



**SMITHSONIAN
FOLKLIFE
FESTIVAL**

**INDIGENOUS
VOICES OF THE
AMERICAS** 

**JUNE 26-30, 2024
JULY 04-07, 2024**

CELEBRATING THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN INDIAN

**NATIONAL
MUSEUM
of the
AMERICAN
INDIAN**

 Smithsonian



LEFT At the 2023 Folklife Festival, Natalie Solis, Latinx curatorial assistant, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage (right), shares a moment with Ofelia Esparza (left) in front of the Esparza family's *ofrenda*, or Day of the Dead altar. PHOTO Grace Bowie, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives

In 2024, Smithsonian Folklife Festival will present a program devoted solely to Indigenous traditions and voices of the Americas, drawing hundreds of thousands to the National Mall for an unforgettable cultural experience.

The Festival, presented by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage in partnership with the National Museum of the American Indian, will honor contemporary and traditional Native creative expressions, joy-filled celebrations and community activism, all of which feed new possibilities for Indigenous futures. This year's Festival also celebrates the 20th anniversary of the National Museum of the American Indian's historic opening on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Embracing its theme, *Indigenous Voices of the Americas*, the Festival will offer the public, including families and young learners, an unprecedented opportunity to experience the vast diversity and unity of Native cultures of the Western Hemisphere. Over two weeks, artists and makers, professional chefs and home cooks, musicians, dancers, athletes, and storytellers will be invited to the National Mall to showcase the depth of multi-generational traditions as well as new approaches to cultural expression.

Visitors can join circles of celebration with stories, songs, and dance. Experience ancestral foods such as the "Three Sisters" (beans, corn, and squash) and inventive, sustainable cuisine. Learn the history and cultural importance of stories that underlie Indigenous sports and games. Hear how Native youth are reclaiming their languages through spoken-word and hip-hop performance. Explore traditional arts that highlight the importance of place and environmental knowledge.

The Festival will present contemporary Native experiences in the context of historic and ongoing threats to sacred spaces, land, sovereignty, and identity. Making space for meaningful conversations, the program will affirm the value and vitality of Indigenous cultures today and into the future. Themes will highlight the involvement of youth and emerging cultural leaders, as well as the multi-generational transmission and transformation of traditions.

Lead presentations will be built around the following regions: **Arctic, Hawai'i, Southwest, Plains, Great Lakes, Eastern Coast, Oaxaca, and Central and South America.**

Centered around four main themes—**relevance, resistance, representation, and reclamation**—programming will share Indigenous voices through performances, hands-on activities, demonstrations, and lively discussions. These themes will be explored through programmatic components of **foodways, music and dance, and sports.**

MUSIC AND DANCE

The National Mall will come to life with joyful dance, drumming, and music performances reflective of contemporary Indigenous life.

Highlights include:

- Lightning Boy Foundation Youth Hoop Dance Troupe, which engages boys and girls from multiple tribal communities through dance education
- Renowned performers Zuni Olla Maidens, whose songs and dance with pottery honor the roles of women in Zuni life
- Halau O Kekuhi, the hula dance school recognized as Living Hawaiian Treasures for their depth of Native Hawaiian cultural knowledge
- Pamyua, which brings Yup'ik dance and music traditions to worldwide audiences with their unique Inuit soul sound
- Pasatono Orchestra, an organization dedicated to the research, performance, composition, and promotion of Oaxaca's Mixtec culture, incorporating a unique set of rhythms, styles, and musical forms in the context of Indigenous and mestizo instrumentation: Zapotec brass and wind band from Oaxaca, the ritual percussion of northwestern Mexico, and abstraction of pre-Hispanic percussion
- Sons of Membertou, a drumming and singing group that performs contemporary and traditional Mi'kmaw songs

RIGHT A Kazakh musician serenades 2023 Folklife Festival visitors with the *kobyz*, a Turkish instrument with strings made of horsehair. PHOTO Sonya Pencheva, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives



LEFT 2015 Festival participants from Peru's Wachiperi communities demonstrated their archery skills on the National Mall. PHOTO Kadi Levo, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives

RIGHT Chef Rafael Rios—owner of Yeyo's El Alma de Mexico in Arkansas—discussed traditional corn cooking techniques at the 2023 Folklife Festival. PHOTO Grace Bowie, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives



SPORTS

The dynamic world of Indigenous sports and games celebrates resilience, skill, and deep connections to cultural traditions.

Highlights include:

- Demonstrations of lacrosse and stickball, some of the oldest organized sports in North America, which are thriving today in the Northeast, Southeast, and beyond
- Demonstrations of Arctic games, also known as Inuit games and Dene games—athletic disciplines that reflect the hunting heritage and arts of survival of Arctic peoples
- Skateboarding and skate art, vibrant expressive cultures ranging from North to South America

FOODWAYS

Innovative chefs, noted home cooks, and food producers will explore the food sovereignty movement and how Indigenous food systems support sustainability from seed to plate.

Highlights include:

- Chef Sean Sherman (Oglala Sioux), James Beard award-winning founder of Owanmi restaurant and NĀTIFS (North American Traditional Indigenous Food Systems)
- Chef Elena Terry (Ho-Chunk), founder of Wild Bearies, an educational community-building organization centered on Native cuisine and ancestral seeds
- An interactive teaching garden showcasing Native crops



LEFT In 2024, the National Museum of the American Indian marks 20 years since it opened on the National Mall. PHOTO Itza Villavicencio Urbietta

Smithsonian Folklife Festival

Initiated in 1967, the Smithsonian Folklife Festival honors contemporary living cultural traditions and celebrates those who practice and sustain them. Produced annually by the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and staged outdoors on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the Festival is an educational research presentation that has featured master artists and tradition bearers from more than 100 nations, every region of the United States, over 100 American Indian groups, and some 70 different occupations.

The largest annual cultural event in the U.S. capital, the Festival takes place for two weeks every summer overlapping the Fourth of July holiday. At its heart, it is an exercise in cultural democracy, in which musicians, dancers, cooks, storytellers, artisans, and others speak for themselves, with each other and to the public. It encourages visitors to participate—to sing, dance, learn traditional recipes, ask questions, and actively engage in this unique cultural exchange.

Folklife Festival Archives

Since 1967, the Ralph Rinzler Archives at the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage has preserved comprehensive documentation from each Folklife Festival. This essential research component captures festival participants' narratives through oral histories, videos, and photography. The Folklife Festival is a unique opportunity for scholars to connect with living culture bearers and document this information; oftentimes, it is the sole occasion for such scholarly recording. Documentation ensures the preservation of cultural traditions and practices. The archives provides access for researchers and the public alike.

National Museum of the American Indian

In partnership with Native peoples and their allies, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian fosters a richer shared human experience through a more informed understanding of Native peoples. The museum strives toward equity and social justice for the Native peoples of the Western Hemisphere through education, inspiration, and empowerment. Through two locations, it features exhibitions and programs in New York City and the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

COVER LEFT Festivalgoers attend a performance on the National Mall in 2018. PHOTO Sonya Pencheva; **TOP RIGHT** A Native basket weaver demonstrates her craft at the 2006 Festival. PHOTO Leah Golubchick, Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives; **MIDDLE RIGHT** A Festival participant carves a Pueblo pottery jar, 1992. PHOTO Ralph Rinzler Folklife Archives; **BOTTOM RIGHT** Porfirio Gutierrez, *Ofrenda*, 2014. National Museum of the American Indian

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