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THE LOST JOURNALS OF SACAJEWEA WINS THE 2023 MONTANA BOOK AWARD

The 2023 Montana Book Award winner is **The Lost Journals of Sacajewea** by Debra Magpie Earling, published by Milkweed Editions. This annual award recognizes literary and/or artistic excellence in a book written or illustrated by someone who lives in Montana, is set in Montana, or deals with Montana themes or issues. Presentations and a reception for the winning authors will take place on April 17, during the Montana Library Association Conference in Butte, MT.

In *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea*, Author Debra Magpie Earling challenges prevailing historical narratives of Sacajewea. She brings to life a mythologized figure, while casting an unsparring light on the men who brutalized her and re-centering Sacajewea as the arbiter of her own history. Written in lyrical, dreamlike prose, *The Lost Journals of Sacajewea* is an astonishing work of art and a powerful tale of perseverance—the Indigenous woman’s story that hasn’t been told.

Four honor books were also chosen by the 2023 Montana Book Award Committee:

Holding Fire by Bryce Andrews, published by Mariner Books. In precise, elegiac prose, Andrews chronicles his journey to forge a new path for himself, and to reshape one handgun into a tool for good work. As waves of gun violence swept the country and wildfires burned across his beloved valley, he began asking questions—of ranchers, his Native neighbors, his family, and a blacksmith who taught him to shape steel—in search of a new way to live with the land and with one another. In laying down his arms, he transformed an inherited weapon, his ranch, and the arc of his life.

Lookout by Christine Byl, published by Deep Vellum. Set in rural Montana, *Lookout* centers on the dual coming-of-age of a girl and her father amid the natural and cultural forces that shape their family. It tells the story of the Kinzlers, a complex working-class family firmly rooted in northwestern Montana. It offers a gripping dual coming-of-age of two siblings, bound by their love of the land. *Lookout* brings to life a family coming out to itself, at home in a new and nuanced American West.

Man, Underground by Mark Hummel, published by Regal House Publishing. As neighborhoods have grown up around the subterranean home of the narrator of *Man, Underground*, the city has initiated a review of his dwelling. Intent on ignoring the review process, his life is interrupted by a seventeen-year-old girl who declares that she will be his accomplice in a battle against the city, fighting the righteous fight against “the Man” and the ostracization commonly weaponized against those seen as “the other.”

A fast-paced dark comedy, *Man, Underground* contemplates life disruptions and the potential transformative power found in random acts of kindness.

Mumblecusser by Allen Morris Jones, published by Bangtail Press. This is the author's first full-length collection of poetry, contemplating late-life fatherhood, aging and mortality. It reveals his view of life and the recognition and power of connection. From his family to the stars, from the cacophony of humanity to the quietude of water, Jones looks keenly around himself to render smart, humorous and heartfelt poems that celebrate life in this place at this time.

The Montana Book Award was founded by the Friends of the Missoula Public Library in 2001 and winners are selected by a committee of individuals representing areas throughout Montana. Members of the 2023 Montana Book Award committee include Starla Rice, Hot Springs; Chris Brenna, Livingston; Kayla Whitaker, Missoula; Alice Ebi, Great Falls; Olivia Headdress, Poplar; Samantha Azure, Poplar; Beth Antonopulos, Bozeman; Sarah Widger, Bozeman; and Melody Karle, Cut Bank.

2023 marks the 21st anniversary of the Montana Book Award recognizing and honoring achievements in Montana literature.