

### **LESSON THREE: DR. ORONHYATEKHA'S HISTORICAL COLLECTION**

Through Dr. Oronhyatekha's Historical Collection students will examine the themes in Dr. Oronhyatekha's collection and explore why museums and individuals collect?; how does society determine what is a valuable object?; what is considered an appropriate item to collect (in 1800 and now)?; does collecting objects marginalize groups of people?; and should near extinct or sacred objects be collected?

#### **OBJECTIVES:**

**(Time: Approximately 6-8 class periods)**

#### **A) CONTENT:**

On September 10<sup>th</sup>, 1902 the Independent Order of Foresters Headquarters opened the Oronhyatekha Historical Rooms and Library in The Temple which contained over 800 artifacts and natural history specimens. The Toronto Star headline for that day, proclaimed "The Beginning of a Very Valuable Museum, Founded by the Supreme Chief Ranger". Collecting was a very popular undertaking in Victorian society, and Dr. Oronhyatekha embraced collecting as he travelled, first as an aspiring young Victorian physician and later as the Supreme Chief Ranger. Collecting though was frowned upon in more traditional circles of the Six Nations, for certain religious reasons and because for the most part Native people and their cultures became the objects to be collected.

None the less, Dr. Oronhyatekha's collection was appropriate since it was more a reflection of himself. The collection proclaimed the prestige and status accorded a world traveller and was as random as it was eclectic. It combined items and objects for serious study in social and scientific fields while other items were simply exotic or bizarre. It also offered the visitor an opportunity to appreciate age-old relationships that had existed for millennia before and after the arrival of the European to North American shores, between peoples and nations. Dr. Oronhyatekha assembled his collection by purchasing some the objects on his own or purchasing other collections and by also having commissioned collectors obtain objects and artefacts.

With any collection there is often a bias associated with that collection. One thing that stands out about the Oronhyatekha Historical Collections is the particular attention paid to objects and artefacts that demonstrate a direct and dynamic relationship between the Crown in Britain and First Nations in North America. Oronhyatekha's bias was towards the assertion that First Nations people, particularly the Iroquoian people, had, have and would continue to have a place in a world of nations equal to all others. The collection seemed to assert that his people were neither "vanishing", nor facing extinction. Rather it offered archaeological evidence of North American occupation by native people dating back thousand of years. Through the trade silver that was collected it provided a glimpse of long standing economic relationships while simultaneously articulating the adaptation of native and non-native artistic design developed over hundreds of years. Military objects and items from Joseph Brant, Tecumseh, and Osceola recall a time of allegiance and active participation by members of many native nations in the defence of the Crown in establishing Canada's borders. The way in which the artefacts were displayed also lead to the predominant theme around native people and their inter-relationships being first and foremost, while objects and material from other cultures were relegated to an other worldliness. It was as though native people, their history and their leaders were the dominant culture.

(Source: Jamieson, Keith (2001)Wadrihawa Article, Woodland Cultural Centre, Brantford, ON)

**B) LEARNING MATERIAL:** Dr. Oronhyatekha's [Historical Collection website](#)

**C) PRE-REQUISITES:** Completion of Lessons One and Two on Dr. Oronhyatekha.

**D) INSTRUCTIONAL OBJECTIVES:**

***I) Process Objectives: Individual Work***

**(240 mins)**

Students will complete individual research on the various objects found within the Dr. Oronhyatekha's Historical Collection and write two one-page reports on the selected objects.

***Teaching Points:***

- ① Teacher will assign each student approximately four to six pages (depending on class size) of Dr. O's Catalogue.
- ① Students will be directed to review the pages to see what items Dr. O collected.
- ① Students will briefly summarize the items Dr. O collected.
- ① Each student will identify 2 objects they found to be interesting and will write a one page report for each object.
- ① The student object report will give a detailed description of the items including the:
  - a) name of the item; b) geographic location it comes from;
  - c) cultural group it came from; d) create or find a picture of the item;
  - e) explain why they chose the item; and f) if this item can still be seen/ found today and where it could be viewed.

***Learning Objectives:***

- ① Students will use computer technology to do further research on Dr. O's Museum Collection.
- ① Students will complete research on two objects and prepare a one-page written report for each object.
- ① Students will give an oral report on their research topic.

***II) Process Objectives: Group Work***

**(60 - 120 mins.)**

In groups students will review their selected research items and will be asked to place a value on each item, 1 = most important to 10 = not important, within the group's collection. Students will be asked to explain their selections and the values placed upon the objects.

***Teaching Points:***

- ① Divide students into groups of four or five depending on class size.
- ① Ask students to rank (as listed above) and place a value on each of the objects they researched from Dr. Oronhyatekha's collection.
- ① Students will prepare a ranking list for the class, based on their group discussion.
- ① The teacher and classmates will question each group about their collection.
- ① Students will explain how they decided on the ranking and value placed upon the objects.

***Learning Objectives:***

- ① Students will demonstrate their abilities to work in a group and create a collective list of objects based on group discussion.
- ① Students will present their findings in both a written list and oral format.
- ① Students will prepare themselves to answer questions from the class and be able explain their decisions and how they valued each object within their collection.

### **III) Process Objectives: Class Discussion**

**(60 - 120 mins.)**

In 1911, Dr. Oronhyatekha's Historical Collection was donated to the Royal Ontario Museum. It was evaluated by Dr. C.T. Currelly, then Director of Royal Ontario Museum, as "1) a collection of Indian stone implements and pipes, which are of no particular value but which we should be glad to have;

2) A collection of personal historical things Toronto etc. for which we have no place in the constitution of the museum, with exception of a piece or two, the value of which would compensate for the straining of the constitution of the museum;

3) The third section of objects picked up in travel, mainly in Egypt, are not only worthless but are objects which would have to be so labelled that they would bring discredit upon those from whom they came. There are two or three exceptions in this class that we would be glad to keep, and my private advice would be for the complete destruction of the remainder as they are not even copies of real things, but are fantastic creations that are very well known;

4) The fourth class is a series of marble carvings from the modern Italian factories, and one of the objects of the Museum is to educate people away from that kind of thing."

(Source: Dr. Oronhyatekha Catalogue, 2003 Woodland Cultural Centre)

#### **Teaching Points:**

- ① From the ranking provided by each group, guide students through a class discussion on:
  - i) the purpose and place of museums;
  - ii) the process of and why we collect objects;
  - iii) the bias' in collecting;
  - iv) how values are placed on various items.
  - v) what should and should not be collected;
  - vi) ownership of objects;
  - vii) should objects be returned to rightful owners.
- ① Create a list of answers provided by the students for each question.
- ① Have students summarize the class response to these issues.
- ① Have students identify whether or not their original ideas and values placed upon Dr. Oronhyatekha's Collection has changed based on this discussion.

#### **Learning Objectives:**

- ① Students to participate in class discussion.
- ① Student will explore and review their own opinions on "collecting objects".
- ① Students will re-evaluate their original assessment of the value of Dr. Oronhyatekha's Collection and what they have learned from this exercise.

**Evaluation:** Assessing individual and group reports - written and oral  
Participation in group and class discussion.  
General rubric for completing research assignments.