

Alistair MacLeod



*Photo by Carol Tulpar: historic cannon*

*balls near the Plains of Abraham, Quebec City*

Alistair MacLeod was born in 1936 in Saskatchewan, grew up on Cape Breton Island, and was educated in New Brunswick and Indiana. He also taught for a time in Indiana University before moving to the [University of Windsor](#) in Ontario. He is now a Professor Emeritus of that school.

Prose that sings is the hallmark of MacLeod's work. One lyrical passage from his short story "The Boat" sounds in my head still. Years after, the words take me to the quaking edge of life's mystery.

The novel [No Great Mischief](#) came out in 2001, an appropriate date, as this novel touched upon many aspects of twentieth century history: French-English tensions, the US involvement in the Vietnam War and the draft dodgers that came to Canada, and ethnic isolationism among small cultural groups such as the community of Cape Breton miners he so poignantly portrays. The novel won the [Impac Dublin](#) Award in 2001. The story was later produced as a [play](#).

The phrase itself comes from a letter written by [General Wolfe](#), and refers to the Scottish fighters he intends to send first up the cliffs to the [Plains of Abraham](#), saying that since he does not trust them anyway, "no great mischief if they fall."

Though MacLeod has not been a prolific writer, his work is polished, translucent and true, a precious gem of Canada's literary treasure.