

CENTER OF THE AMERICAN WEST



Center of the American West
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER



YEAR IN REVIEW 2024 - 25

EDUCATE
STUDENTS

RESEARCH
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CONNECT WITH
CAMPUS

COLORADO &
BEYOND

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The Center of the American West is a recognized hub for illuminating the role of the western United States in regional, national and global issues. We bring people together to explore the ongoing complexities of and challenges facing the western United States through education, research, programs, and projects.



Learn more: www.colorado.edu/center/west

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- Patrick Campbell: front, page 9
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DIRECTOR'S — WELCOME



Faculty Director Thomas Andrews nails a horse-shoe above the front entrance to the Center's main office in Macky Auditorium while charro Don Roberto looks on.

It's hard to believe that nearly a year has passed since I began directing the Center of the American West! Despite my long association with the Center and my participation in several CAW events and programs over the years, I hardly knew what to expect as I stepped into this new role. Fortunately, leading CAW has proven even more rewarding, stimulating, and—dare I say it—fun than I anticipated. I am proud of what we have accomplished in 2024-2025 and thrilled by the momentum we have amassed heading into the coming academic year. Five sets of efforts deserve special mention.

First, the wonderful members of the CAW team—Brooke Neely, Tamar McKee, and Ryan Lueck—and I have placed the Center on a broader, more sustainable footing. Under interim director Thomas Zeiler, CAW instituted new by-laws and developed a strategic plan. After I succeeded him in 2024-'25 we expanded our Board of Faculty Affiliates, successfully completed reauthorization as a center in the College of Arts & Sciences, and assisted the University Counsel's office in settling the suit CAW's former director filed against CU-Boulder in May 2024.

Second, we have worked hard to build trust, clarify responsibilities, and open and maintain channels of communication. I am incredibly proud of the collaborative, constructive culture we are building. Third, we have made notable progress in our push to support students who are passionate about engaging with pressing issues in the American West's past, present, and future. In addition to recruiting more undergraduates for our certificate program, we have launched a student internship with the Aspen Historical Society, disbursed funds from the Beardsley and Hoffman Scholarships to help several students with educational expenses and conference travel, and deepened our collaborations with History Colorado, the Nature Conservancy, and other internship sites.

Fourth, we pulled off an ambitious year of events and programming that brought together Indigenous elders, public servants, scholars from CU-Boulder and other institutions, students, and the broader public. I have especially fond memories of beautiful, powerful horses and expert charrería riders from Colorado's Torres Family parading across the Norlin Quad on a glorious September day, former Deputy Secretary of the Interior and dear friend Tommy Beaudreau regaling a dozen students with an insider's perspective on this critical juncture in public lands policy, and creative nonfiction authors Lucas Bessire, Julie Carr, and John-Michael Rivera probing the intersections between the western American past and their family histories at the latest installment of our *Rewriting the West* series.

Fifth and finally, we have begun to make real progress to define and solidify CAW's future. This process, which began with the strategic plan finalized under Professor Zeiler, has now expanded to encompass the development of several new initiatives (see "Engage Colorado and

Beyond” on page 12) as well as redoubled fundraising efforts (more information on page 14) to ensure CAW’s vitality for decades to come.

However you define or delimit the West, our region seems destined to play a pivotal role in many of the most significant and divisive realms of contemporary life and politics. From climate change to border control, social justice to international trade, artificial intelligence to higher education, the American West remains significant, vulnerable, and endlessly fascinating. CAW’s mission as a recognized hub for illuminating the role of the western United States in regional, national, and global issues is more important than ever. As this newsletter details, we remain deeply committed to bringing people together to explore the ongoing complexities of and challenges facing the western United States through education, research, programs, and projects—and, in so doing, advancing the esteemed tradition of thoughtful, purposeful engagement embodied in our university’s motto, “Let your light shine.”

We invite you to delve more deeply into this review of the Center’s 2024-’25 operations and aspirations, which is organized according to our strategic plan’s four key priorities:

- 1) **Educate Students**
- 2) **Enable Research Collaborations**
- 3) **Connect with Campus**
- 4) **Engage Colorado and Beyond.**

To everyone who helped make our work in 2024-’25 so stimulating and successful, we can’t thank you enough! And for those of you who were unable to join us, we very much hope that you’ll consider joining us at one or more of the events and programs to come - or simply reaching out to say hola, howdy, maykw, or kooniin’iini.

