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ANGEL DE CORA: HER ASSIMILATION, PHILOSOPHIES, AND CAREER AS AN ART INSTRUCTOR WHILE EMPLOYED AT CARLISLE, 1906-1915

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A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

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Introduction:

During the penultimate decade of the nineteenth century, the federal government implemented the off-reservation Indian boarding school system. Hailed by reformers as the ultimate means of assimilation, the system aimed to remove Indian education from secular institutions and place it in the hands of reform-minded federal employees.[1] The formative years of the Indian boarding school era are recognized as 1879-1900. In this period, Indian agents and boarding school representatives coerced or kidnapped American Indian children from their reservation homes and took them to school. Winnebago tribal member Angel de Cora was only one of thousands of Indian children to experience and be educated in the boarding school system.

De Cora matriculated into the system during the "pioneer days" of the Indian educational/assimilation system, in 1883. Unlike subsequent generations of boarding school attendees, she did not have the benefit of others' experiences to guide her through this new world, but she persevered nonetheless. While most Native students did not graduate from their boarding school programs, De Cora did and she used her education to help her attain a college education and additional post-graduate studies. She became a self-supporting professional artist-illustrator, and due to her educational and professional accomplishments, became a model for

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[1] See, Margaret Connell Szasz, *Education and the American Indian—The Road to Self-Determination Since 1928* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1974); Frederick E. Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984); David Wallace Adams, *Education for Extinction: American Indians and the Boarding School Experience, 1750-1928* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1995); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 2004); K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994).

the kind of success the Indian boarding school officials hoped to achieve. De Cora was an independent, professional woman, as well as a representative and a practitioner of the two opposing assimilation philosophies that fostered her growth.

During the early years of Indian boarding school education, two competing schools of thought existed, each concerned with the question of what Indians should do after completing their education. Lieutenant Richard Pratt, head of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, which became a model for Indian education, ardently believed the school's role to be one of liberating Indians from reservation life through education, thus allowing them to assimilate fully by participating in the dominant society. He felt that freedom from the reservation created opportunities for the students, whereas returning them to their former lives hindered their growth and chances to lead "civilized lives." Pratt premised his beliefs on the successful incorporation of blacks into American society. He used slavery as his model, citing the experience of enslavement as the location in which blacks learned "civilized" habits.[2]

In contrast to Pratt, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong, the founder of the competing educational institution, the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute, aligned his views with those of the reformers of this period.[3] General Armstrong believed that returning the educated Indian students home upon the completion of their studies constituted the best path towards successful assimilation. He expected the returned students to lead by example and influence their people, thus perpetuating assimilation by bringing white culture to the reservation. This latter

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[2] Donal F. Lindsey, *Indians at Hampton Institute, 1877-1923* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 37.
[3] Linsey, *Indians at Hampton*, 25, 37.

philosophy was the dominant one, shared by significant politicians such as Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas J. Morgan, the man responsible for the systemization of the boarding school institution at the end of the 1880s.[4] De Cora incorporated both of these philosophies into her own life.

Angel De Cora took on the challenges of being an Indian woman in a white world and became a nationally recognized artist with her own studio. Even though she graduated from Hampton, early in her career she (probably unknowingly) embraced Pratt's philosophies by staying in white society and gaining individual success. De Cora took her place in the dominant culture and never "returned to the blanket" which was exactly what Pratt hoped to achieve with Indian education.[5] But she also fulfilled Armstrong's ideals by putting aside her individual pursuits to accept the position of Native arts teacher at the Carlisle Indian boarding school. She surrendered her professional career as an illustrator to become an educator of other Indians. Her employment at Carlisle, however, should not obscure the fact that she succeeded as an artist at a time when few women entered any profession, when Indians simply did not compete in the fine arts world, and when most Indian women, and women generally, were neither successful professionals nor artists. It is these complexities that make De Cora's life an ideal site for examining the numerous issues that faced Native people, especially women, at the turn of the century.

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[4] Wilbert H. Ahern, "An Experiment Aborted: Returned Indian Students in the Indian School Service, 1881-1908," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 2. (Spring, 1997), 270.

[5] This phrase was a common reference made about Indians who were exposed to civilized life but turned their backs on it and chose to return to their "savage" ways.

The multiple intersections, of race, identity, and gender, further complicated by assimilation, education, and professionalism, shaped Angel de Cora's life. For example, as a result of her ethnicity combined with society's belief that Indians possessed innate artistic abilities, she received instant credibility as a professional artist, an Indian educator, and a public speaker on Indian art. In fact, these same factors brought her to the attention of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis E. Leupp and earned her the position of Native arts teacher at Carlisle. And while all of these intersectionalities allowed her a great deal of success, they also complicated her life and our understanding of her.

Being an assimilated Winnebago woman, Angel de Cora lived within the constraints of dominant white society while simultaneously challenging it. Although white society saw her as a "civilized Indian," she was still just an Indian, subject to the romanticism, racism, and regulations faced by all Indian people. In many ways, she participated in and helped perpetuate some of the stereotypes about Indians, but the complexities arise from how she challenged them in her professional work.

This thesis will examine Angel de Cora's perpetuation of stereotypes of Indians as natural decorators, and her employment at Carlisle in an effort to understand her philosophies as an Indian teaching other Indians. It will also discuss her racial perspectives in regards to her students and her articulation of the situation of Indians at this time as expressed through her own art. This thesis argues that De Cora's success as an Indian art instructor and advocate for the inclusion of Indian decoration in mainstream society resulted from her status as an assimilated Indian

woman.[6] It demonstrates that her education at the off-reservation Indian boarding school Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute was the foundation of her assimilation.

In exploring the assimilation of Angel de Cora, one is faced with the question: Just how assimilated was she? This thesis analyzes her perspectives on race and her attitudes towards the process of assimilation as practiced by the Indian boarding school system. The ultimate question is to what degree De Cora, a boarding school educated, assimilated woman, remained blind to the problems within the federal government's practice of turning Indians into "brown Caucasians" and to what degree she tried to alter that goal.[7]

The thesis explores the early life of Angel de Cora. Her journey through education is in itself a compelling story—how she achieved professional success and ultimately arrived at Carlisle. De Cora's success as the teacher of Native American arts and crafts at Carlisle is in itself unique and worthy of examination. It also examines the statistical data on Indian teachers who were employed by the Indian Service at the turn of the twentieth century. Like De Cora, most Indian employees discovered a complex litany of social and political obstacles. This thesis also includes an examination of De Cora through the lens of Pan-Indianism. Although the term "pan-Indian" has fallen from grace with modern scholars, the

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[6] Frederick Hoxie, *A Final Promise: The Campaign to Assimilate the Indians, 1880-1920* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 15. In these early days of the assimilation era and the boarding school era, assimilation was defined as total "conformity to the standards of the white Protestant majority culture." This definition of assimilation is the one used for this thesis.

[7] Angel de Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," reprinted in *Cougnes International des Americistes, Vol. II* (Quebec: Dissault and Roulx, 1907), 205-209. Courtesy of Hampton University Archives (HUA). Accessing De Cora's student files in Hampton's archives requires a considerable amount of pre-planning. The archivists require researchers to present permission either from the student's family or tribal council in the absence of family.

discussion here explains why it is important to examine those involved in this movement by use of the terms through which they understood themselves.

The Indian Boarding School era is the subject of numerous scholarly endeavors. Some of the most cited works in the field are by Margaret Connell Szasz, Frederick Hoxie, David Wallace Adams, Brenda Child, Michael Coleman, Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima. These works vary greatly in how they assess the era. Some authors discuss the era generally and give a broad perspective, while others focus on a few specific schools, thus showing a regional perspective. These scholars also put the standard sources to different uses, providing various insights into this era.[8]

Aside from the major works in the field, numerous autobiographical accounts of individual experiences in the boarding school system exist. To supplement the issues and personal perspectives De Cora failed to address, it was necessary to consult the autobiographies of Zitkala-Sa and Luther Standing Bear, whose boarding school experiences are well-documented.[9] The books and articles by Child and Lomawaima are also excellent sources of information on the individual experience at boarding schools.

The federal government's involvement in Indian education began at the end of the 1870s and technically continues to the present day. The early years of the

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[8] For example, some authors use student and family letters to document the overall boarding school experience, student activism, or the Native perspective. Others choose a specific period of years in which to explore Indian policies, while a few scholars combine the two approaches. An important theme in more recent boarding school histories is the resistance and bonding shared by Indian students. These groupings both reinforced tribal boundaries, while bending the rules depending on the needs of the students. See, generally, Lomawaima and Child for excellent discussions on this issue.

[9] See, Luther Standing Bear, *Land of the Spotted Eagle* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978); and Zitkala-Sa, a.k.a. Gertrude Bonnin, *American Indian Stories* (Washington: Hayworth Publishing House, 1921).

system were times of instability, as major socio-political changes occurred within American attitudes towards assimilation, in the federal policies governing Indians, and in how Indians perceived boarding school education. De Cora experienced the early years of the system, and was a product of the shifts in attitudes and policies that governed not only her life, but the lives of countless Indians at the time. In many ways, this thesis is about all of them.

"Angel de Cora: Her Assimilation, Philosophies, and Career As an Art Instructor While Employed at Carlisle, 1906-1915"

In July 1902, *The Chilocco Farmer*, an Oklahoma Indian boarding school periodical, pronounced Winnebago artist Angel de Cora "the best known of Indian artists."[10] The article described her work as "…devoted exclusively to the interpretation of Indian life and… [with] a keenness of insight into Indian character and a poetic appreciation of the picturesque side of Indian life which could come only from generations of Indian ancestry and could be developed only amid the associations of such a childhood as was hers, passed in Indian camps."[11] She was a Winnebago artist who attended the Hampton Normal and Industrial Institution in 1883 and from whence she graduated 1891.[12]

Post-boarding school, she went to college and thereafter became a self-supporting, professional Indian artist-illustrator at the turn of the twentieth century. When summoned by the Indian Services, however, De Cora put her professional career aside to return to the boarding school system to teach Indian children how to use the talent that the dominant culture believed was bestowed upon them by their Indian ancestry. This false assumption that De Cora herself adhered to complicated De Cora's life as a student and brought disappointment in her role as a teacher, when she realized that the off-reservation boarding school system was responsible for eroding her students' cultural memories and tribal languages.

