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Esther Burnett Horne, Shoshone Educator

Cynthia B. Leung
*University of South Florida
St. Petersburg*

When I first began to teach courses in American Indian Education at North Dakota State University,¹ Esther Burnett Horne, Wind River Shoshone, a highly respected tribal elder and retired teacher of Wahpeton Indian School in Wahpeton, North Dakota, graciously became my mentor. She shared with me and my students oral traditions related to her great-great-grandmother Sacajawea, who had accompanied Lewis and Clark on their westward journey to the Pacific Ocean in 1805.

She told of important events in her life: growing up in Idaho and Wyoming; attending Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas; teaching at Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding schools in Eufaula, Oklahoma and Wahpeton, North Dakota; working with youth groups and consulting with educators after her retirement. Of particular interest to me were her discussions of teaching strategies she found successful for developing a sense of ethnic identity and pride among her American Indian students.

Together, Horne and I outlined this brief account of her educational experiences, her philosophy of education, and her teaching methods. I have included details and incidents that she suggested should be included here. I draw on transcripts of audiotapes of several of our conversations so that Horne's voice can be heard.² I also use information and excerpts from her life history, *Essie's Story: The Life and Legacy of a Shoshone Teacher*, a ten-year collaborative project with Sally McBeth, an anthropologist at the University of Northern Colorado.³ Horne and I continued to discuss issues related to American Indian education until her death on June 6, 1999, at age 89. I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to learn from such a dedicated teacher.

Early Education

Esther Burnett was born on November 9, 1909 near Twin Falls, Idaho. Her parents had both grown up on the Wind River Reservation in northwestern Wyoming but had eloped to Idaho because neither her mother's nor her father's families wanted their children to marry out of their ethnic group. Horne's mother, Mildred Large, was Shoshone, and her father, Finn Burnett Jr., was the son of the "boss farmer," the agricultural extension agent of the Shoshone people. Fortunately, soon after the couple married, the relationship between the two families was mended.

My mother and father ran away to be married because she was Indian, and it wasn't popular at that time for a white man to marry an Indian girl. And the same vice-versa. It was not popular for an Indian girl from our tribe to be marrying a white man because our chief was trying to keep our tribe small. It was small and he was trying to keep it pure and not have a lot of other ethnicities. So he said, "You don't find a blackbird marrying a dove." So they ran away and went over the mountains into Idaho and lived there. And so we were the only Indian, my father was the only man with an Indian family, in my community. Yet, he was very much a leader. (Interview 20 February 1998)

Education was important to Horne's parents. Her mother and father instructed their children in reading, writing, and arithmetic at home when they reached school age. Her father obtained textbooks and put together a curriculum for the children, and her mother, who had a sixth grade education, did most of the teaching. In 1918, when Horne was nine years old, their small community of Perrine Siding, near Twin Falls, had sufficient population to qualify for a teacher so her father set up a school for the local children.

He was anxious for us to be educated. He used our granary and got the chairs and the seats and all of that kind of thing for it, in this school. And the teacher lived with us. This was in Idaho. (Interview 20 February 1998)

Miss Durfee, the teacher of this school in the granary, challenged the children as she provided a quality education.

Horne later attended a one-room public schoolhouse. Her parents continued to teach their children, especially about the contributions of American Indians to American culture. Her mother taught them traditional Shoshone teachings about native foods and medicines. After her mother was refused membership in a social club because of her ethnicity, her father taught his children and his wife to be proud to be Indian. "He was not only educating his children, but he was also educating his wife. And building up a pride in Indianness in my mother as well as her children" (Interview 20 February 1998). Horne's father had a collection of books in his library, and she enjoyed reading them. She became an avid reader by the time she was nine or ten years old. Finn Burnett Jr. wanted his children to have a well-rounded education and to appreciate both their non-Indian and Indian heritages. Horne remembered her father's teachings and later applied his philosophy to her own teaching: "All through my life I have also tried to teach my children and my students to have a deep appreciation for their own heritage, as well as that of others" (Horne & McBeth, 21).