Sincerely,



Thomas Andrews, Ph.D.

Faculty Director, Center of the American West

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EDUCATE STUDENTS

Exceptional revitalization and growth for Center of the American West initiatives and opportunities for CU students, our campus community, and beyond characterized the CAW's 2024-2025 academic year. The CAW made a concerted effort to reactivate our academic programming, undergraduate scholarship awards, student professional development, graduate funding, and cohort building. Renewing these programs, funds, and opportunities all exceeded our growth expectations for the 2024-2025 academic year and generated momentum for the CAW in the next phase of initiatives.

The CAW prioritized our Western American Studies [undergraduate certificate program](#) and the [Beardsley Family Scholarship](#) offered to certificate students. Since January 2024, we went from having no students enrolled in our certificate program to eight enrolled undergraduates by May 2025.



Students from the Center's spring 2025 "Introduction to the American West" (CAMW 2001) course work together in breakout groups on the Clare Small quad. This course is often the first step students take to begin their progress in our Certificate program.

This rapid growth allowed us to make use of dormant scholarship funds for students in this program. The Beardsley scholarship fund was created to financially support students who are passionate about Western American topics and issues. The certificate program's growth thus allowed us to make use of these funds once more, awarding a total of \$6000 to undergraduate students in AY 24-25.

We also resumed our [internship program](#), reaching students beyond our certificate program. Our internship partners include History Colorado Center in Denver, CO, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) in Boulder. These opportunities are available for all CU undergraduates, and we've had an additional eight students outside of our certificate program complete internships since January 2024.



(L-R) CAW Academic Programs Coordinator, Ryan Lueck, and CAW Senior Research Associate, Brooke Neely, with spring 2025 TNC interns Shea McCarthy (B.A. Anthropology) and Olivia Moyer (B.A. Psychology and Environmental Studies).

The CAW also rejuvenated our support and engagement for graduate students through funding, research, and colloquium opportunities. The CAW renewed a previously dormant fund, the [Hoffman Scholars Program](#), which supports students attending academic conferences with a CU faculty mentor. In April 2025 we granted funds for three graduate students to attend the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) conference in Pittsburgh, PA. The CAW then partnered with the Aspen Historical Society to provide a summer funding opportunity to graduate students interested in local and public history. Lastly, the CAW generated new opportunities for graduate cohort building by creating a colloquium. Throughout the 2024-25 academic year, graduate students convened and shared important and foundational scholarship in their fields, while engaging other members of the graduate school community.

The CAW's renewal of these programs and funds led to reactivation in our campus engagement, student academic and professional development, while laying foundations for sustained and generative growth in the future. These accomplishments are in line and even beyond our strategic plan for our current phase of academic programming. The work we have done enrolling students into the CAW's certificate program and providing funding to students in all stages of their academic careers stands out as a personal highlight for me as the CAW's Program Coordinator. We've reached students all across campus, reinvigorated engagement with the Center's mission, and provided funding opportunities for students to develop and deepen their relationships with the American West academically, professionally, and personally.

“Thanks to the generous support of the Hoffman Scholarship from the University of Colorado Boulder’s Center of the American West, I was able to attend and fully immerse myself in this year’s American Society for Environmental Historians (ASEH) meeting. While at ASEH, I attended over a dozen panels, assisted in the execution of a field trip to Pittsburgh’s excellent Phipps Botanical Conservatory, and engaged with conference participants from undergraduates to senior scholars [...] Each of these alone would have justified my time in Pittsburgh, but taken together, I can confidently say that the conference was an integral and transformative moment as I continue to transition towards dissertation writing.”

~ Trevor Egerton, Ph.D. candidate, History

Ryan Lueck, M.A.

