



# Oregon Folklife Network

By Nathan Moore

The [Oregon Folklife Network's](#) (OFN) mission is to document, sustain, and promote Oregon's diverse folk traditions. Located at the University of Oregon, the OFN continues the work of the Oregon Folklife Program (OFP), which operated out of the [Oregon Historical Society](#) until 2009. As a collaborative network of state arts organizations, cultural non-profits, university departments, and other groups who are invested in Oregon's folklife, the OFN seeks to develop accessible statewide folk arts programming while honoring the state's tradition bearers.

2010 was the OFN's first year at the [University of Oregon](#). During that time, the organization established a permanent office space and initiated a number of folklife programs. In November, the OFN held its inaugural symposium in Eugene, Oregon entitled "[Public Sector Folklore in the 21st Century](#)." The symposium featured a public lecture by Bill Ivey, former chairman of the National Endowment of the Arts, along with a convention to discuss issues surrounding public folklore and folklife programming. In April 2011, the OFN brought together members of Oregon's tribes in the first of a series of regional folklife listening sessions to learn more about statewide cultural activities and to discuss future opportunities for collaboration. In addition to these events, the OFN began a concerted effort to establish an online presence and to reach out to a variety of organizations in the Pacific Northwest.

In May 2011, the OFN received a grant of \$40,000 from the National Endowment of the Arts to re-establish a [Traditional Arts Apprenticeship Program](#). The program supports and documents the sharing of ethnic, tribal, occupational, and regional folk arts between a mentor and an apprentice and highlights the ways in which cultural diversity is passed down from one generation to the next. Oregon is home to a wide variety of folk arts including old-time fiddling, Native American basket-weaving, and traditional boat making, and previous mentors have included artists such as Irish fiddler Kevin Burke, Ghanaian drummer Obo Addy, and traditional healer and corona maker Eva Castellanoz. As award-winners are announced and the program kicks into gear, the OFN will document the teaching and learning process between mentors and apprentices and share it with the public through online materials, public performances, and a traveling exhibit.

Along with supporting the accomplishments of traditional artists, the OFN is planning to share Oregon's folklife with the public in a variety of other ways. The network is working toward creating a folk arts roster and developing folklife phone apps and other educational tools for digital media. The OFN's website is also rapidly becoming a clearinghouse for resources on folklore societies, arts agencies and non-profits, and folk arts in education materials. In addition, the OFN will employ more traditional methods of publicizing the state's folklife such

as putting together exhibits that will travel the Pacific Northwest and adding valuable fieldwork documentation to the University's archives and libraries.

To promote Oregon's folk artists and traditions, the Oregon Folklife Network continues to draw on the expertise of highly trained faculty in the [Folklore Program](#), the [Arts and Administration Program](#), the [Knight Library](#), and other departments at the University of Oregon. The network also welcomes students who want to gain practical experience to partner with the OFN for fieldwork projects and internship opportunities. Not only do students have opportunities to learn valuable skills, but they can also make important contributions to preserving Oregon's folk music, stories, art, and culture.

The OFN encourages organizations that are passionate about the folklife of the Cascadia region to become part of a growing network of stakeholders that will ensure the preservation of important cultural traditions for years to come. If you belong to such an organization, you can contact the OFN by calling 541-346-3820 or sending an [email](#) to Emily Afanador.

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