

NAI SOUTH CENTRAL REGION



STORIES OF THE PLAINS
Lawrence, Kansas



Interpreters, Welcome to Lawrence Kansas!

We are thrilled to welcome you to the **2026 NAI South Central Regional Conference** in historic Lawrence, Kansas! Nestled where the Kaw and Wakarusa river valleys meet, this region is a living mosaic with **bottomland forests, winding wetlands, tallgrass prairie remnants, and the eastern woodlands all brush up against each other**, creating the perfect backdrop for an interpreter's imagination. Every sunrise here feels like a new story, migratory birds cruising overhead, prairie winds whispering through big bluestem, and cottonwoods creaking with history.

History lays heavy on this landscape. Lawrence's human story is powerful, complicated, and vitally important. Founded by abolitionists in the heat of the national struggle over slavery, the town endured violent raids and became a rallying point for voices like John Brown. Today, as home to the University of Kansas and Haskell Indian Nations University, Lawrence embraces a diverse community of scholars, artists, and storytellers. It's a place where **the land and its people carry stories worth listening to**.

That's why our conference theme, "**Stories of the Plains**," feels so right. This region holds layered narratives, ecological, historical, and cultural. As interpreters, we know the magic of helping those stories take flight.

Our conference home, the **DoubleTree Hotel**, has hosted many notable guests, including former President Barack Obama during his 2015 visit to KU. While you're here, we hope you dive into the stories woven throughout Lawrence:

- Field trips into the landscapes and historic sites that shaped Kansas and the Nation
- A Sunday night social at the Watkins History Museum
- A Tuesday night dinner in the beautifully repurposed Carnegie Library
- And plenty of chances to explore the community's vibrant arts, food, and natural spaces

We hope this conference helps you sharpen your interpretive skills, make new connections, reunite with old friends, and gather fresh experiences to add to your own story.

We can't wait to see you in Lawrence!

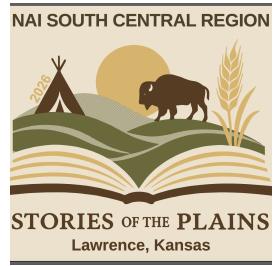


Amber Lamble
2026 Conference Chair



Lindsay Evans
2026 Conference Co-chair

2026 Conference Committee



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Registration

Registration Fee Schedule

	Regular Rate	Discounted NAI Member Rate	Discounted Student Member Rate
Full Registration	\$300	\$225	\$200
Single Day	\$145	\$100	\$75

Full Registration includes one ticket for the awards dinner and a NAI 2026 canvas tote bag.

Cancellation policy

Refund requests must be received by January 22, 2026. A \$50 processing fee will be charged. No requests for refunds will be granted after January 22, 2026. Email naisouthcentral@gmail.com to submit your request.

Additional Fees

Pre-conference workshop \$30

Details on page 8

Award Banquet Guests \$50

Please indicate meal preferences in online registration

Field Trip Fees:

**Lunch is on your own unless otherwise indicated*

1. A Capitol Kansas Experience, \$15
2. Preserving Natural History, \$15
3. Urban Voices in Natural Spaces, \$15
4. Untold Stories, The History Under our Feet, \$25
5. An Excellent Birding Adventure, \$15
6. A Conservation Story, \$5 (morning only trip)
7. Living in the Past, \$15
8. Native Voices of the Plains, \$15
9. Call of the River, \$5 (afternoon only trip)



Accommodations

Hotel Host

Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Lawrence- [200 McDonald Drive Lawrence, Kansas 66044](#)

Reserve your room

\$99 per night plus taxes, February 21st- 26th

[DoubleTree by Hilton, Lawrence - Natl Assoc for Interpretation South Central 2026](#)

Breakfast is included in the rate. Current offering is scrambled eggs, breakfast potatoes, biscuits & gravy, bacon, sausage, pastries, waffles/pancakes(alternating days), yogurt, fruit, assorted cold cereals, orange juice, apple juice, and coffee. Made to order eggs and omelets are available.