Academic Programs Coordinator
Center of the American West

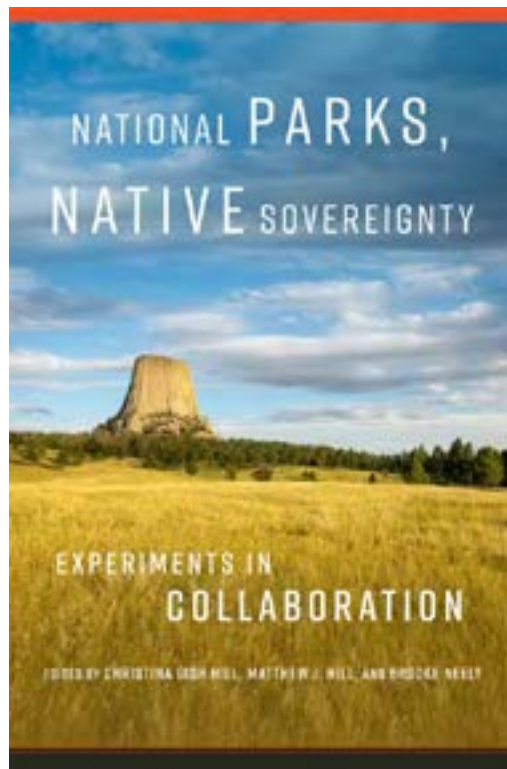
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RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS

The Center of the American West's longtime project, [Indigenous Connections at Rocky Mountain National Park](#), continued over the past year. RMNP hired its first Native interpretive ranger, RisingBuffalo Maybee, to lead the Eastern District at the park. With the support of other NPS staff, Maybee energized Indigenous-focused programs and exhibits. Rocky Mountain National Park also secured a National Parks Foundation grant to support this work. CAW graduate students contributed to these efforts, most notably by finalizing online Story Maps with information about Ute, Arapaho, and Cheyenne people.

In 2024, CAW senior research associate Brooke Neely co-edited the book [National Parks, Native Sovereignty: Experiments in Collaboration](#) (University of Oklahoma Press), an edited volume show-casing examples of national park sites and tribal nations collaborating on educational and natural resource management initiatives. The CAW hosted a book event in November 2024 that brought together the editors and contributors for a conversation about the volume's creation and the case studies it highlights, including Rocky Mountain National Park, Mount Rushmore National Memorial, and Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. Neely has also participated in a number of workshops with National Park Service employees and other organizations to discuss how to apply the book's findings to current work in national parks and elsewhere.



(L-R) Former CAW Graduate Research Assistant Natasha Myhal, now Assistant Professor of Indigenous Environmental Studies at Ohio State University, joined CAW Faculty Affiliate and Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies Clint Carroll and CAW Senior Research Fellow, Dr. Brooke Neely, for the book panel “National Parks, Native Sovereignty,” November 2024.

Over the past year, the CAW has developed a partnership with the [Sand Creek Massacre Foundation](#), the non-profit support organization for the Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site. The partnership includes co-hosting events that shed light on the legacy of the massacre and the contemporary lives of Cheyenne and Arapaho people. In October 2024, we held a standing-room only event with Cheyenne educator and activist Dr. Henrietta “Henri” Mann. The partnership has also included hiring undergraduate and graduate students to support the work of the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation. In the future, we intend to further develop the partnership with collaborative projects, events, and archival research. This promises to be a fruitful collaboration for years to come.



Dr. Henrietta Mann upon finishing her talk at CU Boulder, October 2024.

I was fortunate to spend time with Dr. Mann during her visit. At her wise age of 90, she’s still full of energy and enthusiasm. She wore brightly colored outfits that reminded me of my own 90-year-old grandmother. She had a twinkle in her eye throughout her visit. And her public presentation was powerful, showcasing the human experiences surrounding the tragedy of Sand Creek. Students from the Center’s introductory course on the American West attended Dr. Mann’s event.

Afterward we spent a class period reflecting on the experience. Many of the students expressed that this was the most powerful event they had ever attended. Some students learned about Sand Creek for the first time, while others learned about it in new ways. All of them were struck by the way Dr. Mann brought the history and human experiences to life for the audience.

Dr. Mann’s visit encapsulates why I love working at the Center of the American West. It offers the opportunity to engage with troubling histories in meaningful and beneficial ways. It also allows me to connect with amazing people like Henri and our collaborators at the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation.

~Brooke

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CONNECT — WITH CAMPUS



In developing our 2023–26 strategic plan, the Center of the American West identified “Inclusivity” and “Community” as core values, with “Connect with Campus” as a strategic priority. The 2024–’25 academic year brought these principles to life through a series of collaborative events with CU Boulder partners.

We kicked off the year by participating in the 2024 campus-wide Culture Crawl, an annual event led by University Libraries to spotlight cultural units across campus. On September 24, the CAW hosted “**Charrería on Parade,**” a live showcase of horses and riders featured in a photography exhibit, “**Charrería: Exploring the Human-Horse Connection in Mexican Rodeo,**” by CU alum Chris Sessions. Charros and charras paraded from Macky Auditorium to Norlin Library, engaging the campus community in a vibrant cultural experience that you can watch [HERE](#) or scan QR code below.



