

National Storytelling Network

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

A 2026 OF PARTNERSHIP



Rishi Nixon

President & Chair of the Board of Directors
National Storytelling Network

Warmest wishes for a 2026 filled with peace, resilience, and unity for our storytelling community, and our regional and national communities at large.

I wanted to take this moment to look back on the progress we made in 2025, especially on one priority area both Immediate Past President Delanna Reed and I have worked on over the past two years: **partnership**.

While you have heard about some of these in more detail in previous letters, I am pleased to share that in 2025, we recognized a total of five new organizations as NSN collaborative partners—**Northeast Storytelling**, Illinois-based **Storytelling.org**, **Story Crossroads**, the **Storytelling Resource Place** in Jonesborough, Tennessee, and the **National Association of Black Storytellers**—in various new initiatives, big and small, involving sponsorships, outreach, and resource sharing with NSN.

In addition, we built relationships with two new regional partners—the **Tejas Storytelling Association** and **Story Arts of Minnesota**—on the next two national conferences, currently in the works.

It strikes me how welcome a year this was for NSN to lean into relationships with friends and partner organizations, many of whom have felt increasingly isolated in a difficult national arts funding climate.

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2026 Conference About
The Palo Duro Canyon

Winter Auction for
Member Grants

ORACLE Award Nomination
Period Closes Jan. 10th

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Scholarship Application
Open

Featured Events

National Storytelling
Calendar

The Story Beast

DID YOU KNOW? NSN
BOARD MEETINGS ARE
OPEN TO ALL MEMBERS

Click [here](#) to read this
month's and prior meeting
minutes.

CLICK THE RED HALF OF
THE PAGE TO TURN BACK

CLICK THE BLUE HALF TO
TURN TO THE NEXT PAGE



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

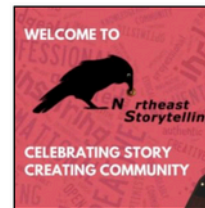
As we enter this new year in 2026, I want NSN to widen our net of collaborative partner organizations farther across the storytelling community. While most of our new partnerships in 2025 have come from connections through members of the NSN board or staff with relationships at these organizations, I am reaching out now to all of you:

If you are a leader of a storytelling organization interested in interacting with NSN, try to identify areas, both big and small, in which your organization and NSN might collaborate. Some possibilities are:

- (1) joint benefits and initiatives that can bring our memberships closer together,
- (2) joint programming with one of our special interest groups—Environmental Storytelling (ECO); Producers & Organizers (PRO); Storytelling In Organizations (SIO); and Youth, Educators, Storytellers (YES)—
- (3) joint promotion of storytelling resources,
- (4) joint promotion of storytelling events,

And contact me directly at rishi@storynet.org to talk about bringing our organizations closer together!

Meet NSN Collaborators





NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE • JULY 23–26, 2026

PALO DURO CANYON—A 15 MINUTE DRIVE FROM OUR 2026 SUMMER CONFERENCE VENUE



Caleb Hubbard and Trudy Hanson
Co-Chairs of the National Storytelling Conference
National Storytelling Network

When you come to Canyon, Texas for the 2026 NSN Storytelling Conference on July 23–26, you'll be only a short drive from Palo Duro Canyon, the second largest canyon in the United States. People have inhabited Palo Duro Canyon for about 12,000 years. The Clovis and Folsom peoples first lived in the canyon and hunted large herds of mammoth and giant bison. Other cultures, such as the Apache, Comanche and Kiowa, used the canyon's plentiful resources more recently. https://tpwmagazine.com/archive/2018/apr/ed_2_paloduro/

When you come to Canyon, Texas for the 2026 NSN Storytelling Conference on July 23–26, you'll be only a short drive from Palo Duro Canyon, the second largest canyon in the United States.

The Clovis and Folsom peoples first lived in the canyon and hunted large herds of mammoth and giant bison. Other cultures, such as the Apache, Comanche and Kiowa, used the canyon's plentiful resources more recently.

