

Introduction at Rudy's book launch, Nov 10, 2010, by Myrna Kostash

I first met Rudy Wiebe in 1973, in Toronto, when he was touring with his new book, *The Temptations of Big Bear*. I confess that, even though this was his fourth novel, I had never heard of him—I was still living in Toronto—but I was happy to accept the assignment from the editor of *Saturday Night* magazine, Robert Fulford, to interview Mr. Wiebe and review the book.

[Read from the review here.]

But *Temptations* was to have a powerful effect on me again, later, as I imagine it has had with many many others like me, children, grandchildren or great-grandchildren of European settlers in the Canadian west, who have been challenged, by the force of Rudy's moral, esthetic and spiritual imagination, to examine ourselves, in the light of the Aboriginal precedence on this land.

As we now know, from the unstoppable flow of novels, short stories, literary nonfiction, playscripts and screenplays over a period of 48 years, Rudy's work has always been entangled with that generative trinity of land, people and the Great Universal Spirit. And we've read him as he has ploughed and hammered and sweated and prayed his way through Mennonite history (*The Blue Mountains of China*), Metis history and identity (*The Scorched-Wood People*), Canadian northernness (*Playing Dead: A Contemplation Concerning the Arctic*), family narratives (*Of This Earth: A Mennonite Boyhood in the Boreal Forest*), literature for children (*Chinook Christmas*), and drama about the people and land of southern Alberta (*Far As the Eye Can See*).

But his Albertan readers haven't been the only ones to notice and appreciate this body of literature: Rudy has been honoured with the Governor-General's Literary Award (twice), the Writers Trust Canada Book Award, the Lorne Pierce Gold Medal Award from the Royal Society of Canada and the Order of Canada.

Rudy was a creative writing teacher at the University of Alberta from 1967 to 1992—part of the generation following on his teacher, F.M. Salter—and in this role as well as in service with the Writers Guild of Alberta, The Writers Union of Canada, writer-in-residencies and visiting professorships, he has been a generous—and more amiable the older he gets—mentor and critic.

But we are here tonight to welcome another book by Rudy Wiebe into the world, *Rudy Wiebe: Collected Stories*, including four new ones. I haven't always thought of Rudy as a writer of short fiction, but what did I know: he's been writing and publishing them since 1955.

On their website, Rudy's publishers, the University of Alberta Press, quote a reviewer, Michael Bryson, *Quill & Quire*, September 2010: "Wiebe is one of Canada's powerful myth makers and storytellers of the past half-century." And to think he's been among us all along.