Watch
“CHARRERÍA ON PARADE”

“CHARRERÍA: EXPLORING
THE HUMAN-HORSE
RELATIONSHIP IN
MEXICAN RODEO”
Digital Exhibit Guide



After the success of the Culture Crawl, the CAW welcomed Dr. Henrietta Mann to campus in October 2024 for the event “**Henrietta Mann and the Legacy of Sand Creek**” and then in November hosted an panel of international guests for “**National Parks, Native Sovereignty**” at both CU Boulder and Colorado State University (see more in the previous “Research Collaborations” section). For these events, we were honored to work with campus partners such as the Center of Native American and Indigenous Studies and the departments of History and Ethnic Studies.



(L-R) CAW Faculty Director, Thomas Andrews, with Tommy Beaudreau and Chris Winters, Executive Director of the Getches-Wilkinson Center, February 2025.



Angela Parker, Assistant Professor of History at the University of Denver, delivering her talk “*Deluged: Inundation and Transformation of Land, Place, and Space*,” April 2025.

In December, we organized two back-to-back events. In collaboration with the History Department, we hosted historian **Dr. Danielle Olden** for a talk on her prize-winning book on historic struggles over school desegregation in Denver. This followed with a CAW co-sponsored symposium “**Horses and the Human Story: A Global Perspective**” with the CU Museum of Natural History and the Center for Asian Studies. Directed by CAW Faculty Affiliate Dr. William Taylor, the event featured presentations by CAW Faculty Director Thomas Andrews and Manager of Programs and Operations Tamar McKee.

2025 then opened with a January luncheon presentation by Dr. Nir Evron (Tel Aviv University, Israel), who eloquently and persuasively traced connections between the 1902 western novel *The Virginian* and turn-of-the-century animal welfare movements. In February 2025, CAW then partnered with the Getches-Wilkinson Center at the CU Boulder Law School to host former Deputy Secretary of the Interior Tommy Beaudreau for “**The Lords of Yesterday and the Imperatives of Now**,” the 2025 Schultz Lecture in Energy. Alongside a public lecture at the CU Boulder School of Law, CAW facilitated a student lunch discussion at the CU Alumni Center.

March brought Dr. Angela Parker from the University of Denver to campus for a student lunch and public event to talk about her new book, ***Damming the Reservation: Tribal Sovereignty and Activism at Fort Berthold***. This visit was made possible through collaboration with the Graduate Certificate in Environmental Justice, the Center for Native American and Indigenous Studies, and the departments of Ethnic Studies, Environmental Studies, and History. Dr. Parker’s visit exemplified our commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue and student engagement.

Videos of our 2024-25 events are available on our YouTube channel [HERE](#) or scan QR code below:



“Throughout the three presentations, I was immersed in a world full of reckoning, grief, and an entanglement of the speaker’s past and present lives.

Julie Carr’s talk encompassed the American West through her conflicting legacy with her grandfather and his populist activism, which included his embrace of eugenics. Immigration policy institutionalizing racial exclusion in the West was brought up a lot in this talk, and showed that the West was never just a place of opportunity, but a place shaped by selective belonging [...]

Lucas Bessire’s reading, centered on the Shinnery Oaks and his family land, shared many themes with Turner’s Frontier Thesis. However, unlike Turner, who celebrated westward expansion as a Triumph of individualism, Bessire mourned the environmental destruction of these Oaks that was intertwined with American conquest. In his talk, he had a hopeful vision for ecological restoration and tried to erase Western narratives that seem not to care about the environmental costs of expansion.

John-Michael Rivera’s talk felt like a performance on violence and apathy centered around gun violence in his youth. Rivera showed that gun violence, like some historical myths, has become increasingly invisible over time due to the sheer number of shootings that we observe in America [...]

Each presentation revealed to me that the American West was not only a frontier of freedom, but a battleground of violence, guilt, and memory that still unfolds today.”