Palo Duro Canyon is known as the "Grand Canyon of Texas" for being the second-largest canyon in the U.S., famous for its stunning multi-colored rock layers, dramatic cliffs, and iconic hoodoo formations like the Lighthouse, offering extensive hiking, biking, and equestrian trails, plus history from Native American refuge to the Red River War, and even hosting the TEXAS Outdoor Musical.

There is limited (rustic) lodging in the canyon for those who would like to explore. Check out the accommodations at <https://tpwd.texas.gov/state-parks/palo-duro-canyon/fees-facilities/cabins>

Palo Duro Canyon is on the southern high plains, known as El Llano Estacado or the Staked Plains. Palo Duro is Spanish for hard wood, referring to the Rocky Mountain junipers in the canyon. The rim of the canyon is part of the shortgrass prairie.



Lighthouse Rock (Texas Parks and Wildlife Magazine)



The canyon floor supports more types of plants because it is in the river's flood plain. Besides juniper, other common trees in the canyon include mesquite, cottonwood, willow, western soapberry and hackberry. Wildflowers and grasses dot the canyon floor and wall. Indian blanket, American basket-flower (shown in photo from Texas Parks and Wildlife), sunflower, paperflower, blackfoot daisy, tansy aster, sideoats grama, buffalograss, sand sage, yucca and prickly pear cactus are the most common species

Watch for rock formations in the canyon with a larger rock balanced atop a smaller base. These are called hoodoos. Hoodoos form when rock layers erode at different rates. The harder rock on top then protects the softer rock underneath. To learn more about Palo Duro Canyon, check out this article:
https://tpwmagazine.com/archive/2018/apr/ed_2_paloduro/

**We are planning a conference field trip hosted by ECO SIG on Friday morning of the conference.
More details will be available soon!**





MEMBER GRANTS PROGRAM

SUPPORT STORYTELLERS—DONATE TO THE NSN ONLINE AUCTION!



Kate Dudding and Marilyn McPhie
kate@katedudding.com • mmcphie@gmail.com
Auction Co-Chairs
National Storytelling Network

The money raised through this year's auction will directly fund NSN Member Grants, supporting storytellers in their creative, educational, and community work.

Do you have something wonderful that deserves a new home? A recent holiday/birthday gift that isn't quite you? Something interesting you discovered when downsizing/consolidating?

Your donation can make a real difference!

For our last online auction, **54 generous donors** contributed **99 items**, and **57 bidders** raised an amazing **\$5,896** for storytelling projects across the country. With your help, we can do even better this year!

What to Donate

Here are examples of items that have sold well in the past:

- **Art:** quilts, wall hangings, paintings, photography, posters
- **Clothing & Accessories:** scarves, handmade items, wearable art
- **Food & Treats:** specialty foods, homemade jams, local products
- **Gift Certificates:** restaurants, bookstores, online classes, local experiences
- **Jewelry:** handmade, vintage, or distinctive pieces
- **Storytelling Accessories:** puppets, props, musical instruments, costume pieces, games, and other story enhancers
- **Books, Recordings, and Media:** storytelling books, CDs, DVDs, downloads
- **Event Registrations:** storytelling conferences, workshops, and festival passes
- **Storytelling Services:** coaching, marketing, photography, recording, virtual performances, or even house concerts!

 NATIONAL
STORYTELLING
NETWORK

Raise Funds for Member Grants!

Winter 2026 Online

AUCTION

Feb. 23 – Mar. 6

Donation bit.ly/nsn26-auction-donation
Form **Forms accepted Jan. 9 – Feb. 9**

Auction 32auctions.com/nsn26

Info storynet.org/online-auction





New Ideas!

