

"To fall in hell
or soar angelic,
you'll need a pinch of psychedelic."

"The Psychedelic Pioneers" is a documentary about a remarkable yet little known history in which Saskatchewan played a vital role.

During this time of remarkable freedom, Saskatchewan was home to some of the most innovative and socially conscious projects of our era. Saskatchewan was the birthplace of publicly funded health care, the first North American Arts Board and Psychedelic Therapy.

Beginning in 1952, cutting edge psychiatric research used LSD to unlock the mysteries of human consciousness. LSD promised an entirely new approach to understanding the mind, an inward passage to our truer and richer selves. But a decade later, in the 1960s, LSD was used to fuel a cultural revolution, resulting in one of the most controversial periods in Canadian history.

"The Psychedelic Pioneers" tells the story of three doctors who were at the center of the controversial work with LSD : Abram Hoffer, Humphrey Osmond and Duncan Blewett.

producing "The Psychedelic Pioneers"

Helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Gordon McLennan, (central in the below photograph) Notable credits include "In The Flesh" (Doc - NFB), "Arthur Erickson" (CBC *Life & Times*) and "My Life Without Me" (Feature film starring Sarah Polley & Mark Ruffalo).

The production drew upon his many years of storytelling experience to sculpt the compelling story of "The Psychedelic Pioneers". Gordon's extensive life experience and filmmaking talent would ensure the material was treated with the sophistication and artistry it deserved.



Much of the reportings on LSD and its surrounding history had a global reach that sent researchers to archival sources in Canada, USA and Europe in search of the materials needed. As the archival materials were gathered, the edit became increasingly key to the film. Editor Julian Clarke, "Arthur Erickson" (CBC *Life & Times*) & "Emile" (Feature film starring Sir Ian McKellen) brought energy, skill and a fresh new perspective to the project working closely with McLennan to manage the vast amounts of material, incorporate CGI elements and ultimately construct the final film.

Shirley Douglas is the voice of "The Psychedelic Pioneers". She has worked extensively in theatre, film, television and radio since her early 20s. She is the daughter of Tommy Douglas, the former

premier of Saskatchewan, co-founder of the New Democratic Party and considered to be the father of Medicare. The Douglas administration paved the way for psychedelic research and put Shirley into direct contact with the doctors as a child.

"It was a real pleasure to work with one of Canada's premiere talents and I felt that her personal connection to the story brought drama and sincerity to the narration that couldn't have come from anyone else." Anand Ramayya - Producer ("Cosmic Current" - 2004 Gemini Award Winner, "Christmas at Wapos Bay" - Official Selection Sundance Film Festival).

A native of Saskatchewan, Ramayya had heard of Saskatchewan's connection to LSD since he was a child. A serendipitous meeting with filmmaker Gordon McLennan and a shared interest in the subject matter led to a partnership that would result in "The Psychedelic Pioneers".



Producer Anand Ramayya & Narrator Shirley Douglas

"The definitive story of LSD in Saskatchewan had not yet been told and this important piece of our history was in danger of being lost. Fortunately we were able to find the support needed to make this film before it was too late." Anand Ramayya - Producer

A story of utopian idealism, leading edge medical research and controversial times, "The Psychedelic Pioneers" challenges popular history by offering a new perspective on the Psychedelic Era.

THE PSYCHEDELIC PIONEERS

One hour Documentary



part
leading edge
medical research
part
utopian idealism.
Three gifted
psychiatrists,
in combination with an
extraordinarily
powerful
hallucinogen,
resulted in one of the most
fascinating
and controversial
periods in Canadian history.

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Narrated by Shirley Douglas Editor Julian Clarke Director of Photography George Hupka

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Executive Producers Bob Crowe, Kevin DeWalt

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Produced with the participation of :



created by the Government of Canada

and the Canadian cable industry

CTF : Licence Fee Program

hoffer



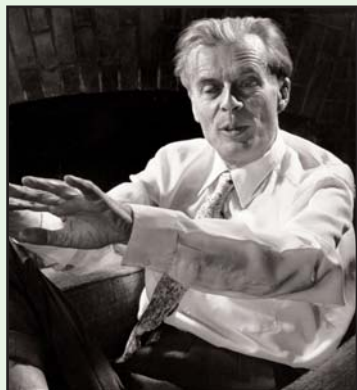
blewett



osmond



huxley



the regina five



captain trips hubbard



timothy leary



burroughs & clan

LSD, acid, psychedelics and the sixties

In a remote corner of the Canadian prairies called Saskatchewan, there is an urban legend which speaks quietly about the taboo subject of LSD. Known to so many as only a street drug, it is a subject we all know of, but know very little about.