Complementary Self-Parking

Complementary Wi-Fi

Reservations must be made prior to January 30, 2026, 11:59pm. If the cutoff date is not met, or you choose to book at a different rate, the group benefits will not be extended.

Transportation

Kansas City International Airport (KCI/MCI)

45 minute drive to Doubletree Lawrence Hotel and Conference Center

There is no hotel shuttle from the airport to the hotel.

We encourage you to share a ride with other participants.

5 Guys Transportation provides shared ride service for \$47 per person or private car service for up to 6 people for only \$100. 24/7 live and local dispatch and reservations staff. Call 816-891-9999 or [visit the website](#).

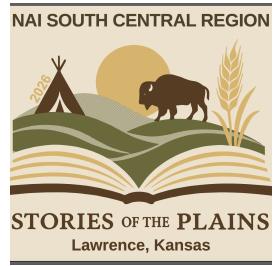
[Arival – KCI Airport Shuttle – Ride Share Service](#) is another airport shuttle service.

Amtrack

Amtrack Passenger Service, 413 E. 7th Street 1.800.872.7245 [Train Tickets, Schedules & Routes | Amtrak](#)

Bus

Greyhound, 707 Vermont Street, 1.800.231.2222 [Greyhound: Affordable Bus Tickets Across US, Canada & Mexico](#)



Getting Around Lawrence

Public Transit

Lawrence Transit System is offered through a partnership between the City of Lawrence and the University of Kansas. Bus Service is free. There is a bus stop near the hotel. On-demand service is available for free when the buses are not in service (Sundays and After 8 pm other days). [Home - Lawrence Transit](#)

Private Services

Uber and Lyft are readily available.

Miscellaneous

Searching for a roommate? Indicate “roommate” on your registration or email naisouthcentral@gmail.com with “Roommate” in the subject line.

Keynote Spotlight

Keynote Speaker - Monday Morning

Dr. Debra J. H. Bolton (Ohkay Owingeh/Dine', Ute), Teaches geography and climate science. She is also a researcher with Haskell Indian Nations University and with HINU's Rising Voices Changing Coasts, a project to address weather and climate changes' effects on Indigenous coastal communities of Alaska, Hawai'i, the Louisiana Gulf Coast, and Puerto Rico. Bolton recently retired from K-State University with an academic appointment in Geography and Geospatial Sciences. Bolton's research and publications focus on human migrations, displacements, and ecologies, as well as integrations of displaced and historically excluded populations in the U.S. Bolton, a National Geographic Society Explorer and Geography Educator of the Year (2019) introduces geospatial sciences to high school-aged females, grossly under-represented in the geosciences and other STEM disciplines. In addition, Dr. Bolton serves as an officer for Kansas Association for Native American Education, as a Trustee for the Kansas Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, and board member of the Kansas Rural Center. Previously, Bolton lived in SW Kansas and served as a docent at the Lee Richardson Zoo and as a volunteer naturalist at the Sandsage Prairie Bison Range for 22 years. In addition to her role as a lecturer for Humanities Kansas on "Indigenous Wisdom and Climate Change," and "Strangers in Town," Bolton loves returning home to Colorado for family, camping, and mountains.



Keynote Speaker - Wednesday Lunch



Derrick Doty is an independent researcher and writer living in Manhattan with his wife Kelsie, a Professor of Fashion at K-State, and their two boys. For twelve years, Derrick ran the Council Grove Barber Shop where he gained an incredible insight into local folklore and history. This led to writing a regular history column for the Council Grove Republican and publishing a book on Morris County in 2014. Also a musician, Doty plays in several bands; Tallgrass Express String Band, Fiddler's Dream, and Bodarc, an old-timey duo focused on unique traditional music of Kansas and the Midwest. This talk will focus on the musical traditions of territorial Kansas, through the age of radio, and feature performances on a variety of instruments!

Pre-Conference Workshop

Storytelling with Molly Postlewait

Storytelling, so simple but oh so powerful!