When Horne's mother was growing up on the Wind River Reservation, English was taught as the first language in many homes. It was frowned upon to speak their tribal language, Shoshone. Although her mother spoke some Shoshone, she did not speak it as well as her father because his family had to learn the language in order to communicate with adult Shoshone on the reservation. Horne explained why Shoshone was no longer spoken by some of the reservation people.

This was due in part to policies set forth by the government, but it was also due to the expectation that *Americans* would conform and become a part of the melting pot. Indian people were taught that their culture was backward and uncivilized, and as a result, many parents did not teach their children the tribal language or tribal values. They thought it might prevent their children from attaining their full potential in white civilization. Of course, discrimination against Indians continued whether they spoke English or a tribal language. (Horne & McBeth, 13)

In 1922, when Horne was twelve years old, her father died. Her mother took the six children back to Wyoming to live close to her family. Horne met her paternal grandfather, aunts, uncles, and cousins on both sides of the family for the first time and enjoyed being part of an extended family, but this was a difficult time for Horne's mother and her children. At first, the family lived with relatives. Her mother accepted a job as chambermaid at the Union Pacific Hotel and then found a home for her family in Green River, close to the Wind River Reservation. She worked long hours for low wages so it was hard for her to support her family financially. The children were left to take care of themselves much of the time. The families of both her father and her mother then decided it would be best for the three oldest children, including Horne, to attend Haskell Institute, a Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) boarding school in Lawrence, Kansas.

Attending Haskell Institute

Haskell Institute was established in 1884 as an off-reservation industrial training school for male and female American Indian youth. Five years before, Army Captain Richard Pratt had founded Carlisle Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. This was the first federally-funded off-reservation industrial boarding school with a goal to assimilate and acculturate American Indian children into mainstream American culture.⁴ The success that Pratt demonstrated in educating American Indian youth led to the opening of a number of federal boarding schools modeled after Carlisle, twenty-five schools in all by 1900.⁵ Haskell was one of the schools built during this time of rapid expansion of off-reservation industrial boarding schools. Like Carlisle, it had a large campus and a multitribal student body.

Living conditions were difficult for children in the early days of Indian boarding schools. Children were separated from their families for years at a time and were not allowed to speak their tribal languages. The schools followed a military model of discipline established by Pratt; students had their hair cut, wore uniforms, and drilled in military-style. Students spent half of the school day working at jobs on campus to support the operation of the school.⁶ The first classes at Haskell Institute were small. Of the twenty-two students who attended the first year, nine died during the cold winter.⁷ As enrollment increased, however, the school soon became a showcase for the government's federal Indian policy. Haskell was one of three select federally-supported Indian schools to offer a high school curriculum in the early days of boarding schools.⁸ Beginning in 1895,

Haskell offered commercial courses and normal training for elementary teacher education. In 1927, high school classes were accredited by the state of Kansas.⁹

By the time Horne began attending Haskell Institute in the 1920s, the school was recognized nationally for its successful football and track teams.¹⁰ Haskell still adhered to a strict military regimen, and work details were an integral part of the school day. Many students, like Horne and her siblings, were sent to the school because families felt their children would learn discipline and get a better education in a boarding school setting than on the reservation or in public schools at home. Reflecting on her boarding school experience, Horne explained why she attended Haskell Institute.

I went to Haskell because my father had died of a brain tumor and my mother had six small children to try to take care of. She had a sixth grade education, and it was difficult. We were sort of from pillar to post. We were unattended most of the time and lived on the wrong side of the track in an ethnic housing unit. My father's folks, that in his sisters, were two of the more important employed at the Shoshone agency at Wind River, Wyoming. And they thought probably the best thing to do, since we were eligible to attend the boarding schools, was to send us to the boarding school at Haskell. (Interview 20 February, 1998)

When Horne first arrived at Haskell Institute in 1924, she was frightened by the layout of the sleeping porches because they reminded her of the hospital ward where her father had died.

