwitz explains “Traditions, cultures, heritages appear only to the synoptic gaze of the colonizer, tourist, or essentializing theorist. They are not. To know a tradition is to know its arguments, its differences, its breadth of diversity, as well as the underlying similarities and forms of part unity.”\textsuperscript{242} Herwitz continues to point out the setting in which the dominant American tastes were formed with the English conception of taste being a \textit{practice} in itself “…one whose formation in the eighteenth century was a very central part of the growth of consumerism.” Taste and “civilized” taste is about consumerism. This concept would become the ultimate reasoning that allowed the Native arts curriculum into the federally funded Indian boarding schools. It became tasteful to collect artifacts from the so called “vanishing” colonized peoples. As

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{240} David Herwitz, \textit{Aesthetics: Key Concepts in Philosophy}, (Trowbridge: Cromwell Press, 2008), 55.
\item \textsuperscript{241} Patricia Johnson, \textit{Seeing High and Low}, Introduction.
\item \textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 55-56.
\end{itemize}
a result, everyone wanted an “Indian Corner” in their living room. Economic culture of the early twentieth century would turn the eyes of the trendy nouveau riche “standards” to American Indian material culture.

Simultaneously, arguments in American social sciences and modern art movements were being hatched asserting the incommensurability of rankings among cultures based on any one set of European standards. The hierarchical placement of the races was a predominant theme at Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Virginia’s Freedman Bureau school where DeCora received her first five years of Western education. An example of the dogma of Social Darwinism can be found in Hampton’s curriculum. In an edition of the Southern Workman, Hampton’s news magazine, examples of social studies tests are published. The questions developed for the tests asked the students to list the races in order from most “civilized” to “savage.” As Wallace points out, the indoctrination of racial deficiency dogma was a strategy of cultural domination. As the Indian policies failed to bring the races up the rungs of the racial hierarchy within a generation, opinions shifted and racial characteristics were seen as capacities and Indian arts proved to be a worthy “product” of American Indian innate capacities.

The pressure to assimilate Indian peoples created a new value for artifacts from the “vanishing race.” The myth of the vanishing Indian promoted much of the photography and souvenir trade also. This did not change the fact that much of the Native arts were created in a market driven economy by the “tastes” of those who could afford the work. This held true for much of the work DeCora’ students made, although

244. David Wallace Adams, “Education in Hues.” 159.
she promoted innovation using old patterns and forms in new modern ways. It was, however, the Progressive era and Progressives wanted to validate the folk traditions as well as Native American and women’s art. The arts and crafts movement supported the preindustrial everyman’s art forms. All of these factors influenced DeCora’s curriculum design as seen later.

The emerging value of viewing arts through the lens of a specific cultural context became more popular among anthropologists around the turn of the century and sifted into mainstream Euro-American tastes. The importance of understanding the cultural context is echoed by Alice C. Fletcher in her 1900 anthology of *Indian Story and Song from North America.*

Fletcher became one of the first female anthropologists specializing in Omaha art and music who later worked extensively with Francis LaFlesche, Omaha, to document and preserve songs, stories and culture of American Indian tribes in the English language and transcribed musical formats. The preface to her 1900 book includes this explanation of the art forms when speaking of the story and context of “themes:”

> It was felt that this availability would be greater if the story, or the ceremony which gave rise to the song, could be known, so that, in developing the theme, all the movements might be consonant with the circumstances that had inspired the motive.  

By placing the Native arts within a context, the general public was given an opportunity to feel nuances of the belief system and the purpose and integrated beauty of the original intent. This became an important factor in the validation of the arts and crafts

---


movement. As the twentieth century unfolded, the revolt against industrial society’s ills bred new, socially conscious movements, such as the arts and crafts movement empowering artists, anthropologists, Indian reformers, women, Native peoples and politicians to challenge hierarchical standards set by Anglo aesthetics although commercialism remained a driving force.  

DeCora’s Early Biography and Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, Virginia’s Freedman Bureau School

Angel DeCora’s Life: Her Voice

DeCora’s 1911 (fig. 6) autobiography begins “I was born in a wigwam of Indian parents. My father was the fourth son of the hereditary chief of the Winnebagoes.” She went on to write about her mother being educated in a convent yet “she gave up all her foreign training and made a good, industrious Indian wife.” She acknowledged outside educational forces and how her mother “gave up” the training. This mirrors much of DeCora’s later professional choices. Trained in the most formidable Western institutions, her life took her on a trajectory as a professional educator who decided to not teach in the easel style. She asserted she became drawn to design stating, “Perhaps it was well that I had not over studied the prescribed methods of European decoration, for then my aboriginal qualities could never have asserted themselves.” While saying she was clearly influenced by her Western art training, she also admitted she retained

Fig. 6. Angel DeCora probably taken while she was Director at Carlisle. Cover of *The American Indian Magazine*, Spring, 1919.
some of her Winnebago identity as a designer. DeCora asserted the pictorial design qualities inherent in her race.

The inherency argument was used often as it was the predominant mainstream conception to explain racial differences. Much of the policies pertaining to Indian Education in the early twentieth century can be attributed to these theoretical foundations. Social Darwinism asserted that pre-industrial and non-European Americans had yet to develop into the more “civilized” stages of racial evolution. Although DeCora espoused this rhetoric in her autobiography, she may have been appealing to the majority attitude of the dominant culture while simultaneously promoting qualities of her culture not readily appreciated by the Western reformers, policy makers and public.

Her earliest experiences in racial stratification and conception of racial aptitude were formed while at Hampton. It is interesting to note the first dormitories at Hampton for Indian students were “Winona” and “Wigwam” pan-Indian names still plastered to the sides of the buildings as reminders of the lack of tribal understanding prevalent in 1878.

Hampton’s philosophy, under the leadership of General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, developed along the lines of evolutionism not universalism as Pratt’s mission at Carlisle did. To train “hand, heart and head,” became the mantra of the first freedman’s school. The school’s curriculum focused on industrial and vocational training. It was the first freedman’s school, post-Civil War, that promoted race pride. It may have been in her early years at Hampton that she truly formed her views on race,

her ability to succeed as an artist as well as her deepest connections to the white world and the new Indian identity forged by the government through Indian Boarding schools. While drawing and pottery decoration was encouraged, these traditionally male art forms became promotional fundraising gestures sparked by the Fort Marion prisoner’s art. Hampton did not encourage and develop an art curriculum based on Native traditions or for that matter, Western traditions. It seems the students were allowed to use drawing and painting materials and encouraged to “decorate” pre-made pottery.²⁵¹ Many of the Native prisoners from Pratt’s prison in Fort Marion were prolific artists when they were transferred to Hampton (see fig. 7). Although there are few records of the curriculum at Hampton, the material evidence suggests the arts were part of the student’s lives.

Angel DeCora did find drawing and watercolor supplies readily accessible, yet she mentioned she had received no formal training at Hampton. In one of her speeches she mentioned how having the opportunity to draw “kept her from running away.”²⁵² One of her surviving paintings dates to her years at Hampton. As a teen, she painted a scene of a tipi lit from within. The figures circle the inner borders as the sun sets outside on the prairie landscape. When viewing this first hand, one is struck by the remarkable detail in a postcard size painting. The colors are distinct and vivid even within the dusky setting. The wagon acts as a skeletal shape maybe placed as a reminder that the White world was always outside the tipi door ready to take the Native children for a “ride.”

Fig. 7. Making Medicine. “A Cheyenne at Home.” Circa 1875-78. Ledger drawing, colored inks & crayon. #1996.027.0542. Arthur & Shifra Silberman Native American Art Collection, Donald C. & Elizabeth M. Dickinson Research Center, National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.
This is what happened to DeCora; the train was waiting to take her far away from Winnebago, Nebraska and the warmth of her family. While studying her personal writing and art, it may be argued DeCora used her Western education as a vehicle to work within the American system without truly “buying into” the negative aspects of racialism at Hampton. Admittedly, the reconstruction years carried a hopeful fervor for Black America and the Indians at Hampton must have felt it too. DeCora always wrote of her fondness for Hampton, as discussed later, as she tried to convince her future husband to teach with her there because it was “different.”

DeCora’s remembrance of being “kidnapped” from her Nebraska home is best described in a letter to Cora M. Folsom in 1912 defining the conditions and situation. She wrote,

“I’ll tell you just what I remember of the whole incident of my first going to Hampton. It may be at variance to what Julia St. Cyr may have told at the time. She had the advantage of knowing the English language and…my knowledge of the language was very limited….A white man came there [to her reservation] and was asking the pupils to go on long distance on the steam cars. This was the information I got from the other children. I had not seen Julia St. Cyr or knew she was home. I was asked one morning if I would join the ones that were going and I said, “No.” In the afternoon of the same day I was asked again. I was in the woodshed washing dolls clothes and some man with an interpreter came up to me to ask me. I didn’t see who he was or what he looked like for I ducked my head down and shook my head “No” to what they said. That evening the dress maker measured me for a dress and she must have worked all night long for the next morning a whole outfit was ready for me and at six we were piled into a lumber wagon and on the way they stopped at Mitchell St. Cyr’s home for Julia St.

253. Angel DeCora to Cora Folsom, 1907, Courtesy of HUA.
Cyr. The white man was not with us on the wagon trip but when he reached Sioux City he was there waiting for us. His name as I recall it was something like Hodges or Hedges. Julia St. Cyr did not conduct our party to Hampton. It was this man who traveled the whole distance with us. Where or when he left us I can’t recall but he was good to us on the train and we got rather fond of him…he was the one who conducted our party I am sure. Julia St Cyr had nothing to do with the train officials. Mr. H. did it all. The rest of the story is what my mother told me when I had returned from Hampton. She insisted that I had been stolen because neither she nor my uncle had been asked for the consent…I thought it likely my uncle Frank may have had a voice in the matter as he was my guardian…so I asked him then and again some years ago…if he had given his consent to the ‘strange white man.’ He denied it each time and not only that but he said as soon as he heard I was taken away, he struck the trail for Sioux City only to find the train had started on time some days before.  

Her voice, uninterrupted and without breaks, puts forth her memory. There is no need to refine this or interpret it other than to point out that as a grown woman, this is how she wanted the world to know how she was abruptly and forcibly transitioned to Hampton Institute.

Within the short text of her autobiography in the Red Man, DeCora publicly recalled memories of the circumstances resulting in a lengthy paragraph in the two page autobiographical essay:

He [a strange white man] asked me through an interpreter if I would like to ride in a steam car…I had never seen one, and six of the other children seemed enthusiastic about it and they were going to try, so I decided to join them, too. The next morning at sunrise we were piled into a wagon and driven to the nearest railroad station, thirty miles away. We did get the promised ride. We rode three days and three nights until we reached Hampton, Va.  

254. Angel DeCora to Cora Folsom, 13 January, 1912. Courtesy of HUA.
After DeCora’s Hampton years, she regularly wrote letters to Cora Mae Folsom, a Hampton employee hired by Armstrong in 1880 to “help in plans for the betterment of health conditions at Hampton, especially among Indians.”256 During the course of her work at Hampton, Folsom gained the trust of the students and their families taking eleven trips to reservations to visit returned students, encourage new students and to gain first hand knowledge of family concerns.257 Folsom also paid for and arranged for DeCora’s room, board and education at Miss Burnham’s School in Northampton, Massachusetts.

In the course of Angel DeCora’s years at Hampton, rapid changes took place in the lives of the Winnebago tribe due to the physical encroachment of white settlers, the Allotment Act, and the push for assimilation. With the passage of The Dawes Act, or the Allotment Act in 1887, attempts to end the tribal communities and turn American Indians into agricultural laborers were initiated. Concurrently, the values of Christian missionaries and Indian reformers became factors influencing the way Indians were being educated by using Christian values to justify “civilizing” Native peoples. Within the short time she began her boarding school experience at Hampton between 1883 and 1888, she returned “three years later” to the death of the lifeways she had grown up in and the death of her “father and the old chief and his wife.”258 She went on to explain “with[ou]t them the old Indian life was gone.” 259

256. Angel DeCora to Cora Mae Folsom, undated. Courtesy of HUA.
257. Biographical sketch of Cora Mae Folsom by Mr. Malval at Hampton University, Cora Mae Folsom file, HUA.
258. Angel DeCora, “Angel DeCora—An Autobiography”: 279-85. The length of her initial stay at Hampton is controversial, DeCora states three years in her 1911 autobiography, Cora Mae Folsom, 1919, cites five years just as Hutchinson and McAnulty reported.
259. Ibid., 279.
What were her experiences as one of the first American Indian students at Hampton? The first Native students, all men, came with Colonel Pratt from Fort Marion prison in 1878. They were given art materials, a dorm, and the same basic education as their African American counterparts: practical industrial arts with a smattering of the three “R”s. “Our Indian paintings are much sought after, and are doing good in many places, as reminders of the needs of a noble but wronged people,” Director of Hampton, Samuel Chapman Armstrong’s fundraising techniques included selling student drawings. Through validating Indian arts he elevated the race to a status of aesthetically competent by implying a certain innate artistic value. Donors to the school were offered remunerative “for a subscription to the Southern Workman people were offered an Indian drawing.”

Photographs of DeCora as a young teen show her wearing the prescribed cinched up styles of the dominant culture with other Indian girls. Other photographs show her in her fashions of the time when she was a teacher (see fig. 6). One in particular shows young DeCora on the steps of “Winona” dorm with a small white cat. Hampton must have allowed the warmth of animals to be of comfort to the children. Her love of animals played into her commonalities with her future husband, as they raised prized wolfhounds while teaching at Carlisle.

We know she developed a strong bond with her teacher and health specialist Cora Mae Folsom and much of her life is documented by scholars solely through the correspondence between the two. The relationship was more of the “white mother” and

the Indian daughter. One might suspect the pull of the old Indian life and the reliance on the new mother figure, Folsom, would have caused considerable conflict in DeCora’s young impressionable life. Folsom’s 1919 account of this is the only extant version:

[She] was far too young to cope with reservation conditions as they then existed. A few months later a representative from Hampton found her living with her Grandmother and very unhappily situated. Old and new customs were at that time strongly conflicting currents and young girls had hardly more weight than a leaf between them. It was not easy to get her out from the stronger force of these two currents, but it was accomplished and she was brought back to Hampton…

DeCora does not mention the specific situation she returned to, however, she alluded to her teacher’s views of her “immaturity” in her autobiography she states, “some of my teachers prevailed upon me not to return home as I was still too young and immature to do much good among my people.” Placed into context of racialist rhetoric of the time, “too immature” would mean not “civilized” enough on the race progress scale to be a civilizing influence on her tribe within her reservation community in Nebraska. Her words quote her teacher’s attitudes, not her own. It seems DeCora knew she had to gain more of the white man’s “power” through education in order to generate greater understandings of Native cultures and evoke sensitivity towards the changing circumstances facing Native people. In fact, Armstrong asserted that education was the only way Indians could “get ahead” on the civilization scale. Adams concluded, “Hampton Institute, then, is testimony to the traditional and paradoxical use of education as an instrument for both social control and social mobility.”

264. Ibid.
returning to Hampton, she empowered herself and at the same time gave in to the assimilationist values. This theme repeats itself throughout her life; through Western education she gained knowledge of white culture and powerful recognition with Indian and white intellectuals and reformers in order to represent her race to myriad audiences on a national level.
The Political Space in Art History

The emergence of the arts and crafts movement, Western styles of Impressionism, Aestheticism, Romanticism and the Pre-Raphaelite movement influenced the ever present popular printed media as well as the development of American modern art. During the turn of the century, applied art came in various forms and could be influenced by multiple cultures as seen in DeCora’s work. Examples of DeCora’s applied art include book covers, frontispiece work, furniture design and magazine illustrations. They offer a glimpse into this art historical period and show a uniquely transcultural viewpoint. Her work exemplified incredible versatility and hybrid adaptations of media and content throughout her career. Along with illustration, DeCora used applied art to help make the case for pre-industrial arts. She confidently brought motifs, materials and design traditionally used by specific tribes into her work. This paralleled the arts and crafts movement encouraging immigrants to America craftspeople in mainstream and esoteric art communities to redefined primitive arts as “art.” Her Western art education and contributions to American arts with regard to how they inform her curriculum development guide the following discussion.

Within the context of the Progressive era, DeCora developed her strategies for her own self support by using her skills in applied arts, illustrating and writing, to promote greater cultural understandings. The pivotal moment occurred when she agreed to take the position of Director of Native Industries (1906) by conceptualizing and making concrete her specific identity through curriculum development. Simultaneously, she created new roles in the arts and as a political activist. She found a place as a teacher following the tenets of Progressive education teaching applied arts to the perceived “capacities” of her race.

Tracing DeCora’s personal art career reveals how her work did not fit neatly into one category of art. Within her lifetime, she became fluent in design, illustration, easel styles, Western concepts, materials, and “fine” art aesthetics. She was able to create work easily for many tastes and audiences. The arts and crafts movement of the time provided an outlet to use Native design for social reform and education.

The European arts and crafts social reform movement of Ruskin and Morris found its way into American culture in immigrant arts based social reform movements. In the late nineteenth century, the movement also promoted traditional Native arts. Applied arts flourished due to the popularity of magazines and demand for illustrators. The results led to the social and political reformers lobbying for changes in college level curricula as pre-industrial society and information for the masses became valued. Her instructor at Drexel Institute, Howard Pyle, became one of the most formidable art professors who adapted his illustration curriculum to fit the new demands for illustrators.
DeCora’s Hampton education prepared her to study music and visual art at an advanced level and she had mentioned how having the option to draw was one of the reasons she did not run away. Landscape painting seemed to fit into her expression as she was later drawn to the Aesthetic Movement. She had painted landscape while a student in her teens at Hampton. After moving to Miss Burnham’s preparatory school in Northampton, Massachusetts, in 1891, she entered the art school at Smith College with the financial support of Cora Folsom and her custodial position with Smith’s Hillyer Art Gallery. Her mentor and teacher, Dwight Tryon was at the forefront of the Aesthetic movement and primarily taught landscape painting and drawing within the techniques of tonalism. One might assume that Tryon’s concentration on landscape and “place” study may have inspired DeCora to continue in the Western all women’s college.

DeCora grappled with the concepts of “art for art’s sake”, applied, commercial and illustration varieties of visual popular culture. Tyron was a noted Aestheticist, working with James McNeal Whistler on large commissions. He declared the inherent spiritual aspects of natural beauty. DeCora latched on to Tryon’s theory and techniques of rendering landscapes while capturing the transitory beauty of nature. Within the Aesthetic movement representing the transitory visual beauty of nature was considered an end in itself. Hutchinson emphasized how this influenced DeCora and the social reform movements:

Aestheticist artists such as Tryon were concerned that American culture was becoming decadent in the face of expanding industrialization and commercialism, and they created works of art intended to help inspire the nation's cultural ascent. Subtle, harmonious compositions such as Tryon’s

---

266. Angel DeCora to Cora Mae Folsom, August, 1891, HUA.
provided the viewer with a chance to escape the dirty, crowded, workaday world of the city and find the repose necessary to dwell on higher things.\textsuperscript{267}

The movement may have appealed to DeCora for the “worship” of nature and beauty while renouncing Christian subject matter. As Waggoner asserts, “Angel rejected Christianity” and with this gesture separated herself from many Winnebago tribal members and close family.\textsuperscript{268} By embracing “art-for-arts sake,” she also embraced a philosophy closer to Transcendentalism. DeCora painted nocturnal scenes (see fig. 15) in the tonal style to humanize depictions of Native American family life and to correct misperceptions promoted by Romantic White painters like Remington.

But rather than emphasize the heroic exploits usually associated with European-American images of "the vanishing race," DeCora's nocturnes point to domestic moments of families gathered around the evening fire to reinforce their sense of community, delving into her own childhood memories.\textsuperscript{269}

She accepted illustration commissions due to the fact “the wolf was always at the door” and she had to become self-supporting.\textsuperscript{270} DeCora would also readily accept commission work for decorative and applied arts projects.\textsuperscript{271}

After her time at Smith College, she had the rare opportunity to study with noted and influential illustrator Howard Pyle in Philadelphia. He had the reputation of being a racist and a chauvinist and she debated him on topics of illustration, form and technique. At the time DeCora began studying with Howard Pyle at the Drexel Institute, his newly developed school of illustration began to blossom fully. Her association with Pyle helped broaden her professional opportunities as an illustrator. During her busy

\textsuperscript{268} Linda Waggoner, \textit{Firelight}, 121-22.
\textsuperscript{269} Elizabeth Hutchinson, “Modern Native American Art,” 746-8.
\textsuperscript{270} Angel DeCora to Cora M. Folsom, undated, probably 1901, HUA.
\textsuperscript{271} Linda Waggoner, \textit{Firelight}, 123.
time in Philadelphia, she kept her point of view intact with regard to her choice of
stories to write and illustrate. In a letter to Cora M. Folsom, DeCora mentions his
attitude. Pyle spoke of DeCora when asked if he had a student with “real Genius” he
said “Yes, I had – once. But unfortunately she was a woman and still more
unfortunately an American Indian.” Pyle’s statement sums up the type casting she
was faced with throughout her career. However, Pyle’s applied arts influence is seen by
her conviction to the arts and crafts movement and through her Western education
especially at the Drexel School of Illustration.

Drexel promoted applied arts, not the “art for art’s sake” philosophy of her
mentor Tryon at Smith. Pyle had created numerous illustrations of the romantic
stereotypes of the peoples of the plains, while he promoted the “Indian princess”
stereotypes within his work and teaching. It has been noted he had relatively no
experience in tribal dress or cultures as DeCora commented on how he “used the
leggings for sleeves” and adorned most of his models with random feathers.

Although Pyle was a racialist, he did encourage her to travel to Fort Berthold
Reservation and draw and “mingle” with her “race.” Pyle encouraged DeCora to spend
the summer of 1897 in Indian Country where she was to paint the portraits of the people
on the Fort Berthold Reservation and visit her Hampton classmate, Anna Dawson. She
took him up on his offer for travel in the summers as she bolstered her knowledge and
understanding of tribally specific art and social structures of the Arikara, Mandan, and
Gros Ventre people. These trips also gave her the opportunity to be in Indian Country

and visit with individuals and communities and see cultural survival strategies as well as spiritual morbidity facing the tribes.

Her visit to Fort Berthold, North Dakota in 1897 became a catalyst in her reinvention of a curriculum focusing on tribally specific visual arts forms. Although DeCora involved herself in drawing renderings and paintings of the people at Fort Berthold, she also familiarized herself with artistic methods, materials, geometric design sensibilities and gender specific art forms. The portraits and landscapes resulting from her trip to Berthold in the summer of 1897 brought with it recognition from Pyle and a recommendation to *Harpers*, leading to her commission of “*The Sick Child*” illustrations and story publication. She learned to assert the social benefits of arts integrated into media production and applied arts.²⁷⁵

The techniques she learned from Pyle and practiced in illustration were supported by the flourishing business of magazine printing and book illustration. These printing techniques opened up the commercial art form of illustration to a wider audience.²⁷⁶ This, in turn, gave her the promise of self-sufficiency. Her ability to be self-sufficient in American mainstream culture fulfilled the goal of her boarding school education. DeCora was one of the Indian “success stories” of the assimilation policies. She entered the art world through the doors of Western Institutions and art, yet her significant contributions were tied more closely to her Native arts curriculum, teaching and her pedagogy at Carlisle.

