

## First Nations Residency Fund Brings Dr. Beatrice Medicine to MOA

by Rosa Ho, Curator of Art and Public Programmes

Lakota Elder and internationally-known anthropologist Dr. Beatrice Medicine spent a month at MOA this past fall under the auspices of the museum's First Nations Endowment Fund. Dr. Medicine first spent time at UBC from 1957 - 1963 when her husband James Garner was Acting Curator of MOA. During that time, Dr. Medicine taught evening courses in anthropology through the Department of Anthropology and Sociology.

At the invitation of MOA director Dr. Michael M. Ames, Dr. Medicine returned to the museum last November to examine MOA's Plains materials. She also conducted her own research on beaded balls ("medicine balls") about which little has been recorded in the literature.

Dr. Medicine was able to locate one beaded ball attached to a beaded wand, labelled "war club," in the collection.

This is in fact a medicine ball used in female puberty rites which are presently being revitalized amongst the Lakota. Using photographs of the ball, and with the assistance of members of her community, Dr. Medicine hopes to contribute more information about this object.

During her stay, Dr. Medicine also discovered film footage of one of the last "medicine ball" makers in Wood Mountain, Saskatchewan by Vancouver artist and video producer Dana Claxton. This finding may lead to a collaborative project between Claxton and Medicine on use, continuity and change in this Lakota tradition.

Perhaps Dr. Medicine's most significant contribution to the museum lies in her assessment of a collection of drawings, photographs and dolls collected in the 1930s by Jean Telfer, a school teacher at the Stoney Reserve in

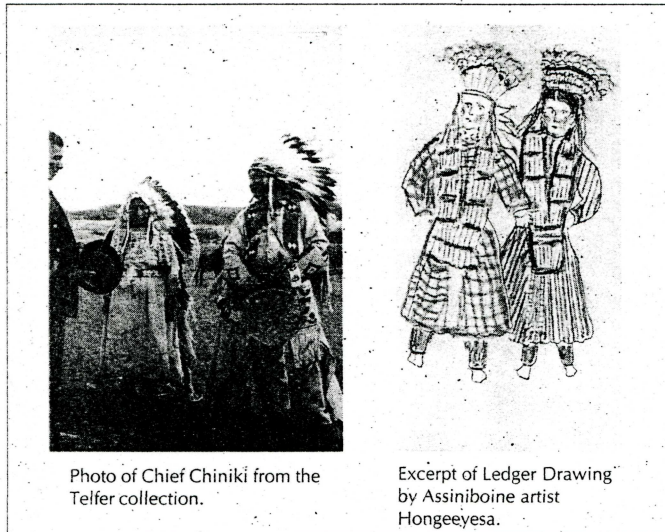


Photo of Chief Chiniki from the Telfer collection.

Excerpt of Ledger Drawing by Assiniboine artist Hongeeyesa.

Chiniki's wife wearing a feathered headdress, presenting a gift to the then Governor-General Lord Tweedsmuir. This custom of a woman wearing a feathered headdress is also shown in one of the ledger drawings in the exhibit by

Assiniboine artist Hongeeyesa. The Assiniboine are Dakota speakers, also linguistically related to the Lakota and Nakota.

Overall, Dr. Medicine gave good marks to the museum's collection and documentation of Plains materials, and encourage more work to be done on the collection by people of Plains background. The museum hopes to bring her back to do some teaching with students and others on the diversity and specificity of the Plains materials in MOA's collections. Dr. Medicine feels that there will be continuing tension in Native and non-Native relations and that the museum plays a significant role in public

education by involving people from different cultures in the interpretations of their own histories, lives and traditions.

As staff liaison for Dr. Medicine, I found her to be a woman of purpose who holds clear views of her dual role as an elder in the her own community and as a senior scholar and researcher in anthropology. I view her practice of effecting social change from both within and across boundaries to be an inspirational path for all of us to follow.

Moreley, Alberta. The Stoney being Nakota speakers are linguistically related to Medicine's own Lakota language, and the reserve and its people are familiar to Dr. Medicine, who visited the area frequently in the early 1960's when she lived in Calgary.

After examining the Telfer collection, Dr. Medicine suggested that MOA may wish to exhibit the drawings made by the children of the Stoney Reserve alongside the exhibit *Reclaiming History* which MOA is hosting this winter. One photo from the Telfer collection shows Chief Jacob



## Recent Acquisitions

This fall, the museum received two important additions to its Asian collection. The first donation was presented to the museum by the First Lady of the Republic of Korea, Sohn Myoung-Soon, and consists of two exquisite porcelain vessels, one celadon and one hand-painted on white porcelain. The white porcelain vessel was made by Lim Hang Taik, a contemporary potter who produces wares in the traditional manner and fires them in an old-style climbing kiln. His ability to successfully combine technical and artistic expertise has resulted in one of two superb works that add significantly to the Korean collection. The museum is also grateful to the Korean Consul General Johng-Won Kang for making the First Lady's visit possible.

The second donation came from the Sapporo Ainu Cultural Society in Hokkaido, Japan. Some of their members had visited MOA last year and noted how little Ainu material there was in the collection. This year, a delegation came back with a gift of several wooden objects made by Ainu craftsman Shigeo Toyakawa. These include two vessels (*hima*), a woman's knife (*menoko-makiri*), a cup and saucer (*tuki*) and a libation wand (*iku-pasuy*). These finely crafted pieces represent much needed and greatly appreciated additions to the collection.