

Cuentos y Cantos al Desierto



Participants write about transformation in the obsidian heart of a crater

Mono Basin, CA

September 4–6, 2026 • Blanca Stacey Villalobos

Sliding scale \$40–80

*enrollment limited

Optional, shared camping will be available

***This bilingual seminar is specifically designed to create a space for native & heritage Spanish-speaking participants and field instructors to connect with the Eastern Sierra.**

La tierra es testigo de nuestras ofrendas, ¿cómo podemos honrar nuestra relación con la naturaleza a través de nuestras voces? Over the course of a weekend, participants will be guided on a series of outings that will explore reciprocity as an offering through stories and song. Exchanges with plants, animals, and the elements will inform our relationship with the lands, people, and communities we call home. As a bilingual field seminar, we will co-create an experience for all levels of Spanish and English and welcome *spanglish*, *pochismo*, and Indigenous languages from our lineages.

Some activities may include, but are not limited to: hiking, birdwatching, botany, meditation, journaling, storytelling, singing, and embodied voice practices. If you have a voice, you can sing!

Blanca Stacey (they/them/elle) is a bilingual cultural worker and interdisciplinary artist from the San Geronio Pass of Southern California with native and ancestral roots in México. They have been a land steward of the Mojave and Colorado deserts for over six years and their practice weaves art, culture, and spirit as a way of building relationships. They have had the honor of working with youth and families of color as a community educator, co-facilitated a racial justice

program for California desert conservation advocates and supported relational healing and reconciliation efforts in service of Indigenous peoples throughout the West of the United States.

The Mono Lake Committee and this seminar series operates on the ancestral homelands of the Kootzaduka'a people, who continue to have an inherent and indivisible connection to Mono Lake and Kootzagwae (the Mono Basin). [You can support their federal recognition efforts here.](#)

ITINERARY

Friday, September 4 at 5:00pm: Meet at the Lee Vining Community Center (296 Mattly Avenue). After introductions and an ice breaker, we will go over the expectations of the seminar. Afterwards, participants may choose to stay and share dinner together. We will close our time together by 7:00pm.

Saturday, September 5 at 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining (51365 Highway 395). We will carpool/caravan to the next spot where we will spend the day becoming familiar with a range of ecosystems defined by craters, sand dunes & forest habitats. This day will focus on tuning into our surroundings while building relationships with one another and the land. Each location will invite us into a moment of reflection followed by a creative writing prompt or embodied voice exercise. We will end our day in the late afternoon and participants are encouraged to journal about their day before the next meeting. *There will be an optional excursion to the aeolian buttes to share stories and have tea during sunset.*

Sunday, September 6 at 8:00am: Meet at the Mono Lake Committee Information Center & Bookstore in Lee Vining. We will carpool/caravan to the next spot where we will spend the early morning on a canoe tour of Mono Lake. Afterwards, we will close our day at Lee Vining Creek. This day will focus on the traditional practice of singing & storytelling which has served as medicine for the people and for the land over generations, across cultures & histories. Participants will have the option to share their songs and/or stories with one another. Our day will end at 2:00pm.

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

This seminar's activity level: *adaptive*. This seminar's activities and terrain will be dependent on the experience and comfort level of participants and the instructor will adapt the route and/or locations based on the group's need. There will likely be periods of sitting and reflecting, movement along trails, and using binoculars which may require lifting arms up and down. We will be visiting high elevation areas as well as dry, arid areas. Please reach out to fieldseminars@monolake.org if you have questions or to share accessibility needs.

WEATHER & ALTITUDE

Temperatures in summer will be warm during the day and drop to chilly at night, with possible windy conditions and afternoon thunderstorms. Average temperatures in September in Lee Vining are 75°F (max) and 42°F (min).

This seminar will take place at elevations ranging from about 6,000 to 10,000 feet above sea level. It is a good idea to acclimate at the elevation of Lee Vining for at least 24 hours prior to the start of the seminar. Those with a history of heart, ear, or respiratory problems should consult their doctors before attending. Anyone restricted to lower elevations should not enroll.

Remember to bring (and drink!) lots of water because your body loses more water at the higher altitudes of the Mono Basin. Begin drinking extra water as you drive to higher elevation in order to prevent dehydration and headaches. Also, the sun is intense at high elevations, capable of burning even on cool and cloudy days, so be sure to protect yourself thoroughly using sunscreen, sunglasses, and a hat.

A practice of ongoing communication and respect of needs will be observed throughout.

TO BRING

- ___ notebook and pen/pencil
- ___ binoculars (optional)
- ___ hiking poles (optional)
- ___ appropriate field clothing: hat, sunglasses, layers, rain gear, shoes
- ___ day pack including *plenty of water*, sunscreen, insect repellent, etc.
- ___ packed lunch and snacks (for multiple days)
- ___ a poem or story to share with group (more details later)
- ___ offering for the land/altar (more details later)

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES (non-exhaustive)

Lodging and Directions:

For information about getting to Lee Vining and lodging options, contact the Mono Lake Committee by phone at (760) 647-6595, Monday–Friday from 9:00am to 5:00pm, or email fieldseminars@monolake.org.

Books:

[Voices of the People](#) by The Traditionally Associated Tribes of Yosemite National Park
[Know We Are Here: Voices of Native California Resistance](#), Edited by Terria Smith

Poems, Essays, and Interviews:

- [Singing the Ancient Codes of Mother Earth to Heal & Remember](#) – Almunis Alejandra Ortiz
- [For Calling the Spirit Back from Wandering the Earth in Its Human Feet](#) – Joy Harjo
- [What the Winds Say](#) – Blanca Stacey Villalobos

Performances and Songs:

- [La Jardinera](#) – Violeta Parra
- [Don't Give Up](#) – Black Belt Eagle Scout
- [Pachamamata T'ikanchasun/Adoration of Mother Earth](#) – Luzmila Carpio
- [Déjame Respirar/Let Me Breathe](#) – Bomba Estéreo ft Nidia Góngora



Mono Lake Committee Field Seminars

P.O. Box 29 • Lee Vining, CA 93541 • (760) 647-6595 • monolake.org/seminars