She also had the self-conscious savvy to use the “Indian craze” and arts and crafts movement as a way to communicate greater social understandings and reach

²⁷⁶ Ibid., 69-70.
Native and non-native peoples through popular culture, including magazines, advertising, public addresses and home decor. The milieu surrounding arts and crafts movement allowed DeCora entrance into The Buffalo Pan-American Exposition. A turning point in DeCora exercising her versatility came when she was asked by Commissioner Jones in 1900 to design a mantle, fireplace, paintings and an exhibition living room in the Buffalo Pan American Exhibition. As anthropologist and reformer Alice Fletcher wrote of her creation, “The mantle is a poem. The paintings show growth and power and the subject she (DeCora) chose for the mantle frame completes the conception admirably.”

DeCora had been recognized nationally and her connections to the Western art schools and society people gained her the invitation to show in the Buffalo Pan-American Exposition by Commissioner Jones. She was commissioned to create, with other Indian crafts people, the living room mantle, andirons and a wooden settle with cushions and to supply a painting of her own over the fireplace for a demonstration model. She had opened her own studio in New York at the time of the commission. As she stated in 1911 “The Indian designs modified and applied to interior house decoration are especially in harmony with the so-called ‘mission style.’”

The simple and contemporary trend coupled with social implications fit her objective of bringing Indian design motifs into the American mainstream aesthetic. She went on to say “the geometric designs lend themselves well to the simple and straight

---

278. Alice C. Fletcher, “Talks and Thoughts,” (July 1901) from scrapbook in Angel DeCora’s file, HUA. It is important to note that there are no photographs or preliminary drawings from DeCora’s final exhibition piece found in archival holdings to this date.
279. Angel DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” 86.
lines of mission furniture.” The mission style of furniture had come into vogue through the arts and crafts movement beginning with the work of Gustave Stickley in the United States. Within this same speech, DeCora emphasized the strengths of the Indian race and the appropriateness of full citizenship as American Indians had always been shaping American culture as the first citizens.280

She would continue to use rhetoric espousing the inherent artistic strengths of her race as a starting point when she discussed other political and social issues facing American Indians. Indian design became a conceptualization of racial pride and invited the greater public into the worldview of Indians visually. DeCora initiated her version of design without formal training in the Celtic and Gothic motifs as was taught in Western institutions of the time.281 Although she was fully aware of the history through her studies at Smith, Drexel and Cowles, she felt she had a more “natural” ability to develop a curriculum for Carlisle because geometric design is part of Winnebago art and that of most other tribes. The discussion of DeCora’s Western art training in decorative and applied arts comes into question as art historians like Elizabeth Hutchinson attribute her design style and development saying: “DeCora’s exploration of graphic design reflects the emphasis given to design in late nineteenth-century American art training.”282 DeCora refuted this assumption as she directly addressed her lack of design education, saying she did not follow “the prescribed methods of European decoration, for then my aboriginal qualities could never have asserted

---

themselves.\textsuperscript{283} Although Hutchinson alludes to her Western training as contributing to her development of aboriginal traits in her art, the quote from DeCora suggests she did not appropriate the prescribed methods and may not have studied European decorative art in her Smith and Drexel years. Instead she felt confident to express her cultural upbringing.

Design with an Indian flare became part of the new tastes developing in America as the arts and crafts movement went mainstream. Pre-industrial art became the progressive taste which coincided with the growth in the progressive education movement. The arts and crafts movement gave voice through handicraft traditions to Native peoples and immigrants new to the continent. The arts would be encouraged in education as they were thought to bring the social uplift the country desperately longed for.\textsuperscript{284}

\textit{Education, Applied Art, and Democracy}

Contextualizing DeCora’s arts curriculum within the progressive era is necessary in order to show the public and private support and values concurrent to the development of Native Industries within boarding school curriculum and Federal policy. 1899 also marked the year progressive educator John Dewey gave a series of lectures in response to criticism of the University of Chicago laboratory school he

\textsuperscript{283} Cora M. Folsom, “The Career of Three Indian Women,” \textit{Congregationalist and Christian World}, (March 12, 1904): 375. I am referring to Elizabeth Hutchinson’s suggestion in , “Modern Native American Art” that DeCora’s design curriculum was primarily influenced by her Western education not her cultural upbringing, although she does refer to her interest in Native design “despite” her Western education. More often than not, scholars give DeCora’s teachers in Western institutions credit for her success.

\textsuperscript{284} Eileen Boris, \textit{Art and Labor}, 86-87.
founded with his wife Evelyn. The tracts were published as *School and Society*, and within the readings he blamed industrialism for the lackluster and irrelevant nature of the school experience as of the late nineteenth century. In *Democracy and Education*, the new school and society would be truly democratic and based on community:

A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a form of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer to his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race, and national territory which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity.

As stated by McCarty & Lomawaima (2006) a contemporary view of democracy would be critical democracy in contrast to Dewey:

We view diversity and democracy as inextricably linked…founded on a critical construct of the democratic ideal. We purposefully frame critical democracy as an ideal, recognizing the “contradictions between an espoused theory of democracy and a lived experience of inequality.”

The experiences of women and minorities had been historically ignored as noted in the lack of democratic voting rights with the exception of white males.

Estelle Reel served as Superintendent of Indian Schools and was a suffragette, yet she could not see non-white races of the world deserving equal rights or equal education. Appointed in 1898 by President McKinley, she served as Superintendent until 1910. Among her accomplishments, she “professionalized the Indian Service teaching corps and introduced summer in-service teaching institutes.”

---

standardized curriculum giving DeCora license to teach Native Industries with emphasis on industries, not academics.

Reel’s interest in the women’s suffrage movement placed her within the revolution to challenge prevalent thought although she made choices reflecting personal prejudice which may have been colored by her business interests in Western expansion and the land grab mentality of the times. She, like many others employed in the Indian service profited from her close contact with the Indian tribes. Many seized opportunities for personal profit often leading to corruption. She eventually married a cattle baron and settled in Washington after leaving her position as Superintendent. It may be important to mention that the theory of progress gave Anglo colonizers the right to take over the land inhabited by the less enlightened. Contemporary Native historians like Elizabeth Cook-Lynn (Crow Creek Sioux) give alternate viewpoints for historical study:

the “theory of progress” prevailed in academic thought as a result of the fusion of several ideological systems as explanation concerning the indigenous populations of America. This theory of “progress”—that with time all races and cultures will fuse—brought about the mixing of ideology with ethnography, meaning that if all Indians are not at the present moment enlightened, and racial theories could form classifications, the notion of inferior/superior paradigms seemed useful.

Along the same line as Reel, John Dewey accepted the savage/civilized polarity in Interpretation of the Savage Mind. Using the theories common at the time, he posited the argument that because many Indigenous populations lived in what was thought of as a savage environment, they were inherently uncivilized and deprived.

---

Although Dewey’s argument sharply critiques the social science research methodology of Herbert Spencer relative to non-white non-Anglo cultural groups around the world, Dewey appropriated the necessity to give some explanation as to why non-White populations were different than their White counterparts. He did not want to perpetuate the generalizations by social scientists that grouped all non-White peoples into deficiency categories sharing limited capacities due to slower developmental growth given environmental factors. Spencer believed students should be taught skills to help them survive in the world. He took the survival of the fittest theory and applied it to the human racial discussion.

Dewey gives an alternative argument for the creation of non-European standards to look at each cultural group independent of the other. At first this seems a method much more like contemporary critical theories; however, Dewey develops the thesis to describe stark and dramatic characteristics of tribal groups in Australia with terminology more relevant to the study of animal behavior. For example he describes the harsh climate in Australia as defining all processes or habits of the culture. He begins by saying:

```
The Australian lives in an environment upon the whole benign, without intense or violent unfavorable exhibition of natural forces…Now as to the psychic pattern formed under such circumstances…How are the sensory-motor coordinations common to all men organized, how stimulated into relatively permanent psychic habits?292
```

From the onset of this analysis, Dewey generalizes about the entire population of Aboriginal people in Australia. He continues to describe the lack of impulse control of the hypothetical culture, “By the nature of the case, food and sex stimuli are the most

exigent of all excitants to psycho-physic activity.”293 As he constructs the portrait of the Aboriginal person he contrasts it with, “But with civilized man, all sorts of intermediate terms come in the stimulus and the overt act...it is so complicated and loaded with all kinds of technical activities.”294 By publishing this article, Dewey’s belief in Social Darwinism resulted in further support of the mentality in America that Native peoples in the hunting cultures were only capable of learning and advancing by education to a lesser degree than that of the civilized races.

The Progressives were operating under an interpretation of Darwin’s evolutionary framework relative to the specific needs of children and with regard to their race. Dewey shared the thought that the child had to move through the evolutionary stages inherent to the history of his/her particular race.295 Psychologist Stanley Hall, philosopher William James and Dewey contributed and helped developed social and child centered theories to be used in pedagogy based in the scientific and psychological explorations of their day. This became a marked shift and educational policy soon felt the emphasis on the child “the equation was no longer the school with its well defined content and purposes, but the children with their particular background and needs.”296 Progressive educational rhetoric of the day was in agreement with the arts and crafts. School social reformers lobbied against the effects of industrialism felt to be causing the deteriorating state of the children’s social development. Arts, aesthetic study and handicraft were implemented in curriculum as they were thought of

---

294. Ibid.
296. Ibid., 104-105.
as part of the evolutionary processes in natural child development. Active enterprises
that would stimulate intellectual activity and inquiry were proposed as the most natural
way for a human being to learn. It follows that domestic handicrafts were also
introduced in the Chicago Lab School. However, the young ages in which the arts and
domestic crafts were introduced revealed the progression into abstract and higher level
intellectual activities:

according to Mayhew and Edwards, (curriculum) were as follows: (1) Household and social occupations (kindergarten group); (2) Progress through invention and discovery; (3) Progress through exploration and discovery; (4) Local History; (5) European backgrounds.  

Although the theorists saw education as an organic whole—a combination of
growing processes forming naturally and developmentally with the needs of the child—
they saw scientific thought as the ultimate outcome of this evolutionary development.
One can read Dewey and see that he may have only concerned himself with the growth
of the Euro-American child as in this statement:

The primary basis of education is the child’s powers at work along the same
general constructive lines as those which have brought civilization into being. The only way to make the child conscious of his social heritage is to enable him to perform those fundamental types of activity which make civilization what it is.  

Social and aesthetic reform movements shared the social Darwinism belief espoused by Dewey and written about extensively by Herbert Spencer. The belief that all non-Anglo cultures and peoples were not as “civilized” began to dictate policies in education as well as the establishment of Settlement houses, whose mission was to


uplift the minorities and lower classes including immigrants.  

Through aesthetic education, “un-civilized” people could begin the journey to “civilization” starting with the handicrafts and becoming empowered to study at higher levels. The assimilationist philosophies split. Universalists believed all races could become assimilated into the scientific and industrial society while enriching it with the beauty of pre-industrial aesthetic and craftsmanship. Evolutionists saw non-white races as having limited capacities, and they should therefore stick to vocational programs suited” for the perceived limitations—arts and crafts.

Dewey espoused the theory that education was “all one with growing,” and the human infant at birth learns from experience and learning is also informed by hereditary patterns. He believed experience and genetic capabilities playing alongside each other within the process of growth or education. His specific take on race and education is discussed later. It is important to enter into the context of education with John Dewey’s Progressive educational theories to understand the formulation of curriculum in Indian schools as well as American public schools in the twentieth century.

Associated with the arts and crafts movement, reform-minded women expressed post-industrial concerns including uplifting industrial poor, immigrants, all pre-industrial cultures who had come into contact with the modern industrial societies and the leisure class with and through the study and acquisition of handmade objects. Sharing these views were Indian Reformers Nellie Doubleday and Constance DuBois. With regard to education, a reform-minded, integral education would “remove the

---

children of the rich from parasitic leisure, provide skills for those of the middle class, save the masses from the slums, and protect the immigrant child ignorant of thrift.”

Courses in aesthetic culture were offered in public schools.\(^{302}\)

Like Progressive theorist John Dewey, the reformers of this era attacked the dualistic notion of the divorce between vocation and culture.\(^{303}\) It seemed as though dualistic paradigms had to be challenged in order to implement the new Progressive direction “learning by doing” as offered at the Chicago Laboratory School. Dewey noted that this division had separated people and societies throughout history and the reconciliation of the two may lead to a more fully democratic country. The new holistic view of child development meant culture and education were inextricably linked. In 1897, Dewey published “My Pedagogic Creed.”

As Dewey’s definition of culture took on a new meaning, education became part of the mechanism to develop culture and to develop citizens with abilities to shape a society to become “worthy, lovely and harmonious.”\(^ {304}\) Dewey’s conception of Progressive education meant social reform linking culture to educational practices and to policy development.

Dewey wrote extensively about the role of art in the more unified educational curriculum and its role in society. In *Art and Experience*, he eventually theorized specifically about art and emphatically argued, “Science states meaning; art expresses it.”\(^ {305}\) Because the earlier trend in Progressive education linked culture to active

\(^{302}\) Eileen Boris, *Art and Labor*, 322.

\(^{303}\) Lawrence Cremin, *The Transformation of the School*, 124.


enterprises within the classroom, the time was ripe for Native art to be seen as a worthwhile activity for all Americans. The handicraft movement took root.

*The Arts and Crafts Movement: Women’s Culture*

The idealization of handicraft as “the women’s culture” and its promotion guided many female social reform efforts. This manifested itself in the promotion by middle-class women of handicrafts both to bring validity to women’s culture and to revitalize the moral and spiritual as well as economic state of the immigrant, Native American and European elite class. In any case, in the 1890s Episcopalian missionary Sybil Carter chose to support Indian women’s handicrafts on reservations in the form of lace-making.

Lace-making on Indian reservations gained momentum through Sybil Carter. Carter, a Southerner who was left without family as a child after the Civil War, had become a schoolteacher before dedicating her energies to missionary work. Her missionary work led her to establish lace-making projects on Indian reservations. She wanted Indian women to have a means for self-support through lace-making as she had experienced through her own hardships. The fact that lace was a European handicraft tradition did not dampen Carter’s drive to spread the dainty art form onto fifteen reservations. She and other members of female reform societies stressed the importance of women’s culture and empowerment through the practice of women’s crafts. It seems she did not want to extinguish Native art practices; rather she wanted to provide opportunities for Indian women to earn an income on the Reservations, carrying on the empowerment of women advancing women’s art forms. Carter would promote her

---

programs through meetings such as the “Friends of the Indian” at Lake Mohonk, New York and the Women’s National Indian Association networks.307

Carter’s initial intentions mirrored the aesthetic social reform movement’s belief in the benefit of practicing Indian women’s traditional artistry for moral reasons. Both the makers of the items and the consumers could be uplifted by the inherent beauty of the handmade pieces as well as the artistry and “spirit of art” infused into daily life by the acquisition of the work. The establishment of arts and crafts guilds and local community potteries intended to empower immigrant populations to continue traditions from the old country by encouraging the unique styles and individual cultural techniques. However, the movement first established itself in the Indian reform circles as the European handicraft lace-making.308 As Carter envisioned, Indian women would partake in and devote themselves to a “civilized” art form. The quality and craftsmanship sometimes exceeded lace made by the European counterparts thus providing a visual metaphor for assimilation potential.309 Lace-making did not lead to economic benefits through distribution in the mainstream economy; rather it connected Indian women lace makers with the leisure class on the East coast. Philanthropists became prominent, and vocal lace industry supporters in New York, for instance, included Mrs. Whitelaw Reid, Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt and Mrs. Abram Hewitt. Some notable supporters, like Nellie Doubleday, also played a part in lobbying policy makers like Hailmann to invest in the idea of a federally funded Native Industries

promotion within the boarding school system instead of Carter’s lace-making industries.³¹⁰

Nonetheless, the circumstances leading up to the recommendations of Hailmann and others to create a place for Native Industries within the boarding school curriculum the policy makers and other arts and crafts reformists began to see lace as culturally inappropriate and the “authentic” Indian handcrafts appealing to a larger commercial market and audience.

Nellie Doubleday was central in critiquing lace industries but also encouraging specifically Indian women’s art. In 1901 and 1903, Doubleday published four articles explaining her understanding of the benefits of basketry industries for both cultural and economic benefit as well as uplifting the Indian woman to the position she had had before White influence.³¹¹

DeCora also solicited the trust of the Euro-American and Indian audiences by seemingly accepting the terms of racial bias while promoting racial strengths through the implementation of teaching Native arts and design. This gesture aligned with many reformer groups of the time. Reformers, white groups with members advocating for both Indian economic self sufficiency and the use of the inherently artistic propensities, included the Indian Industries League (1883), the Boston Indian Citizenship


Association (1879), the Women’s National Indian Association (1879), the Indian Rights Association (1882), and the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian (1883) and The Cambridge Indian Association.

With the help of Nellie Doubleday, the Indian Industries League recommended to the policy makers that Indians should be given control of the creative aspects of Native Industries in both on and off reservation schools. This was done under the push for Indian self-sufficiency and with a strong regard for traditions. The League and other reformers advocated preserving the traditions of the specific tribes. This was to be done by hiring Native women to teach in schools. In 1901, Candace Wheeler a leader in the arts and crafts movement promoted this also. “It is most important that the Indian women, the aged squaws who know how to do the oldtime work, be the teachers among the young people of their own tribes.”

The push for Indian basketry in boarding schools and on-reservation schools became popularly referred to as “familial” and “home industries.” This rhetoric emphasized the creation of greater nuclear family bonds instead of tribal. The reference to home industries softened the radical notion of Native Industries being at the forefront of assimilationist schooling.

The changing tone within the rhetoric was instrumental in the popular inclusion of Native arts and crafts in curricula. It was not long after this series of public endorsements by Doubleday, Native teachers and former students that Arizona Swayney and Angel DeCora (both Hampton graduates) were hired to teach Native Industries at Hampton and Carlisle respectively. Estelle Reel published *Course of Study*

312. Indian Industries League, Records Book II, Feb. 6, 1902, April 2, 1903.
the same year advising the staff and teachers in all Indian schools to seek out Native women to instruct in Native arts with particular emphasis on basketry. The popular trend to collect Indian baskets produced a new demand facilitated through the federally funded Indian boarding schools.

*DeCora and Superintendent Estelle Reel: Contradictory Notions*

An examination of Estelle Reel’s Native Industries curriculum must begin with a look into aesthetic and social concerns precipitated by the revolt against the perceived cultural black hole that industrialization had created for preindustrial people, immigrants and the working class. Although cultural disintegration was not limited these people, the invigoration of the wealthy Euro-American by aesthetic appreciation of handicrafts was also in full force. Influences of Progressive social reform movements in education and the arts exerted influence on popular thought to a degree. With the attempt to ameliorate the de-humanization of industrial work by the arts and crafts movement, “Native Industries” became a safe area of American Indian culture for mainstream White Americans to appropriate and economically support while decorating homes. Reel accepted this also. The problem was the reconciliation of the contradictions this brought to Reel’s curriculum development, most importantly contextual Social Darwinism and Progressive views on women and economics.

DeCora would be influenced not only by her Western institutional illustration study and experience in applied art, but also by her sense of self as a Native artist. This sense of self became the basis of both her curriculum and her tribally specific design

---

work like the pages for tribes in Natalie Curtis’ *The Indians’ Book* (1907). DeCora attracted the attention of many policy makers like Luepp and Reel by her close associations to the Indian reformers. As Reel furthered her support of handicrafts especially for economic advancement, DeCora had a unique opportunity to become the Director of Indian Arts at Carlisle Industrial Indian Boarding School, appointed by Commissioner Francis E. Leupp. What began as the systemization of the Indian boarding school also gave Native women the chance to teach Native Industries within the historically assimilationist Indian boarding school curriculum.

Systemization of the off reservation boarding schools required employees to switch from bureaucratic regulation to an educational system with a standard curriculum and inspectors who reported to levels in which more attention could be paid to who attended, the teachers and relationships in general. Rules and regulations had to be adhered to in order for the new systemization to take hold. Estelle Reel who wrote *A Uniform Course of Study* (1901) was herself a practitioner of compliancy to the hierarchy of authority seeing this behavior as the only way in which a true educational system could be successfully administered and managed. A staunch Republican and successful administrator, Reel responded to a complaint from a dissatisfied employee. “Miss Golden’s, absolute, unquestioning obedience to superior officers is necessary in the Indian Service. If Commissioner Jones should order me to black his boots, I should do so immediately.” This clearly illustrates the strict adherence to policy Reel expected not only of her employees but of herself. A new irony existed between the new strict

---

systemization and the addition of American Indian teachers and the Native Industries curriculum.

*A Uniform Course of Study* kept the systemization consistent along with the publication *Rules for Indian School Service*. Both were meant to aid in the filtering of inconsistencies found across the country in schools on and off the reservation.²¹⁶ Superintendent Reel’s policies reflected her interpretation of a racially confined version of popular Progressive ideals limiting academics yet fusing practical and applied skills to prepare students for work. The study of Native crafts for economic pragmatism was initiated in many boarding schools after 1901. At Carlisle, the shift in administration marked the official change. Pratt had to leave.

**The Uniform Course of Study**

As Lomawaima has clearly emphasized, “Reel’s position on the emerging educational debate over ‘liberal’ versus ‘practical’ education was quite clear. She advocated practical training for most American citizens, and very practical training for Indians and other minorities.”²¹⁷ Reel tended to pick and choose among the popular theories of the day, appropriating Dewey’s “learn by doing” theory.

Among notable Progressive mainstream curricular departures from the tradition of conservatism which had turned classrooms into factory-like monotonous perpetuators of impractical busy-work, new child-centered activities school called “enterprises” were initiated by Dewey and colleagues at the Chicago Lab School. These enterprises were


designed to mirror themes based on the development of civilization. Therefore, if Reel was looking at Dewey and Progressive theories of the day, she could have easily articulated her curriculum design including these Progressive principles, she may have also used the argument that the development of the American Indian had passed through a few rungs on the ladder of what was recognized as the height of civilization. Dewey wrote in *My Pedagogic Creed*, “The only tenable approach to education…consists of helping the child to realize as completely as possible the native powers he possesses.”

To substantiate this, Dewey stated in his five “articles,” “all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race.” If one were to perceive this as acknowledging racial and cultural differences in capabilities and interests, it would imply Dewey ascribed to the theories of Social Darwinism.

Reel’s interpretation of this type of rhetoric was one seen through the lens of Social Darwinism and racism of the time; the native powers of Indian people could only be lesser than that of White civilization. Her standards remained low for the extensive curriculum materials put forth for the Indian schools across the United States. Lower standards for academics and increases time in the industries curriculum promised a generation of industrious Indian artisans trained in the “dignity of labor” and steeped in inherently racially bound economic restrictions. Self sufficiency by means of commercializing Native arts became policy. Creating a predominantly industrial and practical curriculum ensured that the racialist attitudes be continued into the policy making process.