When I first got there, the only thing I could equate that place with was the hospital where my father was a patient. He was in a long ward and the beds were white, of course, and everything was white, and at Haskell they had the sleeping porches. So that was very traumatic for me. But my aunt had talked to two older girls who were at Haskell. She had called them, I imagine, and talked to them and told them that my sister and I were coming. And they were to sort of take us under their wing. So perhaps that was less traumatic because someone was there that I knew. (Interview 20 February, 1998)

The girls from Wyoming, whom Horne's aunt had contacted before the children's arrival, helped her to adjust to the boarding school setting, but her sister Bernice had difficulty coping. "She couldn't cope with being away from home, and she became ill and we had to send her back" (Interview 20 February 1998). Since boys and girls were separated with living quarters on different sides of the campus, Horne could not see her brother Gordon as often as she liked, but there was a bandstand in the middle of the campus, and boys and girls could visit there on Sundays. Boys and girls did attend classes together.

It was very foreign to be separated from the boys. The boys were on one side of the campus and the girls on the other. We were not allowed to walk across and visit them anytime. However, finally we had some body language and

signs so that you could communicate with your friends who were not the same gender as yourself. Of course, you would meet them in class and make friends with them there. (Interview 20 February 1998)

Every morning before breakfast, students drilled in formation, military style. They were divided into companies by grade and gender, and older students were responsible for drilling the companies. Horne became a commissioned officer and obtained the rank of major before leaving Haskell. She sometimes was responsible for drilling the whole platoon on Sunday mornings when townspeople from Lawrence, Kansas visited the school to view dress parades.

On Sundays we wore uniforms. The boys wore khaki uniforms, and the girls wore navy blue uniforms with white little overseas caps. And we were in companies military-style, and we drilled before breakfast—every morning. My husband [who also attended Haskell] and I have said so many times, that taught us self-discipline. We both knew that self-control was one of the strongest of Indian values. It wasn't real traumatic for either of us. (Interview 20 February 1998)

Some students, like her sister Bernice, had difficulty adjusting to the strict regimen. She remembered students who could not cope with boarding school life and would run away from Haskell.¹¹

As was common in reservation and off-reservation Indian boarding schools of this time, students worked to offset the cost of maintaining the school.¹² Students at Haskell Institute spent mornings doing jobs around campus, from working at the bakery, dairy, or paint shop to gardening and doing laundry. During the 1920s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was subjected to stringent economic policies put into place during the Harding and Coolidge administrations. The Bureau's budget was "maintained at a dangerously low level."¹³ Without student work, the boarding schools would not have been self-sufficient. The Meriam Report of 1928, commissioned by the Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work and prepared by the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., strongly criticized the boarding school system run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. The use of student labor was of great concern: "The question may very properly be raised, as to whether much of the work of Indian children in boarding schools would not be prohibited in many states by child labor laws, notably the work in the machine laundries."¹⁴ Looking back on her experiences in work details, including running the mangle and the extractor in the laundry, Horne concluded:

Today, I guess I think of our details as a source for broadening our horizons. . . . The skills I learned have been beneficial to me all through my life. I make an effort to soften the point of view that government boarding schools were hellish places with harsh discipline and beatings. My recollections are that in general we were pretty happy; by and large we were like one big happy family. (Horne & McBeth, 35-36)

In the afternoons students at Haskell were in classrooms studying academic subjects. Horne described instruction as "very intense; the teachers' missionary

zeal stemmed from their purpose, which was to take the Indianness out of the Indian in preparation for life in the dominant society” (Horne & McBeth, 39). Assimilation was still the primary purpose of education at Haskell in the 1920s. Students could not speak their tribal languages or dance their own dances, but by bringing together young American Indian people from many different cultural backgrounds, Haskell fostered an environment where students could learn from each other about different indigenous cultures. Students came to Haskell from many different tribes from all over the United States, and they were curious about each other’s culture and language.