- **Unique Experiences:** private story sessions, behind-the-scenes tours, or one-on-one mentorships
- **Collector's Items:** signed books or memorabilia from well-known storytellers
- **Theme Bundles:** "Storyteller's Survival Kit," "Tea and Tales," "Family Story Night," "Spooky Storytelling," or?

Every contribution—large or small—helps build opportunities for storytellers to grow and share their art.

Minimum value for each donated item: \$35

Items must be new or nearly-new in excellent condition.

PLEASE NOTE: at last year's auction, over two-thirds of the items sold for \$35–\$60. So if you have four \$25 CDs you want to donate, please submit two auction items, each containing two CDs.

Ready to donate? Please do the following between January 9th and February 9th

A) Fill out one Google form per auction item: bit.ly/nsn26-auction-donation

NOTE: Unfortunately, you only get one chance to edit the information you enter – that's immediately after you submit this form. So please gather all the pieces of information and then fill in this form with:

- Description of donated item – with enough details to tempt people to bid
- Approximate retail value (\$35.00 minimum for each item)
- Starting price
- Shipping Cost – please enter 0 if you are donating the cost of shipping
- Travel details (if any)
- Donor's name
- Donor's email address
- Name of donor's organization (if any)
- Website address of donor's organization (if any)
- Donor's preferred telephone number

B) Email kate@katedudding.com

- One to four photos of the auction item. (If it's a service you will provide, perhaps your photo would be appropriate.)
- The logo of your business (if you have one)

C) Donors will be emailed when their item has been added to the auction website 32auctions.com/nsn26

IMPORTANT: Do not mail any items to NSN. At the end of the auction, there will be direct mailing from the donor to the auction winner.



Imagine sitting in your favorite spot during Feb. 23 to Mar. 6, bidding on beautiful hand-crafted items and inspiring storytelling experiences, donated from your storytelling friends across the nation and beyond to help support NSN Member Grants. Watch for specifics about the auction itself to be posted at storynet.org/online-auction.

To generate donations and also when the auction runs, please spread the word on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Pinterest, and other social networks. Let your non-storytelling friends, family, and co-workers in on the auction, especially if you spot an item they might be interested in.

We look forward to a fun and profitable online event. But first, we need your donations to make it happen!
Donation Deadline: February 9th

Together, we can keep the stories flowing and the storytellers thriving!
Kate Dudding and Marilyn McPhie

ORACLE AWARDS

**LAST REMINDER!
JANUARY 10 IS
THE DEADLINE TO
SUBMIT ORACLE
NOMINATIONS**

VISIT THE ORACLE WEBPAGE



2025 recipients left to right
Meghna Bhat, Jennifer Pahl Otto, Jim Brule, Sara Armstrong, Trudy Hanson, Sherry Norfolk, Jo Ann Dadisman, Clinton Atwater, Susan O'Connor



NATIONAL STORYTELLING CONFERENCE • JULY 23–26, 2026

KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATIONS OPEN NOW



Margaret Read MacDonald

Chair of the Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholarship Committee
National Storytelling Network

On a crisp October day in 1975, in a small town in Tennessee, people gathered to hear and to tell stories and took them back to their own communities. Kathryn Tucker Windham, a journalist and storyteller, slapped down \$5 and said, “We need a membership organization, and I’m the first member.” In the next 50 years, what would become the National Storytelling Network flourished into a membership organization of over 1,000 individuals and affiliated organizations, working to foster the growth of storytelling and the American storytelling community.

In honor of the legacy of our very first member, a celebrated Alabama journalist and storyteller, The Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholarship is annually awarded by the National Storytelling Network to five scholars. The scholarship's mission is to support their attendance at the National Storytelling Conference for its inspired programming, warm community, and celebrated forum to meet storytelling peers from across the country.

The 2026 National Storytelling Conference will be held July 23–26, 2026 at West Texas A&M University in Canyon, Texas. We encourage a diverse range of tellers—whether experienced or brand new, NSN member or non-member, storytelling professional or emerging teller—to apply for the Windham scholarship.