---

Reel’s curriculum departed from Dewey’s model emphasizing preparation for future endeavors not intrinsic motivation as seen through the child’s eyes. Dewey had seen education as an end in itself, and with this concept motivation to learn more was par for the course. As an individual was internally motivated, so the motivation would yield more curiosity, creating an unending cycle of discovery without the need to focus on preparing for a future occupation, at least in the early years.\footnote{Max Wingo, \textit{Philosophies of Education}, 171.} Reel on the other hand, focused on the preparation of Indian students for the new “civilized” occupations and gender roles which coincided with the Euro-American cultural values as early as kindergarten.\footnote{Reel, \textit{A Course of Study}, 214-215.}

\textit{Resistance to Lace: A Push for Native Women’s Arts}

As a reporter explained with regard to Indian women “Nature seems to have given them a talent for artistic work.”\footnote{Qtd. in Erik Trump, \textit{The Indian Industries League}, p 278.} This belief in the innate or inherent aesthetic propensity was echoed in inherent racial qualities, such as “inherent love of the beautiful.” Perceived propensities began to dictate and define curriculum especially in \textit{A Course of Study} by Superintendent Estelle Reel. The “propensities” singled out aesthetic judgment as a quality deserving of refinement and potential economic benefit.\footnote{Reel, \textit{A Course of Study}.} Although as Lomawaima and McCarty state, “Our indebtedness to the federal mania to collect and store information about Native Americans is profound and...
perverse…but it stings to be so deeply indebted to those who set out to document Indian deficiencies.”\footnote{325}{K. Tsianina Lomawaima & Teresa McCarty, \textit{To Remain Indian}, 18-19.}

Furthermore, the Indian Industries League with which Dubois and Doubleday were affiliated, took up the same reform measures of arguing for economic relief through industries produced where the Indian families lived—far removed from “civilization.” The Indian Industries League also ascribed to the racial evolutionary thought with regard to “capabilities” and supported the enthusiastic reform work to help Indians become self-supportive through what was seen as industries “in the line of their [the Indians] aptitudes” as stated in the League Charter.\footnote{326}{Indian Industries League, “League Charter.” \textit{Annual Report}, (1900): 13. CHS} The new line of reform work clashed with the assimilation policy by encouraging the production of Native Industries to sell the articles for food. Anglo women were once again “helping” the Indian women bring in cash for family sustenance. Simultaneously, there was a viable market for Indian art and “authentic” industries in New England and other immigrant white communities.

The reaction to the lace-making programs of Sybil Carter came at a time when organizations like the Women’s National Indian Association and Indian Industries League sent field matrons, “who themselves were unconventional” to transform seemingly unconventional Indian women into domestic purveyors of the feminine arts of Euro-America.\footnote{327}{Ibid.} Many reported what they had set out to find, yet some grew to advocate, respect and understand Indian women’s roles in many traditional settings. The stereotype of “squaw drudge” was not substantiated and a clearer view of the physical,

\footnotesize
327. Ibid.
cultural and economic realities led many of the field workers to promote the resourcefulness and responsibility of Indian women’s more traditional roles. At this point transculturation or the possibility of an exchange was ripe for fruition.

It was at this juncture, the meeting of reformer field matrons with the Indian women in their traditional settings, that the encouragement of Native arts and industries began to gain momentum. As explained earlier, Nellie Doubleday had become a member of the Women’s National Indian Association and in 1901 wrote *Two Ways to Help the Indians.* The encouragement of the basket trade had reached the West coast and lace-making began to fade and was recognized as having no connection to the culture of Indian women with the exception of the economic responsibility which had become a heavy role for women in the assimilationist period. It seemed to many field workers that in terms of gender, the Indian women enjoyed political, economic and social prestige not found in the “civilized” culture. At a lecture by anthropologist and Indian reformer Alice C. Fletcher in 1888, a listener wrote “we all know women in civilized life who would gladly exchange conditions with their free sisters in savage life.” Fletcher continued to write and travel and make strong statements concerning the historic undermining of the roles of women in Indian society after white contact. This contradicted the assimilationist argument that Indian women need to be saved from the degradation of tribal life by Indian men.

---

Nellie Doubleday commented concerning the art of Indian women’s basketry in *Everybody’s Magazine*, 1901:

The Indian is essentially artistic…There is every reason to believe that our national art will receive new direction, a fresh impulse, from educated Indian Americans…To how much of the handiwork of modern civilized women, tutored or untutored, could equal praise be given?\(^{332}\)

Among the pivotal factors in the eventual decision to teach Native arts in the government Indian schools were the active members of the Indian Industries League with member Nellie Doubleday corresponding with the league and attendees of the Mohonk conference 1900. Doubleday recognized the deep cultural and inextricable meaning of Native arts—specifically basketry—saying that “basketry was the most expressive vehicle of the tribe’s individuality, the embodiment of its mythology and folk-lore, tradition, history, poetry, art and spiritual aspiration.”\(^{333}\) During the conference at Lake Mohonk, Doubleday had secured a promise from Commissioner William A. Jones to put her in touch with Reel as to the inclusion of basket making within the boarding school curriculum.\(^{334}\) The political networking of Doubleday coupled with her eloquent writing on the topic of basketry and what “it means to the Indian” carried political weight among reformists as well as Superintendent Estelle Reel and Commissioner Jones.\(^{335}\) With the help of Leupp, Native Industries became a reality. In DeCora’s case, Reformer Natalie Curtis was said to have introduced DeCora to Leupp.

---

333. Ibid., 561.
335. Ibid.
Commissioner Jones in 1901 concluded that the nation’s Indian policy and educational system had failed. Jones did not have the welfare of Indian people in mind when he made the statement. He was pressured by growing public unrest and various inhumane massacres to acknowledge the need to create new policy and address the acceleration of land cessions supported by Western politicians, greedy farmers and railroad companies. Gradualism began to seem necessary and became a popular tenet. As later stated by Buchanan, assimilation would not be the work of one day. Jones supported projects aimed at exhibiting Indian potential, like DeCora’s living room and mantle set, showing examples of how Native Americans could be fully absorbed into white culture. In his eight years as Indian Commissioner from 1887 to 1905, Jones’ government acquisition of Indian lands was unprecedented. This period in Indian policy is marked by politicians and officials appealing to public demands and cowering to Western expansion. With the Dawes Act of 1887, so began the allotment period and the great land grab was on.

Native gender roles changed with the Western expansion of the United States and the “land grab” became official with regard to Indian lands in 1887. Under the Dawes Act, the allotment system was to give parcels of land to male Indian tribal members. This gesture, undermined cultural roles shaking up traditional life-ways, and gender responsibilities suffered degradation. Traditional Native women’s roles and power had been completely overlooked while forced allotment legislation and the newly defined male-dominated agricultural pressures conflicted with many historic tribal

337. Frederick Hoxie, *The Final Promise*, 152.
338. Ibid., 151-53.
practices. The recognition of Indian women’s roles by Euro-American women set the stage for sympathies and relationships the Federal government could not ignore.

In 1901, Estelle Reel published *A Course of Study* to be used as a curriculum guide for Indian education. This became a year where realities and policy met at an apex where change could occur in off reservation schools and within the foundations of assimilationist policy. The movement was underway to slow down the assimilation process, bring “safe” aspects of Native cultures into schools, and acknowledge parents and specific home cultures of the students. This is a simplification of the changing climate, yet the shift in attitudes and eventual policy strategically placed DeCora into a set of circumstances where, as Director of the Department of Native Indian Art at Carlisle Indian Industrial School, she could create her Native Industries curriculum and begin to influence further American cultural understanding of Native cultures and thousands of students. She was uniquely prepared to maneuver pedagogically, politically and artistically within the space of Carlisle.

The intent of the curricular changes is rooted in the push for Native peoples to become self-supporting through industry and learn the “joys of labor” [sic]. Reel commented Indian people needed to “take the long step in the direction of self-support; which after all, is the end of all Indian education.” Women’s industries were taking the front seat in Indian schools as practical labor could be seen, especially by Reel, as more fitting occupational training for Indian peoples due to their status in “racial progress.” In *A Course of Study*, Reel personally asked agents and Superintendents hire Indian basket makers and crafts people, grow the materials needed for the industries and

confer with “the Indian basket makers of the tribe, thoroughly familiarizing himself with the materials that are used for making baskets in their representative localities.” Hence, tribally specific arts practice was made into policy. The practice was rigorously controlled and maintained under the same dominating system.

Luepp asserted the same sentiments in 1905 “I have none of the prejudice which exists in many minds against the perpetuation of Indian music and other arts, customs and traditions…Although I would use every means to encourage the children to learn English.”341 Striving for a new form of Indian education which would somehow assure economic self-sufficiency meant allowing the familiar and “meaningful” industries and some safe Indian activities into the federal boarding school system. The implication may have been to acknowledge the capabilities of the race through their own art forms and “buy into” the evolutionism prevalent in Armstrong’s philosophy, not Pratt’s universalism.

The belief that races had separate racial destinies and capacities guided Reel’s curricular development.342 It is interesting to note that Estelle Reel acknowledged Samuel Armstrong and his curricular developments at Hampton for the inspiration and as a model for her Course of Study.343 The racial ideals of Hampton had won out. Reel helped systematize the boarding school system and with this one standard, she wrote the narrative for the next few decades of Indian education. As she corresponded with Armstrong’s successor, Hollis Burke Frissell, in reference to a draft of the Course of Study, “I shall appreciate your opinion more than I can say, as most of the ideas

342. Fear-Segal, Nineteenth-Century Indian Education, 338.
343. Ibid.
embodied in the *Course* were obtained from Hampton."³⁴⁴ It was also in the history chapter of the *Course* where Reel spelled out the need for the student’s awareness and identification with their own race as well as on the “race scale.”

Reel’s curriculum implied limits to the capacities of the American Indian students as the *Course of Study* distinctly characterizes the limiting rhetoric of the time. “The Indian’s great finger skill shows the wisdom in training him in what demands finger skill.”³⁴⁵ Promoters of Indian lace-making found specific “talents” justification for the support of lace as the Indian women were said to have an innate love of the beautiful. This was also some of the aesthetic reform rhetoric of the day which extolled the preindustrial arts and questioned fine art and applied art aesthetic debates as mentioned earlier.³⁴⁶ The following passage supports the teaching of lace on the reservations:

The filmy, lacy, cobweb-like substance forming under her hands satisfies the inherent love of the beautiful which has heretofore found form in the barbaric blanket and bead, porcupine, and feather work.³⁴⁷

Perceived “deficiencies” also played a large part in policy choice surrounding areas of study implemented and offered on Indian boarding schools. As vocational and industrial education had always driven the curriculum, the addition of Native Industries was subjugated under sewing or vocational work and often times only encouraged keeping students busy during non-class hours. Prevalent and progressive attitudes of the day supported the recognition of so called “deficiencies” marked by the standards of protestant white European culture and its “advancement” into civilization. The

---

³⁴⁴. Estelle Reel to Hollis Burke Frissell, 20 November, 1901. Courtesy of HUA.
³⁴⁵. Estelle Reel, *A Course of Study*: 54
limitations placed on the students also were related to the theory of a “causal relationship racially inherited ‘physical traits’ manifested through skin color, posture, ‘industry’ or ‘laziness’, and ‘mental’ traits such as intelligence.” As a report in 1907 on Indian education stated:

Results attained at present indicate that it is correct; that pursued through a few generations acquired habits will become fixed and be transmitted by heredity, thus establishing characteristics which distinguish the sturdy white citizen …[policy] will, in a generation or more, regenerate the [Indian] race.

As seen in the changes initiated by Reel, Social Darwinism influenced the theories of John Dewey as well as the theorists she cited in her Course of Study, Frobel and Pestalozzi. While Frobel believed in the active learning of children’s play and the nurturing of the soul, and of the human by “doing,” Pestalozzi subscribed to the belief humans learn best by labor, mechanical work and tilling the ground. In America, it seemed a necessity for Reel to keep perceived racial capacities as standards for curriculum design yet use the Progressive theory and methods to stay in the Progressive movement. The reasons are complicated and can be seen in the history of race in America: slavery of African Americans was used to build the super power of the South and assimilation of Indians via education for Euro-American Western expansion and manifest destiny.

DeCora accepted her position as Director of The Native Arts Department in the wake of Richard Pratt’s forced retirement as captain of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and with the Friends of the Indian wielding significant power to effect change

349. Estelle Reel “Reports: Superintendent Reel,” 1902. Arden Sallquist Collection, Box 3, Folder 18, MAC.
350. Frederick Hoxie, The Final Promise, 163-164.
through policy and political maneuvering.\textsuperscript{351} The strict cultural genocide implemented through the Indian boarding school system was proved ineffective and non-productive in creating “white” Indians. New policies and curricular changes were necessary to move the schools into an era of utilitarian vocational curriculum development to aim realistically for Indian self-sufficiency. The policies resulting from these changes called for Native Industries and Native teachers to teach within the system and promote and “save” the lost arts of the “vanishing Indian.” Playing on the nostalgia of the “vanishing Indian,” markets were created to sell what was considered “authentic” Indian arts and handicrafts.\textsuperscript{352} Reformer groups teamed with policy makers headed by Leupp and Reel with the help of individuals like Nellie Doubleday exerting outside support while promoting new policy to the public in periodicals.\textsuperscript{353} The changing milieu surrounding the political views of White America had a distinct impact on the future of Indian culture as represented in Indian boarding schools.

DeCora’s teaching methods and pedagogy illustrate the transcultural identity she embodied within this context as a modern Indian Intellectual, activist and artist. She stands out as a preeminent figure in the shifts that took place at the turn of the century as she worked with the system creating a more equitable space for the changing Indian identity. What was unusual about DeCora was her unwavering commitment to work and teach on her own terms. Her students were some of the first Indian boarding school students to practice any Indian cultural traditions in the history of the assimilationist movement. The next section attempts to give a glimpse into that experience.

\textsuperscript{351} Carlisle Indian Industrial School Personnel Files, Richard Pratt Folder, RG 75, NARA.  
\textsuperscript{352} W. Jackson Rushing, \textit{Native American Art of the Twentieth Century}, 23.  
\textsuperscript{353} Nellie Doubleday, 1901.
CHAPTER VI
DECORAS’S CURRICULUM

Introduction

In a 1906 letter to Commissioner Leupp, DeCora voiced her understanding of her role as Director of Native Industries—teaching and preserving Indian art, isolating the qualities of Indian art, and using them as a basis for her own production and in her pedagogy.\(^\text{354}\)

I shall not be expected to teach in the white man’s way, but shall be given complete liberty to develop the art of my own race and to apply this as far as possible, to various forms of art, industries and crafts.\(^\text{355}\)

DeCora politicized the inherent talents of Indian people as soon as she took the position of Director of the Native Arts Department at Carlisle. She began to speak publicly about the Indian’s natural propensity for design. “Although at times I yearn to express myself in landscape art, I feel that designing is the best channel in which to convey the native qualities of the Indian’s decorative talent.”\(^\text{356}\)

Working within the inherent restraints of the boarding school and a militaristic atmosphere, she promoted race pride while being viewed as a leader by her students and fellow employees. Within the intensely practical curriculum established by Reel, DeCora placed a uniquely Indian intellectualism into industrial vocational training, fusing philosophy, traditional culture, aesthetics and practical arts into an integrated curricular model.\(^\text{357}\)


\(^{357}\) K. Tsianina Lomawaima, Brenda Child, and Teresa L. McCarty, Away From Home, 32.
Women’s art materials, techniques and forms from many tribal nations became the focus of DeCora’s curriculum. It had been the men’s ledger drawings that had been used as promotional materials for the assimilationist education and sold to help fund Indian education at Hampton and Carlisle. This was in light of the Fort Marion prisoners’ drawings later from Hampton and Carlisle made in the tradition of the ledger book, a male art technique and style depicting historical events, counting coup or battles (see fig. 7). Up until this point, formal lessons in technical skills needed to produce women’s art were lacking at Hampton and Carlisle. Western techniques and materials were presented to students with some instruction as mentioned earlier. The twentieth century Indian school art reflected women’s art for sales and self-sufficiency vocational education.

The context of Native Industries fell within the trends in mainstream education and changing educational policies calling for “half-day” vocational programs for students. This meant the students would be in academic classes for half of the school day and work in vocational or industrial arts settings for the remainder. Dewey’s active enterprise concept was initiated in public schools and the push for Indian self-sufficiency placed Native Industries within the federally funded boarding school system. At times the half-day curriculum deliberately placed Native arts study in the regular school day, like Carlisle, while other schools left it for students to practice in their leisure.358 DeCora’s curriculum fell into vocational training, therefore having a place of importance in the half-day program.

**DeCora’s Curriculum: A Two-Pronged Approach**

First, DeCora encouraged her students to learn and value their tribal and cultural tradition. Second, she encouraged students to develop individual creativities that drew on her individual Winnebago experiences and that of other Indian and non-Indian cultures.

The nature of Indian art is formed on a purely conventional and geometric basis, and our endeavors at the Carlisle Indian School have been to treat it as a conventional system of designing. The Indian pictured the broader aspects in nature as symbolic figures of geometrical shapes with each tribal scheme of symbolisms. The study of the fundamental figures was followed by the combined figures, made up of two or more of the elements of design, complex figures made by repeated use of two or more of the elements of design. Under this analytic system we have studies the various tribal styles. The Indian’s art was a well established system of designing and if the young school Indian was permitted to practice it in the classroom it would make interesting exhibition…and moreover it might be further cultivated by the educated Indians and adapted to modern methods.\(^{359}\)

By 1911, the Cambridge Indian Association celebrated its 25\(^{th}\) anniversary, touting the organization’s work and a new faith in the growing respect for Indian people and cultures. In a speech at the anniversary it was noted that “educated Indians like Dr. Eastman, the Sioux, and Angel DeCora, the Winnebago, interpret for us the customs and higher ideals of their people.” This statement recognizes DeCora’s ability to act as a liaison between cultures. These skills were developed through her familiarity with her own Winnebago culture and her Western educational success. She had rare abilities to act as a “border dweller” with inside knowledge of both cultures. She then could deconstruct her own situation and create curriculum with confidence.\(^{360}\)

---


360. *Historical Sketch of the Cambridge Indian Association* (Cambridge: Cambridge Indian Association, 1911), 12, CHS.
first generation of boarding school students like DeCora, the second generation of students had seen the loosening of the assimilationist policies. However, this did not mean the abandonment of certain racial attitudes by policy makers. The shaping of the Indian identity as transcultural and created through the image of the artist took hold as the 1920s began.  

The years preceding the introduction of Native Industries through the ‘20s set the stage for the “story” that centers Angel DeCora as a key figure in changing attitudes and an invigorating momentum of acceptance and greater cultural understanding concerning many previously flawed and misconceived notions about Indian people and cultures. DeCora and her American Indian contemporaries used the English language and the arts to describe the differing points of view and the contributions and strengths of their race as Native arts became prized and sought after.

The reformist and commercial trend of Euro-Americans to celebrate and develop the market for Native arts made by “authentic Indians” began to rise in the decades around the turn of the century. DeCora fell into a political space which vigorously supported the revival of what Euro-Americans could see as a “safe” and economically profitable snippet of Native cultures, handicrafts and the arts. She used these sentiments in her speeches and course development and was able to present Indian arts as “a well established system of designing.” She attempted to capitalize on the popularity of Indian art and bring both the arts of the Indigenous people and the people themselves into an equal, Progressive aesthetic standing through her rhetoric. Words used by the newly formed Society of American Indians strategically utilized the racial slogans of

the day. Included in the SAI handbook, phrases such as “natural laws of social evolution” and Indian’s goals as moving toward “enlightenment” both played on the racial biases while promoting Indian rights within a comfortable context for mainstream Euro-America, the arts.  

Charles Eastman and DeCora: Aesthetics and Systems of Design in American Indian Art

The “safety” of Native Industries and DeCora’s political strategies used through “saving the lost arts” echoed in the politics surrounding the teaching of Native Industries, music and history. Dr. Charles Eastman (Sioux) and Angel DeCora articulated the American Indian aesthetics in speeches and articles in widely read periodicals such as The Craftsman and The Southern Workman. Eastman explained the Indian point of view or philosophy in relation to traditionally historic work in “‘My People’: The Indians’ Contribution to the Art of America.”  

By laying out the American Indian philosophical view using the English language and forms understandable within Western philosophy, Eastman asserted the lack of understanding of the White viewer and the strong boundaries which religion and belief guided the Indian in all action and in object making. Much of his writing refers to pre-European contact, yet he justifies the condemnation of machine made “Indian” curios and for the promotion of traditional Native Industries within the Indian boarding school system.

Strategies were employed in all aspects of public speaking and writing to clarify the transforming American Indian identity as racial strengths were defined and the

future became a new chapter to be written from a place of empowerment. Both DeCora and Eastman had attended boarding schools and they knew how to use the rhetoric of the era to promote their views. In an attempt to illustrate the parallel strategies DeCora and Eastman used in speeches, articles, and the ideas and rhetoric espoused in creating the Native Industries curriculum, the following two works will be analyzed: Eastman’s “‘My People’,” and DeCora’s 1906 address to the International Congress of Americanists “An Effort to Encourage Indian Art.”

DeCora spoke at the International Congress as one of the first, if not the first American Indian. In her address she succinctly put forth an unapologetic stance towards promoting and protecting the indigenous cultures of the Americas, specifically through perpetuation of their arts. Due to the all inclusive nature of art, religion, land and gender roles, etc, promotion of the arts could also illicit greater holistic cultural understandings among tribes and Euro-American culture.

Her address to the 1906 International Congress of the Americanists began with a straightforward statement of innate American Indian strength. “Indians, like any other race in its primitive state, are gifted in original ideas of ornamentation. The pictorial talent is common to all young Indians.” Eastman began his essay “‘My People’ defining the consummate aesthetic “closely akin to religious feeling.” Momaday (Kiowa) explains that the power of thought and word (literary art) has the ability to harmonize people to earthly elements and the spiritual universe. As all art forms closely connected Native communities divisions were not made in the common to

Western dualistic philosophies, inclusive and sacred boundaries defined the art and the forms it took. As Eastman explained, American Indian artists did not paint what is readily seen in nature. “They held it sacred…they held it sacrilege to reproduce the exact likeness of the human form or face.” He continued to develop the idea in terms consumable to the Western ear “sacred has created boundaries not for lack of imagination.” He asserted the Indian point of view as being viable and all encompassing creating a foundation for Indian arts to be discussed and viewed.\footnote{368} Eastman spoke of Nature being the “consummate beauty.”\footnote{369} He said symbols were used for different reasons as depiction of nature was seen as sacred at least within some tribal belief systems.

The essence of the symbol also had to be delineated to be more readily understood by the audience, which would have included Indian reformers, Native intellectuals and persons from differing worldviews in the general public. As Paula Gunn Allen suggests, Indian symbols capture “that reality where thought and feeling are one, where objective and subject are one, where speaker and listener are one, where sound and sense are one.”\footnote{370} As DeCora herself believed, “The Indian pictured the broader aspects of nature in symbolic figures of geometric shapes with each tribal scheme of symbolisms.”\footnote{371} In creating an understandable context within Western ideologies of symbolism and using the Aristotelian structure of categories, she began to systemize symbol use and break them down into formulae. We can surmise DeCora

\begin{itemize}
\item \footnote{368}{Charles Eastman, “My People,” 179.}
\item \footnote{369}{Ibid.}
\item \footnote{370}{Paula Gunn Allen, “The Sacred Hoop: A Contemporary Perspective.” \textit{Studies In American Indian Literature.} New York: Modern Language Association of America, p. 17.}
\item \footnote{371}{Angel DeCora , 1911, 281.}
\end{itemize}
could not state the worldview of thought and feeling being one through the use of symbol, yet she could use tribal specificity and meaning to justify its study. She went on to say in the Americanists address, “The Indian artist sits in the open, drawing her inspiration from the broad aspects of Nature. Her zig-zag line indicates the line of the hills in the distance, and the blue and white background so usual in the Indian color scheme denotes the sky.” Meanwhile, Eastman (1914) reiterates the main points and extends the explanation to bring in Native worldviews. “The old patterns are mainly geometrical figures, which are decorative and emblematic rather than imitative.” Implying the sacredness of the actual image mentioned above in his “point of view” explanation. He continued “These designs have a religious significance and furnish the individual with his personal and clan emblem…”pointing out the specificity of the images with regard to complex cultural meanings. Like a lexicon, the symbol provided a common meaning and unity of thought and community among tribal members.