We’d discuss the kind of dances or ceremonies that each tribe had and learn about each other’s traditions. We’d also compare notes as to how students would say common items such as sugar, salt, or bread in their language. We had a lot of respect for each other’s culture and talked a lot to each other about our customs and traditions. We students nurtured a sense of community among ourselves, and we learned so much from one another. Traditional values, such as sharing and cooperation, helped us to survive culturally at Haskell, even though the schools were designed to erase our Indian culture, values, and identities. (Horne & McBeth, 32-33)

Horne developed a pan-Indian identity while at the school and also retained her Shoshone identity. It was not uncommon for students in off-reservation boarding schools to create a sense of community based on traditional American Indian values and to nurture the younger children who came to the schools.¹⁵ This is seen in Horne’s case when the girls from Wyoming helped her adjust to the new regimen at Haskell.

Two American Indian teachers at the school, Ella Cara Deloria, Lakota, and Ruth Muskrat Bronson, Cherokee, had a great influence on Esther Horne’s life and on her decision to become a teacher. They also helped her develop pride in her cultural heritages. Deloria taught Physical Education and drama at Haskell Institute from 1923 to 1927 after graduating from Teachers College, Columbia University. She was Yankton Sioux and had grown up among the Dakota at Standing Rock Reservation. She later gave up her teaching position at Haskell Institute to study and work with the noted anthropologists Franz Boas and Ruth Benedict at Columbia University. Deloria then wrote several books about the Dakota language. Her book *Waterlily*,¹⁶ published posthumously, is popular today among students of American Indian culture.

Ruth Muskrat Bronson, a graduate of Mount Holyoke College, taught English at Haskell Institute from 1925 to 1931. Bronson was born in eastern Oklahoma. After teaching at Haskell, she worked for the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the United States Public Health Service, the National Congress of American Indians, and the Save the Children Foundation. In 1944, she published a book for youth, *Indians are People Too*.¹⁷

Both women were teaching non-Native subject matter, but they had a strong sense of pride in their Indianess and wanted their students to develop respect for American Indian cultures and values.

These two Indian teachers were wise enough, and knew enough, and had enough pride in the Indian people's history. They knew that there was so much there that was good, and they realized that much of what is American is Indian. These two teachers were very good at teaching this to the students. They would sort of weasel it into their teaching. They managed to take a lot of the Indian culture and get it into the lessons. Like comparisons with non-Indians. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Deloria and Bronson integrated American Indian culture and heritage into their curriculum and taught their students to respect themselves and have pride in their heritage. They taught Horne and her classmates traditional Indian values and made their subject matter come alive by tying content to the students' cultural backgrounds. These two women were positive role models for the young American Indians at the school.

Ruth and Ella listened to us. They were interested in what we thought about the subject material and interested in our lives. They taught us that we could accomplish anything that we set our minds to. Their positive attitudes and pleasant dispositions convinced us that they must be right; but they also taught us not to believe that everything we learned was the truth. They pointed out biases in what we read and taught us how to disagree without being disagreeable. They taught us how to defend ourselves, as Indian people, without getting angry or defensive. This lesson has been invaluable to me throughout my life. (Horne & McBeth, 42)

The many social, political, and economic changes in American life in the late Nineteenth and early twentieth centuries fostered the Progressive Movement. Educational progressivism was just one facet of this large reform movement and involved changes in educational thought, school curriculum, and school administration.¹⁸ Teachers College at Columbia University, where Ella Deloria completed her teacher education, became a leader in pedagogical progressivism in the 1920s.¹⁹ John Dewey, whose ideas had sparked the Progressive Education movement, was a professor of philosophy there at the time, but his ideas were less influential than they had been earlier in the century. His theory of child-centered pedagogy encouraged the use of school activities that were both meaningful for children and relevant to their community life. W. Carson Ryan, Jr., one of the major writers of the education section of the Meriam Report, also was committed to Progressive Education. From 1921 he was a professor of education at Swarthmore College,²⁰ where Ruth Muskrat Bronson had studied. The teaching practices of Deloria and Bronson that made connections between students' school life and their home cultures reflected the philosophy of Dewey and the pedagogical progressives. The standard curriculum at Haskell Institute, however, did not include the study of American Indian history and indigenous cultures until the 1930s, but Deloria and Bronson found ways to "weasel it into their teaching."

