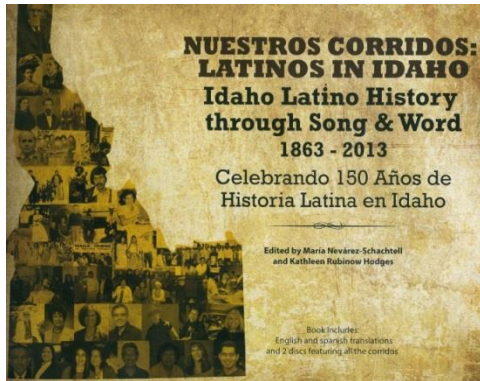




Nuestros Corridos: Latinos in Idaho **Nomination for 2015 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize**

The Idaho Humanities Council is pleased to nominate a project entitled *Nuestros Corridos: Latinos in Idaho – Idaho Latino History through Song & Word – 1863-2013, Celebrando 150 Años de Historia Latina en Idaho* for the 2015 Helen and Martin



Schwartz Prize. This multi-faceted project, designed to reach an underserved, minority population in Idaho, reached audiences totaling 625, with the final product having the potential to impact the general public, teachers and students for years to come.

The project was funded with a series of grants totaling \$16,750 from the Idaho Humanities Council to an organization called Mujeres Unidas de Idaho over several years to teach the history and composition of traditional Mexican corridos.

Corridos are unique musical ballads that record and preserve “news of the day,” and which often profile noteworthy individuals and historical events in a musical story.

The project included (1) a series of educational workshops for Latino students and neophyte musicians, young and old, to learn about the tradition of Mexican “corrido writing”; (2) composition of original corridos by workshop participants; (3) two public concert/performances of the newly composed corridos; (4) professional recording of a sampling of 28 new corridos; and (5) publication of an 82-page bilingual (English/Spanish) interpretive booklet about the project, the transcribed corridos, and the stories of the participants, complete with a two-CD set of the new recordings in 2014.

Key Outcomes for Project:

- ❖ Outreach to a new and underserved audience
- ❖ Increased awareness and appreciation of Hispanic culture among all Idahoans, and especially among Hispanic youth
- ❖ Increased awareness of Hispanic contributions to Idaho history
- ❖ Creation of new resources for teaching Idaho Hispanic history and culture
- ❖ Increased opportunities for Hispanic youth to recognize the importance of the Latino culture to Idaho and its history

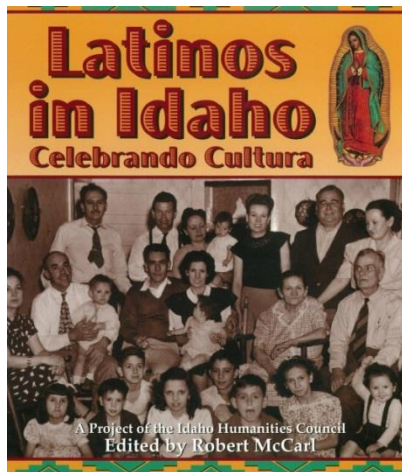
- ❖ Preservation of 25 original works and interpretive materials
- ❖ Development of a model initiative for duplication in other communities

Project Background:

Latinos make up Idaho’s largest minority population, 12%, but the population is growing. The Idaho Humanities Council has worked over the last two decades to collaborate with Hispanic communities in offering humanities programs for the growing but underserved population. The IHC has sponsored or funded grants for scholarly research, cultural festivals, literary events, publications, lectures, traveling exhibits, and other projects and programs.

In the early 1990s, the Council conducted an Hispanic oral history project, which profiled and recorded and transcribed interviews with about 30 “ancianos,” individuals who migrated to Idaho from the 1930s to 1960s, and a decade later IHC received an NEH “Model Initiatives” grant to develop and document a cultural folk festival, called “Fiesta Idaho,” focusing on the history and cultural traditions of the Idaho’s Latino community.

Several years of “Fiesta Idaho” festivals resulted in the publication *Latinos in Idaho: Celebrando Cultura*, which featured essays and interviews about Idaho’s Hispanic culture. One essay in that volume,

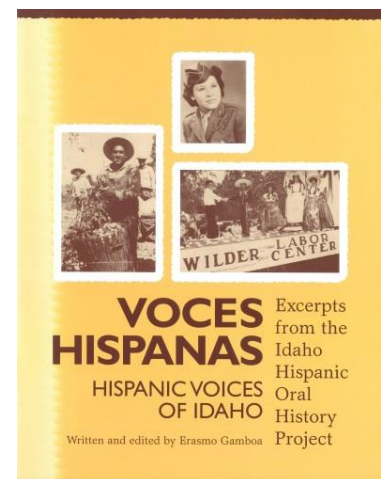


titled “Songs about Culture, History, and the Local News: Oral Tradition and the Mexican Corrido” inspired project director Ana María Schachtell a few years later to create the Idaho Corrido project.

Schachtell noted that there is a general lack of knowledge regarding the contributions of Latinos in the economic and cultural development of the state of Idaho. She indicated that this lack of tangible historical resources and lack of knowledge about Idaho’s Latino history contributes to low self-esteem among many young Latinos, which in turn often contributes to poor academic performance and a high dropout rate in schools. Schachtell states, “We all

know how important it is for young people to see faces like themselves in the annals of history. This is related to pride and positive feelings that spill over other areas of their lives.”