Both DeCora and Eastman “translated,” in a simplistic fashion, the symbol systems of their own tribes and, in teaching research, the systems of other tribes. DeCora went a step further in systematizing the study of geometric symbol systems and creating broad categories understandable to Western thinkers. She reinvented her understandings in the English language and placed traditional arts into categories and forms unique to Western thinking while promoting tribally specific aesthetics and beliefs. As she stated in her 1908 address to the Lake Mohonk Conference

On taking the work at Carlisle I found one of the necessary things to do was to impress upon the minds of my pupils that they were Indians, possessing native

---

372. Angel DeCora. “An Effort to Encourage Indian Art” Congres International des Americans; XVe Session, Tenue a'Quebec en 1906. 1907: 206.
abilities that had never been recognized in the curriculum of the Government boarding schools...³⁷³

While teaching at Carlisle, De Cora began to examine the styles and designs of each tribe. Five months into her teaching position at Carlisle she addressed the International Congress of Americanists stating: “I have taken care to leave my pupils’ creative faculty absolutely independent, and to let each student draw form his own mind, true to his own thought and to his own tribal method of symbolic design.” One might imagine the freedom and trust DeCora gave her students in the strict military style institution. Calling on “race pride,” they must have entered her class with intrinsic motivations, even bewilderment at the independence they were given for a short portion of their boarding school experience.

An important thing to remember is the enormity of the off-reservation boarding school and day school system and the many tribes mixed together in such schools. With the school system being spread out over the continent, it became difficult to truly systematize the curriculum or enforce teacher participation in new curricula. Pan-Indianism pervaded the thinking of many Euro-Americans as specific tribes were represented at the schools, yet not separated.

Who would decide what to promote as Native Industries? As noted earlier, some schools taught Native Industries within the regular school-day while others did not.³⁷⁴ Furthermore, the teachers and superintendents had to choose what tribally specific “traditions” to draw from and what materials to supply and promote to the student-body.


In day schools and boarding schools located on reservations, the local materials and traditional teachings could be easily utilized. Luepp started the slow dissolution of the off reservation school in favor of non-residential day schools, which eventually led to students enrolling in public schools as well.  

The “products” of the industries would also need a market and venue for display or catalogs for the buying public. It is important to note that male arts occupations were promoted in the printing and graphics department and silver-smithing. DeCora opened a shop at Carlisle while Chilocco would publish examples of work within the school publications (see fig. 8). The school publication *The Red Man* had begun with the title *The Indian Craftsman*, mirroring the Arts and Crafts magazine *The Craftsman*. The shift to promote Native Industries had appropriated the momentum of the arts and crafts movement, once more revealing the transcultural nature of the expressions and intentions. Luepp would suggest items for possible production:

> The Navajo silversmith, whose work is beautiful as it stands, ought to be encouraged to preserve and expand it. But whereas now it is occupied almost wholly with jewelry and gewgaws, a shrewd teacher might start the young people of the tribe making the sort of things which command a market in White communities—butter-knives and napkin ring, salt cellars and trays.  

It seems DeCora loosely followed the prescribed suggestions enough to produce items for White consumers. However, she also satisfied her own political and aesthetic goals.

---

Fig. 8. Carlisle publication *The Red Man*, cover, 1910 by William Lone Star Dietz.
Coinciding with the curricular development of items to be made with a pan-Indian “look” for contemporary American society, the Indian Industries League decided to place their emphasis on encouraging self-support through the creation of a market for Indian industries, or “Native” industries. In direct reaction to the reservation lace schools of Sibyl Carter, Nellie Doubleday commented that Whites had unsuccessfully tried to improve or stamp out Indian Industries and that movements like lace-making were culturally inappropriate for people who had traditions of their own “which indicated intelligence, adaptability, and art feeling and finger skill quite remarkable in an aboriginal people.”

Although the allowance of traditional arts and remnants of culture were now marginally promoted, Adams cites the reality of the new interest had no real effect on the “defining institutional features…the routine, the iron discipline, the long separations.” The art department at Carlisle may have been one of the only places of creative freedom and race pride found on campus. It seemed assimilation was no longer deemed the great transformer of the Indian to a “washed out” version of the “savage” but an “improved” Indian who could keep distinctly racial interests. Attempts to stamp out everything “Indian” in boarding schools became replaced by the slightly updated curriculum and a new educational formula by policy makers and supporters of reform.

As the rejection of lace-making by Nellie Doubleday and the Boston based Indian Industries League extended support of Native art with the wealthy and politically

379. Francis Leupp, from an illustrated quote on a page for The Indian Craftsman, (June 1909), 55.
influential, it also reflected members’ personal experiences and dialogue with Native peoples. The support circulated because more women field matrons and policy makers spent time within Indian communities. Leupp had also spent time on Western reservations and traveling and talking with Native peoples. Leupp’s reports were also of the same sentiment, as he advocated teaching new skills to Indian students, adding, “but don’t set down her beaded moccasins as merely barbarous, while holding up her lace handkerchief as a symbol of advanced civilization.” Mainstream tastes had shifted and a new market for Indian goods, authentic or souvenir, was initiated. Carlisle created a space for sales with the Leupp Studio.

*The Leupp Studio*

Carlisle football monies funded the creation of the Leupp Art Studio in 1906 on the grounds of Carlisle to serve as a studio, classroom and showroom for sales purposes funded with athletic profits. The creation of the studio marked a significant change in values at Carlisle. It symbolically stood for the need to reach outside the army barracks for a curricular model and into the culture and creativity of the students. Carlisle students participated in learning building techniques through the construction. It housed studios and a showroom designed to sell work produced at the school. Both facets of the curriculum were implied the need to give cultures a place and the goals of the policy makers to create an economically viable industry for students at Carlisle. The question is how did the students and teachers receive and interpret the revised curriculum as DeCora understood it?

---

381. Interview with Linda F. Witmer (Director of the Cumberland County Historical Society), in discussion with the author, August 1, 2008.
At the height of DeCora’s directorship at Carlisle, the Native Arts department published a catalogue and synopsis of its art programs and media through the Leupp Art Studio on the Carlisle campus. It is important to note that this publication served three general purposes: to “perpetuate” Native Indian arts among the Indians, to promote cultural understanding “to assist and encourage Indian art”, to describe the art curriculum at Carlisle, and thirdly to act as a catalog to advertise Indian arts from Carlisle and “genuine Indian work” from around the country. Labor conditions and integrity of work are other areas of concern DeCora explicitly expresses as motivating factors in controlling the trade and production of Native arts at the Leupp Art Studio.

The Leupp Studio was built by the students on the Carlisle campus and designed to resemble a miniature medieval castle. The building was funded specifically to house the new Native Art Department, a well-equipped photography studio, and a sales gallery. Around the country the sales and demand for Native art and imitations of Native art grew out of the perceived decline of the race and the romanticism of the vanishing Indian as well as the media and popular writings of the time perpetuating the desire for pre-industrial life. Many factors contributed to the creation of souvenir shops. Because of the need for Native peoples to make a living in the White economic markets, they were encouraged to make things specifically for the souvenir market. The Leupp Studio also participated in the marketing of these knick-knacks made by the students of Carlisle. As DeCora said of her own creation of decorative ceramic pins with Native

382. Indian Crafts Department, United States Indian School. *Arts and Handicraft of the Indian*, (Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Carlisle Indian Press, 1911). The booklet is owned by a private collector. A photocopy was donated to The Cumberland County Historical Society in 2007. The booklet has not been catalogued at the date of this investigation.
383. Ibid., 7.
patterns “the foolish things sell better always.” The difference DeCora elaborated on was the intent to create modern functional items using Native motif as the decorative elements. She did not have students make cheap knock offs of the original items; she did teach the students as best she could the more traditional techniques and tribally specific forms so they could learn something of their heritage while attending Carlisle.

In DeCora’s words:

The art department at Carlisle has taken a departure from the regular routine work of public schools. We do not study any of the European classics in art. We take the old symbolic figures and forms which we find on beadwork, pottery, and baskets for the basis of our study.

The innovative nature of DeCora’s curriculum was not based on using European art study as the model, instead using Native forms as a starting point and developing “modern” innovations from the strengths of the traditions. She invited Franz Boas to Carlisle during her research studies for the tribally specific design work. An announcement in the 1908 Carlisle publication, The Arrow, reads, “during the past week, the Teachers’ Club has been entertaining one of the most famous anthropologists of the day . . . Dr. Franz Boas . . . who is the guest of Miss DeCora . . . a friend of many years.” DeCora visited with Boas about the design curriculum and research issues. His philosophy coincided with DeCora’s with regard to the nature of contextual study of contemporary as well as “traditional” Indian arts. Commenting on the variations of designs among Salish women tribal members’ basketry he stressed the cultural “point of view” issue. “It seems in my mind that the error in the whole treatment of the design question in recent literature lies in the fact that designs have been treated too formally

384. Letter to Cora M. Folsom from Angel DeCora, 1915. Courtesy HUA.
385. Angel DeCora, Native Indian Art.
and too little from the viewpoint of the makers.”  

This may have been one area in the study of Native arts from an anthropologist’s point of view that overlapped with DeCora’s philosophy. However, Boas was known for his interpretation on Native arts from a formal and technical viewpoint and did not develop ideas related to the Indian artist as an individual expressing his/her unique experiences through the artwork. Boas concerned himself more with technical expertise as the standard for quality rather than other aesthetic criteria. This is where Boas and DeCora differed. DeCora had the Western formal art training emphasizing the point of view of the artist; she could see both the communal intentions and the individual artist in her students’ work. This influenced her curriculum development preparing students to both represent their tribes and express themselves in the larger Western art market.

The notion of saving “traditional” arts became vital to meeting the goals of Leupp and Reel and also blended with DeCora’s intention to create accurate depictions of the artistic excellence and cultural complexity of the Indian race. She juxtaposed quality examples of her students work along with “the finest pieces of workmanship to be found on reservations, which are produced by the old people.” The booklet goes on to emphasize the point “We do not sell for profit, but to assist and encourage Indian Art.”

Assuming the purpose of the booklet was to be a sales catalog and promote the arts program and students’ work, this juxtaposition could enhance to reputation of the

---

389. “Introduction,” Arts and Handicraft of the Indian (1911), Printed in the Carlisle printing department. CCHS.
new generation to promote sales and also show the “traditional” connecting directly to the preindustrial hence making it more “authentic.”

The “authenticity” of Native arts became paramount to the promotion of Native arts for self-support. The nostalgia of the so-called “vanishing race” upped the salability of the art. Identifying with the white popular culture versions of “Indians” played to the sentimentality of the middleclass as well as helping Indians show their work in a mainstream environment. This could be said for both boarding school art made by students and work sent by agents from reservations to be sold in venues like the Leupp Studio. Keep in mind, DeCora did not define Indian art as static and confined to the past, although she did promote the reservation goods, she also encouraged the highest quality production of everything made at Carlisle and the new application of Indian design to contemporary forms as well.

Comparing the Leupp sales gallery to other commercial galleries of the time illuminates the promotion of the popularized “traditional Indian” and souvenirs associated with the images. This can be seen in a photograph taken by Everett Strong, a local photographer who worked for the school and helped instruct photography classes.

*Leupp Photography Studio*

One departure from the “return to the old-time” was the promotion of photography as an art and industry. By offering photography training, DeCora and the Leupp Studio stood to empower students in contemporary media arts as stated in the booklet “photographs of Indians are taken by Indians, which work will stand

390. Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian*. For another comprehensive discussion related to DeCora’s work and the politics of Indian identity see Elizabeth Hutchinson’s *Progressive Primitivism*.

comparison with any studio in the country.”\textsuperscript{392} The concept was cutting edge at the time: Indians creating their own identity through the photographic medium. Other art forms such as basketry were taught in rooms next to the high-tech photography studio. The Leupp Studio building remained after DeCora resigned. However, it became the Alumni Building until Carlisle closed its doors in 1918.

Within Reel’s \textit{Course of Study}, basketry made a debut as an appropriate handicraft for young Indian women to study in federally funded boarding schools.\textsuperscript{393} The “Basketry and Caning” chapter specifically asks Agents and Superintendents to “furnish names of basket makers on your reservation.” She then also suggests that tribally specific materials and techniques be taught as part of the course of study such as beadwork, weaving, and pottery.

Reel’s curriculum was not without serious racial biases and even called for the use of references on basket making from England. This instruction would be as generic as the watered down versions taught in progressive mainstream Euro-American schools.\textsuperscript{394} It is important to mention Reel listed reference books for teachers to use as she went on to request instructors who excel in these art forms to be hired to teach in off-reservation and on-reservation schools. Although the reference books were written by authors from England and mimicked curriculum in mainstream Progressive schools’ “learn by doing” trends, she made no distinct reference to Native guides yet urged superintendents to hire Indian teachers proficient in tribally specific arts.\textsuperscript{395} Reel may

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{392} Carlisle Catalog, 1911, courtesy CCHS.
  \item \textsuperscript{393} Patricia Johnson, \textit{Seeing High and Low}, 84-87.
  \item \textsuperscript{394} Hutchinson, \textit{Indian Craze}.
  \item \textsuperscript{395} The term ‘learning by doing’ is seen by some to summarize Dewey’s active learning curriculum at the Chicago Laboratory School, citied in Max Wingo’s \textit{Philosophies of Education}.
\end{itemize}
have been more concerned with how the book would be received by White audiences than her Indian colleagues like DeCora. Reel wrote “The basketry as woven by Indians for generations is fast becoming a lost art and must be revived by the children of the present generation.” The sentimentality and romanticism of the day was once again used to promote anything “Indian” from inevitably disappearing.

A telling example of a Euro-American fraternity directed at “helping” Native peoples “save” basketry, a safe representation of the many indigenous cultures, is seen in George Wharton James’ (1903) *Basket Fraternity*. The appendices carefully lay out objectives of this type of organizations. Some of the goals included:

- to collect reliable and accurate knowledge of Indian weaver’s methods and work…to discourage among the Indians the modern commercial methods, which encourage the making of baskets merely for sale, foster the use of aniline dyes, alien designs, hastily prepared materials, and crude workmanship…to seek to retain the love of good and artistic work, to banish aniline dyes, and restore the use of native dyes, native shapes and designs…To seek to influence the Indian department of the United States Government to earnestly endeavor to work to this end among all agents, Superintendents and teachers in its service, and to require all young Indian girls to learn the art as part of their school training.  

James’ publication of the Basket Fraternity goals as an appendix to his book *Indian Basketry*, also reflected the distinctly socially derived ideals prevalent in the larger Arts and Crafts movement:

To promote the organization of classes for the teaching of basketry in orphan asylums, prisons, poor houses, insane asylums and eleemosynary establishments in order that easy and simple employment may be found for the unfortunate which will help relieve the harmful monotony of their lives.

---

DeCora also demonstrated a similar strategy with regard to capitalizing on the premise “the young Indian has a talent for the pictorial art.” DeCora seemed to take this stance to promote even more radical views as to the abilities of Native people. Using the rhetoric of the reformers, she attempted to stretch preconceptions about other abilities which should be nurtured through training within the government institutions and boarding schools.

The “space” she was carving out was one of social empowerment through the arts. The traditional arts and handicrafts were actively supported and were seen as one of the only “safe” aspects of historically traditional culture worth actively perpetuating. As Hutchinson points out in *Seeing High and Low*, DeCora consciously decided to utilize her own position as Director of Native Industries to engage broader audiences in the discourse on social issues facing native peoples while developing an aesthetic and pedagogy in her own classroom specific to her activist agenda. She proposed a collective Indian aesthetic, one that was up-to-date and reflected her allegiance to her indigenous culture and knowledge of Euro-American academic standards and contemporary art movements. Her ideas had the support of Leupp, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Reel, Superintendent of Indian Schools. Leupp and Reel were well aware of DeCora’s extensive experience and ability, as they were dedicated to hiring her as Director of the Native Arts Department. In an article reporting the exhibition DeCora designed, Leupp said, “As the idea of reviving and perpetuating Indian art and its ideals was one of my earliest aspirations.” Leupp validated DeCora’s unique qualifications and the policy makers’ support saying that “I

---

399. Angel DeCora, “An Effort to Encourage Native Art,” *Native Art*, 528.
400. Elizabeth Hutchinson, *Indian Craze*, 199.
feel I am reasonably safe in prophesying that, through this administration at least, she will have ‘the authorities’ behind her.  

In correspondence with friend Cora Mae Folsom, she commented on their knowledge of her personal life as it may affect her teaching at Carlisle “Miss Reel and Mr. Leupp got alarmed last summer because they feared I might marry Schultz, the author of *My Life as an Indian*, he is a fierce drunkard.” One could surmise they policy makers were satisfied with DeCora’s eventual marriage to William “Lone Star” Dietz and his deep connection to Carlisle. It is unclear when DeCora first met her husband William Dietz. This topic will be discussed as it pertains to Dietz’s status as a student of DeCora and his role in creating the stunning and thoroughly modern covers for *The Red Man* later in the paper. The work of Dietz shows an intimate portrait of the collaboration between him and DeCora, as both were trained in Western techniques extensively before coming to Carlisle. The products of this collaboration reveal much of the power they had at Carlisle and how they used the broad audience of *The Red Man* to promote their “brand” of Indian activism and aesthetics as discussed later. However, Leupp and Reel were well aware of DeCora’s availability and past achievements and valued her contributions. Leupp stated with regard to her appointment: “I thought her better fitted for it than anyone else I knew.”

Other support for DeCora’s teaching came indirectly from the top down—President Roosevelt and his close association with Charles Lummis, mutual friend of

---

401. Leupp quoted in *Native American*, October, 19, 1907 as reported from his speech given July 7, 1907 in Los Angeles.  
402. Letters from Angel DeCora to Cora M. Folsom, 1907, HUA.  
403. Leupp quoted from his introduction of Angel DeCora recorded in the *Native American*, October 19, 1907. DeCora and Leupp spoke at the 1907 NEA conference in Los Angeles.
the new Carlisle Superintendent Mercer and Pratt’s replacement. With the replacement of Pratt, a number of shifts in curriculum and visionary emphasis took place in the mission of Carlisle. Federal regulations were recognized and enforced. Even more changes took place as Moses Freidman replaced Mercer in 1908 he felt he would give “breadth” to the curriculum and as this developed concurrently did the admission of older students (14 years and older) who had previously attended other institutions and were ready to be in the new ever changing Carlisle. Friedman’s “breadth” including nature studies, Native arts and moral education were expanded upon.

How did DeCora interpret the curriculum and use the structure to posit her own agenda with regard to promoting and validating Native culture as valuable and adaptable? She asserted aspects of traditional cultures could be unique contributions in a truly American art as well as the application of traditional design aspects. In a 1906 letter to Commissioner Leupp, DeCora voiced her understanding of her role as Director of Native Industries: to teach and preserve Indian art; isolate the qualities of Indian art and use them as basis for her own production and future student production in her pedagogy.404

Before DeCora: Art Curriculum-Examples of Student Work

Although records indicate she was hired as the drawing instructor, the courses she taught were far from the Western traditions of easel painting and studio drawing. Shortly after taking her position at Carlisle, she announced in The Arrow in 1907, “I will not teach drawing.” Instead, she continued, she would teach “Native art and

Industries. The drawing curriculum before Native Industries was described as: “designs of borders and surface pattern; light and shade; objects in natural science; space divisions” (see fig. 9). This photograph, taken from the Estelle Reel papers shows an example of the prized color drawings created by Carlisle students at the time Reel took office in 1900. The art program before Native Industries was a mishmash of agriculture object study, remnants from the Fort Marion style drawings, copies of plaster casts and needle and lace work. What emerged between 1901 and 1915 was truly unique.

**Departure from Ledger Style Male Art in Boarding Schools**

A survey of the importance and purpose of art in Federally funded Indian boarding schools must begin with a brief discussion of drawings by the male members of Plains tribes imprisoned at Fort Marion, Florida. The individuals were under the encouragement of Colonel Pratt to create drawings for personal purposes and commercial reasons prior to their attendance at Hampton in beginning in 1878.

Boarding school art curriculum focused on agriculture and produce drawings, still-life and plaster cast. DeCora’s feelings on the art curriculum in boarding schools as she gave her speech at the Congres International Des Americanistes: XVe Session, in Quebec, 1906:

At an Educational Conference last Summer, I saw an exhibit of Indian schools work. The art work was the usual insipid spray of flower or budding twig done in a slap-dash style, and some geometrical designs apparently made under the

---

405. *The Carlisle Arrow*, March, 1907. The news of the school is well documented in the Carlisle publication *The Arrow*. Month to month news and curricular updates are helpful in seeing DeCora’s influence on the institution and the students.
Fig. 9. Carlisle Student work, Estelle Reel Papers. Courtesy of the Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, Spokane, Washington.
strict directions of a teacher. The only trace of Indian in the exhibition was some of the signatures denoting clannish names. The art show was a farce….\textsuperscript{406}

The following section follows Reel’s curriculum for Native Industries and DeCora’s interpretation in her words as well as in student writing, photos of the studio, and artwork. DeCora had considerable support from Commissioner Leupp as assimilationist policies were seen as a failure and greater self support through art and other ethnic strengths were advocated.

DeCora recognized and articulated her position as the Director of Native Industries at Carlisle by noting the ambivalence of her students to embrace the new way of teaching. They had been conditioned to believe everything “Indian” was to be discouraged. As DeCora designed her curriculum she encountered many challenges including eliciting a new sense of Indian identity through the arts. Although this identity applied the “terms” of the Reel curriculum, DeCora took her challenge with considerable earnestness as in this statement:

An Indian’s self-respect is undermined when he is told that his native customs and crafts are no longer of any use because they are the habits and pastimes of the crude man. If he takes up his native crafts he does it with the sense that he has “gone back to barbarism.” On taking up the work at Carlisle I found one of the necessary things to do was to impress upon the minds of my pupils that they were Indians, possessing native abilities that had never been recognized in the curriculum of the Government schools.\textsuperscript{407}

The hiring of Native teachers became policy during Reel’s tenure and under was listed in the curriculum as preferred for teaching Native Industries (see fig. 10). Although DeCora had gained notoriety and had an extensive Western education, she served as a

\textsuperscript{406} Angel DeCora, “An Effort to Encourage Native Art,” 205.
\textsuperscript{407} DeCora, “An Effort,” 1907.
Fig. 10. Teaching Native Industries, Phoenix Indian School, Arizona. Photo collection of Estelle Reel Papers, Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, Washington State Historical Society, Spokane Washington.
mentor and role model for many students. Another former Hampton student, Arizona Swaney, was named Native Industries instructor at Hampton in 1901.\textsuperscript{408} Swaney’s contributions were explained in the Southern Workman: “She uses the Indian materials and natural dyes, and it is expected that there will eventually be developed here a special pattern to be known as the Hampton Basket…”\textsuperscript{409} This was not the case with many Native teachers employed in day schools and reservation boarding schools who served as housekeepers and guides to Native Industries.