During this 3.5 hour pre-conference workshop participants will explore the world of storytelling potential for programming at nature centers, historic sites, museums, and parks. We will engage in story mapping, flex our creative muscles, and practice this ancient art in a safe non-judgmental environment. Presenting a story to an audience can be terrifying and thrilling at the same time. During our time together we will explore story development, using stories to connect with science and nature as well as living history and costumed character scripts. Be prepared for an interactive, energetic workshop with your instructor, Molly Postlewait.



Molly Postlewait is a professional storyteller, living history performer, and educator who blends creativity, history, and science to bring learning to life. She has presented internationally and her writing has been featured in Ozark Mountaineer and Legacy magazine.

Her excellence has been recognized with the Lifetime Achievement Award and the Distinguished Professional of the Year Award from NAI. She has also produced award-winning CDs, including Animal Tales and Lamp of Freedom, and delivered keynote addresses for organizations such as Arkansas State Parks and the KC Interpretive Site Coalition.

Date: Sunday, February 22

Time: 1 pm-4:30 pm

Cost: \$30



Conference Schedule at a Glance

Preliminary schedule. All times and activities are subject to change if needed.

Sunday, Feb 22

12:00pm-6:00pm	Registration Opens
1:00-4:30 pm	Pre-Workshop @ Hotel Storytelling with Molly (\$30)
4:00 pm	Hotel Check-In Begins
5:00 pm	New Attendee Orientation @ Hotel
6:30-8:30pm	Evening Social @ Watkins History Museum Apps & Drinks Provided

Tuesday, Feb 24

7:30 am	Registration opens
8:00am-4:00 pm	Field trip sessions
9:00-10:50 am	Skill Builder Session 1
11:00-12:50 am	Lunch, on your own
1:00-2:50 pm	Skill Builder Session 2
5:00-6:00pm	Silent Auction start
6:30-9:00 pm	Interp-olympics @ Carnegie Building Pizza Dinner Provided

Monday, Feb 23

8:00 am	Registration opens
9:00-10:20 am	Opening ceremony, Keynote Speaker Dr. Debra Bolton
10:30-11:20 am	Concurrent Session 1
11:30-1:00 pm	Business Lunch, Hotel Provided
1:10-2:00 pm	Concurrent Session 2
2:10-3:40 pm	Concurrent Session 3
4:00-5:30pm	Interpreters Quiz
5:30 pm	Dinner on your own, Explore Lawrence
7:00-9:00 pm	Music Jam Session & Board Games

Wednesday, Feb 25

8:30 am	Registration opens
9:00-10:30 am	Concurrent session 4
10:40-11:30 am	Concurrent session 5
11:30-1:00 pm	Lunch Hotel Provided, Keynote Speaker Derrick Doty
1:10-2:00 pm	Concurrent session 6
2:10-3:40 pm	Concurrent session 7
3:40-5:30 pm	Silent auction last day
6:00-9:00 pm	Live Auction & Awards Dinner on site Limited Cash Bar Available
9:00- 10:00pm	Music and Dancing

Thursday, Feb 26

11:00 am	Latest check-out time
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Hospitality Room
Sun - Tue, 8:30 am - 11:00 pm

Field Trips

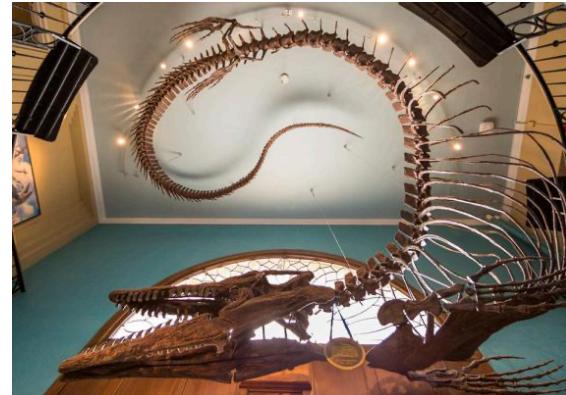
1. A Capitol Kansas Experience:



Time: 9am-4pm
Cost: \$15, plus lunch
Min/Max people: 5/20
Travel: 30 minutes one way, multiple stops within Topeka
Description: Experience the Kansas state capitol and its varied stories as we view the **Brown vs. Board of Education National Historic Site** on a ranger led tour, lunch in downtown Topeka, tour the **Kansas State Capitol Building**, and end the trip at the newly renovated **Kansas State Museum of History**. Lunch is on your own at one of the wonderful downtown restaurants.