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[10] *The Chilocco Farmer*, July 1902, from the announcement of Gertrude Bonnin a.k.a. Zitkala-Sa, *Old Indian Legends* (Boston: Ginn, 1901). HUA.
[11] *Southern Workman*, "The Preservation of Indian Art," October 1907. No page numbers. HUA.
[12] The details and facts of De Cora's life come from two sources: her student file at HUA and the article by Sarah McAnulty, "Angel De Cora: American Indian Artist and Educator," *Nebraska History* 57, no. 1 (Summer 1976): 143-199.

In 1906, at the age of thirty-five, Angel de Cora entered into a teaching position at Carlisle. During her nine years of employment as the boarding school's first Indian arts and crafts instructor, De Cora proved to be a formidable educator and an influential advocate for the incorporation of Indian arts in mainstream society. As a graduate of the boarding school system who returned to the institution to teach Indian students, De Cora was a shining example of how successful the assimilation policy could be when applied to Indian children—at least externally. But De Cora's personal letters and public speeches suggest that she was conflicted about Indianness and assimilation. An examination of her career illuminates the difficulties she faced as an Indian student in the white world, as an Indian art teacher in an Indian boarding school, and as an Indian art advocate who was feeding the dominant culture's desire to decorate their homes "Indian-style."

This thesis argues that Angel de Cora's success as an Indian art instructor and advocate for the inclusion of Indian decoration in mainstream society was due to her assimilation. After all, she received a Western education and found success and acceptance as an artist in white society. De Cora led a complicated life. Regardless of her success in the white world, she harbored concern for Indian people who, like herself, were victims of the government's harsh assimilationist tactics. De Cora's early life on the reservation and adolescent life in boarding school resulted in a complex worldview as an adult.

Angel de Cora was only twelve years old when she was kidnapped by a "strange white man" from her home on the Winnebago reservation in Nebraska and

sent to Hampton to be assimilated.[13] In the early days of Indian reform and at the advent of the assimilation policy, advocates expected land ownership, education, and citizenship to quickly propel Indians out of their "savage" state and allow them to take their place in the dominant culture. In 1880, the Board of Indian Commissioners' endorsement of education revealed their underlying feelings towards Indians: "As a savage we cannot tolerate him any more than as a half-civilized parasite, wanderer, or vagabond. The only alternative left is to fit him by education for civilized life."[14] During this era, the "savage" was finding salvation, assimilation, and civilization through education—at least this was the plan. Both politicians and the general (white) population sought answers to the "Indian problem." Many believed that assimilation was the answer.

Many important and influential people such as Massachusetts Senator Henry Dawes supported the push to civilize American Indians. Senator Dawes, chairman of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee for twelve years, was an "advocate [for] Indian assimilation" and towards this end, he used his position to influence federal Indian policy.[15] The assimilation to which the reformers adhered was strict Indian conformity to Anglo culture that required the abandonment of old Indian traditions.[16] According to historian Frederick Hoxie, the assimilation of American Indians would demonstrate that "America was an open society, where obedience and accommodation to the wishes of the majority would be rewarded with social

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[13] Angel De Cora, "Angel De Cora- An Autobiography," *The Red Man* (Carlisle: Carlisle Indian Press, March 1911). [Online] Available at http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/DecAnge.html. Internet source at the University of Virginia Library Electronic Text Center.

[14] Francis Paul Prucha, ed., *Americanizing the American Indians: Writings by the "Friends of the Indian" 1880-1900* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), 194.

[15] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 33.

[16] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 33.

equality."[17] Reformers also saw the destruction of ancient Indian communities and cultures as serving the "greater good" because it allowed for "the expansion of 'civilized' society."[18] During the early years of the boarding school system, this policy dictated the treatment and education of students like De Cora. The assimilation policy utilized the school-environment to eradicate the cultural influences and values that Indian parents engrained into their children.

De Cora spent eight years at the Hampton Agricultural and Normal School where reformers subjected her to their assimilationist tactics. During her time at Hampton, she returned only once to her Native community in Nebraska. This federally mandated trip home occurred four or five years after she arrived at the school. The journey, however, proved disastrous for De Cora who found it difficult to fit into her old community.[19] The fact that she had trouble re-integrating indicates her disconnection with her own tribal identity and traditional ways. Whether or not her "inability to re-adapt" was a matter of forgetting how to function on the reservation or a personal decision to refrain from integration is a question to which there is no answer. After a year, she returned to Hampton, where she continued her studies and graduated in 1891.

While at Hampton, De Cora distinguished herself from other Indian students. Her teacher Cora Mae Folsom observed her considerable talent for music.[20] As a result, the Hampton administrators found a place for her at the Burnham School for

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[17] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 34.
[18] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 39.
[19] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 147.
[20] Cora Mae Folsom was a white woman who worked at Hampton in various positions from 1880-1922. She was De Cora's teacher, and the two women remained close friends throughout her life. Almost all of the letters in De Cora's Hampton student file are between them.

Girls in Northampton, Massachusetts in order to cultivate this talent. But this school's typical student was upper class, which created a social situation that proved difficult for De Cora. Since she was not wealthy she felt awkward with the other girls, so she transferred to Smith College. Although De Cora probably hoped to find a place where she could enjoy the social setting, this college, like Burnham, catered to the daughters of elite families. De Cora's socio-economic status and race relegated her to the margins, compounded by the fact that she lived off-campus and paid her way by working in the art school as a janitor. In spite of the hardships, she graduated from Smith in 1896 with a degree in art. From there she furthered her art education at the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia where she studied under illustrator Howard Pyle, followed by more art studies at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts. In 1902, De Cora moved to New York.[21]

In New York City, De Cora supported herself by becoming a successful artist with her own studio. Her letters to Hampton teacher Cora Mae Folsom from this period reveal how "crowded" her days were "with work for other people."[22] She had many commissions and produced numerous book illustrations during this period. Her correspondence, however, also exposed the struggles she faced as a woman alone in New York City. For example, De Cora had chronic illnesses and when she was unwell, she had to take care of herself; she was alone in the City.[23] She also complained that her workload took all of her time, and her cat and her housework suffered as a result.[24] Difficulties aside, she worked diligently and

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[21] There are no documents that discuss the reason she moved from Boston to New York City.
[22] Letters from De Cora to Folsom, 1902- 1904. HUA.
[23] Letter from De Cora to Folsom, 1902. HUA.
[24] Letter from De Cora to Folsom, 1902. HUA.

developed a notable reputation. She hosted several art exhibitions which brought her to the attention of Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis E. Leupp. In 1906, Leupp offered De Cora a position as the first teacher of Indian arts and crafts at Carlisle.

As De Cora considered her professional options, she probably gleaned that attitudes towards assimilation differed from when she attended boarding school. In 1895, a few years after her graduation from Hampton, reformers had created "an impressive [Indian] educational program."[25] The reformers regarded the schools as great tools of civilization and were slowly making American citizens out of Indian children. The government built day schools, on-reservation schools, and off-reservation boarding schools, all of which operated on the basis of the Carlisle and Hampton models. But as the twentieth century approached, changes occurred in the direction of assimilation policies, which affected the goals of Indian education.

By the turn of the century, reformers met with disappointment as it became clear that assimilation was not going as planned. Many Indians displayed a high degree of resistance to the process of assimilation. Consequently, Indian agents found it more and more difficult to remove Indian children from their homes. The earlier belief that Indians were capable of reaching the same level of civilization as whites started to collapse.[26] The educational system began to fail as each year fewer and fewer students graduated. Again, the Board of Indian Commissioners stated their position: "A few Native Americans 'might push their way into professional

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[25] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 189.
[26] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 189.

life…[but] the great majority must win their living by manual labor.'"[27] Accordingly, the reformers adjusted their goals, settling for partial assimilation, wherein the Indian would fill his marginal role in society without the expectation of assimilation.

Henceforth, educators expected very little from their students. They concluded that it was best to teach Indians the vocational skills necessary to allow them to exist independently on the fringes of society. In other words, the system hoped to create a less "savage" Indian who depended on the federal government to a lesser degree. Many whites sought enlightenment from the theories of eugenics and biological determinism. They wanted to remain segregated from Indians, as well as other races. One example of the changing climate occurred at the 1901 National Education Association (NEA) convention where one of the speakers told his audience that it would be like "sow[ing] seeds on stony ground" to teach Indians art and literature.[28] Another example was Commissioner of Indian Affairs Thomas Morgan's attempt to integrate several school districts, which failed miserably.[29] As a result of these changes in attitude, Indian education underwent policy shifts that were reflected in the teaching position offered to Angel de Cora.

Three policies makers important to this era were Estelle Reel, Francis Leupp, and Theodore Roosevelt. Their views on Indians and policy resulted in many of the changes that occurred in Indian education during this period. Superintendent of Indian Education, Estelle Reel (1898-1910), like most Indian proponents and reformers of the day, came to her job with distinct views on the

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[27] Board of Indian Commissioners as quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 193.
[28] Calvin Woodward as quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 193-4.
[29] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 190.

abilities of Indians. According to Reel, "The Indian teacher must deal with the conditions similar to those that confront the teacher of the blind or the deaf."[30] Although she supported the Indian art program, her perceptions and low expectations of Indians prompted her to adjust the boarding school system accordingly. She implemented a curriculum that emphasized practical and vocational work lessons, and vehemently disapproved when institutions deviated from her plan. For example, Hoxie cites one instance in which Reel expressed her dissatisfaction that some of the girls at a boarding school were being allowed to practice the piano, instead of doing their chores: "Indian girls should become proficient in cooking, sewing, and laundry work before allowing them to spend hours in useless practice upon an expensive instrument which in all probability they will never own."[31] Reel, like others of this era, believed her work to be beneficent and that her efforts improved the situation of Indians. Her views and attitude exemplify the perspectives of the bureaucrats in charge at the time that De Cora considered employment at Carlisle.

