



Northwest Folklife Announces 2018 Cultural Focus
Echoes of Aztlán and Beyond:
Mexican American and Chicana/o Roots in the Northwest

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SEATTLE, WA (November 1, 2017): **Northwest Folklife** is proud to announce that Northwest Folklife's **2018 Cultural Focus** will be on **Mexican American and Chicana/o Communities in the Northwest**. This Cultural Focus will explore and celebrate Mexican American and Chicana/o communities from around the Pacific Northwest through stories, art, film, music, song, cuisine, dance, language, and culture. An annual tradition, Northwest Folklife's Cultural Focus engages a specific Northwest community to showcase throughout the year. The Northwest Folklife Cultural Focus empowers artistic expressions and cultural traditions and is a great way to discover more about our Northwest neighbors. Northwest Folklife has already begun working extensively with Mexican American and Chicana/o communities to craft the programming for this Cultural Focus. This work will be front and center as a key part of the organization's annual **Northwest Folklife Festival (May 25-28, 2018)**, but will also be part of Northwest Folklife's year-round programming, including the **Seattle Children's Festival in October 2018** and Northwest Folklife's new "Our Big Neighborhood" initiative.

Over the past 4 years, Northwest Folklife has been building a Cultural Focus committee with key community leaders to create ***Echoes of Aztlán and Beyond***. The goal of this Cultural Focus will be to showcase, preserve and recognize traditional and popular arts and culture in Mexican American and Chicana/o communities in our region. This program will explore what it means to be Mexican and Chicana/o, starting with indigenous roots in America, and moving to immigration, the building of communities, and a vision of the future. Audiences will understand the history of the Mexican diaspora in a larger picture of the history and development of our region, and will explore the vibrant art and culture celebrated in today's communities. Now more than ever, it's important to share how communities evolve with the ever changing societal and cultural shifts we face as a region.

"In the committee meeting last night," says Francisca Garcia of SEEDArts, "we were all so excited at this opportunity to look back at what we've contributed to the Pacific Northwest, to our home here, to see how deep our roots are, what our ancestors have left us, and to continue passing on our cultural heritage. We talked about the youth and what traditions we want to keep alive. We talked about how great it was to share this with our greater Seattle and Northwest community, to show what we bring to the table. Because Folklife is about all the

cultures that are here in the Northwest. It's about how folks live and express themselves in their own cultural traditions. What makes the Northwest Folklife Festival beautiful for me is to see the rest of the cultures in this region. I get inspired at Folklife by the Irish dancers, the Serbian musicians, the indigenous blessing that opens the festival... All of that is also mine, because I'm American. We're happy to have the opportunity to be the Cultural Focus this year to show what we have to offer. What we'll show you is also yours, because we're all part of the same community. We are the American experience."



As required by Northwest Folklife's community-driven model, this committee, made up of individuals, professors, culture bearers, activists and local artists, became the consulting council to develop and curate the Cultural Focus. The committee includes members from SEEDArts, Dia de Muertos Committee, the Indigenous Aztec community, La Sala, Bailadores de Bronce and Joyas Mestizas Folklorico groups, members from The National Association of

Latino Arts and Cultures (NALAC), and heritage artists from around the Seattle area. The Cultural Focus committee has identified that the main core of *Echoes of Aztlán and Beyond* will be to **create a larger platform for youth to explore their heritage and visualize the future**. This program will provide a space for youth artists, activists, and culture bearers of all ages to collaborate, share ideas, and envision the future while building a strong community together.

Throughout 2018 and starting in January, the Cultural Focus will weave through all of Northwest Folklife's year-round programs bringing in a bilingual component. Programming will highlight musical groups representing different Mexican American and Chicana/o traditions, including norteño; mariachi and banda as well as represent the evolving musical traditions of contemporary music expression. Through dance, the program will showcase the rich Mexican folkloric dance groups from around the region including groups that have performed with Northwest Folklife for over three generations. Demonstrations of traditional and contemporary Mexican cooking will take place on our new Cultural Cuisine Stage and cultural customs will be explored such as the Quinceañera, Día de Muertos altar, Sandpainting and Lucha Libre (Mexican wrestling). In partnership with Seattle International Film Festival (SIFF), the program will showcase heritage and protest films that discuss the Farm Workers history of Yakima Valley and Chicana/o Movement from the 1970s. Throughout the year, Northwest Folklife will partner with committee organizations to hold a panel series discussing identity and terminology intersectionality. This program will also give a brief history of regional celebrations such as Cinco de Mayo, Guelaguetza Festival, Seafair, Fiestas Patrias, Hispanic Heritage Month, Seattle Latino Film Festival, and the Dia de Muertos Celebration.



Another key element of the 2018 Cultural Focus: ***Echoes of Aztlán and Beyond*** will be a re-contextualizing of Northwest Folklife's work twenty years ago with these communities. In 1998, Northwest Folklife created ***Norte y Sur***, a bi-annual Folklore Project, which introduced the culture, lifestyle, customs and identity of Mexican, Tejano and Chicana/o communities to the Northwest Folklife Festival. Northwest Folklife published a magazine and CD that accompanied this program, featuring artists such as Juan Barco and Eva Ybarra. Twenty years later, Northwest Folklife will reflect back to this program, reaching out to those that participated to gain an understanding of how the community has evolved and to examine how it will progress in the future. Educational components, stories, videos and a digital listening station of the ***Norte y Sur*** CD produced in 1998 will be hosted on the Northwest Folklife website. All written materials presented on behalf of the program will

be bi-lingual including press releases.

More Information:

Mexican American and Chicana/o Communities in the Pacific Northwest

The Pacific Northwest, including Idaho, Oregon, and Washington has one of the oldest and most consistent immigration paths of ethnic Mexicans in the country, dating back to the Spanish expeditions from Mexico in the mid-1700's. In the twentieth century, Mexican communities grew significantly and after World War II, Mexican *braceros* (laborers) left an undeniable mark on the overall agricultural history of the region. The immediate post-World War II movement of ethnic Mexicans into the Northwest was, by and large, U.S. citizens of Mexican ancestry coming from south Texas, the Midwest, Rocky Mountain region, and California. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, each of the Northwest states ranked in the top ten in regard to percentage increase of Hispanics with the state of Washington having the tenth largest in the nation. Between 2000 and 2010, Mexican Americans were the fastest growing group in Washington with the population swelling by more than 71 percent during this time.

Northwest Folklife is an independent arts organization that celebrates the multigenerational arts, cultures, and traditions of a global Pacific Northwest, 365 days of the year. For 45 years, Northwest Folklife has been deeply committed to celebrating the diversity of our Northwest communities and to de-mystifying our differences together, under one roof. *Northwest Folklife believes that arts and cultures build stronger communities.* Northwest Folklife is committed to access for all and works to unite our communities by offering all of our programming with no admission charge by raising funds from individuals, corporations, foundations, and the public sector.

www.nwfolklife.org

VISIT <https://www.nwfolklife.org/programs/2018-cultural-focus/> FOR MORE INFORMATION

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