

Smithsonian Latino Center Continues Expansion of Its Latino Virtual Museum

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Washington, DC - The Smithsonian Latino Center is expanding its Latino Virtual Museum through the nationwide launch of a suite of bilingual, digital educational resources Sept. 29. With the continued support of Target, the Latino Center, via its Latino Virtual Museum, will launch a bilingual digital Teacher Training Toolkit and a series of six animated shorts under the Virtual Museum's *¡Chequea Esto!* (Check This Out!) educational series.

The goal of the expansion is to better equip educators nationwide with digital resources to best serve Latino youth in economically challenged communities. The project also aims to motivate and engage Latino youth to pursue careers in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math).

"We are about providing access to teachers and children throughout the country," said Eduardo Díaz, Latino Center director. "We know that our approach has to be engaging and innovative if we want to capture the attention of youth today. We feel that our dynamic Latino Virtual Museum is the perfect tool to accomplish this, and we are grateful to Target for their support of this initiative."

The digital Teacher Training Toolkit and *¡Chequea Esto!* animation shorts will be available online and through iTunes U Sept. 29, and it will include animated stories of Smithsonian projects, teacher training e-publications, immersion games, Web books and digital objects that apply 3-D augmented-reality technologies. Some of the subjects that will be explored and shared with students and teachers include the popular Latin American holiday *Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead), the ceramics of Central America, Mayan history and culture, contemporary Latino art in the U.S., pre-Columbian indigenous cultures and environmental science.

"Like the Smithsonian, Target is committed to education, innovation and supporting diverse communities," said Laysha Ward, president of community relations at Target. "To prepare our youth for success in their careers and lives in the technology-driven global economy, we must provide them with culturally relevant resources to ensure they reach their full potential, so we're proud to partner with the Smithsonian to add educational materials to their Latino Virtual Museum."

Through this initiative, the Latino Center continues to strengthen its partnerships with the University of Texas El Paso and its Cyber-Share Center for Excellence and Academic Technologies department; the Immersive Education Initiative, an international non-profit consortium; and the National Girls Collaborative. These partners have committed to working with the Smithsonian to improve outreach and mentoring opportunities for Latinos nationwide. The digital toolkit and animated shorts will also be available Oct. 2 via a webinar offered by the National Girls Collaborative at www.ngcproject.org. To learn more about the toolkit and to register for the webinar, [click here](#). The toolkit can also be accessed through the [iTunes U collection](#).

Launched in 2009, the Latino Virtual Museum is an innovative lab for online games, simulations and virtual worlds that highlights Smithsonian arts and science collections. The virtual museum enhances visitor knowledge and appreciation of Latino cultural heritage through online activities and, in 2013, was visited by more than 900,000 users. More information about the Center's Latino Virtual Museum is available [here](#).

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