President Theodore Roosevelt appointed Francis E. Leupp to the office of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1905.[32] Leupp's views closely paralleled

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[30] Estelle Reel as quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 195.
[31] Estelle Reel as quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 195.
[32] Francis E. Leupp, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1901-1909), began his professional life as a newspaper editor, a position that allowed him to befriend people like Presidents Grover Cleveland and Theodore Roosevelt. In 1895, he accepted a temporarily appointment as the Indian Rights Association's (IRA) Washington agent. This arrangement led to his 1896 appointment to the Board of Indian Commissioners, a position he held briefly. Leupp, however, continued to be involved in Indian Affairs until his 1898 resignation from the IRA. Thereafter, his involvement was peripheral until 1903, when he mediated a dispute between Roosevelt and the IRA. Roosevelt then appointed Leupp Commissioner of Indian Affairs on January 1, 1905. See, Donald L. Parman, "Francis Ellington Leupp, 1905-1909," in *The Commissioners of Indian Affairs, 1824-1977*, ed. Robert M. Krasnicka and Herman J. Viola (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 221.

Reel's.[33] For example, like Reel, he was reform-minded and sought to reorganize Indian education by placing an emphasis on vocational lessons and job placement assistance.[34] Both had paternalistic and racist views of Indians. Leupp once stated that "the Indian is an adult child" and thought that although Indians should not be classified as low as African-Americans, they were nonetheless inferior to whites.[35] Reel, too, believed that "Indians were inescapably conditioned by heredity and environment to be less than whites."[36] Leupp was an ultra-assimilationist; yet, despite such sentiments, he implemented Carlisle's first Indian arts program and he needed De Cora to get the project off the ground.[37] Leupp's venture had the full backing of President Roosevelt.

According to historian William T. Hagan, Roosevelt was well versed in Indian issues as a result of his work as Civil Service Commissioner and from the friendships he cultivated during this period. Hagan also points out that until 1903, Roosevelt truly had very little interest in Indian issues and used his friends to assist him when Indian problems and questions arose. That year, Roosevelt met ethnomusicologist Natalie Curtis, and she convinced him of the importance of Native arts and music, especially for what it might contribute to America. Of this

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[33] Parman, "Leupp," 221-223. Also see, William T. Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt and Six Friends of the Indian* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), 29. Parman suggests that these political connections were crucial to his appointment.
[34] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 200.
[35] Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 198.
[36] Margaret L. Archuleta, Brenda J. Child, and K. Tsianina Lomawaima, eds., *Away from Home: American Indian Boarding School Experiences, 1879-2000* (Phoenix: Heard Museum, 2000), 31.
[37] Archuleta, Child, and Lomawaima, *Away from Home*, 85. According to biographer Donald L. Parman, Leupp's views on Indians were a paradox. While he was sympathetic to the loss of Indian cultures and traditions, and his early work with the IRA reflect this attitude, during his tenure as commissioner, his focus shifted from concern for the Indians to that of cultivating political relationships. As commissioner, his dealings in tribal matters have been described as "iron handed" and representative of the "domestic imperialism" that resulted from the Roosevelt era. See Parman, "Leupp," 231.

Roosevelt wrote, "'She [Curtis] feels—and I think she is entirely right—that the one side in which American life is weak is the artistic, and that we ought not to throw away anything which will give us a chance to develop artistically in any way along original lines.'"[38] From that point on, Curtis received access to "all Indian reservations" so that she could report to him on "'all matters pertaining to the wellbeing, the education, the artistic development and industries of the Indians.'"[39] Roosevelt acted upon his new and, thereafter, lifelong interest by appointing Leupp as the Commissioner.[40] In turn, Leupp began devising the first boarding school Indian arts and crafts program, but he needed Natalie Curtis's other friend, Angel de Cora, to complete his endeavor.

Leupp's interest in "'the preservation and development of native Indian art'" guided his aspiration to bring the course of study to Carlisle.[41] Leupp stated, "It is my desire that pupils who study any kind of decorative work shall be encouraged and led to employ Indian combinations of line and color, and that the products of the school shop, so far as they lend themselves properly to ornamentation, shall show the characteristic Indian touch as distinguished from the Caucasian designs…."[42] In order to succeed at this task, however, he first needed to attend to "the expectations

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[38] Theodore Roosevelt as quoted in Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt,* 149-150.
[39] Theodore Roosevelt as quoted in Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt,* 149.
[40] Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt,* 58. Also see McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 170, for a brief discussion on Roosevelt's concerned for Native American issues and culture. According to Hagan, Roosevelt was involved in Indian Affairs as Civil Service Commissioner because it was part of his job, not due to any altruistic concerns. As a public servant, Roosevelt dealt with Indian issues as part of his responsibilities in many of the offices he held. In other words, he was not anti-Indian, as Hagan points out; rather, he just was not interested in Indian issues and relied upon his friends as advisors.
[41] Leupp from a letter to Foard as quoted in Hagan, *Theodore Roosevelt,* 181.
[42] *The Arrow*, June 21, 1907. HUA.

of the bureaucracy" by defining the practical aspects of the project.[43] Leupp found a way "to combine the artistry of the Indian with the practical products appealing to the white market."[44] He planned to sate the bureaucrats by selling and making a profit from the arts and crafts items made by the students, an idea he almost certainly borrowed from Lieutenant Richard H. Pratt, the founder of Carlisle.[45] The fruition of his ambitions relied upon his success in acquiring De Cora as the first Native arts and crafts teacher.

Leupp was familiar with De Cora's professional work. She was a prominent Indian artist whose illustrations were published in a few Indian-themed books. For example, she illustrated Mary Catherine Judd's *Wigwam Stories as Told by the North American Indians* (1901), and Zitkala-Sa's (Gertrude Bonnin) *Old Indian Legends* (1901), as well as two of her own short-stories which were published in *Harper's New Monthly* in 1899.[46] Additionally, McAnulty states that Natalie Curtis "may have been responsible for introducing De Cora to Leupp."[47]

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[43] Linda Witmer, *Carlisle Indian Boarding School The Indian Industrial School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania 1879-1918* (Camp Hill: Plank's Suburban Press, Inc., 1993 [2000]), 77-78.

[44] Deirdre Ann Almeida, "The Role of Western Massachusetts in the Development of American Indian Education Reform Through the Hampton Indian Institute's Summer Outing Program (1878-1912)," (Ph.D. diss., Unviersity of Massachusetts-Amherst, 1992), 139.

[45] In the summer of 1875, Lt. Pratt, of the Tenth Regiment Cavalry stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, arrived in St. Augustine, Florida with seventy-two Indian prisoners. As the officer in charge of the prisoners, Pratt implemented a daily routine of exercise and drills and undertook the role of educator to the incarcerated Indians. During this time, he discovered that some of the Indian prisoners were drawing pictures. Pratt swiftly acted upon this news and supplied them with the material necessary to encourage their artistic endeavors, such as colored pencils and ink. He also made these "curiosities" available for purchase to the white community. Soon, the prisoners were making "Indian crafts" to be sold to white people. *See* Witmer, *Carlisle Indian Boarding School*, 2, 5-7.

[46] Elizabeth Hutchinson, "Modern Native American Art: Angel DeCora's Transcultural Aesthetic," *The Art Bulletin*, December 2001, 755. Angel de Cora, "The Sick Child," *Harper's New Monthly*, February 1899: 446-448; and "Gray Wolf's Daughter," *Harper's New Monthly,* November 1899: 860-862.

[47] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 170.

Securing De Cora for the teaching position, however, was not easy for Leupp. He stated, "I had to struggle hard with Miss DeCora [*sic*] for her to abandon the private practice of her profession and come in with us and take up this task because I thought her better fitted for it than anyone else I knew."[48] Part of her hesitation probably stemmed from an unpleasant visit she made to Carlisle in 1902, wherein the newspaper described her as "a plain and unassuming young woman who is quietly working her way, in the Metropolis of this country."[49] In a letter to a friend regarding her visit, she admitted that she felt ill at ease and "out of place" at the school.[50] But her vacillation indicated more than her distress at being uncomfortable. She had pedagogical concerns.

In 1906, when Leupp offered her the position of Indian art teacher, she stated that she would only accept the position if "[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."[51] A few years later, De Cora recounted the conversation with Leupp that led to the job offer, and of this she simply stated, "The subject of conversation was naturally the Indians, especially their native talents. Unsuspicious of any design on his part, I talked freely on the subject. As an outcome of this, I was ushered into the

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[48] *Native American*, October 19, 1907. Reporting on a statement made by Commissioner of Indian Affairs Francis Leupp, July 1907, in Los Angeles, CA. HUA. Also printed in U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), *Annual Report of the Superintendent of Indian Schools to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (*ARS*) (Chilocco: Printing Dept. U.S. Indian School, 1907), 50. Also available online at: located at http://libraries.ou.edu/govdocs.

[49] *The Red Man*, December 1902. HUA. The term "Metropolis" refers to New York City.

[50] Letter from De Cora to Folsom, dated only as 1902. HUA.

[51] Natalie Curtis, "An American Indian Artist," *The Outlook,* January 14, 1920. HUA.

Indian Service as a 'Teacher of Native Indian Art.'"[52] In 1906, she began her career as teacher and mentor at Carlisle.

