



**Four Souls: Stories from America's Borders
A Public Humanities Symposium
Honoring Louise Erdrich
August 23-24, 2012
Bluestem Center for the Arts
Fargo-Moorhead**

“When we are young, the words are scattered all around us. As they are assembled by experience, so also are we, sentence by sentence, until the story takes shape.”

— Louise Erdrich, *The Plague of Doves*

Storytelling is an ancient art form that endures to this day. Stories tell us who we are and remind us what is most important. They connect us to our past and to each other. Stories have the power to transform lives. This public humanities symposium, brings together four of the nation's most celebrated writers & poets to share their stories. Representing the four borders of the nation, each writer brings their rich cultural perspective to bear on the American experience. The event honors North Dakota writer Louise Erdrich and her work on behalf of Native language preservation.

Join us and see the world through new eyes...because sometimes you have to go outside yourself in order to find yourself.

Thursday—Bluestem Center for the Arts

Announcement of a special Native American Language Preservation grant initiative by the ND Humanities Council.

7:30 p.m. An Evening with Louise Erdrich

Moderated by Jamieson Ridenhour

New York Times best-selling author, Louise Erdrich grew up in North Dakota, where her parents taught at a school run by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. As the daughter of a Chippewa Indian mother and a German-American father, Erdrich explores Native-American themes in her works, with major characters representing both sides of her heritage. She has said, “One of the characteristics of being a mixed blood is searching. You look back and say, ‘Who am I from?’ You must question. You must make certain choices. You’re able to. And it’s a blessing and it’s a curse. All of our searches involve trying to discover where we are from.” Erdrich will share her journey during this conversation with fellow North Dakota author Jamieson Ridenhour.

45 minute interview with Q & A, questions submitted via notecard
Book Signing with Louise Erdrich

Friday—Bluestem Center for the Arts

10:30 am Writing Workshops for adults and children (separate tracks) Forty-five minute sessions—two each for adults and children.

Adult Writing Workshop – Scheels Room (Ages 18 and up, limit 45)

Youth Writing Workshop – Starion Room (Ages 12 – 17, limit 45)

Children's Workshop – Pavilion (Ages 12 and under)

11:30 am Lunch

12:30 p.m. The Stories That Tell Us Who We Are

Award-winning Palestinian-American poet Naomi Shihab Nye was born in St. Louis in 1952. Just four years earlier, her father and his family lost their home in Jerusalem following the establishment of the state of Israel. As a result of her father's experiences, she learned the importance of place and of being connected - a theme that has been central to her writing ever since. As Nye explains, "When you grow up in a house with someone who lives with a very strong sense of exile, when they are disconnected from the place they love most, that casts a certain light on how you see everything - your sense of gravity, history and justice." In 1966, Nye's family moved to Jerusalem but left following the outbreak of the 1967 war. They relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where she resides today. "As poets we're attracted to little things and little stories," Nye explains. "I think as a Palestinian American that's part of my job - to tell the stories that the news does not take the time to tell. We have to tell what we know." Listen to Shihab Nye share her story about the amazing resilience of the human spirit.

45 minute talk/reading with Q & A, questions submitted via notecard

Book signing with Naomi Shihab Nye

2:15 p.m. Universal Border: From Tijuana to the World

Born in Tijuana, Mexico to a Mexican father and an American mother, Luis Alberto Urrea grew up in San Diego, California. As a young man Luis served as a relief worker amongst people living in the Tijuana garbage dumps prior to receiving a teaching Fellowship to Harvard University. "The border" has defined his life and colored much of his writing. Regarding this point he once said "the border is simply a metaphor that makes it easier for me to write about the things that separate people all over the world, even when they think there is no fence." Join us as Urrea shares his story of transformation from his beginnings on a dirt street in Tijuana to Pulitzer Prize finalist and beloved storyteller.

45 minute talk/reading with Q & A, questions submitted via notecard

Book signing with Luis Urrea

4:00 p.m. Trading Fours

Robert Pinsky (United States Poet Laureate 1997-2000) grew up in a lower-middle class Jewish family in Long Branch, N.J. His writing amalgamates the language and images of his culturally diverse home town with a rich sampling of other bits of Americana as he explores subjects from the lofty to the commonplace. According to Pinsky a poet needs to “find a language for presenting the role of a conscious soul in an unconscious world.” Music, it is said, speaks directly to the soul. This special program showcases these two great mediums: poetry and jazz. Pinsky will perform improvisatory poetry with a local jazz combo, “trading fours” with the musicians to create a spontaneous work of art that tells its own story.

45 - 60 minute performance

Book signing with Robert Pinsky

6:00 p.m. VIP Dinner at Bluestem Center for the Arts

7:30 p.m. Four Souls: Stories from America’s Borders

Moderated by Jamieson Ridenhour

Join us for an evening of stories and conversation between America’s premier writers and poets. Louise Erdrich, Luis Urrea, Robert Pinsky, and Naomi Shihab will read from and discuss their work.

One hour interview/conversation with 15 minute Q & A, questions submitted via notecards

Possible Questions/Topics will be submitted to participants one month prior to program.

Book signing with authors

Official Bookseller – Zambroz