NEW for 2026 CYCLE! We are setting aside two of the five Windham Scholarships for new tellers (those who have been involved in the art of storytelling for less than ten years). We hope to encourage tellers new to the field to attend our annual conference and become involved in NSN.



Kathryn Tucker Windham in 2007 (The New York Times)



The Kathryn Tucker Windham Scholarship application is due March 7th, 2026. Scholarship attendees will be notified of their application status by the end of that month.

Conference Scholarship Benefits

- One year of membership to the National Storytelling Network
- Free registration to the full conference (including the regional, national, and ORACLE awards concerts)
- Free on-campus housing for the full conference, possibly with a roommate (of your choice, if another conference attendee)
- Free meals at the campus dining hall

Please note that the scholarship does not cover transportation to West Texas A&M University. As university housing does not provide linens, please bring your own twin bed sheets, pillow, pillowcase, blanket, and towels. NSN can provide these linens for you for a fee.

During the conference, Windham Scholars are required to volunteer for 2 hours. Following the conference, Windham Scholars will be asked to submit to newsletter@storynet.org a reflection essay of their experience to be published in the National Storytelling Network's monthly newsletters.

VISIT THE SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION FORM



Storytelling In Organizations Presents: The RIGHT Impact Story to Drive Change

When: Saturday, February 28, 2026

Time: 12:00 p.m. - 1:15 p.m. EST

Where: Zoom

By the end of the webinar session participants will be able to:

1. Identify six types of impact stories and explain when each type is useful for what strategic purpose.
2. Use a structured interview approach, when needed, to gather strong impact story elements.
3. Embrace the ethical considerations involved in story collection and sharing.

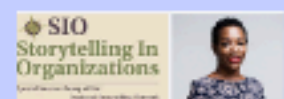


Facilitator:
Sally Perkins, Ph.D.

Consultant in story-driven
organizational communication
Coach & Storyteller

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)

Free to SIO Members and Non-Members





CLICK EVENTS TO REGISTER



Storytelling In Organizations Presents a Virtual Webinar Series

Storytelling to Shape Culture Mindset in Organisations

When: Every 2nd Tuesday

January 13, 2026 February 10, 2026 March 10, 2026 April 14, 2026

Time: 8:00 pm -9:00 pm Eastern

Goal: At the end of the webinar series, attendees will be able to learn how to notice, find, and use stories that nurture the way people think and perform in their organizations.

Objectives

Session 1: Stories that define culture mindset

- Practice noticing cultural mindset indicators in existing stories

Session 2: Understanding stories, narratives and beliefs

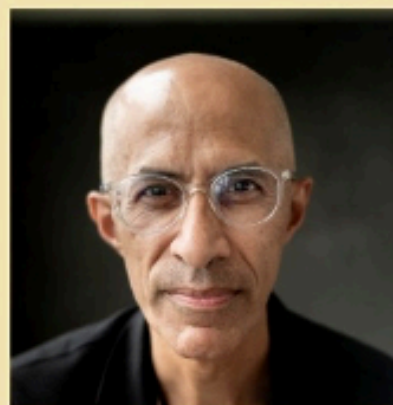
- Learn observation and listening techniques to uncover the deeper beliefs behind stories

Session 3: Leading change through narratives

- Practice eliciting powerful stories that support the desired culture mindset

Session 4: Stories to change culture mindset

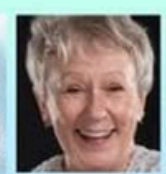
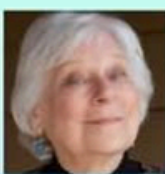
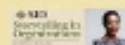
- Practice to deliver stories to become a better storyteller in an organisational context



Facilitator: Vinod Krishna

Founder of Storytelling at Work™
MBA in Human Resources Management
Certified Project Management
Professional (PMP®)
Certified NLP Master Practitioner

SIO Members: Free
Non-SIO Members: Free



MIDWINTER MIRTH

LAUGHTER IS THE BEST MEDICINE



EMCEE



LANI PETERSON

On Zoom!!