Employment in an off-reservation boarding school as a teacher of Indian children might seem an odd decision for De Cora, or for any Indian boarding school alumni. After all, these schools changed the lives of many Native peoples, including De Cora; however, statistics show that this occupation was not unusual. Due to the influence of the boarding school system, many Indian graduates entered the teaching profession as well as other positions within the Indian School Services (ISS). Some people probably made this career choice as a result of the advocacy of reformers such as the Reverend Lyman Abbott, who in 1888 ardently spoke to his belief that it was the responsibility of the federal government to educate Indians so that they became the educators of their own people. He felt it was the role of Hampton and Carlisle to produce the teachers who could teach other Indians "either in the schoolroom, or in the shop, or on the farm."[53] Apparently, the schools succeeded in producing the right sort of educators.

Statistics show that by the turn of the century, Indians and boarding school alumni in particular, regularly sought employment within the ISS as teachers and in other positions. One source reported that of the employees working for the ISS in 1899, forty-five percent of them were Indians.[54] By 1900, a significant number of

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[52] Angel de Cora, "Native Indian Art," *The Report of the Twenty-sixth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of the Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples* (New York: Lake Mohonk Conference, 1908), 16-18. HUA.

[53] Lyman Abbott's speech, "Education for the Indian," from the Sixth Annual Meeting of the Lake Mohonk Conference of Friends of the Indian, 1888: 11-16, as quoted in, Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indians*, 213.

[54] Colin G. Calloway, ed., *First People—A Documentary Survey of American Indian History* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 351.

Indians staffed the Indian Office.[55] According to the "Employment of Indians" section of the1909 Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, "Graduates of the larger Indian schools [were] not infrequently…given suitable appointments [as teachers]. Some have risen to be superintendents and have been successful."[56] De Cora, like many Indians, found success and some degree of satisfaction in her career as an educator.

The fact that ISS employment attracted many Indians was good news for the administrators who encountered problems recruiting teachers, presumably white ones, to fill the open positions. In 1907, they reported "nearly half of those who [were] selected and notified of appointment, declined to enter the Indian service."[57] The ISS attributed their inability to attract white employees, especially teachers, to the low pay and bad conditions of the schools. Given these conditions, the question is: Why would Angel de Cora, a college-educated and professionally successful artist, decide to teach at Carlisle? There can be little doubt that her decision to work at the school was due to the uniqueness of the offer—pioneering an Indian art program—as well as the job (and personal) security it provided. De Cora was the first ISS educator hired to teach Indian students Indian arts and crafts. Her success at Carlisle made her a role model for teaching Indian arts and crafts to boarding school students. The federal government began Indian arts and crafts programs in

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[55] Calloway, *First People*, 335. According to this source, American Indians "accounted for nearly one-quarter of the Indian office's [total] staff."
[56] BIA, *Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs* (*ARC*), 1909, 6. Available online at: located at http://libraries.ou.edu/govdocs.
[57] BIA, *ARC*, 1907, 9.

other off-reservation boarding schools. By 1908, the Superintendent of Indian Schools reported broad success in hiring Indians to teach Indian arts.[58]

De Cora's introduction to teaching Indian art to Indian students at Carlisle was an entirely new experience. Her formal training was in art, not in education, and even though it is reported that she gave art lessons as a student at Smith College, her only real experience with teaching as a profession came from her exposure to the people who taught her.[59] As such, De Cora chose to use the perspectives of her teachers to educate her own students, views that gave credence to the widely held misconception that Indians were natural-born decorators.

De Cora's adherence to this essentialist perspective most likely resulted from her own education in a system that based its philosophies in the racial theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The theories used biological determinism as a means of classifying people, wherein the sum value of a person depended on their physical traits, phenotype, and the racial purity of their blood. Society perceived people who did not meet the dominant culture's standards of whiteness as uncivilized and made negative predictions about their ability to evolve. As previously explained, by the turn of the century, people no longer expected American Indians to evolve to the standards of white people. In many ways, De Cora perpetuated this ideology in her work at Carlisle, but she also challenged white's views on the abilities of Indian students.

In the face of these changed expectations, the future of the Indian looked bleak—from the white perspective, at least. Anthropologists began the task of

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[58] BIA, *ARS*, 1909, 23.

[59] *Southern Workman*, November 1894, HUA. The article reported that De Cora was back at Smith College studying with Dwight Tryon and giving art lessons. No further details were given.

collecting and preserving everything that they considered "authentic" from Native cultures. This included material culture, linguistics, and tribal knowledge. They feared that these precious resources, which made America unique in the world, would disappear as the Indian vanished from existence. Reformers, like anthropologists, perpetuated the idea that Indians were innately talented designers and the value of the designs needed protection from vanishing. This view influenced reformers, both Indian and white, including people like Leupp and De Cora.

The push to salvage Native culture was "the first wedge in the creation of a market for modern work by living Native American artists."[60] According to art historian Bill Anthes, the drawings and material items produced by Indians such as pottery "were not yet appreciated as works of art in their own right, but rather as precious links to a vanishing tribal past."[61] The idea of the "Vanishing Indian" permeated the reform movement, and in the face of Indian extinction, they focused upon the salvation of the Indian, people like Leupp, participated in "salvage anthropology."[62] The reformers believed that if all else was lost, they were at least capable of saving American Indian traditions through the commodification of their material culture. When Leupp accepted his position as Commissioner, he adhered to this pervasive theory.

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[60] Bill Anthes, *Native Moderns: American Indian Painting, 1940-1960* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006) 3.
[61] Anthes, *Native Moderns*, 3.
[62] "Salvage anthropology" is an anthropological term referencing the salvaging of indigenous cultural knowledge, traditions, and languages when these Native peoples were thought to be on the brink of disappearing due to their perceived inability to evolve and merge into hegemonic society. For a better understanding of "salvage anthropology" and the anthropologists who were advancing it, see Robert E. Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian, 1820-1880: The Early Years of American Ethnology* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986).

Scholars and scientists alike embraced "salvage anthropology." Their need to save Native cultural knowledge came from their solemn belief that Indians' natural talent for art came through their blood and the influences of their environment. Leupp stated, "The race of men feel, think, and act differently not only because of environment, but also because of hereditary impulses."[63] Since reformers expected Indians to vanish at a rapid pace, there was some urgency behind the need to extract information. Essentialism grasped the hearts of reformers and prominent Indians, such as Sioux physician and activist Charles Eastman. In 1905 and again in 1914, Eastman expressed his belief that Indians were natural-born artists and claimed it was time to "unfold the resources of his genius."[64] This viewpoint was a subject of conversation at the 1907 National Education Association (NEA) in Los Angeles.

At the NEA conference, E.C. Moore, the Superintendent of Schools in L.A., stated that the "old arts of this people …should be preserved" and "that we should…allow them to teach us something about their art."[65] His views mirrored Eastman's and others. Leupp furthered this idea by stating, "We have in the Indians of this country a race of natural artists. There is an artistic instinct in these people…. Instead of pinning little Indian children down to work at forms of art which are alien to them, I should try to draw out of them what has come down to them in their blood, the ideals of their own people."[66] Regarding De Cora's work, he said, "You will find in nearly every Indian the instinct of the artist…. [De Cora]

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[63] Leupp as quoted in Hoxie, *A Final Promise*, 199.
[64] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 187, and Charles Eastman, "'My People:' The Indians' Contribution to the Art of America," *The Craftsman*, November 1914. HUA.
[65] BIA, *ARS*, 1907, 22.
[66] BIA, *ARS*, 1907, 23.

is drawing out of [her students] what is already in them."[67] When De Cora appropriated and utilized the essentialist theory in her speeches and in her teaching, it was an expression of that which had been instilled in her by her teachers at Hampton and Drexel. Indeed, Howard Pyle employed the same theory when he taught Angel de Cora, but he encountered a major problem—De Cora did not have the innate ability to produce Indian designs without being instructed and shown what it was Pyle expected of her. Later De Cora faced this exact problem in teaching her own students.

When De Cora studied illustration under Pyle, he encouraged her to study Indians as her subject matter. Because De Cora was Indian, Pyle relied on her "innate ability" to be the source of her Indian art production. When De Cora proved unable to meet his expectations, he sent her West to the Fort Berthold reservation to sketch other Indians, allowing her to depict them with detailed accuracy. Pyle did not see the faults in his essentialist view. Her inability to produce Indian design on-demand undoubtedly resulted from her education in an institution whose mantra was: "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." De Cora's Western education estranged her from her Winnebago traditional culture. Salvage anthropology came into fashion after De Cora graduated from Hampton, so as a guiding principle of the boarding school system, it did not affect the way she was taught. Yet, Pyle expected her to produce Indian art because she was Indian. And despite the lengths to which Pyle went to stimulate her underlying talents, De Cora nevertheless expected her Indian students to instinctively be Indian designers and artists.

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[67] BIA, *ARS*, 1907, 63.

Upon entering her teaching position at Carlisle, De Cora immediately met with disappointment when she discovered her students were not "natural" designers. Like Pyle, she worked hard to awaken their dormant artistic instincts. She instructed her students in Indian art and "decoration" and, in some cases, even took the step of reintroducing them to material culture from their individual tribal nations. She accomplished this by using books from the Smithsonian Institution depicting Indians and Indian life. As to the early days of her teaching career, she wrote, "when I first introduced the subject—Indian Art—to the Carlisle Indian students, I experienced the discouraging sensation that I was addressing members of an alien race."[68] Her students perhaps were "alien" to her because they were Indians in the midst of becoming assimilated, whereas she was already assimilated. In her own words, De Cora found herself "manufacturing [her] Indians" as she worked to evoke and, in some cases, restore traditional cultural memories to Indian students.