While some students at Indian boarding schools suffered from malnutrition, disease, and emotional and physical violence,²¹ Horne saw her time at Haskell Institute as mostly a positive experience. “ I am not one of those people who had a lot of trauma in the boarding school” (Interview 4 April 1998). Horne learned self-discipline and leadership skills by leading her company of students through military-style drills. She learned social skills by taking part in the outing program where she worked as a maid in the home of a doctor and his family. She learned public speaking by participating in programs that Ruth Muskrat Bronson arranged in schools, churches, and service organizations. Horne was fortunate that during the years she attended Haskell she had some progressive teachers who cared about her as a person.

My personal evaluation is that I received a very good education at Haskell. Some argue that the curriculum left much to be desired, but I had attended public schools before I went to Haskell, and I felt that some of the BIA teachers were more effective in challenging and motivating students than any teachers I had in the public schools. Or maybe I was simply fortunate to have had some excellent teachers in my years at Haskell. (Horne & McBeth, 39)

Teaching at Bureau of Indian Affairs Schools

During her junior year at Haskell Institute, Horne began her vocational training with the Normal Training Department. She completed her student teaching in the lower grades at Haskell and was certified to teach at the elementary level. She was recruited by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for her first teaching position. There was a great need for teachers, both Indian and non-Indian, in BIA schools in those days and few qualified teachers to fill the positions. In February 1929, Horne began teaching at the Eufaula Boarding School for Creek girls in Eufaula, Oklahoma. The only American Indian teacher at the school, Horne was assigned to a class of thirty-five first and second grade students. Some of her students spoke Creek as their first language and did not know much English so Horne was creative and devised activities such as peer tutoring to help these children become more proficient in English.

Horne taught at Eufaula for only a year. In the summer of 1929, she married her high school sweetheart, Robert Horne, whom she had met at Haskell Institute. He was working in the power plant at Wahpeton Indian School in North Dakota, and Horne requested to be transferred to the school in Wahpeton so she could be with her husband. In February 1930, she began her new position at the Wahpeton Indian School, which was a BIA boarding school for grades one through eight. At that time Horne was the only American Indian teacher at the school. She continued to teach at Wahpeton until her retirement in 1965.

I taught fourth grade most of the time. Sometimes I taught a combination fourth and fifth. And sometimes I had a few sixth graders in my classroom. Our students were over-aged at that time. When I first came to Wahpeton, I had a sixteen-year-old boy in my fourth grade class, and an eighteen-year old boy, and girls who were fourteen and fifteen. It wasn't because they were backward. It was just because they hadn't gone to school. They were so far away from any school that they hadn't attended school. We had such big

classes back then, thirty and forty. And one time I had fifty-two kids in my classroom. It was so crowded, I was squeezing between desks and getting around and got bruises on my thighs. (Interview 20 February 1998)

Since the classes were so large, Horne relied on peer tutoring to provide one-on-one instruction for all students.

I couldn't do much of anything with that many kids without having help, and we didn't have aids. But my aids were the other children. That goes back to sharing, the old Indian values of sharing and generosity. "So you can help. If you're real good in math, you help somebody who isn't so good in math." But it really taught them to be helpers and not make fun of each other and be happy. I remember there was a little girl who helped this big boy, so much bigger than she. They really got into generosity and sharing, and he was real happy to have her teach him math. (Interview 20 February 1998)

She compared her teaching situation to that of teachers in country schools where students at one grade level learn from students in other grades. "So it wasn't just me. Some of those teachers were very innovative and creative. I think dedicated teachers are creative. They'll find some way to do something" (Interview 4 April 1998).