2. Preserving Natural History:

Time: 9am-4pm
Cost: \$15, plus lunch
Min/Max people: 4/20
Travel: Multiple stops in Lawrence
Description: Visit **Baker Wetlands** to see their efforts in restoring essential wetlands, **Prairie Park Nature Center** in their continuing efforts of local public informal environmental education and invasive species removal from their natural spaces, and to the **University of Kansas Natural History Museum** on a visit to their museum and to experience some of the unique hands on programming they have developed to enhance their visitor experiences. Lunch on your own in downtown Lawrence.



3. Urban Voices in Natural Spaces:

Time: 8 am- 3:30pm
Cost: \$15, plus lunch
Min/Max people: 4/20
Travel: 50 minutes one way, multiple stops in Kansas City KS & MO
Description: Discover how powerful conservation stories emerge in the heart of the city. This field trip highlights two dynamic urban nature centers: the **Mr. & Mrs. F.L. Schlagel Environmental Learning Library** and the **Anita B. Gorman Conservation Discovery Center**. Participants will explore how each site connects diverse urban communities to nature through



education, stewardship, and innovative outreach strategies. The experience includes guided outdoor walks at both facilities (please dress for a short hike) and a panel discussion featuring staff members and guest representatives from the **Heartland Conservation Alliance**. Lunch will be on your own in the vibrant Crossroads Arts District, where you'll find a wide range of dining options

4. Untold Stories, The History Under our Feet:

Time: 8:30am-4:30pm

Cost: \$25, plus lunch

Min/Max people: 6/19

Travel: 50 minutes one way, multiple stops in Kansas City KS

Description: Join us for a unique opportunity to hear from local groups representing the Wyandotte Nation, African American community, and historians about their vision and struggles to bring forward the voices of the past from the National Historic Site **Quindaro**

Ruins. The town of Quindaro Kansas was a port town on the Missouri River built on land originally belonging to the Wyandotte Nation and was an important station on the Underground Railroad. The town was mostly abandoned during the Civil War and never fully recovered. We will have a discussion group about the site, a visit to a historical indigenous cemetery, a 2 hour guided hike by Urban Hikes KC at the Quindaro Ruins, and warm up at the nearby **Vernon Center** to visit their artifact display. Please dress for the weather and be prepared to hike on very steep and unimproved terrain. Lunch on your own at Los Palmas.



5. An Excellent Birding Adventure:



Time: 6:30am-1pm

Cost: \$15, plus lunch

Min/Max people: 4/11

Travel: 30 + minutes

Description: Get an early start with a trip to area bird viewing sites and eagle nesting areas. We will stop by **Baker Wetlands** to hear from them and end our trip with a visit to **Prairie Park Nature Center** to see their live birds. End the trip with an on your own lunch stop to a

popular Lawrence brunch spot The Roost.

6. Monarchs in Motion:



Time: 9am-12pm

Cost: \$5, plus lunch

Min/Max people: 4/15

Travel: 15 minutes (in town)

Description: Join us for a short field trip to the University of Kansas campus. Visit Monarch Watch and hear from their staff on the success their team has had with public education and their conservation efforts regarding the Monarch Butterfly. We will also get an exclusive tour of the KU McGregor Herbarium across the street and learn about their efforts. Lunch on your own in downtown Lawrence.

7. Living in the Past:

Time: 8:30am-4pm

Cost: \$15, plus lunch

Min/Max people: 4/15

Travel: 45 minutes, one way, multiple stops

Description: Step back in time to experience the stories of Kansas at two different living history sites. At **Shawnee**

Town 1929, our visit

will include a private guided tour with staff through their mix of recreated and original buildings, including downtown businesses and a Truck Farm (including chickens!).