It did not take long for De Cora to prove her abilities as a teacher to Leupp and others involved in Indian education. In 1907, De Cora began to travel to educational and reform conferences, where she exhibited her students' work. One exhibition that came early in her career at Carlisle took place in Los Angeles which was reported by the *Southern Workman* as "consist[ing] of a collection of original designs by her pupils in which only the Indian themes and patterns were used for decoration and ornament. Each one was the individual production of the pupil, done outside the schoolroom and without suggestion from the teacher—a pure expression of Indian art. In encouraging her pupils to use their native designs and patterns Miss

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[68] Witmer, *Carlisle Indian Boarding School*, 78.

DeCora [*sic*] acted upon her belief that although decorative art may be considered a superior accomplishment among white people, with the Indians it is a natural expression. The aborigine draws or weaves decorative motifs just as the bird sings. It is in the blood of his race and is the spontaneous expression of his mood."[69] This quote demonstrates the artistic development of the work of De Cora's students who progressed from a place of no artistic ability, according to their teacher, to presenting a well-received exhibition. It also exemplifies society's belief that Indian artistic ability was innate, or "in the blood." De Cora's success with her students (perhaps unknowingly) contributed to "salvage anthropology's" need to save the "Vanishing Indian's" culture.

De Cora's career as a spokeswoman and advocate for Indian art began at various reform conferences. Her speeches discuss the necessity of applying Indian designs to items used everyday in modern life not only to beautify these objects but to save the designs from obscurity. She stated that although whites would not understand what the symbols in the designs meant, "the simplicity and beauty of the patterns would be preserved."[70] Through her advocacy, De Cora hoped to garner support for the Carlisle Indian art program and to show the benefits of allowing Indian art to be brought into "modern times." By "modern times" she meant that Indian artistry had a place in modern décor. Another art exhibition included "a demonstration in rug weaving by two [of her] pupils…showing what that school is doing…to preserve the aboriginal arts and crafts."[71] De Cora's ideas and philosophies paralleled Leupp's need to take Indian art to white consumers. Their

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[69] *Southern Workman*, 1907. HUA.
[70] *Southern Workman,* October 1907. HUA.
[71] BIA, *ARC*, 1908, 55.

joint work helped to create the dominant culture's fascination with decorating their homes in the Indian motif. Leupp sold the student produced art and rugs to the general public to raise money for the institution.

De Cora spent her entire Carlisle career arduously working under this essentialist and problematic assumption. Her role as a public speaker was one of the most important facets of her work at Carlisle; her speeches provide a site for examining her essentialist views. She spoke on the preservation, production, and teaching of Indian art. She was, after all, the "best-known Indian" artist of the time, so she was a credible speaker on the subject.[72] As to her early disappointment at her students' lack of natural artistic ability, she stated, "But even a few months have proved to me that none of their Indian instincts have perished but have only lain dormant. Once awakened it immediately became active and produc[tive] within a year."[73] Common to all of her speeches was her belief that "all" Indians, young or otherwise, were naturally talented "decorators." According to De Cora, "The Indian in his native dress is a thing of the past, but his art that is inborn shall endure."[74] Her work at Carlisle contributed to "salvaging" of Indian knowledge.

De Cora's method of teaching and her success with her students' Indian art production were based in the racist rhetoric. As to her students, she claimed that she

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[72] Angel de Cora's four speeches used for this paper are as follows: "Native Indian Art," 1908, written for the Lake Mohonk, NY Conference of the Friends of the Indian and Other Dependent Peoples; "The Native Indian Art," 1907, reprinted in *The Indian School Journal, Vol. VII*, Chilocco, Oklahoma, 44-45; "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," reprinted in *Cougnes International des Americistes, Vol. II* (Quebec: Dissault and Roulx, 1907), 205-209; "Native Indian Art," 1911, written for the First Annual Conference of the American Indian Association (which would later be known as the Society of American Indians), Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio October 12-15, 1911. Common to all of her speeches is her belief that Indians were innately talented in art and that Indian designs, or "decorations" as she called them, should be brought into the modern home. All speeches from HUA.

[73] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.

[74] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.

did nothing to impede or influence their "creative faculty."[75] An important part of De Cora's methods was to get her students, most of whom had lost touch with their tribal cultures, to "recall the days of old," and to create art from this place.[76] In her speeches, she claimed that she let the students draw from their own minds, allowing them to remain true to the tribal designs.[77] She noted that the best art and designs came when students produced their art outside of the classroom, when, like the true artist, they could be alone with their work.[78]

As to the actual production of art, De Cora was not so tied to the value of traditionalism. Indeed, she staunchly defended the creation of Indian art through the use of non-Indian methods. For example, using the weaving methods of "Persian rug makers" proved to be an easier means of producing rugs that more readily allowed the Indian art students to create their intricate Indian designs.[79] Not so enthusiastically, she added that the students would also use the Navajo method. While traditional methods of producing Indian art might have been cumbersome, or near impossible in the boarding school setting, her push to move away from these methods suggests that perhaps because of her assimilated perspective, she did not value all traditional ways. To her mind, trying to do things in a strictly traditional way was difficult in the white world and might hinder or halt the production of Indian art. By making it acceptable for Indian artists to use non-traditional methods in order to create Indian art, she helped ensure the continuation and survival of Native art forms, if not the traditional means of production.

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[75] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[76] De Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[77] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[78] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[79] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1907. HUA.

One of the most problematic aspects of her speeches that reflect her assimilation and boarding school education is her pejorative, racist way of discussing her "mixed-blooded" Indian students:

> I made daily appeals to the Indian's stronger instinct, that of racial pride [in order to get them to produce art]…The Indian blood has become diluted thro' [sic] the admixture of white blood and I found that I had to manufacture my Indians…Even in a mixed blood, who has not retained any of the physical traits, the Indian dominates the white blood, and is quickly roused to native pride once that pride is appealed to.[80]

According to De Cora, white blood corrupted Indian blood, but if properly appealed to, Indian blood and racial pride would reign triumphant. Then again, if left unchecked and uncultivated, the "mixed-blood's" Indianness and cultural memory would be consumed by the whiteness. Her statement is peculiar considering she had white-blood running through her own veins. Her perspective is complicated by the racial issues embedded in it, which are evocative of the popular eugenics ideology. Even in De Cora's era, conversations about the corruption of blood in relation to race were problematic and loaded with negative social meanings.

De Cora's troublesome perspectives on race indicate the conflict that dwelled within her and reflect the era in which she came of age. She was raised in a time and by a system rooted in biological determinism. In this era, one's race indicated one's ability to succeed. Although it is evident that she had the wherewithal to thrive as an artist, she also let others act upon her life in very significant ways. Pyle is a classic example because it was he who fashioned her into an Indian artist, instead of the landscape artist she wanted to be. Her adoption and

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[80] De Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," 1907. The speech was written five months after she became employed at Carlisle. All information related to this speech was taken from the notation made on the copy of it that is in her file at Hampton. HUA.

dissemination of the racialized language she employed to discuss mixed-blood children is also something she acquired form the non-Indians who dominated her life. Her methods, philosophies, and acceptance of the dominant cultures perspectives suggest that she turned a blind eye to all the negative effects that early Indian policies had on Indian students. Yet, a closer reading of her speeches demonstrates her skepticism and anger towards these policies.

De Cora's speeches convey her frustration with the way boarding schools treated and educated Indian students. For example, in one of her earliest speeches she discussed how the system tried to remove the barbarism from the students, only to turn them into "brown Caucasians."[81] She also recalled an experience at an educational conference where she viewed an Indian boarding school art exhibit. According to her, earlier boarding school attempts at teaching art were "insipid," and she condemned the art show by calling it a "farce."[82] Prior to De Cora's tenure, Indian students learned how to paint flowers on china and landscapes: there was very little instruction in design. In another speech she stated, "If he [the Indian] takes up his native crafts he does it with the sense that he has 'gone back to the way of barbarism.'"[83] This last statement likely reflected how De Cora felt as an artist of Native arts and crafts. She was caught in a quagmire.

As an assimilated Indian woman who did not necessarily adhere to tradition, De Cora advocated for the commodification of Indian traditional designs, perpetuated essentialism, and yet was angry at the means and ways of assimilation. In this respect, her life was a conundrum. It is only possible to understand her

[81] De Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[82] De Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," 1907. HUA.
[83] De Cora, "Native Indian Art," 1911. HUA.

involvement in the system by viewing her as a partial participant. She was not fully convinced of the rightness of the rhetoric and practices around her. The off-reservation boarding school system victimized her through indoctrination. In some ways, her situation reflected the changes that occurred in assimilation policies during her lifetime.

Her life at Carlisle afforded her the opportunity to marry William "Lone Star" Dietz. De Cora met Dietz a few years before her employment at Carlisle at an art exposition. Dietz, a Sioux Indian with Germany ancestry, was an artist, a football player, and student at Carlisle. After De Cora's employment at Carlisle, Dietz became one of her star art pupils, and following their marriage in 1908, he became her assistant art teacher.[84] They worked collaboratively on various programs and received acclaim for their "Indianness" and their artistic talents. But shortly after her marriage, De Cora lamented to Miss Folsom that she and Dietz were unhappy at Carlisle and wanted to leave the ISS.[85] Finally, after nine years of employment, De Cora resigned.

