



Winter Fishtrap
What is the West?



Fishtrap
Writing and the West

February 14-16, 2025 - Enterprise, Oregon

From the Director

Dear Friends,

Since 1998, Winter Fishtrap has been a gathering place for the people who live in and are passionate about the West to explore the themes, stories, and challenges that shape our lives. Each year, we come together to reflect on what it means to live in this vast, complex, and beautiful part of the world. This winter, we invite you to join us for a thought-provoking weekend as we ask a timeless—and maybe even urgent—question: ***What is the West?***



Is the West defined by its borders, its landscapes, or its people? Is it a culture? A collection of myths? Or is it something ultimately undefinable? This weekend, we will delve into these questions and many others. Through panels, workshops, and storytelling, we will explore the essence of the West and how it shapes our identities, our communities, and our future.

Maybe even more importantly, we'll explore these issues together in community. We'll gather for dynamic discussions, share perspectives, stories, and even a meal or two! I hope you'll join our **Dutch Oven Cookoff** on Saturday night, where we'll savor delicious, locally-inspired dishes, followed by the **Best of the West Storytelling Showcase**, where tales of the West will come to life through the voices of our neighbors and friends.

Winter Fishtrap is more than just a weekend event. It's an opportunity to reflect on who we are and where we're going as individuals and as a region. Whether you've lived here for decades or are new to the West, this gathering is for anyone curious about our shared history and collective future.

We're excited to have you with us and can't wait to embark on this journey of discovery together.

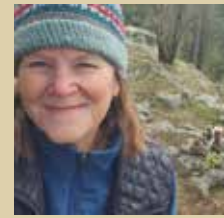


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Fishtrap could not do what we do without the support of our Wallowa County Community. To our many local volunteers, writers, businesses, family, and friends who help us throughout the year, we send our heartfelt thanks!

Fishtrap Governing Board

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2025 Winter Fishtrap Schedule

Friday, February 14

5:30 pm – Doors Open

6:00 pm – Reception

7:00 pm – **What are the Stories We Tell about the West?**

Welcome with **Shannon McNerney**, Fishtrap Executive Director

Keynote keynote address with award winning author and distinguished educator, **Debra Magpie Earling**. Debra is a member of the Bitterroot Salish Tribe and was the first Native American director of the University of Montana's creative writing program. She will inspire attendees to think about the West through the stories we tell about it.

Saturday, February 15

8:30 am – Doors Open – Coffee – Light Breakfast

9:00 am – **Who Owns the West?**

A panel discussion moderated by **Kathleen Ackley** of the Wallowa Land Trust followed by activities and interactive breakout sessions.

Panelists:

Lisa Collier – Wallowa County Commissioner

Bobbie Conner – Director of Tamástslikt Cultural Institute

Jeff Fields – Program Manager, The Nature Conservancy

Adam Sowards – Historian, Professor Emeritus, University of Idaho

Noon – Lunch Break (lunch on your own)

1:00 pm – **Who Lives and Works in the West?** - A panel discussion moderated by **Taylor Sarman**, Wallowa Resources Economic Recovery Corp Fellow followed by activities and interactive breakout sessions.

Panelists: Mike Hayward – Wallowa Resources

Liza Jane McAlister – 6 Ranch

Nic Powers – Winding Waters Medical Clinic

The panelists will explore their personal connections to Wallowa County and share insights on how each of their industries has shaped the county's economic landscape. Additionally, we will introduce our model of the Stewardship Economy—an economy grounded in the need to responsibly manage both land and community sustainability.

An afternoon breakout session follows the panel discussion as an extension of the "Who Lives and Works in West?" discussion. This activity is led by Wallowa Resources staff and will hold space for participants to reflect on their role in the Stewardship Economy and how the represented industries relate to each pillar of the Stewardship Economy discussed in the earlier session.

Saturday Night

6:00 pm – **Dutch Oven Cook Off Dinner and Best of the West Storytelling Showcase** with Pam Royes, Janie Tippett, Adam Sowards, and Debra Magpie Earling.

Sunday, February 16

8:30 am – Doors Open – Coffee – Light Breakfast

9:00 am – **The Indigenous Experience** - A panel discussion moderated by **Shannon McNerney**.

Panelists:

Bobbie Conner - Director of Tamástslikt Cultural Institute

Debra Magpie Earling - Author, Professor Emeritus, University of Montana

Kristen Parr - Nez Perce Language Instructor, Confederated Tribes (CTUIR)

Jacy Sohappay - Wallowa Nez Perce Homeland and Crow Shadow's Institute of Arts

Times and topics are subject to change.

What is the West to YOU?