The remarkable history of LSD has influenced almost every sphere of popular culture including the music we listen to and the films we watch. Beyond its place in popular culture LSD has also challenged the world of psychology and psychiatry.

"The Psychedelic Pioneers" is a one hour documentary which brings this unique, untold side of history to light. The film takes us to the true origins of LSD and goes beyond the sensation of the psychedelic era to reveal some of the most fascinating people, times and events in modern history.

Helmed by acclaimed filmmaker Gordon McLennan, "The Psychedelic Pioneers" tells a story that will challenge, provoke and entertain audiences worldwide.

the saskatchewan group - the psychedelic pioneers

In the 1960s LSD was used to fuel a cultural revolution, resulting in one of the most controversial periods in Canadian history. At the center of the storm were three doctors.

abram hoffer

Abram Hoffer, a native of Saskatchewan, gained an international reputation as Canada's preeminent LSD researcher. "After taking LSD, I knew, quotation marks, what it was like to have been mentally ill."

humphrey osmond

Humphrey Osmond, a free-thinking psychiatrist, became a cult figure in the world of psychedelics. "For myself, these experiences have been the most strange, most awesome and in their own way, amongst the most beautiful of my life."

duncan blewett

Duncan Blewett, a charismatic psychologist, was an early advocate for the personal use of LSD. "The government makes 11 million a year in Saskatchewan off liquor, they could double that off LSD without any trouble at all."

Innovative work with LSD put Hoffer, Osmond and Blewett at the forefront of a radical new science. But fear and hostility to psychedelic drugs made them victims of social and political forces beyond their control.

psychedelic times

Over a span of fifteen years, from when the drug was first administered in 1952 until it was banned and made illegal in 1967, the use of LSD ranged from leading edge psychiatric research into schizophrenia and alcoholism to volunteer testing on the general public. "The Psychedelic Pioneers" reveals a little known period in the psychedelic era telling the untold story of LSD.

1920

The Saskatchewan Hospital was built; a debilitating disease called schizophrenia was claiming millions of victims world-wide.

1950

In London, England, Humphrey Osmond was studying schizophrenia. With a creativity that would define his career, Osmond used a radical new approach. He began experimenting with mescaline, one of a group of hallucinogenic drugs similar to LSD.

1951

Osmond arrived at the Saskatchewan Hospital in Weyburn and became Superintendent. Osmond was convinced his mescaline-induced experience was similar to the inner world of the schizophrenic.

He shocked the medical community by suggesting that schizophrenia might be a form of self-intoxication caused by the body mistakenly producing its own hallucinogenic compounds. This implied an entirely new line of psychiatric research.

At the University Hospital in Saskatoon, Osmond discovered a research study focused on schizophrenia headed by Abram Hoffer, a researcher with the unusual combination of degrees in biochemistry and psychiatry. Cutting edge psychiatric research used LSD to unlock the mysteries of human consciousness.

1956

Osmond coined the term "Psychedelic" when he travelled from Saskatchewan to California to give author Aldous Huxley his first mescaline experience. To explain the experience, Huxley wrote "To make this mundane world sublime take half a gram of phanerothyme." Osmond responded with "To fall in hell or soar angelic, you'll need a pinch of psychedelic." Huxley's experience was soon after published as his seminal work "The Doors of Perception".

1960s

As word of LSD's amazing properties began to seep out of the laboratory, artists and intellectuals travelled to Saskatchewan to have their first experiences with LSD. LSD was soon to be used to fuel a cultural revolution, resulting in one of the most controversial periods in Canadian history.

1962

Timothy Leary, the self professed high priest of LSD, takes his first psychedelic trip a decade after the start of research in Saskatchewan. Influenced by the work of Hoffer, Osmond, Blewett and Huxley, Leary would 'turn on' an entire generation.

1966

On the newsmagazine program W5, actress Pamela Hyatt was shown undergoing therapy with LSD. On a Sunday night, Hyatt's intense emotional experience was broadcast into millions of homes nation wide, resulting in a huge public outcry.

1967

Opposition Leader John Diefenbaker brought the W5 program to the attention of the House of Commons. To Diefenbaker, the broadcast was 'a flagrant exploitation and encouragement of crime', and called for government action. In March 1967, the LSD related suicide of a young man from Toronto was carried by newspapers across the country. On April 23, 1967, the Canadian government introduced a bill that banned LSD. All research projects by the Saskatchewan group were immediately abandoned.

