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# Chicanos in Oregon: An historical

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## Sponsor

Portland State University. Department of History

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## Abstract

Spaniards were the first Europeans to explore the Pacific Northwest. The only evidence of these early visits is a sprinkling of Spanish place names and the intrepid voyagers. The more than four centuries of record are nearly devoid, of references to Spanish-speaking people, except for Americans of Mexican descent (Chicanos). Even the heavy influx of farm workers in the 1950's and 1960's failed to attract the attention of social science researchers. By 1970, the Spanish-language population was the largest ethnic minority and was exerting influence in most areas. This document documents the depth and diversity of Oregon's Chicano community in its historical context for the movement of Spanish-speaking people.

Even in the strongly Anglo-American milieu of the Northwest, the Chicanos, their unique blend of Mexican and American cultural and linguistic traditions. Through social clubs, cultural centers, economic and political organizations, an independent college, Chicanos in Oregon are preserving and promoting their identity. Hopefully, this study will aid Anglo Americans in understanding the differences without prejudice or animosity, and help Chicanos improve their position in the state.

The dominantly oral tradition of the Chicano coupled with the lack of written documentation, primary and secondary, required reliance upon interviews, conversations and generalization upon limited data. Research on the farm worker image of the Chicano has become obsolete as they have become settled and primarily urban. If this study provides a framework that generates interest in further investigation of the migration of Chicanos, it will have served its purpose.

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