In the 1920s, reform groups had "uncovered extensive mismanagement in the Bureau [of Indian Affairs]."21 Indian reform groups, including the American Indian Defense Association, made the public aware of the diminishing land base and poverty of many American Indians living on reservations. Also, Indian boarding schools were found to be ineffective in educating children to maintain employment in mainstream society. The Meriam Report of 1928 provided a "biting and penetrating" analysis of the education program of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.22 Problems of off-reservation boarding schools were exposed: poor diet that resulted in malnutrition, spread of diseases like tuberculosis and trachoma, lack of medical care, harsh discipline, overcrowding, and excessive labor of students. Most of these problems were a result of insufficient funding and the philosophy of assimilation.²³

In this social climate of reform, ideas from Progressive Education, such as child-centered curriculum and community-based schooling, began to influence Indian education. The Meriam Report was written in the spirit of pedagogical progressivism. Ryan attacked boarding school curriculum and the policies of assimilation by recommending that children's cultural values be adopted in schools and that differences among tribes be recognized. He introduced the idea of cross-cultural education. While many reformers wanted termination of all Indian boarding schools, Ryan argued that it was not realistic to do so at that time. He considered it the responsibility of the Indian Service to prepare American Indian youth for two worlds—the white and the Indian.²⁴

Charles Rhoads, Commissioner of Indian Affairs from 1929-1933, began to act

on the recommendations of the Meriam Report, but not fast enough for many of the reformers. Ryan was appointed Director of Indian Education in 1930 and was committed to carrying out the proposals of the report. Then John Collier, who had been Executive Secretary of the American Indian Defense Association and was a committed reformer of American Indian land and education issues, became Commissioner of Indian Affairs in 1933. Ryan, Collier, and Willard Beatty, Director of Indian Education from 1936 to 1945, were all progressives who worked to improve American Indian education. During the time that they held influence in the Bureau of Indian Affairs, curriculum in federally funded schools became more cross-cultural. Students' home cultures were no longer kept out of the classrooms.²⁵

When Horne was teaching at Wahpeton, she motivated her students to learn by weaving aspects of American Indian culture and history into the standard curriculum as her teachers Ella Deloria and Ruth Muskrat Bronson had done at Haskell. It was important to her to help her students be proud of their Indianness because she knew this would build self-respect and confidence. She practiced the style of teaching modeled for her at Haskell by her American Indian teachers. Horne set up the first Indian Girl Scout troop in the United States at the Wahpeton Indian School in about 1931 because she felt that the values promoted by the Girl Scouts paralleled traditional Indian values. Policies toward Indian education were changing in the early years of Horne's career, and ideas from Progressive Education were being applied to the Indian education. The February 1932 issue of *Progressive Education* was devoted entirely to Indian Education.²⁶ Ryan, the Director of Indian Education at that time, contributed an article to the issue.

As the Bureau of Indian Affairs began to have summer inservice workshops for its teachers in the 1930s, Horne attended some of these training sessions. She took courses from anthropologists to learn about the cultures of various indigenous peoples, and she learned how to apply teaching methods, such as thematic teaching, to her own classroom. She studied traditional Acoma pottery making, Navajo weaving, and Pueblo basketry in a series of art courses offered at Albuquerque Indian School for Indian Service teachers in the summer of 1935. From these and other summer courses Horne gained new knowledge about Indian arts and crafts and American Indian history and cultures to share with her students.

