**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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CONTACT:

Kate Moore, Vice President of Marketing and Public Relations

(616) 929-1713; kmoore@grpm.org

**Ethnic Heritage Festival Returns to the Grand Rapids Public Museum**

**Museum Opens New Exhibit - “Journey Through the Pacific”**

**Grand Rapids, MI**: Join the Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) on Saturday, February 4 for the annual Ethnic Heritage Festival. The Festival is a day-long celebration of music, dance, crafts and food representing the various ethnic groups that call West Michigan home. The City of Grand Rapids and the surrounding region have a long standing history of diversity and various cultural traditions dating back from early explorers and fur traders, to modern day cultural rituals from new residents of the region.

The event will begin at 10 a.m. and features a variety of organizations, performances, beer tastings and presentations. The Museum Café will feature ethnic food selections and a special International Beer Tasting. Event activities are included with general admission to the Museum.

The 2017 Ethnic Heritage Festival will also celebrate the opening of a new temporary exhibit, *Journey to the Pacific*, showcasingshowcasing cultures of the Pacific region. This exhibit will be free with admission to the Museum.

Visitors will be able to view the Museum’s exhibitions, with two specific exhibitions having a primary focus on diversity and culture: *Newcomers: The People of This Place* which highlights the ethnic groups that have settled the Grand Rapids area, and Anishinabek: The People of this Place which focuses on the Native American culture in the region.

Organizations participating in this year’s festival include: Friends of Fisher Mansion, Amber Treasures, India Link, Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, Grand Rapids Sister Cities, Grand Rapids Scottish Society, Polish Heritage Society, Swedish American Heritage Society, Anishinabec - Grand Valley Lodge, End of the Trail Jewelry, Voice in the Wood, Native American, Native Blend, Edelweiss Club of Grand Rapids and more!

Colorful performances will take place throughout the day in the Meijer Theater and Galleria, starting at 10 a.m. Performances will include: Pacific Island Dancers, Ballet Folklorico Sol Azteca, Le Clay, Le Zu, West Michigan Tamil Sangam, Chinese Dance for Health, the Imani Singers of Grand Rapids, CAWN Dance Troup and Belly Dance Grand Rapids.

Please visit www.grpm.org for additional information about the Ethnic Heritage Festival.

***Journey Through the Pacific***

A new temporary exhibit, themed around culture, will open at the GRPM during Ethnic Heritage Festival. Travel across the vast Pacific Ocean and explore the islands and experience the culture of the people who call Oceania home in the new exhibit *Journey Through the Pacific* at the GRPM, opening Saturday, February 4.

Oceania is one name for the vast region of our Earth that stretches across the Pacific Ocean from Australia to Hawaii and Easter Island. Although it is dominated by water, Oceania is made up of more than 10,000 islands and is currently home to more than 40 million people. These remote islands were some of the last places on earth to be settled by humans. This exhibit will explore each island region, it’s culture, heritage and what makes it unique. Artifacts from the GRPM’s Collections will be featured to represent each region, as well as interactive components.

The exhibition will be on display through Spring 2017 on the Museum’s third floor and is included with general admission; free to Museum members. For more about this exhibition, visit grpm.org.

**Grand Rapids Public Museum**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an invaluable, publicly-owned institution that is home to more than 250,000 unique artifacts that tell the history of Kent County and beyond, houses the only planetarium in the region, and is responsible for protecting the Norton Indian Mounds, a national historic landmark. The Grand Rapids Public Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with its main location in downtown Grand Rapids, MI at 272 Pearl Street, NW. For additional information including hours of operation, admission fees and exhibit/event listings, please visit www.grpm.org.

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