Zoom! Representing Ourselves Online

Many of us are now meeting, playing, and learning virtually. This activity will help you identify some of your important folk groups and traditional knowledge. You will then create a virtual background that may be used on Zoom or other meeting platforms as a way to share something about ourselves in these online spaces.

Supplies Pencil, paper, and either a way to take a photograph that you may upload or a large paper bag cut open to lay flat (to create a large canvas for art!), crayons, markers, or magazine and other images/objects for a collage.

Directions
1. Yes, folklore includes quilts and fiddle tunes, but it also includes all that we learn informally in everyday life: skateboarding tricks, how to set a table, texting emojis, jokes, and even how we act in a classroom, real or virtual. Think about these questions:
   What's your name?
   What was your favorite game when you were little?
   What do houses look like in your neighborhood?
   How did you learn to tie your shoes?

2. Write down groups that you belong to, groups in which you share something in common with others, including hobbies, neighborhoods, sports. Don't forget your school, family, or special friend groups! These are what folklorists call folk groups.

3. If you can, take a walk through your neighborhood to look for ways that your community shares things in common or reflects folk groups. Maybe there is a similar brick color on many buildings or multiple houses have sports flags out front (Go Cubs!).

4. Look at your lists of groups that you brainstormed and noticed in the community. Think about words, colors, symbols, or other ways to represent some of these groups or meaningful parts of your community to create a background for your online interactions.

5. Either take a photo in your home or community that you feel particularly represents something important to you or use a paper bag canvas to draw or collage these words, colors, and symbols of your important folk groups. The next time you Zoom or attend a digital meeting, use this as your background. (Follow our notes below for some technical suggestions.)

Notes
To use your virtual background, you will want to do the following:

Using a Digital Background
- Photographs that do not include people work best.

- To use a photograph that you have taken as a Zoom background,
  - Save a copy to the device that you will be attending a Zoom or digital classes on.
  - Open Zoom and click the menu at the bottom next to the "Video" button.
  - Choose "Virtual Background," then click the "+" sign and choose your digital image. Make sure "I have a green screen" is not checked. (If your computer will not allow this green screen option to be unchecked, use a real art background instead.)
- Other digital platforms may support a virtual background, but you will need to check.

Using a Real Art Background
- A digital background might slow down your computer too much or not be supported by your meeting platform. In this case, you will need a real art background.
- To use your background, take your decorated paper bag canvas or large paper and tape it up behind you. With this art background, you can transform a quiet closet, a kitchen table, or a bed headboard into a space of your choice that reflects you and your folk groups!