Several student papers reported Angel de Cora's departure from Carlisle. For example, it was printed in the September 17, 1915, *The Arrow*.[86] The *Southern Workman* also reported her resignation and further stated that she planned to return to illustrating. Although the publications did not disclose her reason for resigning, it

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[84] Letter from Angel de Cora to Miss Cora Mae Folsom, January 27, 1908. HUA.
[85] This information comes from various letters sent to Cora Mae Folsom during Angel de Cora's employment at Carlisle. This assertion is specifically stated in a letter from De Cora to Folsom, dated spring of 1908. Although it seems like an inordinate amount of time to pass between her growing discontent and actually leaving, the couple was tied to Carlisle because of Dietz's involvement with the football team. HUA.
[86] *The Arrow,* September 17, 1915. HUA.

most likely stemmed from the corruption that had befallen Carlisle.[87] The school came under the scrutiny of the federal government due to mismanagement by Superintendent Moses Friedman. Federal investigations were underway, requiring the students and faculty, including De Cora, to testify. To complicate matters, while the new superintendent, Oscar Lipps, supported the art program and De Cora's work, the new Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Cato Sells, did not.[88] Sells' main concern was Indians and alcoholism, and he gave his full-attention and support towards that issue. This change put an end to all that De Cora had accomplished at the school.[89] In 1915, De Cora ended her employment at Carlisle.

Shortly after De Cora's resignation, William Dietz also left Carlisle to accept a coaching position with the Washington State University football team. De Cora joined her husband on the West Coast a few months later and remained there until 1918.[90] That summer, she returned to the East Coast to teach art at an "Indian" summer camp for privileged white girls run by Dr. and Mrs. Charles Eastman.[91] Differing interests and distance took its toll on the marriage, and on November 30, 1918 the Dietzes divorced in Spokane, Washington.[92]

Upon returning east, De Cora took a position with the New York State Museum in Albany as an illustrator of Devonian Fauna.[93] Although a seemingly odd decision for the artist, this job allowed her to step back into the professional arena. She needed a way to rejoin the field since her time at Carlisle had all but

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[87] *Southern Workman*, December 1915. HUA.
[88] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 183.
[89] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 183.
[90] Almeida, *American Indian Education Reform*, 140.
[91] Almeida, *American Indian Education Reform*, 140.
[92] Almeida, *American Indian Education Reform*, 141.
[93] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 196.

halted her once flourishing career as an illustrator. She produced very few artistic works after 1907. For example, in 1911 she illustrated the book *Yellow Star* for her friend Elaine Goodale Eastman, the wife of Indian physician and activist Charles Eastman. For Dr. Eastman himself, De Cora illustrated a few articles. And in 1913 she designed the cover for the September issue of *The Red Man*, the Carlisle student periodical. This job in New York was to be her last.

In 1919, a worldwide influenza epidemic struck the U.S. and claimed the lives of 6,270 Native Americans.[94] While in Albany, De Cora became ill. She returned to Northampton, Massachusetts to the family that housed her during her time at Smith College and who she considered family—the Clapps. On February 6, 1919, Angel de Cora died from pneumonia and influenza. De Cora was 47 years old at the time of her death. Her body was laid to rest in an unmarked grave within the William H. and Gertrude Clapp family plot at the Broad Street Cemetery.[95]

Indian boarding school circulars reported De Cora's death, but otherwise her passing went fairly unnoticed. Even today, there is little academic reference to her contributions and few scholarly articles. Yet, De Cora's work was significant. She made important contributions to Indian arts and crafts and was an advocate for the inclusion of Indian art in the white world.

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[94] R. David Edmunds, Frederick E. Hoxie, and Neal Salisbury, eds., *The People: A History of Native America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), 370.

[95] While attending Smith College, De Cora lived on and off with William H. and Gertrude Clapp and their daughter at 65 Paradise Road in Northampton, Massachusetts. When she was not living with them, she was a constant visitor, and their relationship developed to such a degree that she was buried in their family plot. The unmarked grave comes as a result of the custom that only blood relatives received headstones. The Clapps' involvement in Indian reform, beyond assisting De Cora, is unclear. The records that may contain evidence as to the Clapps' further participation in the reform movement are located in the archives of Historic Northampton, Northampton, Massachusetts, but have not been used for this thesis.

Ironically, De Cora's work at Carlisle, not her work as an artist, became the most important facet of her professional life. She demonstrated her capabilities as a teacher and as a spokesperson and advocate for Indians and their arts and crafts. She applied herself to the task of gaining the acceptance of Indian art by modern American society, thus preserving the designs for all times. De Cora spoke at many national conferences and worked hard to exhibit her students' work. In many ways, her decision to work at Carlisle was essentially a return to safety. By going to Carlisle, she returned to boarding school, and in doing so, walked the "well-worn path [for artists] from fine arts to commercial art and finally to teaching."[96] Carlisle also represented the safety of home for De Cora, who was essentially raised in the system. It was a return to a life surrounded by other Indians. General Armstrong of Hampton would have been pleased with her decision to educate other Indians. De Cora shift from professional artist to art teacher/Indian educator, however, afforded the opportunity to peddle the virtues of assimilation beyond the gates of Carlisle. She became involved in the modern pan-Indian movement.

In contemporary scholarship, the use of the term "pan-Indian" as a descriptor is suspect; however, it is important to understand De Cora and her peers in the context in which they understood themselves and how they organized as groups in differing social situations. According to Hazel Hertzberg's book, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements,* there were two different types of pan-Indianism: early and modern.[97] Early pan-Indianism was tied to "questions of race, ethnicity, and nationality," while modern pan-Indianism

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[96] McAnulty, "Angel de Cora," 169.
[97] Hazel W. Hertzberg, *The Search for an American Indian Identity: Modern Pan-Indian Movements* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1971), viii.

combined Indianness with elements of mainstream culture to create an identity that was socially mobile within American society.[98] Several of the major works on the boarding school era agree that the one element that aided the construction of early pan-Indianism within the walls of the off-reservation schools was the forced learning of English.[99] Aside from the shared experience of their internment, English was the common factor that made communication among students of differing tribes possible. Thus, as a boarding school student who arrived unable to speak English, De Cora was undoubtedly part of the pan-Indianism that emerged in early boarding school days.

The main reason scholars retreats from the use of "pan-Indianism" to explain the intertribal relationships that occurred among Indian children in boarding schools is due to the latest histories of that era. These authors argue that children banded together for a variety of reasons such as gender, age, personalities, geographically, and, of course, tribally—just to name a few. Yet, all of these sources themselves come back to the relevance of pan-Indian grouping and identity. The isolation of children forced them to deal with each other, and they only had each other to rely on, regardless of their differences in age and tribal affiliation. English enabled communication and allowed for pan-tribal group formation. This pan-Indianism in boarding schools is historically significant because prior to its emergence, American Indian tribes usually did not seek marital partner from outside of their tribal

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[98] Hertzberg, *American Indian Identity*, viii.

[99] The discussion of English as a main source of communication in this section draws on insights from K. Tsianina Lomawaima, *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of the Chilocco Indian School* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Brenda J. Child, *Boarding School Seasons: American Indian Families, 1900-1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Jon Reyhner and Jeanne Eder, *American Indian Education: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004).

communities, except out of political, social, or familial necessity. Afterwards, marriages between people of differing tribes became common. More to the point, while recent scholarship is correct in asserting that we must not overlook the formation of gangs and groups for reasons other than simple pan-Indianism, we also must not forget its significance.

According to Lomawaima and Child, boarding school group formation and identity occurred for many disparate reasons, but there was one significant difference between the students they examined and De Cora. She attended school in the early days of the system, entering in 1881, and their subjects attended after 1900. This difference was one of eras and experience. Early boarding school education was doctrinaire and more stringent than after the turn of the century. That is not to say it became less cruel, but as total assimilation stopped being the goal, expectations diminished. Also, later generations of boarding school attendees were guided by the experiences of their parents and grandparents who were alumni. Most of the boarding school students in De Cora's generation did not have family members who were boarding school alumni. As a result, there was no one to instruct the children in how best to protect themselves and how to get along in school. Her generation was forging a new road and identity—a pan-Indian one—galvanized by the English language.

De Cora was a pan-Indian woman as a result of her early education, and she re-enforced this identity as an adult by her involvement with the Society of the American Indian (SAI), a short-lived (1911 to 1923) modern pan-Indian movement and forum for political and social activism. When De Cora resided in Boston, she

befriended the future leaders of the Indian reform movement, such as Carlos Montezuma and Zitkala-Sa. De Cora was a founding member of the SAI and took an active role by collaborating with other members in their literary endeavors and illustrating some of their works. Her involvement with the SAI is evidence of her concern for the future of Indian people and her adherence to her Indian identity, even as an assimilated woman. Her participation allowed her to be part of a community that celebrated their Indianness, and tried to effect change by lobbying Congress for (what some felt was) the betterment of Indian people.

When examining De Cora in regards to issues of pan-Indian identity and assimilation, an unavoidable question arises: If De Cora's reputation as an Indian artist afforded her such professional success that she did not need to accept Leupp's job offer at Carlisle, then why is she so unknown today? The answer to this question relates to pan-Indianism because it explains why her artistic works ultimately had little historical value to white patrons. As previously discussed, Americans preoccupied themselves with "salvage anthropology" and went about the task of collecting "authentic" tribal material culture and knowledge in the face of Indian extinction. According to art historian Bill Anthes, they believed that what they were doing was "all that stood between Indians and historical oblivion."[100] The keyword in this effort was "authenticity," so these "early patrons of Indian art" would have ignored the artistic work of Angel de Cora. She was a product of colonialism, shaped by her boarding school experience and formally trained to paint

[100] Anthes, *Native Moderns*, 4.

at an elite college. She was an inauthentic Indian.[101] Pyle sought to avoid this issue by re-creating her authenticity by sending her out West to be with other Indians, a move that only reified her inauthenticity. As a result, little of her artwork, outside of her book illustrations, survives today.

De Cora's perceived inauthenticity stemmed from her being a product of her era and situation. She led a life riddled with all of the assimilation policies that the government applied to it while she attended Hampton. Her speeches and philosophies expose her participation in this system. The Federal Government educated Indian children hoping they would take what they learned back to their Nations and perpetuate the erosion of culture, tradition, sovereignty, and identity. Few Indians who attended boarding schools left the institutions without surrendering part of their identity. Some students resisted acculturation. Others, however, had little choice in the matter, so they gave up their traditional ways, and reformers considered them successful due to their assimilation. Angel de Cora was a member of the latter category. She achieved a high degree of education, and used it and her assimilated ways to achieve success in the white world. Subsequently, De Cora returned to boarding school to teach what she learned to a new generation of attendees. De Cora lost some of her cultural identity and forged a new one.