Pay What

You are Able:

\$20-\$50

**A FUNDRAISING CONCERT
FOR HEALING STORY ALLIANCE**

Sunday January 11th

8:00 pm ET

7:00 pm CT

6:00 pm MT

5:00 pm PT

FEATURING

**LAURA SIMMS, HEATHER FOREST, ANDY OFFUTT IRWIN, CAROL BIRCH,
LYN FORD, MOTOKO, ED STIVENDER, NOA BAUM, PAUL STRICKLAND,
DONNA WASHINGTON AND ROBERT KIKUCHI-YNGOJO**



NATIONAL STORYTELLING CALENDAR
LINKS IN TITLES IF AVAILABLE

JANUARY 2026 EVENTS

Storytelling Connections • Let Me Tell Ya! Book Club “The Perfect Story” with Karen Eber

January 4, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

January 11, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

January 18, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

January 25, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

February 1, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

VIRTUAL

Howell Opera House • Live: The Storytellers

January 8, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Eastern • Paul Strickland

February 12, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Eastern • Adam Mellema

March 19, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Eastern • Ingrid Nixon

Howell Opera House • 123 W Grand River Road, Howell, Michigan

Laura Packer • New Year, New Stories: A #storyseeds workshop

January 8, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Central

January 15, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Central

January 22, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:30 pm Central

VIRTUAL

Healing Story Alliance • Midwinter Mirth: Laughter is the Best Medicine

January 11, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 9:00 pm Central

VIRTUAL

Storytelling Arts of Indiana • A Celebration of the Indy Story Slam

January 11, 2026 • 4:00 pm – 6:00 pm Central

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center • 450 W Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana

HYBRID

NSN Storytelling in Organizations (SIO) Special Interest Group presents

Storytelling to Shape Culture Mindset in Organizations

January 13, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Central

February 10, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Central

March 10, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Central

April 14, 2026 • 7:00 pm – 8:00 pm Central

VIRTUAL



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
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Voices In The Glen • Monthly Story Swap

January 7, 2026 • 7:30 pm – 8:30 pm Eastern

VIRTUAL

Laura Packer • More than an elevator pitch: How to talk about what you do, stand out in a crowd, and feel more confident

January 24, 2026 • 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

VIRTUAL

Storytelling Arts of Indiana • Hear Our Stories: The Life and Afterlife of Incarceration on the Mainstage

February 8, 2026 • 3:00 pm – 4:30 pm Central

Eugene and Marilyn Glick Indiana History Center • 450 W Ohio Street, Indianapolis, Indiana