Reflections and Activities

1. Where is the West? Circle your understanding on the map on the opposite page. Find someone to share it with.
2. What have you learned this weekend that you didn't know before? What resonates the most for you?
3. Who are the people you met or reconnected with that you'd like to stay in touch with or learn more about?
4. What are the stories you heard that made an impact?
5. Now look at the map again. Is the West still where you thought it was at the beginning of Winter Fishtrap?
6. Has your perception of the West changed this weekend? How?

Notes:



2025 Winter Fishtrap Presenters



Kathleen Ackley is Wallowa Land Trust's first Executive Director. She joined the Trust in the fall of 2013 after almost a decade at Capitol Land Trust in Olympia, Washington. Raised in Eugene, Oregon Kathleen graduated from the University of Hawaii with a degree in Asian Studies, before receiving a master's degree in Environmental Studies from The Evergreen State College. She has worked with many charitable organizations over the years and brings her extensive knowledge of nonprofit administration and successful land conservation to northeast Oregon. She is the past president of the Coalition of Oregon Land Trusts and is a member of the Rotary Club of Wallowa County.

Lisa Collier was raised in Wallowa County from a very young age. She went to school in Joseph and graduated from Joseph High School in 1998. Married before graduation, she and her husband JR Collier went on to start a family, enter the workforce and attend college. After college, they spent years traveling the state of Oregon following JR's work with Oregon State Parks, returning home to Wallowa County in 2017 with their seven children. Soon after, Lisa was appointed to the Joseph City Council, later became the Mayor of Joseph, and recently was elected to the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners. She has spent 23 years in private and public education: teaching and other roles. Lisa loves her family, all things involving children, and studying local and State government lawmaking and impacts. She also enjoys hiking, coffee dates, and the people of Wallowa County.



Roberta (Bobbie) Conner is the director of Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute, this tribally owned museum, which opened in 1998. The Institute serves three goals: to accurately present the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla peoples' history, to perpetuate knowledge of their history and culture, and to contribute to the Tribal economy.

Bobbie is Cayuse, Umatilla, and Nez Perce, is enrolled at the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla, and is a graduate of the University of Oregon and Willamette University's Graduate School of Management. She co-authored a chapter in *As Days Go By*, the CTUIR history book; penned a chapter in *Lewis and Clark through Indian Eyes*, authored an introduction for *Pendleton Round-Up at 100*; wrote the introduction to the Treaty Edition of *The Cayuse Indians Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon*; and was an editor and contributor to *Cáw Pawá Láakni, They Are Not Forgotten*, the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla native place names atlas published in October 2015.

She serves on the Oregon Historical Society Board of Trustees and the Ecotrust, Oregon Community Foundation, and Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland Boards of Directors. She chaired the Board of Trustees for the National Museum of the American Indian for two years during service from 2008 to 2014 and served on the Board of Directors for the American Alliance of Museums simultaneously.

Debra Magpie Earling is the author of *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea* and *Perma Red*. She has received a National Endowment for the Arts grant, a Guggenheim Fellowship, two American Book Awards, and her second novel was long listed for the Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence in Fiction and awarded the 2024 Montana Book Award. She retired from the University of Montana where she was named professor emeritus in 2021. She is Bitterroot Salish.





Jeff Fields leads The Nature Conservancy's grassland conservation program building conservation partnerships with stakeholders and landowners of the public and privately owned grasslands that surround and include the Zumwalt Prairie Preserve. He also serves as part of a larger Conservancy team that works with communities in rangeland landscapes across the Western US. Over his career, Jeff has worked for both public and private natural resource organizations, and had the privilege of managing forests, rivers, and grasslands. Key employers that have had a big influence on how Jeff approaches this work include the Rogue Institute for Ecology and Economy, the University of Idaho, the US Forest Service, the Weyerhaeuser Corporation, and the Government of Nepal's Ministry of Forests as a US Peace Corps volunteer. Jeff has a B.Sc.

in Forest Management from the University of Wisconsin and an M.Sc. in Forest Resources from the University of Idaho.

Mike Hayward currently serves on the Wallowa Resources Board of Directors. He previously worked for Wallowa County Grain Growers. He was Chairman of the Wallowa County Board of Commissioners, a position he has held for 15 of the 19 years he served on the County Commission. Prior to taking public office, Mike served as the Executive Director of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, owned and managed the Eagle Cap Chalets at Wallowa Lake, and was Acting Manager for Les Schwab Tire Center in Enterprise. Mike is originally from Pullman, WA and received a forestry degree from Washington State University. Despite significant reductions in forest revenue, the Wallowa County economy remains dependent on natural resources. Wallowa Resources attracted Mike because it addresses the challenges of a resource-based economy.



