

# Interactive Activity Using an Artifact/Object in a Gallery

Find a cart object/artifact that fascinates you and that you think museum visitors will enjoy learning about!

**Purpose:** To engage adult visitors in your gallery talk or tour through inviting them to handle an artifact/object/material while they learn about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs.

**Gallery Name:** Spirits & Headhunters

**Docent Name:** Christine Alderson

**Cart Artifact/Object/Approved Material:**

Child's Slit Gong Drum

**Gallery Artifact/Map or Visual/Concept:**

Artifact: Men's House area including Door board plus all pictures on display showing drums in use as well as the large Crocodile Slit Gong Drum & beaters. My personal pictures of slit gong drum too.

Concept: Initiation of young men into the tribe.

**Connection:** What is the relationship between the two items to be presented? Think about how they are made or used or the concept they illustrate. What do they tell you about the people, their culture, way of life, and beliefs?

Cart item, Child's Slit Gong Drum, was made to facilitate the younger members of the tribe having practice time since drumming plays such an important role in communicating between certain villages along the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea. These drumming events also take place during special ceremonial events and celebrations, such as the completion of initiation period. Accompanying the drum are carved wood beaters that often have intricate designs of ancestral figures on one end. The sound produced by a large drum can carry over 5 miles. These large drums may even be placed around the ceremonial grounds to serve as ancestral guardian figures. The inside of the drum is hollowed out so that one side is thicker than the other. This gives different tones when played, either by beating on the side with one beater (see heavily worn area) or running a stick up and down along the slit. The "Salt Water Crocodile Drum" represents spirits from their Creation story. Notice the embossed dots, which represent crocodile eggs.

**Interactive activity description:** Steps in presenting the activity.

1. Welcome to the *Men's House*. In order to fully participate in the activities that occur in this place, you must be male, a member of this tribe and fully initiated or in the process.
2. *Door Board* – To enter the Men's House, if you qualify, you must enter through the Door Board, which has images of the spirits that this Men's House honors.
3. *Salt Water Crocodile Slit Gong Drum* – During your time in the Men's House, you will hear music/prayers/songs that are accompanied on this kind of a drum. Your initiation into the tribe might involve learning the tribe's *version of the creation of Man* that I will share with you.
4. *Photos of Drum Usage*- The sound produced by a large drum can carry over 5 miles. These large drums may even be placed around the ceremonial grounds to serve as ancestral guardian figures (see photos on side of display). The inside of the drum is hollowed out so that one side is thicker than the other. This gives different tones when played, either by beating on the side with one beater (see heavily worn area) or running a stick up and down along the slit (see my photos from Musical Instrument Museum).
5. *Child's Slit Gong Drum* – This item from our ILS is an example of a *Child's Slit Gong Drum*. It was made to facilitate the younger members of the tribe having practice time since drumming plays such an important role in communicating among certain villages along the Sepik River in Papua New Guinea.
6. *Audience participation* – You will now have an opportunity to see how well you can make a drum work.

**Sample interactive questions (2-3) for the audience:**

1. What initiation rites are you familiar with in our society? Gang, Quinceanera, fraternity/sorority, freshman hazing.
2. Who might this tribe not want to come in through the Door Board? What security measures do you have at your house, business, and school?
3. Compare this “Salt Water Crocodile Slit Gong Drum” with the other drums on display. How are they different or the same?
4. What are the uses of drums in some societies? Keep the beat in rowing or marching, send messages, a part of percussion section of orchestra, announcement, signal time, signal an execution, scare tactic.

**Cross-cultural connections or related folk tale to engage people further; or research or story books.**

Relate a version of the “Creation of Man” story from the Latmul people who live along the Sepik River.

The crocodile is central to spiritual belief along the Sepik River and was the founder of the world in a well-known creation story. One version of the story, told by the Latmul people of Yentchan Village, relates that in the beginning there was no land, only water. The only things that existed were a giant crocodile that swam in the water and his mother, a tree kangaroo who drifted over the water. The crocodile had nothing to eat, and his huge stomach was full of air. One day he decided to blow the air out of his stomach to see what would come of it, and so he opened his throat and blew out the air. The blast of air was so strong that the crocodile’s tongue was torn out and split in two parts. His lower jaw became the earth; his upper jaw, the sky; and his eyes, the sun, moon, and stars. The two halves of his tongue became the first two human beings, Wolindambi, the older brother, and Kivinbangi, the younger. The two both married Nduman, the tree kangaroo, who was the mother of the crocodile, but soon began to fight over their wife. The younger brother renounced the wife and abandoned his brother. In anger, he walked over the land, and wherever he set his foot, hills and mountains sprang up.

Date approved by the Education Committee: \_\_March 14, 2015\_\_