



**New Mexico Regional Meeting
Fall Gathering - September 25-27, 2026
UNM Field Station, Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge**

To all Friends seeking community and a spiritual anchor in these times, please gather for a weekend with the theme **“Finding Presence in this Place and Time”** at the University of New Mexico Field Station, located on the Sevilleta National Wildlife Refuge, 21 miles north of Socorro, NM.



Been feeling penned up, hurried, crowded and stressed lately? Anxious about all that “stuff” that’s going on “out there”? Maybe you need to watch the sunrise and sunset on 230,000 acres spanning the Rio Grande Valley (the Sevilleta NWR). Or spend some quiet time beside a still pond among the cabins at UNM Field Station for a break from all the buzz. Or break bread with Friends young and old, visit with each other and share worship together. The gathering will be planned to have special appeal and unique experiences for families and young people.

Our regional gathering of Friends will open from Friday afternoon on September 25 till we part at noon on Sunday, September 27. The Refuge joins four major biomes that are home to an incredible variety of plant and animal species. And the sky ... it is SO vast! Perhaps your time in this landscape will bring to mind the unbroken chain of people who inhabited the land before our weekend. Indigenous hunters and gatherers. Pueblo people raising crops. Hispanic land grant holders on small farms. A large ranching operation that paved the way for the refuge.

Guest Speaker:

Our guest speaker on Saturday morning, Deborah Jackson Taffa, has roots on her mother’s side among the Hispanics of nearby Socorro and on her father’s side in Laguna Pueblo and the Quechan/Yuma people of California. Her book *Whiskey Tender* weaves those heritage threads into the fabric of her life today as director of the Master of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing at Santa Fe’s Institute of American Indian Arts. She will talk about *Untying Knots in the Yucca Rope: Facing a complex New Mexico History Together*. She says, “Much of the history addressed in my talk will address what it means to find belonging in the land; to reclaim pride in Indigenous values; to remember we are part of the earth, and she is part of us, regardless of our cultural backgrounds.”

A copy of *Whiskey Tender* has been sent to each NMRM meeting and worship group. Whether the book is considered by a group or individually, Deborah suggests considering the following queries to help discussion and to set the stage for her presentation with us on Sept. 26:

1. The author's lineage is an important aspect of the book. Were you surprised by aspects of her Hispanic or Indigenous history? How does the memoir process the trauma of colonization, displacement, and forced assimilation?
2. The memoir spans multiple Southwestern locations. How do these physical locations mirror the internal state in a family exposed to Indian boarding school and the Indian Relocation Act? Was it surprising to think of Native people as migratory?
3. In what ways does *Whiskey Tender* serve as an act of memorial, resisting the erasure of Indigenous practices?
4. The memoir directly links the narrator's attempts to reclaim her ancestral values to the traumas of Spanish colonization in New Mexico. How does the author weave violent history—both ancient and more recent, for example the testing of the nuclear bomb—into the personal lore of her family while also including uplifting accounts to create levity and humor in the narrative?

After Deborah’s talk and lunch, we will see how scientists today are documenting the natural processes at work on the site. Arturo Benavidez is the director of the Field Station and he will take us outside to show the steps they take to document the changes taking place on the land and its creatures.

Lodgings:

We have access to nine cabins at the UNM Field Station, which will be reserved on a first-come, first-served basis. They include 29 rooms with 58 beds, so we may have more attendees than they can accommodate at the facility. The room rate will be \$60 single and \$50 each for double occupancy. There are one or two RV/camper sites on campus.

The Socorro Chamber of Commerce offers a list of RV and Camp sites (<https://socorronm.org/plan-your-trip/rv-camping/>) as well as a lodging list (<https://socorronm.org/plan-your-trip/lodging/>) for accommodations off-site.

Draft Schedule:

This is an early outline of a work in progress, just to give you a general idea what to expect. We expect to have the details and costs worked out in time to call for registrations by late July. At that time, more of the details will have been worked out and will be available. Our goal is to keep it simple!

Friday, Sept. 25

- 3:00-5:00 - Sign in and settle into your accommodations
- 5:00-5:45 - Brief welcome and orientation to the facilities
- 6:00-7:00 - Dinner (provided)
- 7:15-8:30 - Getting to know each other

Saturday, Sept. 26

- 6:45-7:30 - Sunrise worship on the patio
- 7:45-8:45 - Breakfast
- 9:00-9:45 - Worship sharing
- 10:00-11:30 - Deborah Jackson Taffa: "Untying Knots in the Yucca Rope: Facing a Complex New Mexico History Together"
- 12:00-1:00 - Lunch
- 1:00-1:30 - Ice cream social
- 1:45-3:00 - Arturo Benavidez's presentation on Sevilleta research - outdoors
- 3:00-6:00 - Finding Presence (meditating by the pond, hiking, engaging Friends, etc.)
 - 3:15-4:00 - Art workshop A
 - 4:15-5:00 - Art workshop B
- 6:00-7:00 - Dinner (provided)
- 7:00-8:30 - Social evening with art and music

Sunday, Sept. 27

- 6:45-7:30 - Sunrise worship on the patio
- 9:00-10:00 - Brunch
- 10:30-11:30 - Meeting for worship
- Noon - Bidding adieu!