Liza Jane McAlister owns the 6 Ranch, a Wallowa County Century Ranch established in 1884 by her great-grandparents. The ranch is a multi-generational operation involving the production of grass-fed beef and lamb, conservation, and recreation. Liza enjoys her side-line work as a fly fishing guide on the ranch during the summer months. Liza Jane worked with her community to build a domestic violence shelter and program, serving as the Director for 14 years. She was honored with a National Peace Award for her work in this field. She worked as the Preserve Steward for the Nature Conservancy Zumwalt Prairie Preserve, including developing their community-based elk and shed hunting programs. Liza Jane is currently serving as a member of the Oregon Watershed

Enhancement Board and representing the Columbia Basin and Blue Mountain region on the Oregon Conservation and Recreation Board. Liza Jane is passionate about her family, caring for the land, and preserving Western culture and traditions.

Shannon McNerney has served as Fishtrap's Executive Director since 2015. Fishtrap's mission to cultivate clear thinking and good writing in and about the West aligns with her passionate belief that the power of storytelling, creativity, and art can bring together and transform community. Shannon spent the first part of her career working in music as a classroom and studio teacher, singer, in music publishing, and as the Executive Director of the Portland Symphonic Choir. She has a Bachelors degree in Music Education from the University of Oregon, and just completed her Masters of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Gonzaga University in 2024. Shannon lives, writes, sings, cooks, attempts gardening, and snuggles with her ridiculous beasties in Joseph, Oregon.



Kristen Parr - Nez Perce Language Instructor, Confederated Tribes (CTUIR)

Nic Powers has lived and worked in Wallowa County since 2006. He is the CEO of Winding Waters Clinic, a non-profit Community Health Center serving the residents and visitors of Wallowa County. Winding Waters' 90 employees provide comprehensive medical, dental, and mental health care, serve as the local public health agency, and operate one (soon two!) open-door pharmacies. Originally from a small town in New Hampshire, Nic met his wife, Dr. Liz Powers in college in upstate New York. After earning a Bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering, Nic followed Liz to California where she had started medical school. When considering medical residency programs, Nic and Liz learned of the OHSU Family Medicine residency's connection with Wallowa County. They made the move to Portland, and first visited Wallowa County in 2005 for Liz's rural medicine rotation. It took less than a month to know they wanted to make a life in Wallowa County.



Pamela Royes lives on a farm with her husband Skip and an undetermined number of (from big to small) cows, horses, mules, dogs, cats, ducks, chickens, and honeybees. But no pigs. Pam loves planting things, baking sourdough bread, playing her ukulele, and writing. She is currently writing a novel for young adults, and working on a book of essays about people, food, and landscape.

Taylor Sarman proudly hails from North Eastern Oregon and is a self-described public policy wonk who brings insightful political strategies to his work to solve complex policy challenges. Taylor has a track record of achieving big legislative and policy wins for a broad array of organizations and companies, and he believes that public policy should center the voices of those most impacted. From the Oregon State Capitol to the White House, Taylor has built strong relationships with top public officials and decision makers who have helped him hone his leadership and advocacy skills. A Political Science graduate of Oregon State University, Taylor is an avid Beavers fan and passionate about work that connects rural and urban Oregon.



Jacy Sohappy is an enrolled member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation born and raised in the Mission/Pendleton area. She grew up in the tribal longhouse, traveling Indian country on the pow wow trail and medicine dances. Learning how to preserve our cultural identity and teachings from her grandmother, Loretta "Lonnie" Alexander (Pinkham). Following in her footsteps as a gatherer picking berry, digging and drying corn. The outdoors have always been a retreat growing on the Umatilla river with her Uncles fishing, hunting with her brother Rob or gathering wood and tipi poles. All these teachings have seeped into her artwork expressing her dedication to preserving our culture and identity for the future of our children. One heart. One mind.



Adam Sowards is a lifelong westerner and writer. An award-winning historian, he is professor emeritus at the University of Idaho and now is settled in western Washington's Skagit Valley. His most recent book is *Making America's Public Lands: The Contested History of Conservation on Federal Lands* and he is currently writing a history of national parks. He has written creative nonfiction that has appeared in places like *South Dakota Review* and *Stonecoast Review*; op-eds that have appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Boston Globe*; and commentary and reporting in places like *High County News* and *Smithsonian Magazine*. He writes a weekly newsletter, *Taking*

Bearings, that focuses on nature, time, and story.

Janie Tippett is a fourth generation rancher, mother of four, stepmother to three, grandmother, and great grandma. She is the author of *Four Lines a Day: The Life and Times of an Imnaha Ranch Woman* and recently published a six volume collection of her articles for *Agritimes Magazine* titled, *Janie's Journal: 31 Years of Ranch Life in Wallowa County, Oregon*. Janie is also a photographer, outdoor enthusiast, is active in two writer's groups, and has been a part of the Fishtrap community of writers since the beginning.



