

Robert Kroetsch



CELEBRATED Canadian author Robert Kroetsch died Tuesday in a motor vehicle collision while returning home from an arts festival in Canmore, Alta.

The award-winning writer and former University of Manitoba professor was killed when the vehicle he was a passenger in collided with another vehicle north of Drumheller, said Linda Cameron, director of the University of Alberta Press, which published Kroetsch's work.

Five others were injured in the crash, one critically.

Born in Heisler, Alta., in 1927, Kroetsch produced a body of work that included 14 books of poetry, nine books of fiction, and seven books of non-fiction.

He was awarded the Governor General's Award for Fiction for his novel *The Studhorse Man* in 1969, and was made an officer of the Order of Canada in 2004. Earlier this year the 83-year-old received the Lieutenant Governor of Alberta Distinguished Artist Award, and less than two weeks ago he was presented with a Golden Pen Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Writers Guild of Alberta.

"He was loved by everyone here," said Cameron, speaking on behalf of the University of Alberta Press. "He was more than an author. We just loved working with him."

Kroetsch taught at the University of Manitoba from the late 1970s until the mid 1990s. He lived in Winnipeg much of the time in the years following his retirement, and moved to Leduc, Alta. in 2009.

Longtime friend and Winnipeg author Dennis Cooley described Kroetsch as "probably the most esteemed postmodern writer in Canada." Cooley, who last spoke to Kroetsch a few weeks ago, said he had been writing actively up to the time of his death.

Kroetsch was an energetic public figure but private about his writing, an author whose work earned him scholarly acclaim, though not widespread popular attention, said Cooley.

"Part of the reason, I suspect, is that he never cultivated favour," Cooley said. "He never was a person who sought exposure or publicity."