As pointed out by Lomawaima:

Instruction by Native women, however, was not secure precisely because it brought girls into contact with the kind of tribal women whose authority and respectability the schools were determined to undermine. It is important to note that the school encouraged these craft productions not as part of technologies to be used within viable Native economies but to make items for sale to Whites, to generate cash, and to knit Indian families into the dominant economy.\textsuperscript{410}

This curriculum and DeCora’s interpretation had very little in common with Pratt’s original conception of total assimilation, as seen in Leupp’s words in 1905:

The Indian is a natural warrior, a natural logician, a natural artist. We have room for all three in our highly organized social system. Let us not make the mistake, in the process of absorbing them, of washing out of them whatever is distinctly Indian…our proper work with him is improvement, not transformation.\textsuperscript{411}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{408} Hampton University Museum displays their collection of American Indian art made at Hampton and collected by the University Museum. Arizona Swaney is pictured in a display specifically acknowledging Native Industries at Hampton as seen on July 28, 2008 in the Hampton University Museum.
\item \textsuperscript{409} Quote from the \textit{Southern Workman}, 1902, from the above-mentioned display.
\item \textsuperscript{410} K. Tsianina Lomawaima & Teresa McCarty, \textit{To Remain Indian} (Teachers College Press, Columbia University New York, 2006), 63.
\end{itemize}
Within the Basketry and Caning chapter in Reel’s *Course of Study* the introduction is a clear call for Native arts and artists to work within the boarding schools and day schools across the country. Reel called for the study of specific tribal cultures within the chapter entitled “History.” She called for:

> Begin teaching history by telling the children the story of their tribe and then their race. Relate to them legends and stories such as will excite and fix their interest. Have the pupil tell you what he can of the history of his forefathers and of his tribe…Oral and written reproduction of all such historical stories should form an important part of the work.412

DeCora modified the boarding school curriculum to fit her political sensibilities and tribal and Western educational background. To illustrate this, excerpts from speeches and other correspondence show the same rhetoric taken a step further to promote the “talents” of her race.

DeCora developed a series of lectures and essays during her tenure at Carlisle. Speaking before the Department of Indian Education at the 1907 National Education Association conference in Los Angeles, she explained her teaching rationale and revealed the successes of her curriculum at Carlisle after one year of heading the Department of Native Art. This speech was also illustrated by a series of photographs she made as a display (see fig. 11).

An analytical comparison of DeCora’s curriculum as demonstrated in the 1907 speech and Reel’s prescribed guide provided in *Course of Study* structures the following discussion. Many of her ideas were shared by other Indian intellectuals and leaders of the time, like Henry Roe Cloud (Winnebago), who also agreed to use the racialist rhetoric of the time, yet emphasized the conception of the inherent artistic talent of the

---

Indian race by choosing to negate the primitive unchanging view that was exploited to promote and describe Indian art, opting to offer a view of vital and adaptable arts using Indian design in the formulation of modern application. Thus, the importance of her position at Carlisle also provided a vehicle for the promotion of her specific political stance and represented the emerging Indian identity. Leupp had emphasized his desires to have the curriculum and methods in Native Industries reflect a combination of artistry and practicality and to use art to promote self-sufficiency. In DeCora’s words, her teaching goals were “to show some of the possibilities in the adaptation of Indian art to modern usages.”

Under DeCora, the course description for drawing read:

Drawing: Freehand drawing is given throughout the course. Most Indian pupils come to us with some pretty definite knowledge of drawing already fixed in their minds. For such pupils the aim of the teaching work here is to systematize that knowledge, to eliminate anything of an impertinent nature, and to strengthen and add to that which is of real value. One of the aims in teaching drawing to Indians is to standardize, perpetuate, and give the world at large the priceless decorative designs peculiar to the race.

414. DeCora from her speech “Native Indian Art” before the Department of Indian Education at the annual conference of the National Education Association held in Los Angeles CA. July 8-12, 1907.  
415. “Course Description,” Carlisle Catalog (1915), 45.
Fig. 11. DeCora’s Art Studio and Classroom. Photograph reproduced in *The Red Man*, 1910.
Drawing, as mentioned above, does not carry the connotations of perspective drawing in the Western tradition. Instead, it fortifies drawing as a foundation for Indian design.

Fourteen years after Reel wrote the *Course of Study*, the official catalog reflected the transcultural or hybrid contribution of DeCora within the parameters set in the 1901 policy. Reel’s mission to create industry that would preserve the traditions of the past also promoted production for economic self-sufficiency within a “safe zone.” Both Leupp and Reel mentioned music and handicrafts as worthy of saving and could not be considered harmful for the students’ overall civilizing education. She related this in her *Course of Study*:

> The importance of preserving the Indian designs and shapes can not be over estimated. The object must be to weave the history and traditions of the tribe in all distinctively Indian work, thus making it historical, typical and of value….Race pride should stimulate them to effort in preserving the work of the past.\(^{416}\)

Placing Native history and traditions into a once total assimilationist curriculum was a bold and double edged gesture by Reel. On the one hand, she advocated Native traditions, yet it was in direct response to the failed policies of the past and the directive was aimed more at economic self sufficiency than true cultural validation or empowerment. The message that was conveyed was in sharp contrast to Pratt’s assimilationist mission, and he voiced his disregard in newspapers of the time.\(^{417}\)

Although these policies and curriculum changes did not stay within strict assimilationist theory, they came with the baggage of Social Darwinism as the overarching view for

\(^{416}\) Estelle Reel, *Course of Study*, 55.

cutting back on academics and allowing, as Leupp called them, “silly little songs” into the lives of boarding school students.\footnote{418}

Quoting the words denoting DeCora’s experience gives life to this embodied curriculum. In her speech at the NEA conference 1907 she stated her perceptions of the boarding school curriculum:

> It must be remembered that most of the Indians of the Carlisle school have been under white influence from early youth and have, in many instances, entirely lost the traditions of their people. Once awakened the students at once became active and produced, within a year, some of the most characteristic and beautiful designs.\footnote{419}

She echoes what Reel set as the prescribed curriculum yet her voice seems to express herself as an empowered guide to her students, not the industrial arts teacher prompting students to produce for monetary gain. In contrast, Lucy P. Hart, (non-Native) spoke of her implementation of Native Industries in a 1902 report to Reel “basketry and beadwork have received some attention, but in these arts perfection rather than quantity has been the aim, and the work has been a test of neatness and thoroughness rather than a productive industry.”\footnote{420} On the contrary, DeCora had different intentions, being an American Indian artist herself and holding her firm belief in adapting Native artistic traditions for contemporary outcomes. To do this successfully, she had to gain the trust and understanding of her students. To illustrate her trust in her students’ abilities she continues:

> As a teacher I have taken care to leave my pupils’ creative faculty absolutely independent and to let each student draw as his own mind prompted him, true to

\footnotesize{418. “Extracts from Personal Letters by the Commissioner: 1. Indian Dances”, \textit{The Indian Craftsman}, June, 1909.}

\footnotesize{419. DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” \textit{The Southern Workman} (1907): 526.}

his own thought, and, as far as possible, true to his method of symbolic design.\footnote{421}

*Student Writing Pertaining to Native Industries*

Also supporting this philosophy, the following sample of student writing reflects the overall curricular vision and what was being perpetuated through her contextually radical creative and cultural curriculum. Within the Cumberland County Historical Society archives, samples of student work from this period show DeCora’s pedagogy crossed content areas and became an integrated part of the school’s milieu. As written by 16-year-old Washington Taloymptewa in an English exercise:

> Indian art is the art that only Indians can do. They learned it from Nature. They make beautiful things for themselves, and the White people like to see them. The Indians work with their hands. It can be hard work. Our pupils study this art. Miss DeCora is their able teacher. They do not copy but get it out of their heads. It is good for them it makes them think.\footnote{422}

Student writing reveals (1907-08) a reflection of what was being taught by DeCora. She was working in an integrated way within subject areas and with the addition of older students to the Carlisle campus, could create a new set of standards for student work. As policies had changed during the early 1900’s, Carlisle began accepting older students. Little has been written about how the change in policy with regard to age affected how the instructors taught and the differing expectations they had to adjust to. Under Leupp, Mercer effected internal policy such as the enrollment ages of students in off reservation boarding schools. As Bell stated:

> Under Leupp’s control, the Indian Office sought to restrict admittance to non-reservation schools to those over the age of fourteen with more than four years of previous experience in school. At Carlisle, this meant that pupils were on the

\footnote{421. DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” 527.}
\footnote{422. Student work from 1907-1915, Folder: PI 4-13-6, CCHS. Manuscript copy sent April 16th 2008.}
average several years older that they had been under Pratt and they were drawn from a more limited set of nations.\textsuperscript{423}

To clearly see the new policies and changes incurred, one must also look at the demographics of the student population. After Pratt’s tenure, the number of orphaned students declined while the admittance of students with one parent increased. The new administration also brought Carlisle into federal compliance on the entering age of students, length of stay and previous experience in educational settings. Furthermore, members from the Five Civilized Tribes could not be admitted, and for the first time, some students had to pay their own way on non-reservation schools.\textsuperscript{424} Students entering Carlisle were older and more experienced and DeCora gave them freedom that they had not encountered previously in the boarding school system. Natalie Curtis, a reformist supporter of DeCora wrote of her teaching in a 1920 article after her death, “Her classes were told that they need not copy the teacher, or anybody else. The children were to express themselves. Her manner of teaching was to give her scholars a given assignment and then leave the room, freeing her pupils from the restraint of the teacher’s presence.”\textsuperscript{425} Curtis recognized DeCora’s groundbreaking “progressive” educational practices although they were unrecognized in Western educational circles.

As evidenced in her speeches, first-hand accounts of her teaching, and students’ responses, it is clear that DeCora practiced and embodied the following methods reflecting her transcultural views and philosophy:

The nature of Indian art is formed on a purely conventional and geometric basis, and our endeavors at the Carlisle Indian School have been to treat it as a

\textsuperscript{423} Genevieve Bell, \textit{Telling Stories}, 84.  
\textsuperscript{424} Genevieve Bell, \textit{Telling Stories}, 127.  
conventional system of designing. The Indian pictured the broader aspects of nature in symbolic figures of geometrical shapes with each tribal scheme of symbolisms. The study of the fundamental figures was followed by the combined figures, made up of two or more of the elements of design, complex figures made by repeated use of two or more of the elements of design. Under this analytic system we have studied the various tribal styles. The Indian’s art was a well established system of designing and if the young school Indian was permitted to practice it in the class room it would make an interesting exhibition…and moreover it might be further cultivated by the educated Indians and adapted to modern methods.  

Woven within the speeches of DeCora, the acceptance of the Indian student as a “natural artist” is taken to a new level as she distinguishes tribal heritage, individualizes instruction, and gives students a place to breathe. The new curriculum, taught by Indian teachers, benefited students beyond what White teachers could. It is difficult to say how this affected students, yet one may assume an essence of empowerment was added simply by placing Native women in power. DeCora was a Hampton graduate and part of the boarding school forced assimilation program. She could now offer her students strategies for maneuvering in the seemingly unnatural culture of Euro-white America. Her generation of Indian teachers could bring a new self-consciousness to their pedagogy. DeCora took this to a intellectual level accepting racial rhetoric and following up with material examples of the distinctive qualities of “Native abilities” as inherently valuable and can be used in modern applications and in forging a new truly American art.

DeCora’s Pedagogy: Applications of Modern Indian Rhetoric

Much of DeCora’s writings and speeches suggest her firm belief in the art of Indian people as innovative and adaptable. Her speeches and illustrations thrust Native

---

426. DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” 123.
arts into the future. For example, in her speech at the first conference of the Society of American Indians, she used a future tense to describe the contributions of the “Indian of North America” envisioning the widespread use of the hundreds of designs. She also implied the intellectual sovereignty or copyrights of the designs and the knowledge the originators could offer White manufacturers, a better understanding of the system of decoration in order to make the products more popular in the “general market.”

In DeCora’s words:

Many of these designs have been thrown upon the market of the country and each one has brought its financial reward, but more than that, from these small and unassuming ventures, we have drawn the attention of artists and manufacturers to the fact that the Indian of North America possessed a distinctive art which promises to be of great value in a country which heretofore has been obliged to draw its models from the countries of the eastern hemisphere.”

Within the same 1911 speech, her process of gaining intellectual and artistic recognition begins and extends with her optimistic statement “Its [Native designs] continued development shows much more can be expected as time and opportunity offer new occasions for its application.” DeCora had been teaching at Carlisle for six years at the time of this speech. She had witnessed the fruition of her mature pedagogy. She encouraged the momentum of design application and growth. “Its (design) scope grows wider each year and the future has much in store.”

What can be learned from these early twentieth century speeches? As Robert Warrior emphasizes in *Tribal Secrets*, about the earlier movements like the one initiated by the Society of American Indians, paraphrasing Vine Deloria Jr., “The deeper question is really about how one becomes and remains an Indian in the twentieth

---

428. Ibid.
century. A lot of the action is to return only to the external, show business image of Indians…” Deloria saw the American Indian Movement and their tactics as relying on past notions of the Indian and “clothed in the symbols of yesteryear.”

The dynamic adaptable Indian-ness has always been defined by process. DeCora reiterates the view of the process in 1911. DeCora’s words describe the challenges and strategies she embodied in that specific moment in history. “The Indian in his native dress is a thing of the past, but his art that is inborn shall endure. He may shed his outer skin, but his markings lie below and should only show up brighter.”

_Tribally Specific Arts and Design and Pan-Indian Lexicon_

DeCora was first to admit the brainwashing within the cultural genocide of the boarding schools had been successful in cleansing students of an interest in anything “Indian.” Upon entering her new position she commented she felt she was addressing members of an “alien race.” This became a challenge to gain the trust of her students and to familiarize them with the new objectives of her pedagogy and the Native Industries curriculum. As she stated “On taking up my work at Carlisle, I found one of the necessary things to do was to impress upon the minds of my pupils that they were Indians, possessing native abilities that had never been recognized in the curriculum of the government schools.”

We can not see what she did, yet we can grasp the “feel” by the material examples, i.e., speeches and accounts of others. One photograph in particular tells the

---

431. Ibid.
This photograph of DeCora’s classroom shows student working surrounded by chalkboards with tribally specific designs conveying symbolic meanings. Words like “clouds” are placed next to geometric designs as well as the capitalized tribal origins, “Pueblo.” The analytical references in the above passage denoting the breaking down of patterns into more simple units are also demonstrated on the chalkboards. Not only does she teach the meaning as she understands it, but she also shows students the relevance of the work in Euro-American terms by equating it to mathematical patterns and a cross cultural sophistication not recognized when evaluating baskets and “curios” for sales purposes.

The analytical nature of her teaching further illustrates her ability to move easily in and out of the cultures, finding a “safe” zone and carefully defending the race of her people in her rhetoric. As Lomawaima and McCarty (2006) note, “We believe their [Indian Native arts teachers’] ultimate failure stemmed from the fact that arts and music presented a fundamental Indian-ness that schools simply could not control.” The integration and practical application of mathematics was also echoed in student work examples whereby the students were assigned to solve story problems based on the materials needed to weave a rug in Native Industries. Not only aesthetic value was placed on the products of Native cultures, concepts were interpreted to reveal sophisticated and well developed systems of thinking and a view into the Native knowledge base. Integration across the curriculum meant Native Industries was not only valued in the Leupp studio but across the entire Carlisle complex by Indian and non-Indian teachers and administration (at least during DeCora’s tenure).

DeCora’s public presentations on Native arts and industries curriculum did more than simply show the audience (Indian and non-Indian) a glimpse into the successes she found teaching her methods in boarding schools. She pointed out the unique contributions of the “race” to the greater American cultural development. Native art became the true American art when viewed through the speeches of DeCora. One could not undervalue the contributions and future contributions she alluded to in her words:

The designs form the nucleus of Native Indian Art. The Indians are gifted in original ideas of ornamentation. To train and develop this decorative instinct of the Indian to modern methods and apply it on up-to-date house furnishings is the nature and intent of the Native Indian Art Department.435

This notion foreshadowed what was to follow in the 1930s with the Indian Reorganization Act after the Meriam Report was published in 1928.436

Further observation of the photograph reveals process. The scraps and trimmings remain on the floor, revealing the weaving process. The students are working and engaged in various stages of the creative process. The viewer cannot help but think this is an active and creative environment, not merely a staged scene for a propaganda photo. This scenario was in direct contrast to many boarding school issue publicity photos of the same era. This photograph was chosen specifically by her to illustrate accurately the ideas and concepts in her speech. It must be noted that DeCora used this particular photo in a montage of four as a display when she gave her speech at the 1907 National Education Association conference in Los Angeles. In the majority of photographs released by the schools and for publicity purposes, students sit in neat


rows, desks clean of any sign of work or raw materials. In the older photos, students wear pressed uniforms and neat chignons while sunshine streams in on their tightly closed mouths and downcast eyes (see fig. 12).

DeCora’s public presentations on the topic of Native arts and industries curriculum did more than simply show the audience (Indian and non-Indian) a glimpse into the successes she found teaching her methods in boarding schools. She pointed out the unique contributions of the “race” to the greater American cultural development. She incorporated weekly critiques for students to have the chance to show their work and also win prizes. Competition was seen as a Western value that students must grow familiar with. Therefore, DeCora prepared her students with new skills coupled with the empowerment of feeling that at least through art they could compete alongside the Euro-American population and create some of the terms of engagement. This situation came about only through the power that DeCora sought through the appropriation of the Western education and the strength she had to become part of the agonizing experience that defined decades of the boarding school life. Within the school, she could develop student pride and self-esteem, letting true light into the place of extreme darkness and heartbreaking loneliness.

DeCora’s interest and early educational training took her to study the art and visit with the people on the Fort Berthold Reservation in North Dakota, then home to the Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa (see fig. 13). Among the Mandan, she was known for her wit and humor and her sensitive portraiture. She said of her experiences, “For the past two summers I have visited Indian tribes with the view to getting an insight into the

Fig. 12. Uintah Boarding School Classroom, 1900s, Estelle Reel Papers, MAC, Spokane, Washington.
Indian woman’s life and her natural tendencies in domestic life; not with the purpose of giving her instruction in the improved methods of domestic science, but to find out the kind of work she does in which she employs her Native designs.\textsuperscript{438}

Expressing the female experience became a theme for her pedagogy. DeCora’s depictions of women and children coincided with the mainstream social reform movement that advocated women’s art and the promotion of pre-industrial forms of handcrafts. This moment in history gave DeCora further license to study traditional designs and materials such as basketry and bring them back to Carlisle with the applause for the Euro-reformists. During this time DeCora created illustrations and book covers as a form of applied art expressing her distinct views and experiences as an American Indian woman. The illustration entitled “‘I was only digging medicine,’ the elf soberly announced,” from \textit{Yellow Star} by Elaine Goodale Eastman, 1911, depicts the constant and irrevocable relationships between Indian people and the land as well as the strength of the bonds to the land through the “medicine” and women’s changing yet important roles within the culture (see fig. 14).

Choosing to depict women and children signifies the persistence and continuance of the culture. It also signifies art as social uplift: women and children, mothers and daughters bonding and passing on the culture. Her pictorial treatment of subject matter in her easel style and illustration work, for example, show overlapping juxtaposition of Indian women and children and the landscape to create a visual bond between the two. This meshing of figure and ground is consistent with the aesthetic

\textsuperscript{438} DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” 1911.
Fig. 13. DeCora Publicity Photograph “Teacher of Art…”, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Steckbeck collection. Courtesy Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA.
Fig. 14. Angel DeCora and William Dietz illustration for Yellow Star by Elaine Goodale Eastman, 1911.

"I was only digging medicine," the elf soberly announced. Page 209.
found in representations reflecting of the Winnebago aesthetic, not a flaw in her perspective rendering ability. The bond was that they were one in the same, never to be separated, not even for the sake of Western pictorial perspective or values. These themes were either implied or overtly conveyed in her curriculum through choice of materials and practice in pedagogy.

Indian Teachers in Boarding Schools

*Contributions of DeCora and Zitkala Sa: Indian Teachers Among Indians*

Anne Ruggles Gere pointed out in *Indian Heart/White Man’s Head* that Indian teachers including DeCora have not been given much attention in historic education studies or in specific issues of Native visual arts within the boarding schools.439 Angel DeCora and Zitkala Sa (also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin, 1876-1928) both were students of boarding schools. Although Zitkala Sa taught English under Pratt’s administration (1899), they shared many experiences as boarding school teachers. They also collaborated on projects published for mainstream American press and the growing Indian reading audience. The two collaborated on creative projects such as *Iktomi* (*Old Indian Legends*), published in 1901.440 This collaborative relationship is important to note because it maps the development and newfound power the two artist/teachers enjoyed through the Progressive era. Activist, musician, teacher and author Zitkala Sa,

---

440. Zitkala Sa, *Old Indian Legends or Iktomi*, (Boston: Ginn, 1901).
however, taught under Pratt’s administration that led to a short, tenuous stay at Carlisle for one year.

DeCora and Zitkala Sa shared experiences as Native teachers at Carlisle and the following goals: firstly, iconographic, to describe the representation of crucial social issues; secondly, to communicate an understanding of Indian experience and also build a sense of pride and community; thirdly, to analyze how codes, symbols and conventions of representation and their perceived reception, shaped images, literature and Indian and non-Indian public discourse concerning the issues. DeCora and Zitkala Sa’s work at Carlisle as teachers may have influenced students through the inherent power of visual and literary culture to create a small space for transcultural expressions. These influences may have included cultural preservation, empowerment and a degree of healing.

Breaking the false dichotomy between traditional Indian life-ways and Euro-American dominant culture of the late 19th century became possible through American Indian created art and literature. DeCora uses an affirmative style of representation, coaxing viewers into the structured and full domestic lives of the women in her illustrations of traditional life. By the medium she chooses, she has the choice to either recreate the proprieties of her Winnebago everyday world or reveal the harsh and brutally isolating cultural dissolution.

During DeCora’s professional illustration/design career and her tenure as Director of Native Arts at Carlisle Indian Industrial School (1905-1914), she had the unique background to define and promote the aesthetic of Indian visual art. Like Zitkala

441. Patricia Johnson, Seeing High and Low, 32.
Sa her intentions also embraced social reform objectives. How they attained these goals was different. Zitkala Sa sought to engage in a dialogue with the white Progressives by articulating the atrocities of Indian boarding schools through literary means in popular publications. DeCora used the popular tenants of the arts and crafts social reform movement founded in Ireland and England to begin to define Indian art and promote cultural survival through the practice of traditional handicrafts and design. Appealing to the Progressive political movement, and Progressive Primitivism, both Zitkala Sa and DeCora felt the dialogue open to utilize both culturally specific aesthetics in their work, to strike a balance, to illuminate, to educate and to allow White viewers and readers to enter humanity through age old cultural rhythms through publishing their work in popular magazines. DeCora used popularized Progressive Primitivism of the arts and crafts movement to expose the complex and symbolic design motifs of tribally specific art forms while not locking the definition into a historical past.

Simultaneously, Zitkala Sa aimed to appeal to the same audience who would applaud the conservation of her “vanishing culture.” Zitkala Sa wrote to her fiancé Carlos Montezuma. “I am going to try to combine the two! I am going [home] to my mother because she cannot come to me. I can write stories and have them published in the East for the so-called civilized peoples." She succeeded in her goals by writing, teaching, composing and publishing in the English language for Euro-American and Indian audiences.

443. Letter from Zitkala Sa, to her future husband Carlos Montezuma, April, 19 1901. “Zitkala Sa Letters Sent,” Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala Sa) Papers, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Provo, Utah, BYU.
Collaboration between DeCora and Zitkala Sa affirmed pre-contact traditional life as well as a syncretism not up for appropriation. Zitkala Sa’s restraint in storytelling and wording leaves the reader and viewer inside her “in” world, a world where the white audience is not allowed. She seems to hold the images within her gaze not actively involving the White reader to be part of it. For example, her mention of a “secret tattoo” on the face of a woman in her story of Indian teachers illustrates stories with the same restraint and with symbolism not easily translatable to the Euro-American audience through the English language or the Western pictorial conventions. For what purpose and what audience did they create *Old Indian Legends*? One might imagine Zitkala Sa and DeCora pouring passion and affection into the creation of the book. They must have seen their unique opportunity to publish a fragment of the Lakota culture as a challenge and a celebration of transcultural artistic practices.

