

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2026

Portland, OR

Landscapes of Memory

Oct. 14-17, 2026

Our memories are shaped by the landscapes we inhabit—both real and imagined. These landscapes are shifting in the face of environmental change, political instability, and an ongoing sense of crisis. Ancient connections with the natural world are being severed, and people are displaced not only from this innate connection to the earth but also from familiar ways of living and relating to one another. As oral historians, we witness narrators' struggles to imagine new identities within this changing ecology.

For the 2026 Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon, we invite contributions from around the world—from those working in academia, advocacy, education, and community-based practice—that speak to how people shape and are shaped by the landscapes they inhabit, traverse, defend, or are forced to leave behind. We welcome proposals that explore relationships to land, memory, and movement across shifting environmental, political, and cultural boundaries.

The Pacific Northwest offers a vivid backdrop for these conversations. Portland is where many Indian tribes collaborate on river and salmon habitat restoration. It is where Governor Tom McCall pioneered environmental laws that became a national model, and where artists, writers, and community organizers have long given voice to place, displacement, and environmental justice. The region's convergence of urban innovation, protected wilderness, and layered histories invites wide-ranging discussions about how oral histories illuminate ecological crises, stewardship, and resilience.

Possible areas of focus include, but are not limited to:

- Ecological knowledge, Indigenous storytelling, and traditional/local epistemologies
- Displacement, migration, activism, and environmental change
- Borderlands and their stories—whether shaped by international borders, colonial legacies, or climate crises—and the questions they raise about identity, belonging, and resilience
- Foodways, coastal livelihoods, sacred geographies, and senses of place grounded in memory
- How digital tools, social media, and emerging technologies shape or amplify environmental narratives and collective memory
- How oral history bridges local and global contexts in documenting environmental change
- How people remember and make meaning of the places they have lost—or reclaimed
- What it means to belong to a place today
- Interdisciplinary approaches—from Memory Studies, Environmental History, and related fields

We encourage proposals from academics, independent scholars, activists, museum curators, tribal historians, teachers, students, archivists, documentary filmmakers, artists, creative writers, ethnographers, and other practitioners whose work relates to these themes. The Program Committee welcomes broad and creative interpretations of the conference theme and encourages innovative formats, such as workshops, interactive sessions, performances, digital media presentations, and collaborative community reports.