During this era, white people measured an Indians success by her ability to be self-supporting. Lyman Abbott said it was the burden of missionaries to "[transform] hereditary barbarians and paupers into intelligent self-supporting and

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[101] For a more in-depth discussion of how "authenticity" intersected Indians and Indianness, see, Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). According to Deloria, when "Indianness" was removed from the Indian (assimilation), it was not discarded, but instead became a hallmark of American national identity.

valuable members of society."[102] De Cora fit these criteria, as she exceeded everyone's expectations. She was an internationally-known Indian artist and a success by all standards.

Returning to the question posed in the introduction, the degree to which De Cora was assimilated was undoubtedly high but probably not one hundred percent. De Cora cast aside her successful and prominent career as an artist to teach the first Indian arts and crafts course at Carlisle. In this role, she was the educator, the spokeswoman, and the artist. As an educator and orator, she perpetuated the assimilationist rhetoric, stereotyping, and racialized attitudes that she would have encountered in her own educational experiences. In her speeches she brought to light the importance of awaking the dormant, but innate, artistic talent that lay within each Indian student. She also used her speeches to discuss the importance of preserving Indian art and the designs that were doomed to vanish with the Indian. However problematic her philosophies, Angel de Cora truly believed her work was for the preservation of Indian cultural knowledge. She thought her work benefited Indian people.

As for De Cora, personally, her education and professional career mattered most to her. She enjoyed her civilized life and had no desire to return to the reservation. At the same time, she celebrated Indianness by working for the advancement of Indian art and artists and by trying to gain acceptance of Indian art in the modern world through decoration and design. Maybe she hoped that the acceptance of Indian art would lead to the acceptance of Indian people, without

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[102] Lyman Abbott, "Education for the Indian," as quoted in Prucha, *Americanizing the American Indians,* 215.

considering how different she was from most other Indian people of her time. She was an assimilated, professional and independent Indian woman who left reservation life far behind her.

De Cora left a legacy for all Indian people. She attained international acclaim as an Indian artist. Her pioneering efforts at Carlisle resulted in the implementation of art programs in Indian boarding schools across the country which, many years later, led to a renaissance in Indian art. In one speech, De Cora said, "There is no reason why the Indian workman should not have his own artistic mark on what he produces."[103] As an assimilated Indian artist and educator, she left her indelible mark on her work. Angel de Cora initiated the earliest efforts geared towards the preservation of Indian art.

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[103] De Cora, "An Effort to Encourage Indian Art," 1907.



Figure 1. This is a photograph of Angel de Cora on the step of College Hall on the Smith College campus. The image can be located at and is courtesy of the Smith College Archives. This is not for publication.

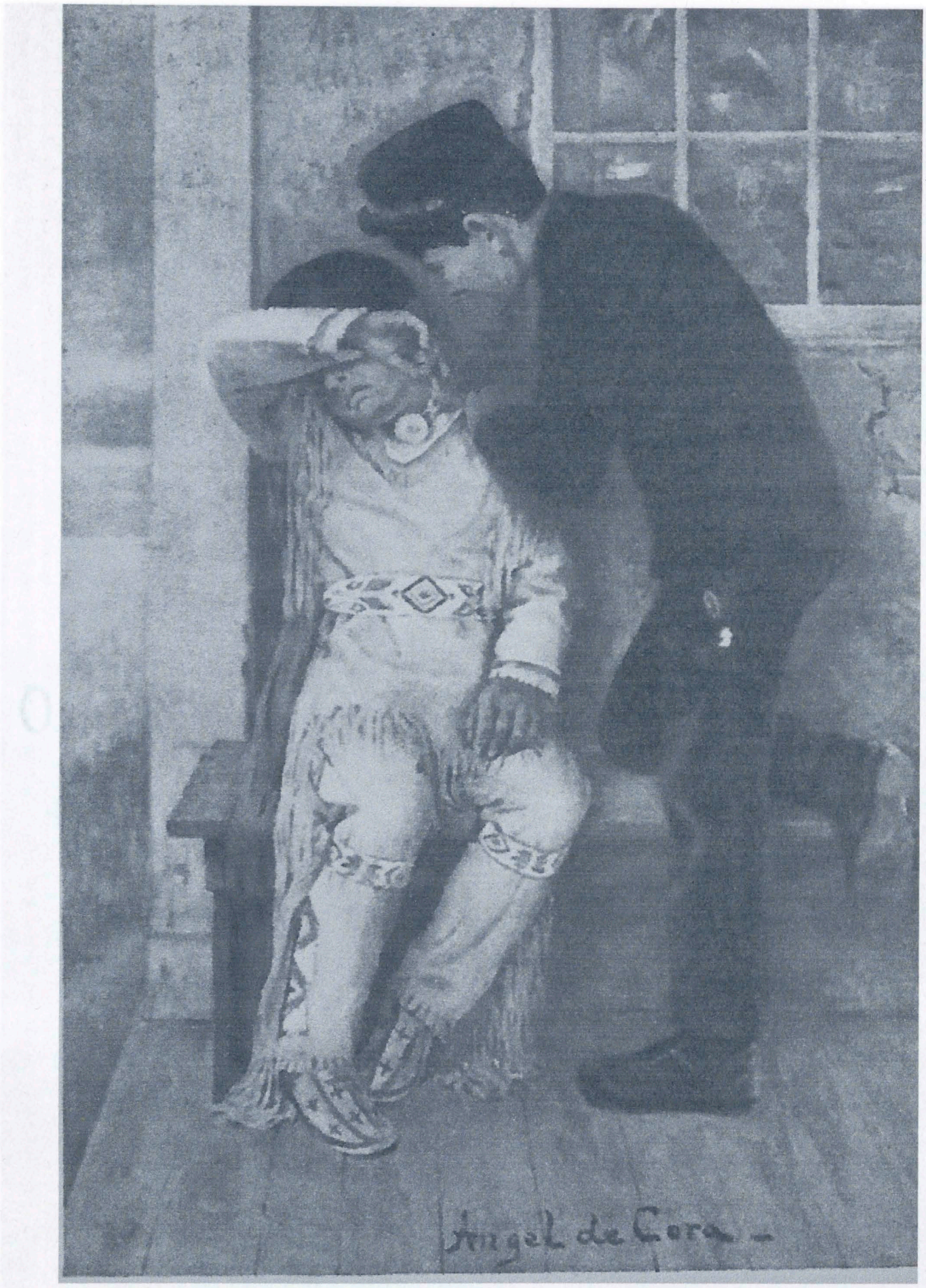

Figure 2. This illustration was the frontispiece for *The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School*, by Francis LaFlesche, published in 1900. Photocopied from the McAnulty article. Not for publication.

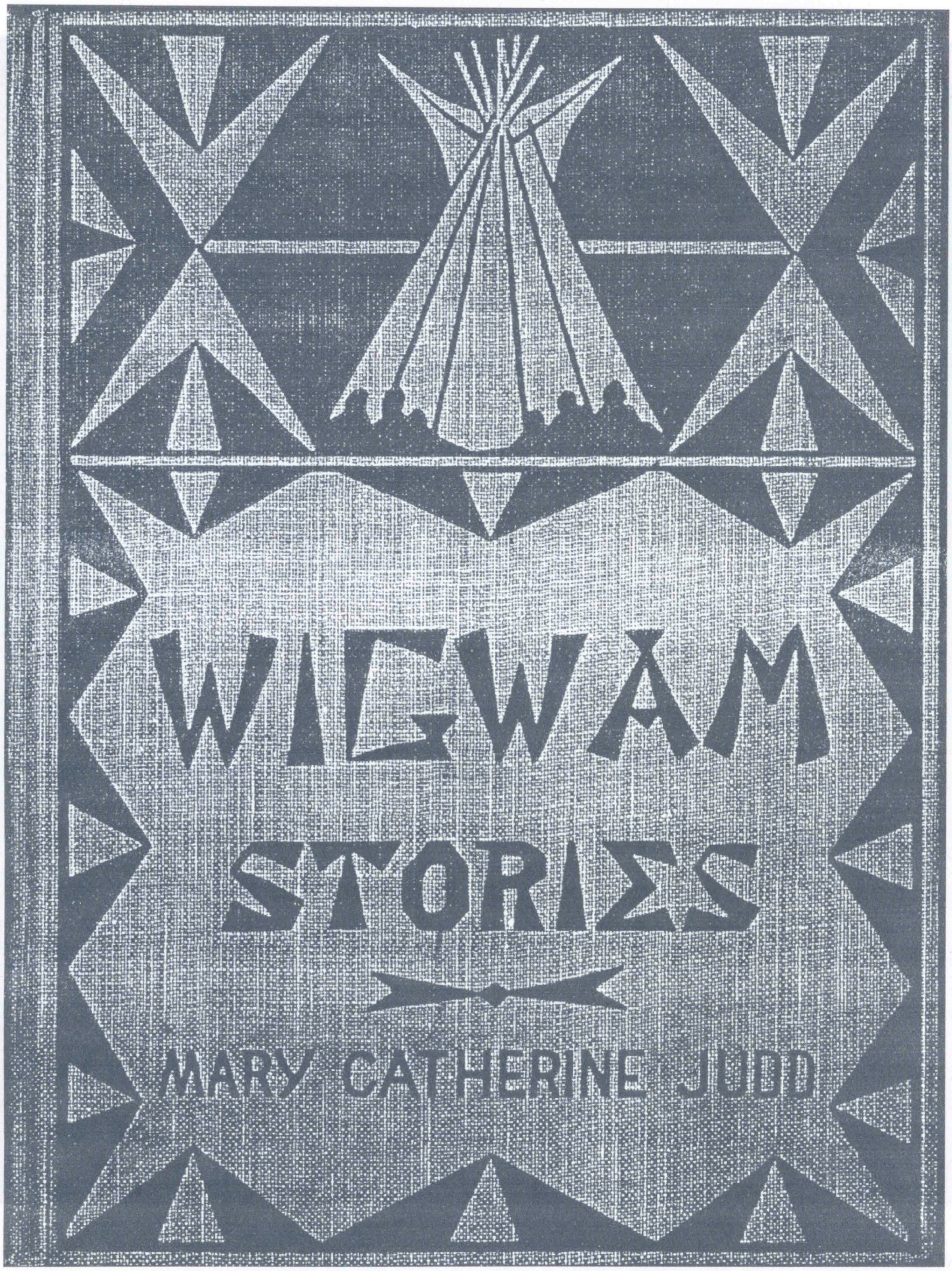

Figure 3. This is the cover of *Wigwam Stories Told by North American Indians* by Mary Catherine Judd. The cover was designed by Angel de Cora and is an example of her decorative work. This is not for publication.