DeCora concurrently published her own prose stories with illustrations to match. She invited the viewers and readers into a restrained and beautiful world through the Western media. Her illustrations for *Harper’s* complement her prose in a luminous style reminiscent of Smith instructor Tryon’s tonal paintings.\(^{444}\) As seen, in the illustration of DeCora’s story (1899) *Grey Wolf’s Daughter*, “Dancing Girls” (see fig.15), faces and lights flicker, objects seem to be in motion, eyes are cast down, all are women, and there is something more happening than a dance. On the left, a woman walks the viewer into the dance, the gaze is directed for us to “read” the work from left to right and back towards the circular wigwam as the lines of deep shadows lead to the feminine symbols of vessels and back to the woman who walks us in. Motion is implied.

\(^{444}\) Waggoner, *Firelight*, 279.
Fig. 15. Angel DeCora, “The Dancing Girls”, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine*, 1899. 445

through the circular forms in the extreme forefront as well as the diagonal lines wrinkling down through the dwelling.

This piece exemplifies her illustration study with Howard Pyle and her mastery of Tryon’s tonalism. Pyle had emphasized creating illustrative views for readers to “enter.” In this eye-level view, many visual details greet the viewer as if one could walk into the piece and find herself part of the story. Tryon wanted his students to paint without the hard lines found in illustrational techniques while portraying transitory light and movement much like Impressionism. In “Dancing Girls” the audience “feels” the mystery through the blurring of line and form, yet the Native audience may have understood the meaning of the ceremony on multiple levels.

Other examples of DeCora’s work can be seen the extensive illustrations she created with Zitkala Sa for *Old Indian Legends*. Zitkala Sa and DeCora both published in major Euro-American magazines collaboratively and on their own. Sometimes their work would be juxtaposed by a story by the racialist rhetoric of the day like an article by President Jackson on colonization. Both depicted the civilized culture from which they came and convincingly show that, to the Indian, white society does not “save” Indian children from their savage ways; instead this supposedly “refined” society savagely transgresses Indian social codes by continually “intruding itself upon others.” Both Zitkala Sa and DeCora expressed their identity through Western mediums. Their experiences teaching Native student no doubt had a profound influence on the continuance of subversive expression through this legacy.

---

Boarding school publications such as Carlisle’s *The Red Man* had historically been used to assure White audiences that their patronage was important and gaining funding. Without this financial support the institution could not continue. This was Pratt’s aim: keep the White policy-makers happy with printed propaganda. He had used the “before and after” shots and success stories of “civilized” Indians to promote his boarding school. After he stepped down from his position, the *Red Man* covers and other published materials took on a different tone. For the first two decades of Carlisle’s operations, the publication covers resembled agricultural magazines as did the studio art for exhibitions. Carefully drawn agricultural produce embellished the magazine covers or Indian men harvesting grains. The post-Pratt era curriculum emphasized Native culture, women’s art and geometric designs.

Cover designs from Carlisle publications were also used by other Indian School magazines. An example of this is a cover of *The Red Man* with various Native designs forming two vertical geometrically balanced bands framing the contents of the 1915 publication (see fig. 16). While a few years later in 1921 Chilocco also used identical vertical bands directly borrowed from the Carlisle graphics. Although Carlisle was then not operating as an Indian Boarding school, the legacy of the Native Arts department continued to influence the Native arts and design well after WWI.

In contrast to DeCora’s experiences, Zitkala Sa taught at Carlisle while still under Pratt’s paternal and idealistic eye. The tides were slowly turning as William N. Hailmann began to take another look at what the curriculum offered to Indian students. Hailmann stated if teachers “seek to better understand the positive attributes of their
Fig. 16. Boarding School Newspaper covers displaying Carlisle designs, 1921.
students’ native heritage” it might “foster…these seeds of high character in the children intrusted to his care.”

While teaching at Carlisle, she illustrated only one cover for The Red Man and collaborated with husband William Lone Star Dietz on illustrations for the book Yellow Star: A Story of East and West by her friend Elaine Eastman, wife of Charles Eastman. One particular illustration from Yellow Star by Elaine Goodale Eastman exemplified the aesthetic of DeCora’s later career (see fig. 14).

Special attention to the aesthetics of figure ground relationship of some Woodlands tribes sheds light on some of the intentions of DeCora’s depictions of women within landscape pictorial compositions. Phillips has delineated the Winnebago aesthetic for depicting figure ground relationships shows a tendency to integrate the two, in effect, showing the holistic relationship in “careful interplay.” This device of meshing the two together in an equal relationship nixes the Western paradigm of human domination over the landscape. Looking at this work in terms of DeCora’s intentions, she had an adept ability at draftsmanship. She would not have been awarded the multiple scholarships if she had a second rate command of perspective formulas used in creating depth in illusionary two-dimensional space. Her achievement was not "token," as this was before affirmative action and Indian Preference legislation. On the contrary she intended to accentuate particular features of her indigenous relationships by abstract pictorial means; she had studied art and formal techniques like perspective formulas and renderings, she must have had exceptional facility beyond that of the average student.


This researcher suggests that McAnulty (1976) was incorrect in assuming that for DeCora, “three dimensional space was indicated, although her command of perspective was weak. In the majority of her illustrations the humans and animals figured were presented in a theatrical manner with the emphasis on gesture. They were normally placed well forward on the picture plane, possibly to avoid perspective problems.” DeCora used this treatment and overlapping juxtaposition of Indian women and children and the landscape to create and visually bond the two. The bond was that they were one in the same, never to be separated, not even for the sake of Western pictorial perspective.

In addition to her intentional use of distorted space in her illustrations, her applied illustration took on a different meaning while she and future husband Lone Star Dietz created covers for *The Red Man* beginning in 1906. These covers are perhaps the most well published and widely circulated popular versions of art expressing DeCora’s aesthetic to bring Indian design into a modern application. She knew the covers would be seen by thousands of people, Indian and non-Indian and the power of the press had much more weight than any other art form. Hence, she used the Carlisle press for her own activist intentions and along with her husband William Dietz created thoroughly modern, cutting edge graphic art further validating Indian people and culture.

CHAPTER VII
RESEARCH FINDINGS: STUDENT DESIGN

There were small passages of freedom and beauty on the tightly regimented Carlisle barracks, much of it inspired by DeCora’s pedagogy. She encouraged her students’ studio practice “to work without her supervision” taking materials to their rooms so they could work independently. At other times they were left unsupervised in her classroom, creating innovations with the materials at hand. She gave them examples of tribal images so that they could create rich lexicons of meaning and offered space and a classroom that nourished and nurtured students.

Tucked away in the archives, the art of DeCora’s students are usually unnamed and unmarked. Some of the art was in display cases for general public viewing while some are housed in large archival folders. Examples of students’ work are included in original collections from the Carlisle School when it closed in 1918 while recent acquisitions, for example the Steckbeck collection (donated in 2008) include student work. The catalog of the Leupp Gallery was added to the collection in 2005 (see fig. 17). One must get special permission to be in the room to gain access to the storage place. Carlisle student work, as in the Sallquist Collection in Spokane, is informally cataloged and therefore if one asks for art work made by the students of Carlisle one may only find it through the hands-on approach. This researcher prefers

Fig. 17 451  Carlisle Rug, Indian Crafts Catalog, Cumberland County Historical Society

451. Illustration of “Carlisle Rug” Courtesy Cumberland County Historical Society.
touching the art, with gloves or not, finding it with other relevant clippings, photos and art from the moment it was made.

Native women’s art fits within the domesticity model of the “civilized” women promoted in boarding schools and within the white women’s Progressive movement. According to early psychologists and ethnographers like Herbert Spencer and Lewis H. Morgan:

Drawing on evolutionary biology, these early ethnologists regarded signs of women’s submission—frailty, economic dependency, and confinement to the home—as necessary to advancement. Sexual differentiation and separation of tasks within the household were the engines behind progress toward civilization.\(^{452}\)

The systemmatized bleaching or “scrubbing” of the “squaw/drudge” image was widely accepted as evidence of successfully “civilizing” Native people. However, as political tides changed, White women reformers celebrated female arts while promoting a less patriarchal society and fervently supported the inclusion of Native arts in the Indian Industrial school curriculum. In the minds of White women, the inclusion became based on empowerment, not subjugation. Part of Superintendent Reel’s Industrial school agenda became to change Indian gender based activities and gender roles while the students were at school, with the exception of Native Industries. The schools created model cottages for students to practice White domestic roles. This later curriculum targeted the female students. After years of listening to the experiences of field matrons and failed attempts to fully assimilate Indians through militaristic industrial training, Native women were championed to a small degree and given the bitter sweet burden of being the bread winners through arts production. One could

assume the curriculum designers were well aware of Native women’s influential societal roles and shared matriarchal structures practiced within many tribal societies. It is important to note that while DeCora researched at the Bureau of Ethnology and ordered reports on pottery and ornament from the Smithsonian and the U.S. National Museum, she did not research to any extent the male Plains Indian ceremonial hide painting styles of the Fort Marion model. One explanation of this exclusion may be the decades of commodification of this type of ledger book drawing and the subsequent changing of commercial “tastes” of consumers promoted by the arts and crafts movement and Progressive women reformers’ groups. Since economics drove the sales rooms, DeCora created pan-Indian items to satisfy white consumers. Of the pan-Indian expressions the “Indian rug” (see fig. 17) and the “Carlisle bag” were designed to allow many tribal and multi-cultural influences such as Persian rug making techniques to be blended into a non-gender based marketable “product.” These goals reflect the popularized souvenir and curio market responding to a demand for products created to satisfy the white market for the “exotic.” Waggoner pointed out the debate of the time with regard to DeCora’s design curriculum. “Students often created composite designs, not tribally specific ones. But what was more preferable, creating a pan-Indian rug when you are a Lakota person, or embroidering Victorian pansies on a dressers scarf when you are a Cheyenne?” Pratt had been averse to the hiring of Leupp, and his philosophy of “improvement not transformation” caused him great concern as he said,

---

453. Carlisle Indian Industrial School Catalog, Courtesy CCHS.
454. Linda Waggoner, Firelight, 156-7.
“It emphasizes the old life and absorbs the attention of the young to the detriment of their acquiring knowledge of civilization.”

Much of her pedagogy was created to inspire race pride, just as the arts and crafts movement was to provide social up-lift in immigrant communities. Pratt, like those of his generation, only saw a stark dichotomy: either Native people went “back to the blanket” or they became completely “civilized.” Any remnant of “Indianness” including pan-Indian design work was considered reverting to “the blanket.” Colonel Pratt, founder of Carlisle, encouraged drawing and painting with his first prisoners of war at Fort Marion, Florida (see fig. 7). The ledger art work of the men from Fort Marion foreshadowed the student work at Carlisle with a twist. Joyce Szabo pointed out the drawings “were sold to tourists and given to non-Native people who might help the cause of Native assimilation, especially through education in off reservation boarding schools.”

The art department at Carlisle forty years later became electrified with women’s art forms and DeCora’s Woodland aesthetic.

By initiating studies of art forms, images and many techniques associated with Native women’s art, DeCora broke from the demand for men’s art depicting battle scenes and the communication offered by the Fort Marion artists. This gesture negated the romantic impetus for male collectors to collect the depictions of male activities and male spiritual practices. Szabo stated, “Men’s shirts, shields, and war clubs made and

455. Pratt to Olmstead, Denver, Colorado, January 24, 1908, WA MSS S-1174, Box 10, Folder 351, RHPP.
used on the Plains are highly sought after—particularly male collectors, many of whom share the view the plains study as solely their province, not one shared by women." \( ^{457} \)

DeCora had the support of women reformers and clearly focused her curriculum on the value of women’s art in Native cultures, even if they too had become commodities. Her students were able to communicate in a different way than the Hampton students who had been encouraged to draw and paint in the plains representational traditions. Szabo summarized the “new art history” view of the art of the Fort Marion prisoners saying that their work was transcultural -- “works that required their creators to bring aspects of their own cultural practices together with some aspects of the practices of at least one additional culture.” DeCora’s students also employed these same transcultural techniques for communicative reasons and to reflect the contemporary Indian. Pratt openly criticized her efforts after his resignation. It was an identity balancing exercise for educated Indians “playing” to some audiences with the risk of being persecuted by others like Pratt. The debate continued well after his departure and DeCora’s position was controversial to many assimilationsists. \( ^{458} \)

Within Lurie’s 1958 English transcription of the autobiography of Winnebago women, *Mountain Wolf Woman*, she alluded to an important juncture: as the tourist trade at the turn of the century dictated the demand for certain products, women’s roles took greater importance than men’s. Much of this change was caused by removal from tribal lands and men’s inability to hunt. An important shift took place within DeCora’s

---

lifetime. “Women enjoyed greater self-confidence than men in a culture undergoing rapid and destructive changes.” With this cultural change, “women have benefited from the change to some extent… and (the change) has given women an added source of income in the production of bead-work and basketry.” One may be surprised to learn from Mountain Wolf Woman that basketry was a new craft to the Winnebago. They had earlier made twined bags and other utilitarian containers. Women’s basketry became a “mainstay of many Winnebago families” after the Dawes Act. DeCora also enjoyed this sense of adequacy and passed onto her students the materials and confidence to create innovative expressions through art.459

Student Work

To reiterate her goals, DeCora proposed a curriculum to Commissioner Leupp which would benefit the students by training in useful industries to aid in “self-sufficiency” and create a distinctly American design system adaptable to modern application. Leupp’s motto for Indian education, “improvement not transformation,” gave DeCora ample room to develop a tribally specific design course of study. Jane E. Simonsen conjectured DeCora “taught all her students the designs styles of all tribes, making various design characteristics available to Indian students for whom such designs were not part of their traditions.” From an art teacher’s point of view, this task would be logistically impossible.460 Students who attended Carlisle were from hundreds of different tribal Nations, including other geographical locations such as the

Philippines and Puerto Rico. The Carlisle Arrow reported students representing over ninety tribes attended in 1910. She did, however, separate the North American tribal iconographic depictions into “three distinct styles of Indian designing, The Alaskan, the Southwestern, and the Plains.”

This data suggests she worked with students individually while also giving them a survey of a geometric system she had developed to explain the conventions of Native design within a categorical Western model. The tangible evidence exhibited in her speeches and samples of student work demonstrate individual encouragement of each student to become more familiar with his or her own tribal symbol systems. She also promoted further development of pan-Indian or composite design, regarding it as a way to allow native students to create “designs by their own intelligence” reflecting racial solidarity. This mirrored the movement within Indian intellectual circles to unite and become a more powerful voice for Indian futures and identities laid out by organizations like the newly formed Society of American Indians. DeCora was one of the founding members of the Society of American Indians and spoke at the first meeting in 1911. By creating new forms of Indian art, she flatly rebuffed the racially based deficiency model. Merging Persian rug making techniques with Indian designs, students made the “Carlisle Rug” (see fig. 17). Multiples of these rugs were made for sales in the Leupp studio (see fig. 19). DeCora studied Persian rug making in New York during the summer of 1906 at the Persian Rug Factory agreeing with Leupp to create a “permanent industry” for future Indian self-sufficiency. This example is important because the

462. *Carlisle Arrow*, April, 27, May 18, and June 8, 1906, CCHS.
design is composite and blended with Persian rug making into a unique creation. She had desired the use of an alternative to Navajo rug making techniques in order to make dense intricate designs. The result was “a very interesting design of a composite Indian character, well adapted to such an art as rug making.”

The inherent spiritual worldviews could live on in syncretism as Indians initiated their own futures with transculturated art forms. She spoke of the misconceptions of white society and asserted “Go to him (Indian). . . and get his story. . . After he has given you what you want, don’t think that what he gave out has left a vacancy in his spiritual nature for you to fill in with your own ideas.” As discussed in previous chapters, the worldviews and spirituality were embedded in the symbol systems. The power of the art could not be reduced to a superficial commodity or artifacts from lost “pagan” societies. From her Winnebago viewpoint, she knew what this meant even if policy makers like Leupp considered Native art “harmless” and “silly.” Western worldviews were blinded by their own categories and could not see how Native arts promoted spirituality, hence, empowered the students and communities. There are few written student responses focused on DeCora’s classes and fewer named art examples. The specificity of the work discussed demonstrates DeCora’s respect for each student and their tribal identities.

Two years into her directorship and after summer travels to tribal communities and to the Los Angeles National Education Association conference, she amended her

---

464. LR 1906:48453, 11E37/26/5 Box 3152, NARA-DC RG 75.
466. Francis E. Leupp. “Extracts From Letters by the Commissioner.” The Indian Craftsman (June 1909), p. 9. Leupp had commented that their “silly little songs” were harmless when incorporated into boarding school curricula. (1906).
original proposal and announced the changes in her 1911 speech Native Indian Art. Within this address, she explains the revised “course of study” to include “tribe by tribe” studies of styles “peculiar to each tribe.” She went on to describe her travels among specific tribes including the Sioux. She gave “practical suggestions” aimed at encouraging women to make articles suited for modern and white audiences such as “purses, opera bags and sewing bags.” Her intimate time spent with “the Sioux” women may have influenced her tutelage of Lillian Rice, the artist who created some of the only signed student work extant in the Carlisle Cumberland County Historical Society.

The simple studies in the folders may have been drawings for use later on other objects or for home decorations. It is this researcher’s intention to view the work like poems made in the English language as an expression of an Indian individual in this specific context. This is not an attempt to reduce the work to “preliminary” or anything other than what they are. As DeCora stated, “they come to me for materials to take to their rooms…with steady and unhesitating hand, they put down lines and color combinations that appear in their designs.” The samples reflect the model she proposed in her speeches: a standardized geometric, tribally specific system blended with Western materials and uses. The students created tribally specific and pan-Indian expressions (see fig. 18). She held to her plan of initiating the future progression of

468. Angel DeCora, “Native Indian Art”, 45.
469. Ibid.
Fig. 18. Native Industries display case at Cumberland County Historical Society, November, 2008.

471. Photograph of student work courtesy of the Cumberland County Historical Society used with permission.
Fig. 19. Close up of display case photograph by Everett Strong of the Sales Studio in the Leupp Art Studio, courtesy the Cumberland County Historical Society.
Fig. 20. Postcard from Carlisle Indian Industrial School, 1911. The Leupp Indian Art Studio. Courtesy CCHS.
Native arts, stating that “much of their [Indians’] art products have been gathered into museums…nothing has ever been done to encourage their further progress.” At the Cumberland County Historical Society, a display case illustrates items made during DeCora’s tenure DeCora encouraged “further progress” for Indian studies and innovative arts production. She intended to break the destructive myth of the Indian “artifact” precipitated by the collector, museum and white anthropologist. With this gesture she resisted the white conceptual construct of the static, “vanishing” Indian cultures. Design and color studies, samples that include names and titles or description of the assignment, serve to illustrate DeCora’s complex communal and individuated assignments used in the Carlisle design curriculum. Most of the studies are by female students. Within the various student names found in the butterfly series, we can assume the students and teacher worked together developing the design template for use by a number of students. The student data revealed the following processes: drafting the original design of the organic butterfly shape and corresponding geometric arrow and triangle motif, assignments in complementary color use, and saturation of tints and hues in watercolor. The student works must have been made during 1910 or 1911 because the student enrollment records confirm their concomitant attendance.\footnote{472. *Carlisle Arrow* Articles in May 1909 through August 1911 mentioning Lillian Rice, Eunice Bartlett, and Cora Battice transcribed by Barbara Landis at http://home.epix.net/~landis.}

*Lillian Rice and Cora Battice*

The concept that “Life Histories are Gifts” emanates from the interview of the daughter of DeCora’s student Lillian Rice.\footnote{473. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *To Remain an Indian*, 12.} This interview began as a series of emails between this researcher and the biographer of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School,
Barbara Landis. It is because of Landis’ openness and profound interest in the students and persons involved in the history of Carlisle that this serendipitous meeting and interview could take place.

Opening the folder at the Cumberland County Historical Society and finding the work of Eunice Bartlett, Lillian Rice (Lakota) and Cora Battice (Fox, or Mesquakie) offered a window into the experiences of the students at Carlisle. The student artwork serves as a fragment reflecting experiences in Angel DeCora’s classroom. Assignment processes surfaced as there were multiple drawings and variations of the same study in design, color and tribally specific symbolism. A larger watercolor and pencil study in orange, red and shades of green on yellowing paper displayed two symmetrically positioned stylized butterflies. The title, written in pencil “Study in Color Harmony” with Lillian Rice penciled in on the discolored border served as a sample of student art with a name and a title exemplifying a lived experience in DeCora’s class. The template has Eunice Bartlett’s name scratched across the bottom. The analysis of the designs also mirrors the experiences of Lillian Rice and Eunice Bartlett as seen through the process of the design studies within the assignment. One can analyze the work “backwards” from the finished product, breaking down the individual tasks and processes to reveal the assignment. It may have been originally assigned as a wall decoration or motif.

Because we know she used a template, the discussion will begin with the title referencing “color harmony.” The assignment must have been an exercise in complementary color placement, or a “Stencil design for frieze(s).” Development of Rice’s ideas are demonstrated by the arrangement of shapes, her color choice,

application of watercolor, juxtaposition of major and minor images, repeated images, number of repeated images, development of organic shapes and recognizable images positioned next to the more abstract geometric lines (see fig. 21).

This discussion will begin with Lillian Rice (Lakota) because of the availability of information pertaining to Rice as well as the well preserved example of her design study. Lillian Rice arrived at Carlisle from Rosebud, South Dakota after attending St. Mary’s Mission. She attended Carlisle from age nineteen, starting her residency in 1910 staying during school years at Carlisle. Born in 1891 on the Rosebud Reservation, she had been orphaned at a young age and had no close relatives left as stated in the NARA citation in her folder. Her mother had died of starvation and her brother of tuberculosis. She also enrolled in the mandatory summer outing program until she was twenty-two. Rice’s age shows the shift to older age requirements for enrollment in the later years at Carlisle. Her youngest daughter, Wynne DuBray, remembered how her mother would tell of the starvation of her grandmother, great-grandfather and uncle during the aftermath of the Fort Laramie Treaty, when members of her tribe were kept in internment camps and given meager rations. The circumstances weakened them to the point most contracted terminal illnesses, which caused death due to the inhumane situation. Rice spent most of her life in boarding schools learning to be “Indian” through institutions and her peers.

475. Reproduction of Lillian Rice’s study courtesy of the Cumberland County Historical Society.
476. This information was emailed to me by Carlisle Biographer Barbara Landis and verified by Rice’s daughter on November 26th 2008 during a phone conversation and semi-structured interview.
478. See interview with Rice’s daughter Wynne DuBray, November 26, 2008, in Appendix C. Name used by expressed written permission of interviewee.
Fig. 21. Lillian Rice, Study in Color Harmony, 1910. L2004.038.09. Courtesy CCHS.
The original template carries Eunice Bartlett’s name although it is more difficult to find information on Eunice Bartlett. Although the butterfly template has Bartlett’s name, she was probably one of the students working in a cooperative classroom under DeCora’s instruction. In the official Carlisle records, Bartlett is mentioned in the “tribe unknown” category. Further investigation revealed she may have been a member of a Chippewa tribe.\textsuperscript{479}

DeCora’s pedagogy and goals for her curriculum are embodied in Rice’s studies. First, the design has a tribally specific design slightly modified and used as a motif. Butterflies have an important place in the Sioux worldview usually associated with women and women’s medicine, botanical medicine, and transformation. Rice’s daughter remembered how “she embroidered butterflies and flowers on hand towels and linens.” The gesture echoes DeCora’s encouragement of applying tribally specific designs to “modern” objects. Furthermore, in DeCora’s 1911 speech to the Society of American Indians she said of her legacy:

My experience at Carlisle shows me that in addition to the creative ability in designing, it is no effort for the school Indian to acquire the technique of any handiwork, but in all probability none of these excellent designers will ever find their way into any art school for a finished training, but should one care to look into their future homes, however modest they might be, one will find there a sense of harmony peculiar to the American Indian.\textsuperscript{480}

In her words, DeCora acknowledged the realities faced by Native students after leaving the boarding schools. Regardless of how talented or academically gifted, they experienced barriers that did not support attending institutions of higher education. She

\textsuperscript{479} Carlisle Arrow, 1910, 34.
asserted the importance of creating beauty and balance within the home. Doing so illuminates the work in the home as valued, especially women’s work.

