



NORTHWEST FOLKLIFE HISTORY

36 YEARS OF CELEBRATING NORTHWEST CULTURE

The annual 4-day Northwest Folklife Festival kicks-off summer in Seattle with more than 1,000 music and dance performances, visual arts and folklore exhibits, symposia, workshops, craft and cooking demonstrations. The Festival attracts an estimated 250,000 visitors, 2,100 volunteers and more than 6,000 musicians, dancers, tradition bearers and visual artists. Other Folklife programs include Northwest Folklife Recordings, Education Programs, Exhibits, Publications, Folklore Research and Consulting Services.

- 1971** The Northwest Regional Folklife Festival was created as a joint project of the Seattle Folklore Society, National Park Service, National Folklife Festival Association, now known as the National Council for Traditional Arts, and the City of Seattle. The goal of this collaboration was to produce a festival of traditional and ethnic arts for the Northwest region as an extension of the National Park Service's urban outreach.
- 1972** The first Northwest Regional Folklife Festival was produced with a \$6,000 grant from the City of Seattle and use of the Seattle Center facilities (the site of the 1962 World's Fair). More than 300 artists from traditional and ethnic communities of the Northwest region of the National Park Service (Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Western Montana) participated in the free 3-day Festival and presented music, dance and crafts to a large, enthusiastic audience. The Festival was deemed a success and became an annual event.
- 1973** Northwest Folklife incorporated and received tax-exempt status to conduct the annual "Northwest Regional Folklife Festival." The Board of Directors was composed of representatives from the Seattle Folklore Society, National Park Service, the City of Seattle and traditional and ethnic arts groups.
- 1981** Northwest Folklife hired its first full-time Executive Director (and first year-round paid staff member). Seasonal staff continued to handle programming, vendors and public relations. New sponsors were brought on and a fundraising membership drive was implemented.
- 1987** Northwest Folklife became a regional advocate of traditional and ethnic arts by helping other Northwest festivals and communities with traditional and ethnic arts programming, sponsoring year-round events and developing an extensive database of traditional and ethnic arts in the Pacific Northwest.
- 1989** Northwest Folklife was selected to coordinate touring exhibits and performances throughout the state for the Ethnic Heritage Programs of the Washington Centennial Celebration.
- 1992** The Festival featured its first major folklore project, *Spirit of the First People*, produced in conjunction with several Native American community organizations. It included demonstrations, an exhibit and a symposium and became a multi-year project involving recordings and a book, published in 1999.
- 1993** Northwest Folklife received the imprimatur of the National Endowment for the Arts when it secured an advancement grant for long-range planning. This major award recognized the organization as a national influence in the presentation of the traditional arts.
- 1995** Northwest Folklife received \$350,000 from the Lila Wallace-Reader's Digest Foundation to expand and stabilize its organization and services, its single largest grant to date.
- 2000** Northwest Folklife was awarded the honored status as a Library of Congress Local Legacy.
- 2006** Northwest Folklife and Executive Director Michael Herschensohn honored by the Mayor's Art Award for 2006.
- Today** Northwest Folklife is the most visible advocate of traditional and ethnic arts in the region. The organization is committed to creating opportunities for individuals and communities of the Pacific Northwest to celebrate, share and sustain the vitality of folk, ethnic and traditional arts for present and future generations. A full-time staff of 10 manages the organization's \$2 million budget along with a 20-member Board of Directors and a variety of advisory committees. These committed individuals ensure the vitality and longevity of Northwest Folklife's mission, values and community programming.