~“Rewriting the West” event reflection by
CAMW 2001 student



Our final event of the year, “**Rewriting the West: Where We Come From / Where We Are,**” took place amid a late-spring snowstorm—ironically rescheduled from a snowed-out March 2024 date! Presenters Dr. Julie Carr, Dr. Lucas Bessire, and Dr. John-Michael Rivera offered creative reflections on the American West as a historical legacy, present-day challenge, and future question. A post-event reception, supported by the Women and Gender Studies Program, allowed for rich conversation between presenters and attendees - complete with a drawing for autographed books by the authors.

Throughout the 2024-25 academic year, CAW’s stimulating and wide-ranging slate of events deepened our collaboration with our CU Boulder partners and community and brought our strategic planning and values to life.




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ENGAGE COLORADO — & BEYOND

In the coming academic year, CAW looks forward to building upon a successful year of engaging a range of audiences in Colorado and beyond. Many of our upcoming events, programs, and initiatives are still in the planning stages, but here is a sneak peek at some highlights:

- Developing another installment of our “Rewriting the West” series;
- Collaborating with the History Department on its annual Athearn Lecture in spring 2026;
- Welcoming another slate of top-notch speakers, including CAW alumnae Dr. Alessandra Link, who will be joining us to talk about her new book, *The Iron Horse in Indian Country: Native Americans and Railroads in Indian Country* (Oxford University Press, 2025);
- Fostering connections with other western-focused centers, including a panel in October at the Western History Association organized by CAW director Thomas Andrews and including leaders from our counterparts at the University of Utah, Stanford, and Brigham Young University;
- Rolling out the [Seo and Hirabayashi Families Symposium and Student Research Fellowship](#), a year-long program that will provide stipends and research funding for approximately six undergraduate and graduate students interested in exploring Japanese American incarceration during World War II and its legacies;
- Deepening our partnership with the Sand Creek Massacre Foundation and the Center for Sand Creek Massacre Studies;
- And a year chock-full of engaging audiences in Boulder, the state of Colorado, and beyond; connecting with campus; advancing collaborative research; and educating students.

A silhouette of a hiker with a backpack and trekking poles, standing on a rocky mountain trail. The background shows a sunset over a range of mountains, with the sun low on the horizon, creating a warm orange glow.

What do you see as the most pressing issues facing the American West and what the CAW could offer in terms of events, programs, research and projects to address them?

Take Our Survey [HERE](#) or scan QR code below:

A square QR code located in the bottom right corner of the text box, used for quick access to the survey.

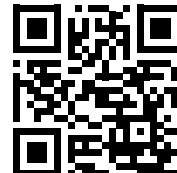
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & COLLEAGUES

We are proud to recognize and extend our heartfelt thanks to our esteemed faculty affiliates, whose expertise, insight, and unwavering commitment have been instrumental in advancing the mission of our center over the past year. Their diverse perspectives and scholarly contributions continue to enrich our programs, inform our research, and strengthen our community partnerships. By lending their time, talent, and thought leadership, these collaborators not only elevate the quality of our work but also help us tackle some of the most pressing challenges in our field. We are deeply grateful for their continued engagement and look forward to the impactful collaborations ahead.

- **Ernesto Acevedo-Muñoz** - Department of Cinema Studies & Moving Image Arts, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Douglas Bamforth** - Department of Anthropology, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Joe Bryan** - Department of Geography, College of Arts and Sciences; Faculty Director, Latin American and Latinx Studies Center
- **Julie Carr** - Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences; Chair, Women & Gender Studies
- **Clint Carroll** - Department of Ethnic Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- **J. Andy Cowell** - Department of Linguistics, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Emmanuel David** - Co-Director LGBTQ Studies Certificate Program, Women and Gender Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Annette de Stecher** - Department of Art and Art History, College of Arts and Sciences
- **José G. Izaguirre III** - College of Media Communications and Information
- **Yumi Janairo Roth** - Chair of Department of Art and Art History, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Kelsey John** - Department of Ethnic Studies, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Stephen Graham Jones** - Department of English, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Angelica Lawson** - Department of Film and Ethnic Studies, College of Arts and Science
- **Cecilia Pang** - Department of Theatre and Dance, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Hanna Rose Shell** - Department of Cinema Studies & Moving Image Arts, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Sarah Stanford-McIntyre** - Herbst Certificate Co-Director, College of Engineering and Applied Science
- **Paul Sutter** - Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences
- **William Taylor** - Department of Anthropology, Curator of Archaeology, College of Arts and Sciences
- **Phoebe Young** - Department of History, College of Arts and Sciences

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Thank you for reading!