The study title itself “Study in Color Harmony” denotes the creation of balance. Harmony can be defined as “aesthetically pleasing relationships among the elements of a whole,” and we can assume “color harmony” was DeCora’s assignment prompt. Harmony also suggests the balance of opposites which is also displayed in the compositional arrangement of the images. DeCora was well aware of the Native value of “balance” and may have encouraged her students to create as much symmetry as possible to support the theme of harmony. In fact, since the tribally specific symbols served as abbreviations for the worldviews, the spiritual belief systems became available for the students.

This researcher found little reference to spirituality and art within scholarly writing on Angel DeCora. Contemporary artists convey the force of the symbol “needing no more than a hint to give us meaning.” Undoubtedly, the essence as portrayed in symbol could speak stories and histories through the lexicon of the visual. She may have been reintroduced to the symbols through DeCora’s work or from her mother or other who was a member of the Sioux nation. The Lakota word for butterfly is “kimimila” which has mimetic qualities reminiscent of the movement and essence of a butterfly. As Ella Deloria remarked with regard to Lakota parfleshe bag design, “these food cases were made in pairs and permanently ties together loosely.” And the pairs

483. Ella Deloria quoted in Marcia Clif Bol’s 1989 Ph.D. dissertation, this quote is from an undated interview with Bol.
were painted exactly alike with designs that their owner could recognize. Each woman had her own design, and it was generally known, so that there was little reason to dispute over them.\textsuperscript{484} Bol emphatically pointed out the individual freedom Lakota women enjoyed while creating signature designs (see fig. 22). Within the same discussion, it was noted that “the women kneeled on the skin and designed her patterns, putting all the colors which she thought pretty and suited her fancy.”\textsuperscript{485}

Rice used red and green which are complementary colors when used in juxtaposition show harmony in visual art studies. These particular earthy reds and variations of green were also popular within the arts and crafts movement for interior decoration color schemes. Rice’s butterfly study relies on complementary colors to create harmony (see fig. 21). DeCora states the natural use of these colors by untrained Native women in her 1906 speech:

\begin{quote}
Her bold touches of green and red and yellow she has learned from nature’s own use of these colors in the green grass and flowers…She makes strong color contrasts under the glare of the sun…this scheme of color has been called barbaric and crude.\textsuperscript{486}
\end{quote}

Looking closely at the marks of her pencil, it is difficult to distinguish if the uniformity of the shapes are generated from a template or hand rendered. We know Eunice Bartlett’s stencil was used to help develop the butterfly images.\textsuperscript{487} Moreover, straightedges and French curves were additionally used as tools. Each seemingly uniform shape shows a slight difference although a straight edge was obviously used as an aide. The same folder contains another variation of the butterfly motif; this

\textsuperscript{484} Marsha Clift Bol, \textit{Gender in Art}. This excerpt was taken from a statement made by Ella Deloria nd., 98-99.
\textsuperscript{485} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{486} Angel De Cora, “An Effort to Encourage Indian Art,” 1906: 207.
\textsuperscript{487} CCHS, folder P17.
Fig. 22. Sioux Tobacco Bag, 1880, Courtesy of Port Huron Museum, Port Huron MI. Used with permission.
does not use the same stencil yet has the same conventionalized images. Although one may view the stencil as a limitation, the converse is true; the use of a stencil offers endless design possibilities. Stencils allow the student to repeat and combine shapes quickly unifying a piece through line and form. Color could then be used as an independent element or to add variety and contrast as seen in “Study in Color Harmony.”

The assignment combines contradictory elements. For example, stylized organic representation, the butterfly, is used in combination with pure geometric form to create tension form and content. Another layer of tension was encouraged by the use of complementary colors. As succinctly stated by Hoffmann, “These artists (Inuit) were asked to work on many levels of meaning, the primitive and elemental, the decorative and beautiful, the symbolic and mythical, in continuity of perspective none of which excludes the other.”

The placement of geometric with representational form characterizes the flexibility of the developing aesthetic. The aesthetic could playfully incorporate diverse elements to deepen the meaning. According to DeCora, “It may be interesting to know that my students never use practice paper. With steady and unhesitating hand and mind, they put down permanently the lines and color combinations that appear in their designs.”

By 1910, she must have been experimenting with a blend of techniques for design studies as these examples show. Furthermore, Bartlett may have French curve for the source of the uniformity found in the curves of the wings. The wing curves juxtaposed with the angular geometric designs creates a directional balance as the organic opening gesture of the wings softens the

strong thrust upward movement of the three vertical yellow bars and grounding of the arrow shapes and triangles pointing towards the lower edge of the work. Remarkably, the elongated lower columns of yellow echo the progressive arts and crafts movement tenant of using “honest, straight lines” combined with folk art “to evoke the simple life” coupled with the earthy red-browns and greens to help scrub the home of the vagaries of artifice.\footnote{490}

Rice’s careful attention to the gradation of the watercolor application shows DeCora’s instruction on color saturation, tints, hues and color theory. DeCora must have asked her students to focus on color mixing and color theory as part of her assignment criteria. This is seen within both butterfly motif studies. Precise color mixing is seen in gradations of tints and hues from the lightest yellow green in the geometric columns ending with the deepest hue of green on the wingtip. The placement of the lightest yellow at the base of the piece creates a dynamic movement as the eye easily and quickly moves up the column as if emulating a butterfly’s flight.

Green remains the dominant color carefully balanced compositionally by the intensity of the red circles outlined by black painted lines on the wings and body. Once again, balance is played out by strategically placed dots of intense reds. The use of strong red dots by Blackfeet women has been reported to be a type of notation for the tallying of completed tanned articles.\footnote{491} This may have been an achievement in notation within the women Lakota craft societies also.

The overall effect of the “Study in Color Harmony” is exhilaration and joy. Yellow greens projecting upwards like a soaring of the spirit through the butterfly. The symmetry conveys balance and a feeling of perfection. Balance can also be linked to spirituality as discussed earlier. The daily importance of spirituality came up often in conversations with Rice’s daughter, and the use of the butterfly would be a way to weave spirituality into the daily grind at Carlisle. The butterfly served as an empowering image for women of Plains tribes while DeCora’s first hand experience and trips to the women of the Lakota influenced her promotion of this iconography.

Another example of geometric design by Cora Mae Battice’s (“Pattequa”, Sac and Fox) is more reminiscent of arts and crafts border designs yet adheres to Mesquakie border design standards (see fig. 23). These designs could be applied to a multitude of objects or in home wall decorating. This is an example of a watercolor design exercise, the artist and teacher consciously chose the shapes and colors and repetition of geometric units. The diamond shapes create the dominate theme with different sized triangles, linear rectangles and squares use as connecting shapes. Red is a significant color used in Mesquakie art forms. The diamond or elongated hexagon can be seen in Woodland tribes’ art sometimes suggesting the stylized otter (see fig. 24). The qualities expressed in this exercise suggest energy, vitality and playfulness in the reordering and rhythm of the diamond and linear shapes. Unity is achieved by the monochromatic nature of the color gradations.

Comparing Battice’s design with an example of Mesquakie art, in this case an 1880’s turban made from otter pelt, cotton fabric, silk ribbon, glass beads and a bear
Fig. 23. Cora Mae Battice, Color and Design Study, 1910. L2004.038.08. Courtesy Cumberland County Historical Society.
claw, reveals iconographic and conceptual similarities (see fig. 24). These similarities show an innovative visual short hand for both content and form within tribal identity. In the turban a long vertical band of repeating diamonds. The top horizontal band consists of repeated slender elongated strips punctuated by contrasting diamond shapes. A variation on this theme is demonstrated by Battice. One of DeCora’s speeches outlined this type of study, saying that “the study of the fundamental figures was followed by the combined figures, made up of two or more of the elements of design, complex figures made by repeated use of two or more of the elements of design.”

Since Cora Battice attended school at Carlisle for ten years, 1906-1916, she would have studied closely with DeCora for the duration of her tenure. She may have worked with DeCora with regard to the “artifacts” from the National Anthropological Society which were integrated into the tribally specific design program.

Red is an important color for use in Mesquakie (Sauk and Fox) visual arts, especially red diamonds. The Sauk and Fox tribal nations’ flag is composed of a rectangle divided in half, top portion red, bottom green. Red diamond shapes are seen in most Mesquakie art. The symbol may be related to the shape of an otter, a spiritually and economically important animal to many Woodlands and Great Lakes tribes. However, the Winnebago tribe usually embellished with a hexagonal shape to suggest “otterness.”

Some Plains tribes used the diamond as a stand-in for the human figure. In Annishinaabeg birch bark scroll work, the diamond shape becomes a notation for

---

Fig. 24. Turban, Mesquakie, c.1880 (otter pelt, cotton fabric, silk ribbon, glass beads & bearclaw) by American School (19th century). The Detroit Institute of Arts, USA, Founders Society purchase and Flint Ink Corporation funds. Used with permission of the Bridgeman Art Library.
various animal forms. The addition of linking diamonds created different animal representations.\textsuperscript{496} The design created a chain of meaning through the rhythm of the linked and unlinked shapes.

Interest through variety is the resulting effect. The study in red by Battice shows the carefully rendered depiction of varied geometric forms coupled with the subtle gradation of color saturation. It is as if all the variables she introduced to her students were to be used in a playful manner resulting in meaning and inventiveness. This playful but productive atmosphere characterizes her pedagogical practices.

Finally, the remaining sample from the file is a study in blue and yellow with an equal armed cross at the top (see fig. 25). Unnamed, unsigned, a combination of shapes seen in the other examples with the exception of the equal armed cross. This could be an example of DeCora encouraging pan-Indian expressions. The four winds, the four directions, the equal armed cross, \textit{four}. Many tribal creation stories refer to the number four. In the center is the nexus, what connects us all.

Sara Bates (Cherokee) contemporary artist and teacher described her use of the equal armed cross within a circle. \textquote{This is the symbol found on water spider’s back. She in the one who brought the ‘first fire’ to our people. . . Symbols reveal the accumulation of knowledge and wisdom. . . this symbol . . . has the visual nature of locating the center and representing balance.}\textsuperscript{497} It was through symbol she empowered her students with a “shining language” for the future.

\textsuperscript{496} Anthony LaFromboise, \textit{Spirit Trails and Sky Beings: Traditional Ojibwa Stories on Birch Bark Scrolls}. Gallery Exhibition at the University of Montana Museum of Arts and Culture, February 25, 2009.

Fig. 25. Untitled, Anonymous, Design Study from DeCora’s Classes, 1910. L2004.038.06. Courtesy CHHS.

498. Illustration Reproduction of Design Work Courtesy of Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA.
Conclusion

The student studies were like a notation for Native syncretism or empowering suggestions of tribal identities in a highly restrictive institution. In any case, they were not “sold” individually and we cannot directly follow their “use” to any other object or even home décor applications. To reduce these as only “useful” in another context or preliminary to another outcome would be to commit the same violence of separation intentionally used by the colonizer. This point was poignantly made by Meyer “one ought to resist trying to parse the ‘functional’ from the ‘non-functional’ aspects of culture. But neither religious nor artistic activity is functionally reducible without violence to the meaning of culture itself.” 499

The studies were visual expressions and reminders of who they were at that moment, values and continuity of culture. The images were created under DeCora’s tutelage, a situation that was “within their control” in the context of a militaristic physically and psychically violent environment, the off reservation Indian boarding school. 500 Aesthetically, she encouraged the creation and manipulation of design forms to represent her conception of current Indian identity. She promoted the expression of “the life-feeling” of a transcultural worldview by emphasizing the unique contributions of Native uses of abstraction, unity and geometric simplicity. 501 She foreshadowed postmodern rhetoric and pluralistic viewpoints by elevating the visual pleasure of decorative design over the tenants of Western illusion asserting the wholeness of

500. Eduardo Duran, Healing the Soul Wound, 10.
thinking and perception available in Native aesthetics. DeCora saw cultural “strength” in art and used it to empower her students. They could at least take a breath while in her class and know they were in the company of someone who saw them as unique individuals. This was a rarity in the context of cultural genocide.

After resigning from Carlisle Indian Industrial School, DeCora separated from her husband William Dietz and taught during the summer at Charles and Elaine Eastman’s camp Oahe in upstate New York. Angel DeCora passed in February, 1919 of influenza and pneumonia at the age of 48. She was buried in Northampton, Massachusetts in an unmarked grave in the Clapp family plot.

502. For a comprehensive and concise discussion of Native aesthetics and twentieth century mainstream art movements see Gerhard Hoffmann, “The Aesthetics of Inuit Art.”

503. Iris Heavyrunner’s and Richard DeCelles’ family based education model aims to empower students to stay in school. They give a brief culturally sensitive explanation of empowerment in Indian communities in “Family Education Model: Meeting the Student Retention Challenge,” *Journal of American Indian Education*. 41 no. 2 (2002).
CHAPTER VIII

IMPLICATIONS

During the past ten years American Indian, Alaskan Native and First Nations research and non-Native researcher collaborations have increased.\textsuperscript{504} Themes in Native education and holistic cultural revitalization generated from such studies reveal the following themes: the desire by tribes and Nations for increased control over education; concern for relationships with land, preservation of languages, spirituality, values, beliefs and practices.\textsuperscript{505} We see the work of DeCora’s students embedded with these. More specifically, the same goals remain of Indian control over Indian education formulated by Indians, including policy writing to activate change within communities. DeCora’s students’ work reflects the guidance she provided and the freedom within the rigor she expected. She began her movement of Indian education by Indians.

DeCora believed she must also be a pupil of her students, saying “I want to learn your stitch; now you must teach me! I became their pupil.”\textsuperscript{506} She brought her own “two-way” pedagogy into student lives. She briefly undid what was commonly associated with American Indian education—Indian boarding schools emulating Euro-American lecture traditions including rows of students dressed in militaristic uniforms adhering to assimilationist and vocationalist curricula. Duran and Duran have found much of the individual intergenerational trauma of today can be traced to the cultural

\textsuperscript{504} Catherine Bell and Val Napoleon offer a meta-analysis of contemporary Native cultural issues in Canada included in the introduction to First Nations Cultural Heritage and Law: Case Studies, Voices, and Perspectives, (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2008), 1-29.

\textsuperscript{505} Ibid.

genocide practiced in off reservation boarding schools. Boarding school students were treated harshly and disciplined in accordance with institutional assimilation into a Euromale world. This model is the antithesis of what is envisioned by Lomawaima as “Indian education by Indians,” within the Native movement to establish themselves as “cultural workers and activists who can intervene and change dominant educational narratives.” DeCora’s story helps us see how impossible it is to erase Native voices.

This is a story of how individuals come to know things that make them more whole, strong, and contributing members of communities while learning to seek balance in all things after severe and ongoing cultural disruption. Throughout DeCora’s Indian boarding school experiences, and that of her students—the willing students, involuntary students, prisoners of war, and Native teachers—they were fighting to validate their cultures. These cultures carried an embodied quest for harmony, punctuated by balance, intergenerational wisdom, practical knowledge, and teaching proper societal roles and duties of the genders as well as how to make a living. As pointed out during this discussion, DeCora and her students were under mandated pressure to lose their “Indianness” as well as their family ties, parents, land, and core beliefs. It seems they could not express the extent of the trauma at the time although it still permeates Indian societies now as intergenerational trauma. Even educational practices can be seen “as

a form of political assent,” while the choice some Native students make by “Not learning” consequently “can be seen as a form of political resistance.”

We know DeCora rebuked the strict militaristic discipline which had characterized the Carlisle milieu. When asked how she could leave her classroom unattended she stated “Children only have to be disciplined when they are bored into re- fractoriness. No one is bored when he is creating something.” She knew how to teach in a gentle, meaningful way. She also encouraged creativity and innovation. Her expertise merged with her Winnebago sensibilities and plans for her race. Like her successor Polingaysi Qoyawayma/Elizabeth White, she was given some freedom to develop her pedagogy. Qoyawayma wrote late in her life of her experiences as an Indian teacher among Indian students,

Educate [the Indian child] from what they already know, not from a totally new, strange field of experience….Lead them, guide them, but don’t try to whip them into education, and don’t make the mistake of thinking education can be superimposed upon them like plaster on a wall.

Although the rhetoric is different, the two women shared a strong message. A message of respecting the local tribes as well as the “Indian ways” that remain sacred: start with who they are and be a guide. This allowed the joy of learning to take place even in unbearable circumstances.

The quest for balance continues to surface as a reason to seek knowledge and become “educated.” This discussion does not imply Western education has not been

---

513. Polingaysi Qoyawayma (Elizabeth White), No Turning Back: A Hopi Indian Woman’s Struggle to Live in Two Worlds, 1964, 174-75.
interested in the quest for balance and the empowerment of community and individuals; it has been interested in promoting its own agenda as a historically colonizing educational system, the great equalizer. As a student of educational psychology, this researcher has found theoretical foundations in the epistemologists of the twentieth century supporting this model. This concept may broadly relate to Jean Piaget’s theory on assimilation and accommodation. In an ironic sense, we all must find our way in ever changing cultural circumstances to achieve equilibrium with ourselves, our community and our surroundings. This is not to demean the worldview of Native traditions by using the metaphor of developmental evolution based on Darwinism as to be oversimplified conceptual construct only that it serves to acknowledge within Western epistemology in the twentieth century that equilibrium is seen as a valuable and productive way to intend one’s life.

Validating Women’s Roles

Through a constellation of circumstance and deliberate choice, DeCora reified the significance of women in teaching positions and the beneficial aspects of the arts within Native societies and the Euro-white federally funded boarding school system. Passing these values onto to her students through the boarding school system meant continuing to move Native people into an equitable aesthetic space within profound cultural change through transcultural expressions and teaching. This was done within her distinctive curriculum, blending her Winnebago education and Western higher educational experience into a classroom pedagogy by the referent power of her persona.
Natalie Curtis commented on her “power” in the classroom as remunerative not coercive. These same pedagogical values are outlined in editor and educator Jon Reyhner’s *Teaching American Indian Students*. Best practices include the touchpoints defining her pedagogy. She may have been “blinded by the ways she reproduced many of the contradictions embedded in the progressive, middle class values with which she’d been educated . . .” She also may have been fully conscious of her intentions in terms of Native based gender empowerment and culturally sensitive teaching methods. Her self-consciousness and sarcasm in reading Darwin show her biting awareness: “is it too much for an injun (sic) to read Darwin?”

She continued to mirror the multidimensional, poly-vocal essence of women in Native societies from “time immemorial,” projecting the power of Native women into the future. She validated domestic work and *teaching* as culturally significant and viable for future generations. As stated by Schneider, “The woman who excelled in crafts not only had a chance to become a member of a select group, but she could also increase her family’s status and wealth by working for others and by teaching her craft.”

DeCora drew her strength from her first-hand knowledge of valued and shared gender roles. Schneider goes on to note “Unlike the role of Euro-Americans in craftwork, Plains Indian women received recognition, often public, for their work.”

---

517. Letter from Angel DeCora to Cora Folsom, November 27, 1892, HUA
Women’s status through craftwork has been analogous to the manner in which a man obtained wealth and status through brave exploits.\textsuperscript{520}

She could teach both male and female students design because it had become decontextualized, all the while acknowledging the collaborative nature of men’s and women’s roles in many tribal societies. DeCora shifted the focus of the Carlisle art program from the value perspective of male collectors—who demanded the Plains men’s ledger book style—to design study.\textsuperscript{521} The shift took place naturally due to public support, the arts and crafts movement and demand for Native Industries as curio. This shift was intentional.

DeCora must have struggled with the decontextualization of the processes of beading, and basketry, knowing she was not in a position to give tribally specific ceremonies for the gift of the knowledge. This issue is not discussed and difficult to find written about in DeCora’s private or public records. In some ways, she reconciled the sacredness of art making through manipulation for “modern use.”

By researching tribally specific design for her students, DeCora literally took Native arts out of the hands of the anthropologists and gave it back to her students. Her knowledge of Native cultures and institutions such as the Smithsonian and the Museum of Natural History, coupled with her notoriety, gave her impetus to conduct research. By bringing examples of tribally specific material culture from museums into the classroom she validated the cultures. This gesture allowed her students to gain a sense of wholeness through the arts. Through deeper investigations into the few extant

\textsuperscript{520} For a full discussion of gender roles in Lakota arts and culture, see Marsha Clif Bol “Gender in Art,” Ph.D dissertation: 253-70.

\textsuperscript{521} Joyce Szabo, \textit{Art From Fort Marion}, 172.
examples of her students’ work, we see her curriculum and pedagogy shine through. The intention of this investigation was to find out more about these students as individuals within the school community. Additionally, the goal was to follow-up on individual students with regard to their experiences in Native Industries.

The multigenerational benefits of her teaching can be seen through families more often than institutions. Though funding for boarding schools depended on passing trends and political winds, the values she embraced persisted through the children of her students. This became evident during the interview with Wynne DuBray, Lillian Rice’s daughter. Although she had been placed in the outing program in homes of wealthy Philadelphians as a domestic servant and cook, she retained her sense of integrity and learned to be a gourmet cook. Here lies the irony: assimilation policy placed girls in domestic servant roles, but this gesture may have supported women instead of undermining them. DuBray remarked on how her mother took pride in her domestic arts and gourmet cooking, and made everything by hand with designs blended from her tribe and her boarding school education. Star quilts and hand-towels with embroidered butterflies were part of her home memories.522

By the twentieth century, institutions would become important to many generations of Native students. However destructive, they would lead to some of their successful contributions to mainstream American culture and the transcultural skills used to develop tribally run schools and colleges. DuBray commented on her mother’s deep mistrust of Whites, yet she knew her children would be able to “survive” in the White world through reading and education. After years of assimilation through

522. See Appendix C for interview with Wynne DuBray.
education, there has been a clear shift to foster empowerment through education—
education dedicated to families and tribal communities.\textsuperscript{523}

Implications for Educational Practices and Further Research

To understand the depth of DeCora’s influence and pedagogy one must shift to
an interrelated paradigm instead of a hierarchical model in order for the research
implications to make sense. This is precisely why the discussion began with an
interpretation of DeCora’s Winnebago tribal aesthetics. The following assumptions
guide the interpretation. Cultures are in constant flux, therefore there is not one “fixed”
or “traditional” art in any culture. Languages and worldviews are not always definable
in categorical Western terms. Visual systems and sign systems are languages. Primary
data includes visual art and oral traditions. Spiritual practices including sacred objects
are to be respected; researchers must ask permission before utilizing oral cultural and
material culture. Gender roles do not neatly “fit” in Western societal models. When
viewing the creative work from Native cultures, one must reject the “deficit “or cultural
deprivation model as a premise for multicultural education.\textsuperscript{524} Indigenous education is
not typically defined by the walls of schools. Success and influence are not limited to
monetary or assimilationist standards. Indian boarding schools led to social and cultural
degradation while perpetuating intergenerational trauma.\textsuperscript{525}

\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{523} Iris HeavyRunner & Richard DeCelles, “Family Education Model”, 5. Also see K. Tsianina
Lomawaima & Teresa McCarty, To Remain an Indian, 31-5.
\textsuperscript{524} See James Banks, An Introduction to Multicultural Education, for a survey of multicultural
theories and curricular models. For a discussion related to the deficiency model in off-reservation
boarding school curriculum see K. Tsianina Lomawaima and Teresa McCarty, To Remain an Indian, 30-
6. Both books address the power relationships in classrooms where white teachers teach minority
students.
\textsuperscript{525} Eduardo Duran, Healing the Soul Wound: Counseling with American Indians and Other Native
Peoples (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006).
DeCora defined herself as a Native teacher and artist on her own terms within the progressive era. She asked for policy makers to value indigenous art within their own context and mythical sphere promoting the traditions of respect, reciprocity and reverence to the spiritual. Within this framework, the implications of this research study are threefold. First, DeCora asserted the importance of women as teachers of domestic arts and crafts. She also provided leadership using her Western education and research skills to communicate with a myriad of communities. Finally, she influenced her students by promoting race pride and future success through her transcultural aesthetic and educational sensibilities.