I did feel that it was very important to give my students a pride in themselves as individuals, and a pride in their heritage. And so all of my teaching years I taught that way. We had a course of study, and we followed that quite a bit. But also during that time, when I was teaching arithmetic, I would also bring in what the Native Americans used for barter in different parts of the country, like furs and shells, and would trade with each other as they traveled about. And in reading I brought in the legends of our people. Of course, in the legends there was a great deal of history. Some of the children knew some of the legends or they'd remember and tell me something that their grandparent or someone in the family had told them. And then in art I would ask them to draw pictures of the legends or the stories that they had told. (Interview 4 April 1998)

In history Horne taught perspectives of American Indians to historical events such as the Trail of Tears. She remembered talking about Andrew Jackson and his friendship with a Cherokee man by the name of Junaluska. "And Junaluska and he became very good friends, except the way Jackson repaid his good friend Junaluska was that he had the Cherokees removed" (Interview 4 April 1998). Horne taught that the democratic form of government of the United States is from the Iroquois and that aspirin is white willow bark, a medicinal remedy first developed by American Indians. She even told her students how the first potato chip was made by an American Indian.

A young man by the name of George Crumb made the first potato chip. He was trying to make a French fry instead. There was a woman at the Indian school who remembered when the potato chip was called the Saratoga Chip. This young man was a chef in the Saratoga House in New York. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Throughout the curriculum, Horne brought in facts, contemporary and historical perspectives, beliefs, and practices that reflected the students' cultures. She created a special project to teach her students the contributions of American Indians to civilization. The project was student centered and interdisciplinary.

This was a yearlong thing. We started on a frieze. I don't know if you call them that nowadays. But the whole one side of our room, we put paper up. I did a lot of planting of books from the library in the classroom. And every time someone would find a contribution, they could go draw it, or if they couldn't draw real well, they could find a picture. Of course I would encourage them to draw, but if they felt that they couldn't, they could get the picture of the turkey and put it on there, or the picture of a toboggan or some of those other things. Oh there were so many. By the end of the year that whole wall was filled. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Remembering her own homesickness when she was a student at Haskell, Horne created a classroom activity to help the children overcome their loneliness. She called her teaching strategy "the cat that went to school." She brought a cat named Tommy into her classroom for the children to care for. Many of the children had left behind loved pets when they moved into the boarding school at Wahpeton. The cat filled a void for these children who were away from home. The children could talk to the cat about their innermost feelings. This was a healthy outlet for them to express their emotions. The children also learned respect for animals. American Indian people believe that animals have souls and that they teach us many things. The children learned this as they interacted with the cat. Horne also used the cat as the center of an interdisciplinary unit. She related language arts and math lessons to caring for the cat. The children calculated how much food the cat ate and then determined the cost of the food. They wrote stories about the cat. Horne could see the children develop self-confidence as they took care of the cat in their classroom. These activities show the influence of progressive ideas on her teaching style, especially the belief that classroom activities should be related to the world of the child.

Before the separation of church and state in educational institutions, Horne brought elements of American Indian cultures to the celebration of Christian holidays. Her students decorated Easter eggs with American Indian symbols. She particularly enjoyed a project where her students created an American Indian nativity scene at Christmas time. One year a Minneapolis newspaper had a story about nativity scenes depicting different ethnic groups. There was an African American nativity and a Chinese nativity, among others.

One of my students had an idea and called out, "Mrs. Horne, why can't we have an Indian one?" And I said, "Why can't we?" At that time the classes took turns making the main bulletin board in the school building, the one on the north as you go into the building. There was always a nice bulletin board. It was our turn to make the bulletin board. I said, "What would the baby be lying on if he was a Native American?" It would be on a buffalo skin. "And then what would take the place of the wisemen?" And so we had the buffalo, and we had the wolf, and I've forgotten some. I think the deer was one. "And then what would be the angel of the Lord?" Somebody said, "The eagle." So all of these things went into the nativity scene. I was still bringing in the Indian culture and teaching them. The holy city. Somebody wanted a teepee. Someone else wanted earth houses, some kids from Fort Berthold [a reservation in western North Dakota established for the Three Affiliated Tribes—Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara]. And someone else wanted, I think he was a Navaho, he wanted a hogan. And so we drew straws, and the kids from Fort Berthold won, so they made the earth lodge. But there again bringing in Indian cultures. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Horne became a demonstration teacher for Bureau of Indian Affairs summer workshops in 1936. She taught a demonstration class at Pine Ridge Boarding School with a group of local children and their parents to show how teachers could incorporate American Indian materials into content area subjects. She also showed how parents and community members could act as resource people in the classroom. In 1937 or 1938, Horne created an Indian Club at Wahpeton Indian School, similar to that established at Haskell Institute in the early 1930s,²⁷ because she wanted faculty, staff, and students to share their knowledge about tribal dances, music, and ways of life. She said of the Indian Club:

