



Northwest Folklife Executive Director Robert Townsend To Retire in Fall 2016

Interim Leadership to Direct Management Transition

Seattle, WASH. (July 7, 2016) - Northwest Folklife Board of Directors today announced that the nonprofit's executive director Robert Townsend will retire after nearly a decade at his post. Townsend's tenure has been a remarkable period of inclusion and evolution for the organization that has actively kept pace with the evolving cultural communities of the Pacific Northwest.

"Robert Townsend's leadership has made Northwest Folklife relevant and inclusive over the past nine years," Board President, Rafael Maslan comments. Townsend believed in the importance of reflecting the region's cultural evolution in the implementation of the organization's mission. "Rob has laid the foundation for us to move boldly into the future."

The organization will work to continue strengthening the community through arts and culture as it approaches Northwest Folklife's 50th anniversary in 2021. The Board of Directors will work strategically to maintain current operations and to recruit a new Executive Director who is committed to the vision of the organization, which is to engage the greater community in sharing and celebrating our respective arts and traditional cultural practices.

"It has been an honor and a privilege to lead Northwest Folklife," Townsend comments. "The organization's crown jewel is and always will be the annual Northwest Folklife Festival, the country's largest community-powered arts and culture Festival. With the enduring support of our dedicated donors, and by working in close private-public partnership with Seattle Center, we've been able to maintain our deeply held ethos of all-access. Today, we have grown beyond the Northwest Folklife Festival and we are fulfilling our great capacity to be the go-to resource for multi-cultural programming through our complement of performance events and community partnerships. While the organization continues its upward trend, the time is right for me to move on and to transfer Northwest Folklife's helm to a new generation of leadership. I look forward to working with our stellar staff and our dedicated Board of Directors during the succession period through the end of September, and then to volunteering at the third annual Seattle Children's Festival on October 9."

Townsend's commitment to self-expression and participation for all has created Northwest Folklife's culture of inclusion in which communities and artists are encouraged and invited into key planning processes. He was the key driver for Northwest Folklife to establish the Seattle Children's Festival, now in its third year. The organization believes that inspiring a child's cultural IQ is an important factor in strengthening communities and families. In all, Townsend's leadership has created space for Northwest Folklife's evolution to reflect and engage all people of all ages and backgrounds, enhancing quality of life and creating a big neighborhood of the Pacific Northwest.

Northwest Folklife's Board of Directors will work with Third Sector Company, a firm dedicated to the continuity of nonprofit leadership, to hire an Interim Executive Director in the short term to conduct the process of selecting Townsend's successor. They will consider both local and non-local candidates for the position.

About Northwest Folklife

Northwest Folklife creates opportunities for all people to appreciate, share, and participate in the evolving cultural traditions of the Pacific Northwest. Established in 1972, Northwest Folklife's signature event, the Northwest Folklife Festival, is not only one of the Pacific Northwest's treasured traditions, but it is the largest community-powered arts and culture festival in the country seeing roughly a quarter million

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attendees each year over the course of the four-day, Memorial Day weekend event. The Festival features roughly 5,000 performers of a variety of disciplines from local communities spanning Washington State, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Vancouver, British Columbia on 25 different stages plotted across Seattle Center's 72 acres of ground. Northwest Folklife produces the annual Seattle Children's Festival, a one-day multi-cultural event that celebrates our big neighborhood with families. The organization offers its cultural programming hand to a variety of other community events such as Crossroad Bellevue's Cultural Arts Series, King County's CHOMP!, and more. On its deepest level, Northwest Folklife sees its greatest impact in its ability to connect with all communities; to bring various cultural groups together, providing them a resource and a home within the greater community.

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