



THE MONTANA HISTORY
FOUNDATION

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Bainville Teacher Chosen as 2021 Montana History Teacher of the Year

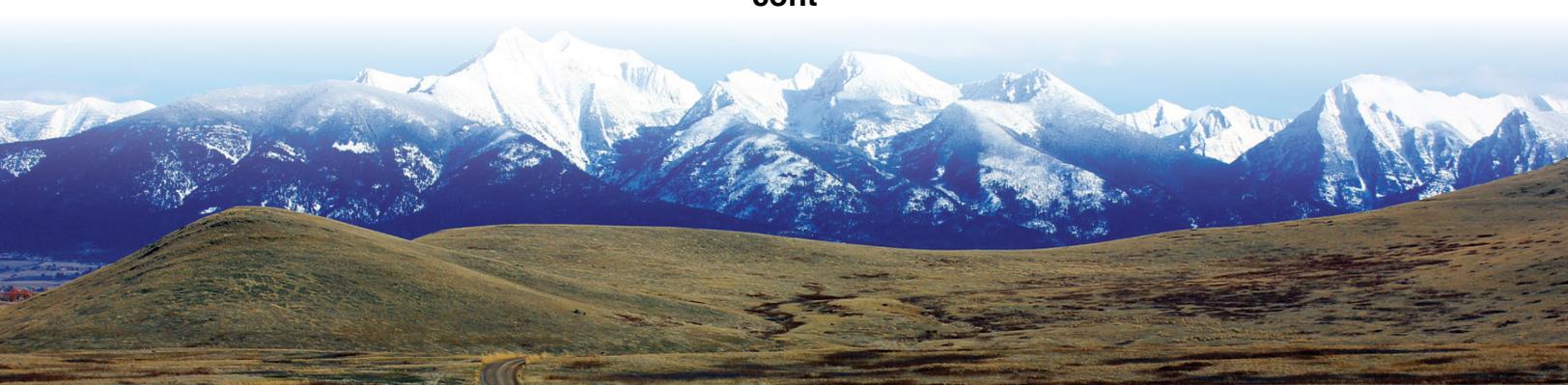
April Wills, a 5th grade teacher at Bainville Public School, has been chosen winner of the 32nd Montana Statehood Centennial Bell Award as Montana History Teacher of the Year. She was selected for the honor by a panel of Montana history advocates.

Wills is a native of Columbus and a graduate of Broadwater High School in Townsend. She received her degree in elementary education from the University of Montana in Missoula and a Learning and Technology Master's Degree from Western Governors University. Wills has taught Montana history at Bainville School since 2014.

"I mesh traditional teaching practices with technology," says Wills of her approach to teaching. "One year, students entered a quiet, dark room flickering with stars. They listened to the sounds of drumming and gazed on planetary views. We learned about ways the Crow tribe used astronomy and listened to oral star stories. Students were fascinated."

Wills says she utilizes trunks from the Montana Historical Society and Montana State Parks whenever possible. She has shown her fellow educators the value of those resources, as well.

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“Without April’s expert lead, I would have never known to utilize the many wonderful traveling trunks that the Montana Historical Society has available to schools,” says fellow educator Samantha Keefner in her nominating letter. “Her passion and excitement for Montana history is present in everything she does.”

Wills and her students will be guests of honor at a ceremony on Montana Statehood Day at the Capitol on Monday, Nov. 8, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. She will receive a plaque and \$4,500 from the award sponsors: the Montana Television Network, The Montana History Foundation, Sons & Daughters of Montana Pioneers, and 1889 Coffee House in Helena, in cooperation with the Montana Historical Society. Wills may use her prize money for the purchase of Montana history materials, field trips, guest speakers, and anything else that will enhance her teaching.

For more information, contact Norma Ashby Smith, Bell Award Coordinator at (406) 453-7078.

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