The implications of this study for teaching, curriculum development and global educational practices are far reaching. In a report, Janet Robideau, (Northern Cheyenne) Director of Indian People’s Action (IPA) in Helena, Montana, states, “Inadequate education, a comparative absence of Indian teachers, harassment, and discrimination leave American Indian students poorly supported in our schools and more likely to drop out.”

DeCora’s model of effective educational practices addresses many of the same issues in Indian education, multicultural education and curriculum development universally. Firstly, she acknowledged worldviews similar to her own while using tools and institutional settings predominantly from Western Euro-culture. DeCora was an Indian teacher among Indian students. She affirmed the deliteralization of knowledge by using design sign systems as cultural languages.

---

was embedded in the sign systems. As stated by art historian Ruth B. Phillips, the “rules for living” are embodied in symbolic systems, of which visual artistic images are one manifestation. Thirdly, she worked with each student individually, considering their rich cultural backgrounds. She affirmed the depth of student potential and cultural heritage while refuting the deficit model. Lastly, DeCora provided a prototype for the application of transcultural art educational practices retaining respect for the influence and the future of her race. In her words:

As a teacher I have taken care to leave my pupils’ creative faculty absolutely independent and to let each student draw as his own mind prompted him, true to his own thought, and, as far as possible, true to his tribal method of symbolic design.

This researcher asserts that the policy makers of the time did not understand the depth of the embeddedness of culture beliefs within DeCora’s design curriculum. Estelle Reel as Superintendent outlined in her Course of Study, the study of basketry, beadwork and pottery for aesthetic pleasure and because “the practice of these arts may be made very profitable.” Reel pounded home the “vanishing Indian” premise by using the term “old Indian” as a thing of the past. She gave them no “new Indian” model, just a whitewashed, assimilated, racially inferior model. DeCora taught on her own term nonetheless.

Within her students’ work DeCora encouraged the use of elements from different worldviews which eluded the Western policymakers. They still appreciated

.reflects indigenous research sensibilities which also support the assumptions.
528. K. Tsianina Lomawaima & Teresa McCarty, To Remain an Indian.
530. Angel DeCora, “Native Indian Art,” 528.
531. K. Tsianina Lomawaima, To Remain Indian, 33.
532. Estelle Reel, A Course of Study, 145.
533. Ibid.
the beauty and profitability of the work. As a “shining language” the tribally specific design lexicons suggested tribal identity and hope for the future.\textsuperscript{534} It was the nuances in the symbol systems that would be the empowering elements for the students. Joseph Campbell summarized the levels of meanings within mythologies or worldviews:

> Mythology- and therefore civilization-is a poetic, supernormal image, conceived, like all poetry, in depth, but susceptible of interpretation on various levels. The shallowest mind see in it the local scenery; the deepest, the foreground of the void; and all the stages of the Way from the ethnic to the elementary idea, the local to the universal being, which is Everyman, as he both knows and is afraid to know.

Therefore, DeCora used symbol systems to teach about cultures through these concise, subversive forms of discourse: teaching worldviews through the arts.\textsuperscript{535}

The findings and implications of this study are in agreement with G. Mike Charleston, who authored “Toward True Native Education: A Treaty of 1992,” contending the necessity for a “true native education to be developed by local communities and tribes.” Furthermore, Charleston asserted, “true native education requires an alternative conception of relationships among the elements of education.” This conception is similar to the replacement of the hierarchies of compartmentalization seen in Western art education and history. He continued using a circle as the graphic metaphor reminding the reader “The pyramid structure that is used to describe hierarchical bureaucratic organizations is replaced by the circle.”\textsuperscript{536} Native speakers and parents of students can be asked to participate within the curriculum on meaningful levels, providing depth and breadth to local programs. Sample lessons and units which

\textsuperscript{534} Ruth B. Phillips quoted one of her students comparing the elements of visual arts of the Great Lakes Woodlands cultures to a “shining” language in “The Spirit Sings,” 92.


include Native Elders, parents and communities are illustrated in Montana’s *Indian Education for All*.

DeCora provided a prototype for the application of transcultural art, educational practices retaining respect for the influence and the future of her race. Applications for teaching cultural perspectives include Native influence: on modernism, form and content, integration of form, content and meaning.

Visual aesthetics as a discipline translates worldviews into a visual language. Many students respond to visual language complemented by literature to gain a full understanding of cultures. With complexity of content, aesthetics in the classroom opens a window into understanding non-western worldviews. This is a skill which is necessary within a global community. The increased ability of students to understand different world views constitutes the foundation of multicultural education. Therefore, through curriculum designs like Decora’s, students learn relevant skills for more effective communication and civic responsibility on a global level.

From her Winnebago upbringing and studies she focused her aesthetic curriculum on design fundamentals uniquely modern and Native. These fundamentals related to the *meaning* of the systematic design studies. As Hoffmann stated “the emphasis is on an integrated whole forming the basis for a meaning making symbolic structure that can point to a pervasive, underlying spiritual content.” Contemporary artist Kay WalkingStick equates this underlying spiritual content to “magic”: art
contains magic.⁵³⁷ She poignantly says, “I believe in the power of its (painting) magic.”⁵³⁸

This study illustrates the power of Native teachers teaching Native students, demonstrated in her pedagogy and unique understanding of the diverse backgrounds of her students. DeCora prepared them for a future within an ever-increasingly dominant Euro-American society. The further recruitment of Native teachers leads to greater empowerment through sensitivity to students’ needs. In art history text books, Native art history and contemporary art contributions of Native arts and culture are usually left out. The inclusion of multiple perspectives and voices from the history of the relationship Euro-Americans and Native Americans is needed in curriculum design. The implications of this study include the essential call to include accurate representations of Native women and the diverse roles they share with men within tribal communities. Contemporary manifestations and ongoing misrepresentations in school curriculum may be lessened by the presence of American Indian historical and present day contributions in the classroom.

DeCora’s transcultural voice is revealed in the following passage she wrote of a moment in New York City when she played a flute given to her by her cousin Oliver LaMere: I sat by my window in the warm sunlight and played my Indian flute. I played till I felt quite sentimental and homesick for the West, for you know you can’t play anything else than a love song on the instrument. Angel DeCora, 1902.⁵³⁹

---

⁵³⁸. Ibid.
⁵³⁹. Letter from Angel DeCora to Cora M. Folsom, 1902, Courtesy HUA.
Abbreviations

APSA: American Philosophical Society Archives, Philadelphia PA.
CCHS: Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA.
CHS: California Historical Society, Los Angeles, CA.
CIAP: Cambridge Indian Association Papers
CIS: Cranbrook Institute of Science, Detroit, MI.
DIA: Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit, MI.
HUA: Hampton University Archives, Hampton, VA.
NARA: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington D.C.
MAC: Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, Spokane, WA.

Bibliography

Art and Archival Sources:

American Philosophical Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
   Franz Boaz Papers
Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
   Drexel Institute Papers
   F. Holland Day Papers
   Louisiana Purchase Exposition, Department of Art Papers
   Papers of the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts
Brigham Young University
   Gertrude Bonnin (Zitkala Sa) Papers, Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Provo, Utah
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, New Haven Connecticut
   Richard Henry Pratt Papers, Western Americana Collection
Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York, New York
   Sybil Carter Indian Lace Association Papers
Cumberland County Historical Society, Carlisle, PA
   Indian School Files, Steckbeck Collection
Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia
   Hampton University Archives
National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution, Washington DC
   Francis LaFlesche Papers, Alice Cunningham Fletcher Collection
National Archives and Record Administration, Washington DC and College Park MD
   Record Group 75, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Northwest Museum of Art and Culture, Spokane WA
   Estelle Reel Papers, Arden Sallquist Collection
Primary Sources

Speeches by DeCora:


__________ . “An Effort to Encourage Indian Art.” Congres International Des Americanistes XVe Session 2 Quebec: Dessault and Proulx, 1907: 205-209.


Articles or Illustrated Works by DeCora:


__________ . “Native Indian Art,” The Southern Workman (1907): 528.


**Other Primary Sources:**


_____________. “Song of the Birch Canoe,” *Craftsman* 23 (October 1912): 3-11.

_____________. “My People; The Indian’s Contribution to the Art of America,” *Craftsman* 27 (November 1914): 179-86.


Hailmann, William N. *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools*


Indian Crafts Department, United States Indian School. *Arts and Handicraft of the Indian*. Carlisle, Pennsylvania: Carlisle Indian Press, 1911.

__________ “Extracts From Letters by the Commissioner.” The Indian Craftsman (June 1909), p. 9.
Morgan, Thomas J. Indian Education. Indian Rights Association, 1890.
Sa, Zitkala. Old Indian Legends or Iktomi Boston: Ginn, 1901.

Works Cited


__________. 1899. The School and Society. Chicago.


### DeCora Chronology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871, May 3</td>
<td>Angel DeCora – Hinook-Mahiwi-Kilinaka born at the Winnebago Agency in Dakota County, Nebraska.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>DeCora begins her boarding school experience at Hampton Normal and Agricultural School in Hampton, Virginia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887, June 21</td>
<td>DeCora returned to the reservation for four months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888, November 10</td>
<td>Returned to Hampton to continue studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Graduated from Hampton and began studies at Miss Burnham’s school in Northampton, Massachusetts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Attended Smith College to study art under the tutelage of Dwight Tryon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Graduated from Smith and continued her studies in Philadelphia to focus in illustration at the Drexel Institute under the direction of Howard Pyle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Encouraged by Pyle to take a study trip to the Fort Bertold Indian Reservation in North Dakota</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Published “The Sick Child” and “Grey Wolf’s Daughter,” two stories she had written and illustrated, in <em>Harper’s New Monthly Magazine</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Moved to Boston to continue art studies at Cowles Art School with Joseph DeCamp.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1900</td>
<td>Began work on Indian design to apply to furniture and the Buffalo Exposition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1902</td>
<td>Maintained an art studio in Boston.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Moved to New York to open a studio.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900-1906</td>
<td>Created the illustrations for Francis LaFlecshe’s <em>The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School</em>; Mary Catherine Judd’s <em>Wigwam Stories</em>; Zitkala-Sa’s <em>Old Indian Legends</em>; and Natalie Curtis’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Indian Book.

1904
Worked on an exhibit to be a part of the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, Missouri.

1906
Accepted the appointment by Commissioner Francis E. Leupp instructs at Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle Pennsylvania.

1906
Spoke before the Congress of Americanists in Quebec of the subject: An Effort to Encourage Indian Art.

1907
She and her students at Carlisle participated in the Indian exhibit at the Jamestown Tercentennial and were awarded a prize for her exhibit of her students’ work.

1907, July
Attended and spoke at the National Educational Association convention in Los Angeles. Topic: Native American Art.

1908
Married William Lone Star Dietz, a student at Carlisle.

1908, Oct 21-23
Spoke at the Lake Mohonk Conference on Native Indian Art.

1911
Created illustrations with Lone Star for Yellow Star: A Story of East and West.

1911
Became a member of the Society of American Indians and delivered an address at the society’s first meeting in Columbus, Ohio. Topic: “Native American Art.”

1914
Attended meeting of the Society of American Indians at Madison, Wisconsin.

1915, December
Resigned from position at Carlisle Indian Industrial School and moved to Northampton, Massachusetts.

1918
Divorced Lone Star Dietz on November 30 Spokane, Washington. DeCora stayed in Massachusetts. She did not make the trip to Spokane for the divorce proceedings.
1918, Summer  Taught arts and crafts at Camp Oahe, a Summer Camp run by Elaine and Charles Eastman.

1918, Fall  Worked as an illustrator of Devonian Fauna for New York State Museum.

1919, February  Died of pneumonia and influenza in Northampton, Massachusetts, at age 48.

1919  Summer issue of *The American Indian Magazine*, the publication of the Society of American Indians, has an article by Charles Eastman illustrated by DeCora.

1919, November  An issue of *The Southern Workman* records the fact that Angel DeCora left $3,000 in her will to the Society of American Indians.

1920, October  An issue of the *Southern Workman* records that a memorial calendar of Angel DeCora was prepared by her cousin Oliver LaMere.
Appendix A

SUBJECT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

TITLE: Angel DeCora’s Influence as an Art Teacher

PROJECT DIRECTOR(S):
Suzanne Shope
1228 Van Buren Street
Missoula Montana
59802
406-728-7295

Special instructions to the potential subject:
If you read any words that are not clear to you, please ask the person who gave you this form to explain them to you.

Purpose:
You have been chosen to take part in this research study because your relative was a student of Angel DeCora. If you agree to take part in this research study you will be asked about your own artistic development and your art educational experiences while a student.

You will be asked to give examples of art work or lessons and relate those to your relative’s own art and education.

The session will last for approximately 45 minutes.

Payment for Participation:
You will receive a $15.00 gift card to Walmart; you may opt out of the payment voluntarily.

Risks/Discomforts: Answering the questions may cause you to think about feelings that make you sad or upset.

Benefits:
A study of this kind may help teachers create culturally sensitive lessons by learning from Angel DeCora’s lessons. Teachers and students may work together to make visual representations expressing contemporary experiences and promoting cultural beliefs, practices and life ways that may not otherwise be included in educational settings.
Confidentiality:
Your records will be kept private and will not be released without your consent except as required by law. Only the researcher and her faculty supervisor will have access to the files in a locked file cabinet. Your identity will be kept confidential unless otherwise authorized by written consent.

Compensation for Injury
Although we do not foresee any risk in taking part in this study, the following liability statement is required in all University of Montana consent forms.

In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims representative or University Legal Counsel. (Reviewed by University Legal Counsel, July 6, 1993)

Voluntary Participation/Withdrawal:
Your decision to take part in this research study is entirely voluntary. You may refuse to take part in or you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are normally entitled (gift card). You do not have to answer any questions you do not wish to answer.

Questions:
You may wish to discuss this with others before you agree to take part in this study. If you have any questions about the research now or during the study contact: Suzanne Shope 406-728-7295. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Chair of the IRB through The University of Montana Research Office at 243-6670.

Subject's Statement of Consent:
I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed of the risks and benefits involved, and all my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. Furthermore, I have been assured that any future questions I may have will also be answered by a member of the research team. I voluntarily agree to take part or to take part in this study. I understand I will receive a copy of this consent form.
Printed (Typed) Name of Subject


Subject's Signature      Date
Appendix B

Telephone Recruitment Protocol

Angel DeCora’s Influence as an Art Teacher

Interviewer’s name___________________
Date_________________
Possible Interviewee’s name_____________
Phone number_________________

Hello, my name is Suzanne Shope, and I am a graduate student working on a project in art education at the University of Montana. I am calling to ask for your help in creating a better understanding of your early experiences in art classes in school or when working with a mentor ____________ (name of artist or mentor i.e. William Lone Star Dietz).

I’d like to tell you more about the project if you are interested. Is it alright to begin?

[If YES, continue to next paragraph; if NO, say “Thank you for your time.”]

I am in the process of finding students or people who may have been influenced by Angel DeCora, an American Indian teacher and artist who taught in boarding schools in the twentieth century. My goal is to gather information on specific experiences you may have had with _____________ (i.e. Lone Star Dietz) and art examples you may remember making or still have.

Did you study or have contact with ___________ (teacher or mentor influenced by DeCora)?

Are you over the age of 18?

[If answers YES to both questions proceed]

Do you think you would be interested in being interviewed either by phone or in person?

[If YES, say “Thank you for your willingness to help.”]

[If NO, say “Thank you very much for your time.”]

1. I can mail you a copy of the questions I will be asking. Does this interest you?

[If YES, continue]

[If NO, say “Thanks for your time.”]

2. I will contact you within a week of sending the interview questions, at that time you may choose not to participate, participate in a one-on-one interview, participate in a phone interview or prepare a statement. You have the option to accept or decline the audio taping of the interview.

3. I respect your right to privacy. All tapes and documents will be stored in a locked file cabinet until the completion of the project. Once the study is complete, documents containing your name will be shredded and the tape
destroyed. You do not need to answer any questions you do not wish to answer during the interview. You can withdraw at anytime.

4. May I mail the documents to your home address? May I write your address down?
5. Is it O.K. if I call you back after you have had a chance to review the questions?
6. Thank you so much for your time.
   If participant says YES, the interview protocol and written consent form will be sent as well as an easy to read description of the research project and goals.

   A follow-up call will be made approximately one week after the materials are sent:

1. Hi, this is Suzanne Shope calling to see if you received the interview materials and wondering if you would still like to participate in any way.
   [If YES, review the options: phone interview, one-on-one interview (make arrangements, I may travel to person’s residence only if signed in agreement), prepared statement to be read over the phone, and prepared statement read in person. Also request whether it is O.K. to tape the interview. Read the consent form together and asked for it to be sent back (postage included in packet) or have it signed during the interview session.
2. When is a convenient time to begin this process?
3. Are you comfortable making these arrangements now?
   If YES, make formal arrangements
   See Interview protocol and consent form.
Appendix C

Wynne D., November 26, 2008. 3pm Mountain standard time, 4 pm Pacific.

Duration of call 66 minutes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wynne D. : Mother, Lillian R. attended Carlisle; her art work was found in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School files at the Cumberland County Historical Society.</th>
<th>November 26, 2008 Notes on themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. Your mother attended Carlisle during the time Angel DeCora was the director and instructor of Native Industries. I am sending you copies of Lillian Rice’s art work you requested. Thank you for signing and sending the interview consent form!</td>
<td>W: I am a psychologist. I remember my mother’s beading, embroidery and quilting. We didn’t have any paintings hanging on the walls only the Sacred Heart of Jesus. (Both laugh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: Can you tell me about her experiences at Carlisle from what she told you and about her art and craft work if any?</td>
<td>It began as a semi-structured interview and slowly began to become stories. Sometimes the stories led to other questions and conversation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: please tell me about your childhood</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W: the place we grew up was Winner, South Dakota. I was the 2nd youngest child of 10. Seven girls and three boys. It was a log cabin and included a farm and ranch.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: Tell me about your mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W: Because of the Fort Laramie Treaty, my Mother was orphaned. Her mother and father, and brother were given rations, starved to death by the U.S. government in the winter of 1896. I think because my mother was orphaned she was a dedicated mother and home-maker. She was an optimistic, spiritual person with a big garden, content to have a large family, never drank or smoked. She was a positive role model and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some of the remembrances paint a different picture than the records of Lillian Rice getting in trouble at Carlisle. So much of the scholarly work on the boarding school experience has focused on the negative and “keeping it negative”. January 13th, after reading the interview transcript, Wynne asked for more information on Lillian “in trouble”. I sent her the quote from Bell 1998.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S: What do you remember doing in your childhood?</strong></td>
<td><strong>W: Playing house by the spring, we had chickens, ducks and geese, we would go to town and sell cream and eggs. Buy and sell farm products – we hauled water we had no running water.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W: All of my siblings turned out to be successful- I have an MSW and have worked with the elderly, my three brothers did well.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>W: My parents were very protective, we were surrounded by Caucasians, couldn’t stay over at other people’s homes and didn’t have people stay at ours.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>S: What tribes were your parents affiliated with? (Indian identity)</strong></td>
<td><strong>W: Mother, Lillian Rice was English and Lakota, Father, Peter DuBray ½ Lakota and French. His parents Jenny Bissonette and Antoine DuBray, his father’s father was wealthy in the fur trade.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Father Peter DuBray?</strong></td>
<td><strong>W: He used to ride bronces before he met my mother. My oldest sister is 92.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Outing program:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>W: My mother was an indentured servant to a diamond dealer in Philadelphia. She became a really good cook, a gourmet cook, she died at 68, they never had electricity or running water, that kind of living wears you out and the cold.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>W: She had Spiritual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength. Our parents taught us that we needed to read and write or we would not survive in the white world. I was always reading.</td>
<td>Lillian home-schooled Wynne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My mother had 9 births at home she had an Irish midwife. When I was young I missed a lot of school because I was sick with asthma. I always liked to read. I became a teacher.</td>
<td>Wynne’s education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: Tell me about your education.</td>
<td>I taught at UC Berkeley, then to the University of San Francisco to get a master’s in social work. I became a social worker. Went on to get my doctorate. I served as the Chief of Mental Health Service and traveled three weeks out of the month. I created child welfare proposal stipends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: Whom did you marry?</td>
<td>I married a Norwegian (Hanson). My father-in-law was appointed by Roosevelt, my nephew is an attorney for the Rosebud tribe. We were told we could do anything we set our minds to, we were always taught to give back to the community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: How did your parents influence your latter life?</td>
<td>My parents were good role models- taught by their actions. They were always there, mother always up before everyone making breakfast. They were not self indulgent people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>She cooked great food because she learned it through the outing program (Carlisle) We heated the house with a potbellied stove. Father kept fires going all night. Father hauled wood, kids brought it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>She chose to go into the field of Social work: Native American health and mental health Issues – “taught to give back to the community”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Outing program at Carlisle taught her to cook gourmet food.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The DuBray Ranch</td>
<td>The Ranch is still in the family four brothers and sisters own it and lease it out. Still have reunions with extended family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: How did you get interested in social work?</td>
<td>After college I went directly into administrative work as Director of Social Services. Native Americans tend to accept their plight in life- “today is what there is”, They have many things in common with African Americans – not thinking about tomorrow, a “present orientation”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College- S: Is Winona a Lakota name?</td>
<td>My name is Wynona it is Wynne for short because people couldn’t pronounce it. Yes. At the master’s level I did a comparison of value studies. Worked with American Indian Social Workers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Indians</td>
<td>There is lots of spirituality and a lot depends on ceremonies. Urban Indians suffer form depression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S: I used to have an art studio in an urban Indian center.</td>
<td>My house is full of Indian art. When I was growing up Lillian embroidered on linen: flowers and butterflies, I still have some. We all had star quilts. The government took everything from us and the medicine people were buried with much. My mother had a picture of the sacred heart of Jesus and a photograph of her mother (Wynne’s Grandmother). I have Indian women’s portraits. I travel to New Mexico to buy art.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a book on Amazon .com: Spirituality and Healing: A Multicultural Approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wynne wrote books on multicultural approaches to healing and mental health.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wynne DuBray 2000. I have written books under the name Wynne DuBray Hansen, nine books on mental health interventions.</td>
<td>health interventions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>