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or a story or pen some lyrics to do it," Broderick said.

New fisherpoets

Josh Wisniewski, an anthropologist who works with treaty tribes in Washington, has fished since 1994 when he was 18.

Wisniewski said reading Gary Snyder's "Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems" when he was young made him interested in writing about his own experiences.

"I love the aesthetics of fishing. I love the boats, the buoys, the smells, the sights, every single part of it," he said.

He plans to perform "The Setnetters Sabbath," "Tide Change," "North Pacific Fish Farm" and "Conservation" at the Gathering. The poems address longlining, opportunities and access, and conservation.

Wisniewski said ideas come to him often when he's sitting down at home or on an anchor.

"I'll find time to start writing it down, and then I usually just sit on it for a while and then maybe eventually put it into my computer and kind of tweak it a little bit more," he said.

Karen Gimbel of Calgary, Alberta, was drawn to the Gathering through friends and family who have attended, and for her love of poetry and fishing.

Gimbel has fished since 1980 and said writing has made her reflect on her days fishing on Bristol Bay in Alaska.

"Fishing was a lifestyle for us. All of our days were wrapped around the seasons of Dillingham, Alaska ... we worked hard to survive," Gimbel said.

Gimbel writes poetry with pen and paper. Her poetry explores connections between things, death, the cycles of life and impermanence.

"Often enough a poem just 'comes through' but other times, I sit with an idea for months, and sometimes find using different 'forms' useful to help them come in," she said.

Vocalist Kim Menster of Cordova, Alaska, has always played with words.

"I focus on humor and how words fit together," Menster said. "Words make me happy and how words are used. I like word play."

Menster began writing fisherpoetry after Joanna Reichhold start the In Em Fisher Folk Festival in Cordova after performing at the FisherPoets Gathering.

Menster has fished since 1994 and bought her own boat in 1998.

She credits the rhythmic and repetitive jobs fishing entails, like hanging nets, as part of what drew her to writing songs.



Photos by Colin Murphey

Jon Broderick, foreground, and Jay Speakman perform at the Labor Temple Bar during the 2018 FisherPoets Gathering.

'IT'S A PARTY. IT'S LIKE CHRISTMAS DINNER OR THANKSGIVING DINNER, YOU KNOW? YOU MAY NOT MAKE IT EVERY YEAR BUT YOU'RE ALWAYS INVITED.'


Jon Broderick, one of the Gathering's founders and organizers

"I kind of get stuck on a phrase or a word that I like. As I'm going through my repetitive stuff, (I'll) start playing with words," she said.

Menster will sing "Useless and Pretty," "Hotlaps" and "The Ballad of the Jimani," which is about a boat she used to work on and its crew.

Returning to shore

Broderick said it's enjoying people's company and catching up that keeps people coming back.

"It's a party. It's like Christmas dinner or Thanksgiving dinner, you know?" he said. "You may not make it every year but you're always invited." 



The FisherPoets Gathering creates standing-room-only crowds at several venues in Astoria, including the Columbian Theater.