

## **Reconnecting Alaska: Mexican Movements and the Last Frontier**

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In this presentation I will present my planned doctoral research, which will explore the historical and ongoing connections between Alaska and Mexico and how and why those connections have been obscured or ignored. It is also about places: Alaska, and “the north” more generally, and Latin America, and Mexico specifically. There are powerful imaginaries associated with these places, and interesting things happen when they are brought together through movement.

People from Acuitzio del Canje, Michoacán began travelling to Alaska (Anchorage, and elsewhere) to work in the 1960s, and movement between Mexico and Alaska has continued across generations since then. Today, many Acuitzences that live in Anchorage maintain a close relationship with friends and family members in Acuitzio, and travel back and forth regularly. However, this movement is obscured by ideological work that makes Alaska seem separate, isolated, wild, and a place where Mexicans are not imagined to be. Mexican movements into Alaska over time disrupt this vision, showing how Alaska is connected to multiple other geographies, and making the US-Mexico border a salient reference point in everyday life in Anchorage. When the South moves into the North, it can make us think about both “Alaska” and “Mexico” in different ways, perhaps. When the US-Mexico border is relocated to Anchorage, if only for a moment, it can elicit a reaction of humor or surprise. Why is that? And what does this have to do with how people actually live in an interconnected place?