

# Shonga Ska

UPDATE - by Jauson King



*A young girl learning her culture, and bonding with a horse she no longer has.*

The Shonga Ska program has been a long time in the making. A program geared to at-risk Omaha tribal (Omaha Nation, Macy, Nebraska) youth, it offers guidance, security and education to children that may be in protective custody, or come from homes where these things don't exist. Although every community has its issues, the Shonga Ska program offers a unique cultural experience, while teaching life skills to these native young people.

Back in April of 2006, a dear friend and member of the Omaha tribe in NE, ask me to join him in the Shonga Ska youth program. Cal Harlan has many years' experience in counseling and programs relating to young people as well as Te-Ga-hon youth ranch in Montana. Cal's cousin Arnie Harlan had spent three years working to establish the Shonga Ska program. Working with the University of NE in Lincoln this dream finally became a reality for a short while. As another friend of mine has stated, "Working with tribal politics is like trying to save the Titanic." My theory is, if it was easy, it would have been done. School started, the Shonga Ska horses and tack were redirected to the wildlife center, and for a while it seemed like all hopes of Shonga Ska were gone.

Cal and Arnie weren't giving up, and neither was I. I was one of those kids, and for me, to let them down was very personal. Cal took a job under the ONCRT heading. (*Shonga Ska was given to the ONCRT after it was relinquished from the University of Nebraska.*) From here, Cal could quietly direct the course of Shonga Ska. Arnie ran for a position on the tribal council where he would have more voice as to the direction Shonga Ska would take, and I started e-mailing and calling everyone I knew.

\*The Omaha Nation Community Response Team (ONCRT) was established in May of 2000, in order to promote better utilization of community resources, create a unified approach to resolving community issues, and to improve communication and working relationships between tribal and state agencies, schools, and community members. The ONCRT has since grown in overall membership of representatives, each committing to the development and implementation of prevention services and activities for Omaha children and youth. **"Supporting our youth through traditional teachings and models."**

As fate would have it, a friend on the Nez Perce rez was also needing a bit of help. James was put in charge of the Nez Perce horse program and now had to cull off all of those horses with Alketeke blood and redirect the breeding program back to its original state. Yup... He's the one that mentioned saving the Titanic. James and I talked a long time about our young people, the self-identity that the horses hold, and everything that comes with the Shonga Ska program and medicine wheel teachings. We talked about the next generation of tribal leaders and what those views would be and we came to a decision. I then put Arnie and James in touch. James has given to the Omaha tribe a nice show gelding and a silver show saddle. In return James will have use of a pure bred Lusitano stallion,



Seneos, and my Criollo stallion, Prairie Tenor. The Nez Perce herd will see a comeback, and with those horses, the youth of both tribes will benefit. The Titanic will rise again!

What is just as wonderful is all the people that have called to help. We still need so much. Yet faith is maintained daily by all of you that are cleaning out your tack trunks, finding those boots you won't wear again and just e-mailing me daily to keep the faith. The Mid Western Longhorn Assn. even donated 12 cowboy boot Christmas stockings. But that's not the most amazing part. All of these people are getting to know each other. New friendships are forming. People are coming together in so many ways. I just sit back in awe of the whole account. Shonga Ska is no longer a youth program; it is a universal people program. It has become a beating heart unto itself.

With winter coming on, Cal keeps telling me "wait until spring." Yeah... and have you ever tried to get a woman to wait?...he's so funny. This winter the foundation will continue to be built. When spring breaks and the flowers bloom, so will Shonga Ska in a new, wonderful form. We will hold an appreciation day (date to be announced) for all those that have done so much. This will be a week-long event for clean up, sharing of cultures, trail rides, BBQ's and more. People will come from as far away as Louisiana, Indiana, Idaho and as close as Iowa. This will be a great time for making new friendships. I hope we can do this every year as we all grow stronger with each other's support.

This has truly been an amazing adventure. I am so happy to have been a part of it, and we haven't even started yet. I am also putting a message board on our website for all of you to get to know each other, and share ideas. It has been those ideas that keep me busy. Thank you again for all you have done, and all the help yet to arrive. We still need donations of time, funds (we have Pay Pal!), and equipment.

Please consider helping.

[www.oneskyranch.com/Shonga.Ska](http://www.oneskyranch.com/Shonga.Ska)

When you buy your riding supplies from Country Supply and enter the Care Code: ShongaSka, they donate part of your purchase price back to the Shonga Ska program. Country supply has excellent prices, good equipment and let's face it, you were gonna have to buy wormer and halters anyway.... Why not help out at the same time?