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MEDIA RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Sandra Birdsell: UWinnipeg's Second Carol Shields Writer-in-Residence

WINNIPEG—Acclaimed Canadian author Sandra Birdsell began her four-month term in January as UWinnipeg's second Carol Shields Writer-in-Residence, with support from the Canada Council for the Arts. Birdsell is an award-winning writer, whose books include *Agassiz*, *The Missing Child*, *The Chrome Suite*, *The Rusländer* and *Children of the Day*, in addition to work for theater, television, radio and film.

“We are delighted to have Sandra Birdsell share the depth of her writing expertise with our students and community members,” said UWinnipeg President Lloyd Axworthy. “Sandra’s insight into the prairie landscape and psyche provides us with greater understanding of ourselves and what it means to be a Canadian on the Prairies.”

As Carol Shields Writer-in-Residence, Birdsell will mentor emerging student and community writers. In addition to devoting time to her own creative works, Birdsell will read and respond to manuscripts, hold regular office hours for students and the public, organize reading series, seminars or lectures on writing and deliver public readings of her work.

Sandra Birdsell, Carol Shields Writer-in-Residence Public Reading

Date: Wednesday, February 7, 2007

Time: 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Location: Room 3C01 (3rd Floor, Centennial Hall, Room 01)

All are welcome to attend this free event.

Refreshments will be served.

“Having an excellent creative writer on campus to interact, stimulate and inspire faculty and students enriches our community,” said Murray Evans, Chair of the English Department. “I think this program is important because it gives the University and larger community an amazing opportunity to meet with Sandra Birdsell.”

University of Winnipeg is where Birdsell began her journey as a writer many years ago. “The very first

story that I ever wrote in my life I wrote here, at The University of Winnipeg for a creative writing class. It was also the very first story that I ever got published,” said Birdsell as she warmly remembers her early days of writing.

Birdsell was born and raised on the Prairies whose landscape and people continue to be the inspiration for her writing. Her first novel, *The Missing Child*, received the W.H. Smith/Books in Canada First Novel Award in 1989. Her second novel, *The Chrome Suite*, was awarded the McNally Robinson prize for best book of the year, and was nominated for a Governor General's Award in 1992. A third short story collection, *The Two-Headed Calf*, was also a Governor General Award nominee in 1997. Birdsell was awarded the Marion Engel Award in 1993, Canada's most prestigious prize given to a woman in mid-career, and the Joseph B. Stauffer Prize in 1992, for meritorious achievement, by the Canada Council for the Arts. *The Russländer*, published in September 2001, was a best seller and finalist for the prestigious Giller Prize. *The Russländer* was also awarded Book of the Year, Best Fiction, and the City of Regina awards at the Saskatchewan Book Awards in 2001. Birdsell's latest novel is *Children of the Day*.

The Writer-in-Residence service is free, open to the public, and runs from January to April 2007. Email s.birdsell@uwinnipeg.ca or call 204.786.9203.

Author of over 20 books, including Pulitzer Prize-winning The Stone Diaries and best-selling Larry's Party, Carol Shields was the much-loved Chancellor of The University of Winnipeg from 1996 – 2000 and a writer-in-residence at the University in 1988. In October 2005 at a ceremony honouring the late Carol Shields, The University of Winnipeg unveiled Larry's Bench, a place of respite and reflection in the heart of the campus. At that time, President Lloyd Axworthy also announced the donation of \$100,000 from the Shields family towards the establishment of The University of Winnipeg Carol Shields Writer-in-Residence Program.

Located in the heart of downtown, The University of Winnipeg is a compact, diverse, multicultural academic community committed to access and excellence. Home to more than 9,200 full- and part-time students, UWinnipeg has been ranked by our graduates in the Top Ten of all Canadian universities when asked about their "Entire Educational Experience" (Maclean's Graduate Survey, June 2006). The Globe & Mail 2006 Report Card gives The University of Winnipeg an overall 'A' grade in the areas of quality of education, teaching quality, class sizes, faculty-student interaction, and the availability of faculty outside classroom hours. Find out why. Visit www.uwinnipeg.ca

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