Lunch will be at locally recommended restaurants in downtown Shawnee. After

lunch we will take a step back even further in time at our next stop **Mahaffie**

Stagecoach Stop and Farmstead where in addition to a museum, staff and

volunteers operate a living history farm from the 1860s. As our stops will be a mix of indoors and out, please dress appropriately for the weather.



8. Native Voices of the Plains:

Time: 9am-4pm

Cost: \$15, plus lunch

Min/Max people: 4/11

Travel: 50 minutes one way to Fairway then return to Lawrence



Description: Explore the changes in stories through two historic and cultural landmarks. Step into the past by visiting the **Shawnee Indian Mission State Historic Site** as it provides a lens into the harsh philosophies of the 19th century and its impact on native communities.

Afterwards, we will travel to the **Haskell Indian Nations University Cultural Center and Museum** to see how the native community shows their resilience, celebrates their voices and contemporary identity.

9. Call of the River:

Time: 1pm-3:30pm

Cost: \$5

Min/Max: 4/11

Travel: in Lawrence

Description: Rivers have been essential to both natural and human systems since the dawn of time. Rivers are the veins of our landscape and the arteries of commerce, but we have not always treated them as the vital systems



that they are. Meet with representatives from the Friends of the Kaw to learn about their efforts in education, restoration, and conservation of our namesake river. Please dress for the weather as we will have a portion of our field trip outdoors.



Volunteer Opportunities

In accordance with NAI's mission to "inspire leadership and excellence to advance heritage interpretation as a profession," we have created professional-sounding volunteer categories. We couldn't manage the conference without volunteers and there are a variety of ways you can help. Volunteer as much time as you would like. It's a great time to network and get to know other attendees. Contact naisouthcentral@gmail.com with any questions

1. Concurrent Session Monitor

When: throughout the conference, refer to schedule for times

Attending a concurrent session? That's a great time to volunteer as a moderator. Session monitors manage each session to ensure a successful learning opportunity for the presenters and attendees. Tasks include assisting with any set up/take down, greeting and presenter introduction, timing, and collecting evaluations.

2. Registration Assistants

When: During registration times

Perfect for our experienced conference attendees. Start the morning by checking in attendees and helping them have a great experience. Tasks include managing registration lists, swag bags, answering questions, and running short errands.

3. Hospitality Monitors

When: late evening, Sun-Tues

Our night owls might like this role and you can network while you work.

Tasks include setting up and taking down of the hospitality room, monitoring refreshments, and cleaning up.

4. Scholarship Auction Assistants

When: Wednesday afternoon and/or evening

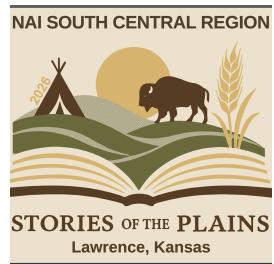
This is a great role for someone with retail experience or our more demonstrative interpreters.

Auction assistants help the Auction Chairs set up and run the silent and live auctions. A select few will also help show off our items and encourage bidding. Incite excitement by dressing up in costumes or evening wear to attract attention.

5. Field Session Leader

When: Tuesday

Want to explore with your peers? Experienced field trip leaders or organizers will work with the field trip committee to create a successful learning experience for all. Tasks include checking in participants, checking in with location staff, and managing trip logistics during the field trip.



6. Shuttle Drivers

When: Sunday-Thursday, as needed or available

Transportation is a key part of our conference experience. We need help moving people around, getting folks to the conference locations, and driving for field trips. Perfect for those who have a vehicle or who have permission to use an employer's vehicle. Shuttle Drivers coordinate with field session leaders when driving for a field trip.

7. Assign me a role

When: As-needed or as available

Do you enjoy a variety of small tasks and are flexible to assist without much notice? We need a small pool of volunteers who can support as needed and in any understaffed areas. This role is perfect for new and experienced conference attendees.

Thank you to all our wonderful and generous donors and partners!

Neil Garrison



And many others!

