



COURAGE, CURIOSITY, & CHANGE
EXPLORING NEW FRONTIERS OF STORY

2026 Conference

October 15 – 17, 2026

Phoenix, Arizona

SCHEDULE IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Thursday, October 15

- 8:00am – 4:00pm **Registration Table Open**
- 9:00am -12:00pm **Visit to Western Spirit Museum in Scottsdale**
Indicate bus reservation on registration form. Admission fee paid at the museum
- 1:00pm – 5:00pm **Bookstore - Open For Drop Off**
- 2:00pm – 4:00pm **Roundtable Advance Critique with Editor/Agent**
\$35/member; \$45/nonmember
- 2:00pm – 4:00pm **“The Poems, Stories, and Songs in and Around Me” presented
by Arizona Poet Laureate Dr. Laura Tohe**
\$30/member; \$35/nonmember

Dinner on your own

- 7:00pm – 8:00pm **President’s Welcome and First Time Attendees’ Acknowledgement**
- 8:00pm – 10:00pm **Readings by WILLA Winners and Finalists**

Friday, October 16

- 8:00am – 4:00pm **Registration Table Open**
- 9:00am – 10:00am **Injecting Play Into Your Writing Process** - Stephanie West Allen, Lynn Downey
- 9:00am - 10:00am **Homespun Marketing: What Worked and What Didn't** - Candace Simar, Krista Soukup
- 10:00am – 5:00pm **Bookstore Open**
- 10:15am – 11:45am **Agents and Editors Panel**
- 12:00pm – 1:45pm **The LAURA Short Fiction and The DOWNING Journalism Award Luncheon with Readings** - Featured Speaker Melissa Sevigny
- 2:00pm – 5:00pm **Pitch Sessions**
- 2:00pm – 3:00pm **Talking About Unmentionables: How Do Writers Research Personal Topics Which Were Taboo? A Brief History of Feminine Hygiene, Contraception, and Health** - Kimberly Burns
- 2:00pm – 3:00pm **Author, Publisher, Entrepreneur: The Successful Author-Publisher** - Joyce Sherry, Nicki Ehrlich
- 3:15pm – 4:15pm **Artificial Intelligence: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly** - Clarissa Willis
- 3:15pm – 4:15pm **Courage and the Power of Connection: Exploring Personal Leaps and Divine Nudges to Uncover the Power of Connection in Our Narratives** - Kate Hamberger Yakis
- 4:30pm **Open Time to Find Your Friends**

Dinner On Your Own

- 7:00pm - 7:30pm **Take a ride down the Colorado River with trailblazing women in this short feature film, "About Damn Time | The Dory Women of the Grand Canyon"**

Saturday, October 17

- 8:00am - 9:00am **AI as a Writer's Assistant: Practical Systems for Protecting Creative Time -**
Kristine Renae Broman
- 8:00am – 9:00am **Saddle Up for Self-Publishing: Your Trail Guide to Going Indie -** Jayme Mansfield
- 9:00am – 10:15am **Pitch Sessions**
- 9:15am – 10:15am **The Courage to Write What We Fear -** Kathryn Wilder
- 9:15am – 10:15am **How True Stories Inspire Fiction: What to Leave In and What to Leave Out...and Why**
Natalie Bright, Cynthia Massey, Irene Sandell, Manuela Schneider
- 9:15am -10:15am **Writing from the Land -**
Susan J. Tweit, Dawn Wink, Arani Shimer, Pam Olson, Amy Hale
- 10:00am – 5:00pm **Bookstore Open**
- 10:30am – 11:45am **WWW Membership Business meeting - Mandatory for Voting Purposes**
- 12:00pm – 2:00pm **The WILLA Literary Award Finalists Luncheon with Readings**
- 2:15pm – 4:30pm **Pitch sessions**
- 2:15pm – 3:15pm **Pitch Perfect: Cut the Noise, Land the Hook -**
Casey Cowan, President & Creative Director, Roan & Weatherford Publishing
- 2:15pm – 3:15pm **Writing on History's Sex Workers: A Feminist Approach -** Janelle Molony, David Grassé
- 3:30pm – 5:00pm **Book Signings**
- 6:00pm – 8:00pm **The WILLA Literary Award Banquet & The WWW High School Writing Contest
Awardees Announcement**
- Keynote speaker: Anne Hillerman**
- Formal Farewell**

**** All consigned books must be picked up by 6:00pm**