That's another thing I did to build up a pride in our heritage. Because before that they did not want the children to dance their Native dances any more than they wanted them to speak their Native language. Because they were trying to take the Indianness out of the Indian. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Because dancing was forbidden for many years in the Indian boarding schools, a number of the children did not know their tribal dances or the meaning behind the parts of their dancing outfits. They had not learned their traditions from their parents and elders of their communities so Horne taught them how to dance and told them about their dance outfits. She enlisted the help of American Indian employees at Wahpeton Indian School and other local American Indian people. Some of her students knew their tribal dances, and they taught the other children. Some of the children had their own dance outfits that they brought from home. For those who did not have outfits, the superintendent of the school provided material

so they could make their own, with Horne's help. Parents were pleased that their children were learning tribal dances. Some sent records of Indian music that they could dance to. At that time it was unusual for a woman to be given permission to teach dancing, but Esther Horne was given that honor. She was also allowed to teach the boys how to make men's dance outfits. American Indian people who were sending their children to Wahpeton Indian School knew that Horne was helping to preserve their cultures so she was accorded this special honor.

Other Experiences

In addition to her formal teaching experiences, Horne had many other accomplishments during her lifetime. While teaching at Wahpeton Indian School, she and her husband raised two daughters. Her husband enlisted in the Seabees during World War II so for four years Horne raised her children without their father. In 1955, Horne participated in the celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Lewis and Clark expedition by being a member of a party of historians and historically-minded individuals who followed the route of the original expedition. Wearing a buckskin dress, she followed the trail taken by her great-great-grandmother Sacajawea. In 1960, Horne was a delegate to the White House Conference on Children and Youth. Then in 1965 she went on a goodwill trip to Europe to promote authentic American Indian art.

After her retirement in 1965, Horne consulted with educators and gave many presentations to students and teachers. In the 1960s, Horne gave inservice presentations to teachers working with American Indian students. She suggested ways that teachers could help in the development of identity and pride in American Indian youth. She challenged teachers to prepare these young people for the technologically advanced world of the 21st century, while at the same time respecting old Indian values.

If you care, if you will answer, along will come a new generation without a fuzzy set of values which is an obstacle to decision making. It will be comprised of individuals who believe in themselves and are not frightened of failure and the unknown. Its members will be researchers who will analyze and define their problems after clarifying the issues with pertinent information. They will be proud and desirous of maintaining their links in the in the environment that gave them birth, and they will be capable of going forward technologically in the world of today.²⁸

After many years of service as a master teacher, Horne received the Distinguished Service Award in 1966 from the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the United States Department of the Interior. Throughout her long career as a teacher of American Indian students and an advocate for their interests, Horne wanted her students to be successful members of American society. She wanted them to retain their unique tribal heritages while at the same time participating in mainstream culture.

I wanted to give the kids pride in their heritage. To know that our people were very intelligent people and that we had given a lot to the world, especially to this country. And I said to OUR country because it was our country before it was taken over by others. (Interview 4 April 1998)

Esther Burnett Horne has touched the lives of many American Indian people and teachers of American Indian children and young adults. Her contributions to American Indian education will not be forgotten.