HYBRID

NSN Storytelling in Organizations (SIO) Special Interest Group presents

The Right Impact Story to Drive Change

February 28, 2026 • 11:00 am – 12:15 pm Central

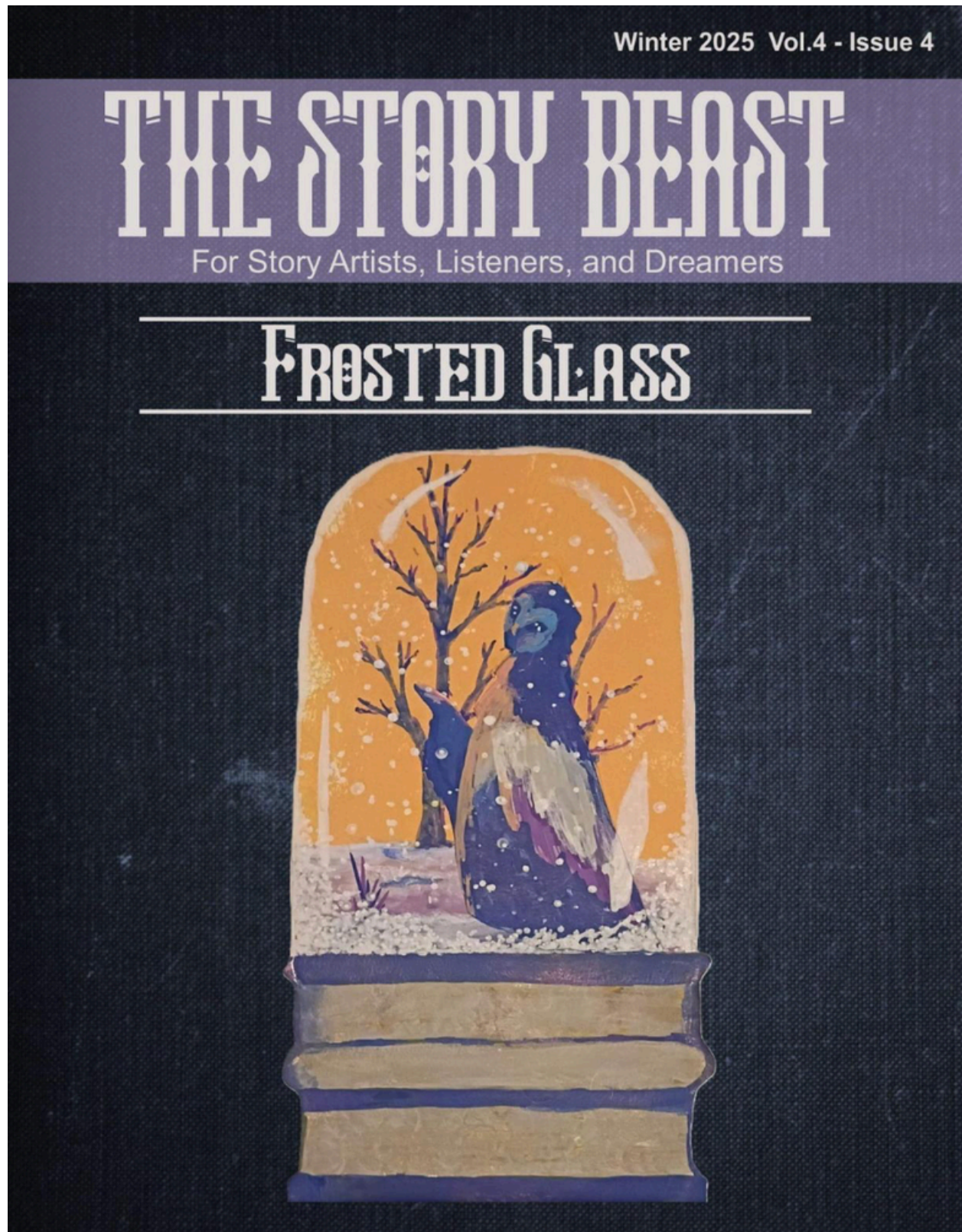
VIRTUAL



NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

The Story Beast's Winter Issue *Frosted Glass* Out!

Watch [this page](#) for updated submission info for 2026 Beast issues.





NATIONAL STORYTELLING NETWORK
JANUARY 2026 NEWSLETTER

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

Margaret Read MacDonald	Managing Editor
Rishi Nixon	Assistant Managing Editor
Ashton Cynthia Clarke	Events Editor
Rita Rigano	Copy Editor
Sara Armstrong	Copy Editor
Nick Smith	Editor
Cassie Selleck	Editor

HOW TO SUBMIT TO THE NEWSLETTER

Send us your events, articles, opportunities, storytelling, or storyteller news, and more in an email to newsletter@storynet.org to go out to the national storytelling community!

1. Contributions due on the 25th of the month.
2. Membership in the National Storytelling Network *not* required.
3. Content subject to editing and inclusion in final issue not guaranteed.
4. If you are the author of your contribution, please also attach a headshot photo of yourself to go next to your byline.