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Writing and the West

**2025 Outpost
on the Snake
River in Hells
Canyon**

**with Ana Maria Spagna
September 3-8, 2025**

Register at fishtrap.org

Photo: Kendrick Moholt



**Fishtrap**
Writing and the West

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Workshop with
Karen Auvinen**

**A Walk in the Woods: Mapping New Territory and
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Apply now at fishtrap.org

Photo: Jenniffer Koskisen





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Gathering of Writers
July 7-13, 2025
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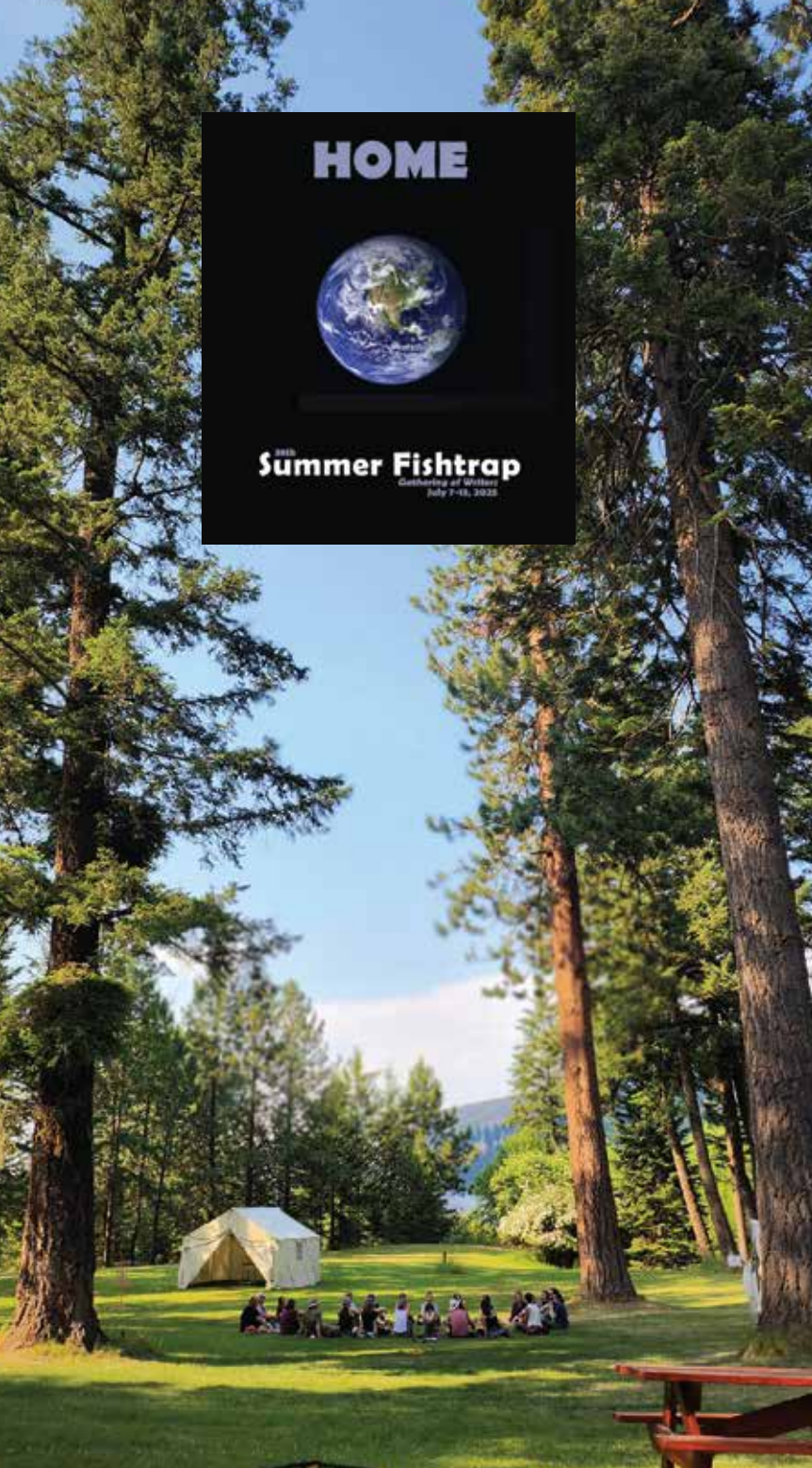
Come home to Summer Fishtrap. Weeklong creative writing workshops in fiction, nonfiction and poetry.

Keynote from author **Beth Piatote**

**Registration opens
February 25, 2025
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