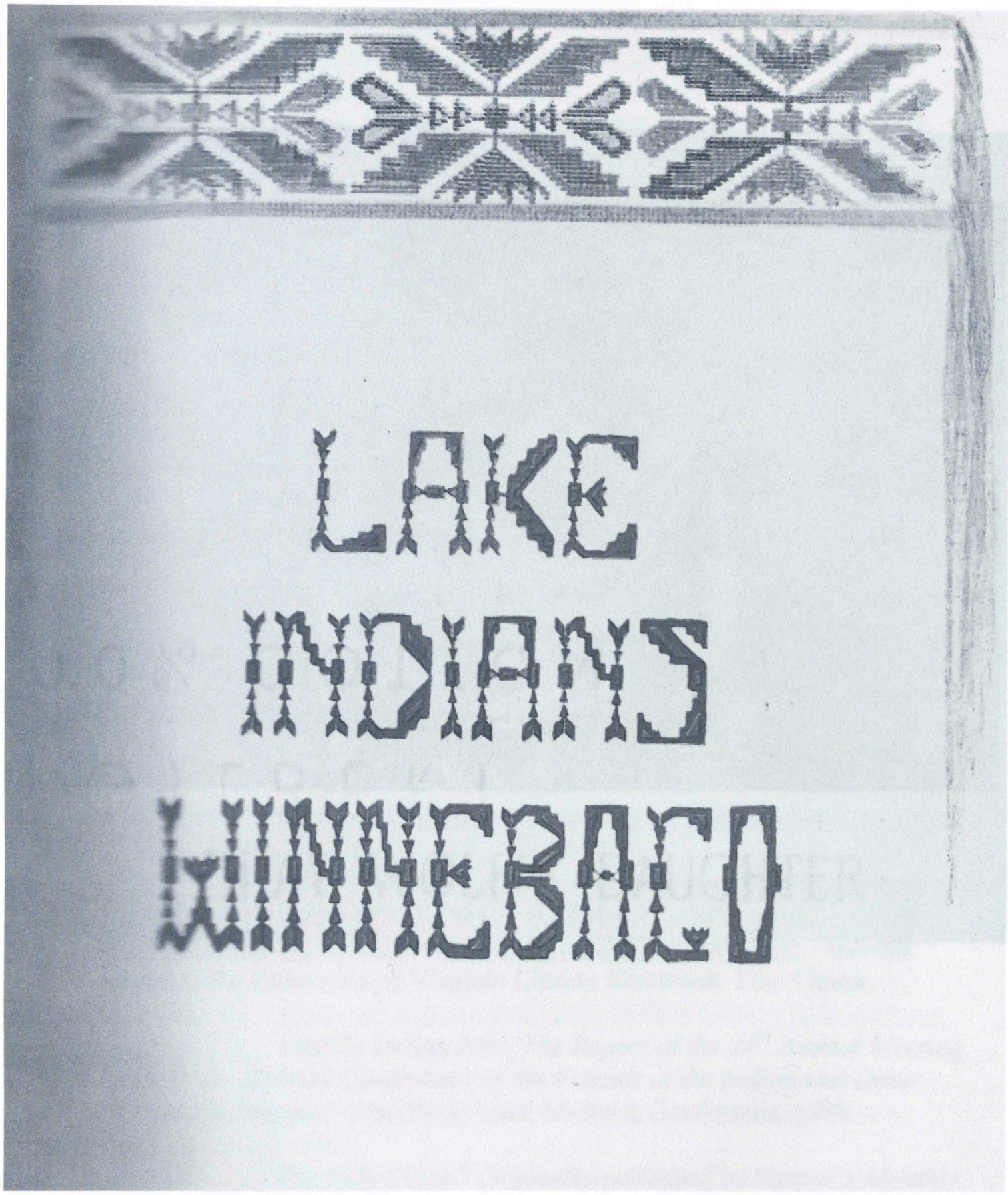

Figure 4. This is an example of the Indian ornamentation, or "decorations," that De Cora often referred to in her speeches about Indian Art. De Cora took great care to be accurate when depicting tribal people or "decorations" with Indian designs or adornments. She made certain that the designs she used were culturally correct in connection to the person or tribe she was depicting. This image is from Natalie Curtis, *The Indian Book.* This is not for publication.

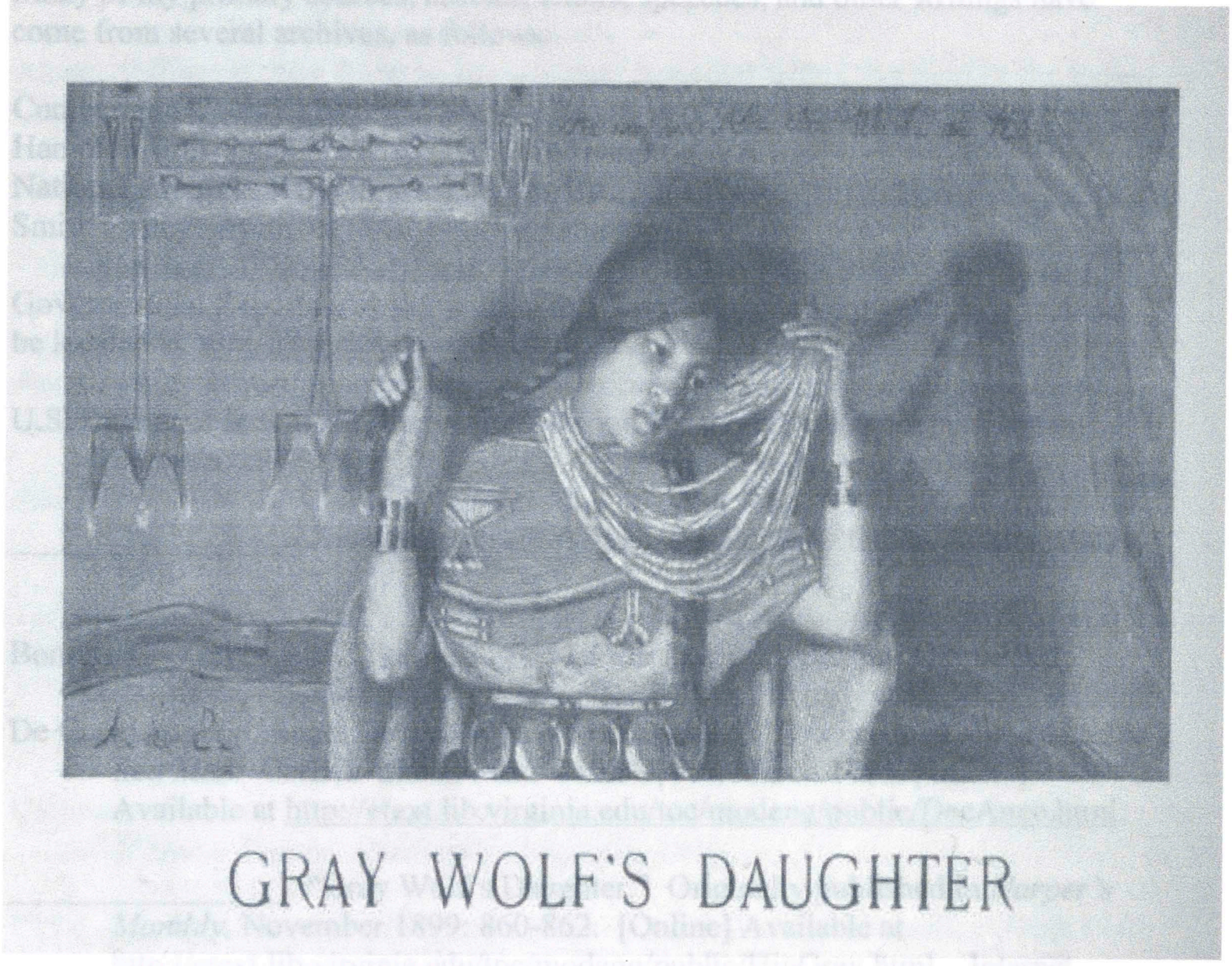

Figure 5. This image is from De Cora's short-story, "Gray Wolf's Daughter." In this illustration, as discussed in the text on page twenty-eight, De Cora captures well the young girl's sadness and conflictedness as she prepares for her last ceremony before departing for school. De Cora brilliantly depicts the internal struggle of this girl by dividing the image in half—one side is clearly Indian, while the other is blurred and uncertain. One can almost feel the skepticism of this young Indian woman. Photocopied from Sarah McAnulty's article "Angel De Cora: American Indian Artist and Educator." This is not for publication.

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