Beginning with an IHC planning grant, and followed by several additional grants supporting workshops, public performances, and recording and documentation totaling \$16,750, the Idaho Corrido project was made possible.



Project Description:

IHC grants helped bring Seattle musician and composer Juan Manuel Barco to Idaho to conduct workshops – one in 2010 and one in 2011 – to guide musicians, poets, and educators in the creation of Mexican corridos to bring the history of Latinos in Idaho to life. The new Idaho corridos—songs with a message, telling stories of historical people, places, and events, and other news of the day—told stories of Mexican cowboys, mule packers, miners, railroad and farm workers, and the accomplishments of many Latinos during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.



Errol Jones, an emeritus professor of Latin American history at Boise State University, describes the corrido in his “Foreword” to *Nuestros Corridos*. “For some, a corrido is a song that tells a story with a message,” he writes. “It must be true, structured with a headline, introduction of characters, and a moral. But many traditional songs are romantic and nostalgic . . . longing for homes, and holding to memories now faded.”



The new, original corridos, composed as part of this project, were performed in concerts in 2011 and 2012 to audiences of 350 and 200 respectively. In 2014, the CDs were professionally recorded, and a bilingual interpretive booklet was compiled, printed, and released at a special presentation of music and culture at the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho in October 2014. The booklet

includes the words to all the corridos in both Spanish and English, background information, and a lesson plan for incorporating the material in the classroom.



Several corridos were written about some prominent Idaho Latinos featured in IHC’s oral history collection and in the IHC-published book *Latinos in Idaho* (2003). Other corridos were created about prominent Hispanic leaders, historic events, the story of an immigration reform march, and even a ballad to the state of Idaho.

Among the 28 corridos recorded for this project are those telling the stories of Jesús Urquides, an early Idaho pioneer and phenomenal muleteer who moved heavy machinery into Idaho’s gold mines using pack strings; the healer Eva Castellanoz; the activist and teacher Rosie Delgadillo Reilly; the organizer and conservator of Mexican culture, Ana María Nevárez-Schachtel; Idaho farmworker champion Humberto Fuentes;

Idaho's first Latino State Legislator Jesse Berain; World War II pilots and Mexican railroad workers; Javier Tellez Juarez, the injured farmworker whose terrible accident ultimately led to legislation extending Workers Compensation Insurance to farm workers; a corrido about a flag incident in an Idaho high school; and the story of field workers being exposed to sprayed pesticides.

The 28 corridos demonstrate the range of the art form and make clear to young people what a corrido's purpose is.

Collaboration and Continuing Impact:

The project became a collaboration involving several organizations. Along with several additional funding and in-kind providers, project sponsors included the Idaho Humanities Council, Mujeres Unidas de Idaho, the Idaho Latino Scholarship Foundation, the Consulado de México en Boise, Boise State University, Boise City Arts & History Department, the Idaho Commission on the Arts, and the Idaho Territorial Sesquicentennial.

Several scholars participated including Boise State University Latin American historian Errol Jones, Idaho State Historical Society Oral Historian Kathleen Hodges, Boise State University Modern Languages Professor Alicia Garza, and Boise writer Max Delgado, author of *Jesús Urquides: Idaho's Premier Muleteer* (another publication funded by the Idaho Humanities Council).

Audiences of the workshops, the concerts, and the final cultural event totaled over 625. Final project reports indicated the appreciation for the program with audience remarks such as "Inspirational"; "Every teacher should see this"; and "This program should be taken to the schools." IHC's independent, outside evaluator for the grant project noted that:

Corridos are an excellent way to educate people about passing histories and tributes on through song. I think that everyone who attended the performances learned something about Mexican culture, Mexican history and Mexican heroes. The [Nuestros Corridos] booklet and CD that came out of this project will be a wonderful resource for teachers, students and anyone desiring to learn more about Idaho's Hispanic community, its history and also to learn about some of the community's most famous members.

After the concerts, several project musicians have been asked to perform their corridos in other community presentations. When some of the participating institutions were celebrating anniversary events, or some of the people profiled in the corridos were being honored, musicians from the project were invited to present their corridos.

For Boise's annual "Día de los Muertos" community celebration, project musicians have been asked to play their corridos as people gather to celebrate the lives of many Hispanic pioneers.

One musician commented, "A Pandora's Box has been opened and now we have to continue doing this." There is a renewed interest in composing corridos, and others have asked for more workshop opportunities.

Nuestros Corridos was donated to libraries, colleges and universities in Idaho. The booklet includes a lesson plan written by the project director, Ana María Schachtell, historian Kathleen Rubinow Hodges, and two Nampa teachers, Glenda Connolly and Mary Gutierrez, which will be used for years to come in Idaho schools. Its impact on future Idaho students, especially Hispanic youth, is yet to be seen.

Over all, *Nuestros Corridos* is a model project for other communities in Idaho and in other states to emulate, and the project is another example of the importance of funding from a state humanities council to help the seed of an idea to grow, and resulting in a program that reached an underserved, minority population. From the beginning, the project was well documented in every way, and the book and CD package are evidence of federal funds well spent.

For more information, see IHC's website at http://idahohumanities.org/?p=Nuestro_Corridos