

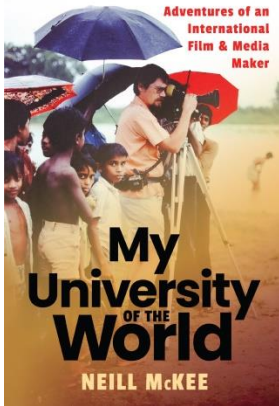
Alumni in Print

Neill McKee

IDRC Alumnus Neill has written his fourth book, a sequel to his *Borneo: Sojourns in Sabah*, the story of his first experience of International Development with CUSO, sharing his adventures as an international film and media maker.

The stories of his 15 years of filmmaking and Communications Division staff with IDRC confirm what many of his colleagues thought: Neill saw more of IDRC in the places where grants metamorphosed into people and action and he appreciated the promise of what research promised and achieved.

My University of the World: Adventures of an International Film & Media Maker, Neill McKee; Albuquerque, NM. See a summary of the book, places to buy, as well as prepublication reviews here:



<https://www.neillmckeeauthor.com/my-university-of-the-world>

Neill's earlier books have won several awards. All are featured on [Alumni In Print](#) page on the IDRC Alumni website.

Reviews from IDRC Alumni

This is a memoir that will appeal to the first generation who lived the opportunities offered by the creation of the international volunteer movement—Peace Corps, CUSO, VSO, UNV. McKee's curriculum vita, which is the essence of autobiography, is also a history in miniature of an era in international development, a firsthand report of the past waning, a future waxing. McKee reaches back to the challenges of the 1960s and 70s efforts to work for a better world (the Utopias we thought possible), and brings the story up to the 2000s. He has lived international development and encountered people, places, and prospects to document and film the wished-for changes. Readers familiar with Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) will appreciate how well McKee narrates the story of its promoting local knowledge-making to foster and empower problem-solving where inadequacies of health, nutrition, and education had previously delayed development. *My University of the World* is a necessary read for anyone considering work in international development. He interweaves just enough technical detail while telling entertaining stories of his adventures while filming ground-breaking projects of IDRC's early years, and discussing their long-term impact.

Christopher Smart,
former CUSO volunteer and erstwhile Director Special Initiatives, IDRC

It is important to note that Neill McKee has written much more than a memoir about filmmaking and media production. He has shared an avalanche of diverse, inspiring, informative stories of actions aimed at helping the world become a better place. These stories highlight the extraordinary activities undertaken by an ordinary Canadian, whose dreams began in a small town in Southwestern Ontario. His significant accomplishments are presented in a relaxed, highly personal manner, enlivened both by the author's sensitive instincts about human behaviour, as well as his mischievous sense of humour. The book is partly a distinctive travelogue featuring solitary filming treks through jungle, mountains, deserts, and oceans, as well as in slums and dangerous traffic. It also offers intriguing historical anecdotes that set a useful context for the larger stories, including the author's meetings with an array of global activist citizens.

McKee's early chapters can serve as insightful introductions to the history of the international volunteer movement and to some of the most illuminating examples of the realities faced by young Canadians working in Asia and Africa under the auspices of CUSO in the 1960s and 1970s. His chapters covering his time with Canada's International Development Research Centre also provide a powerful reminder of why and how this agency, in the 1970s and 1980s, became a global leader in pioneering new approaches to the field of international development.

Surprisingly, the book is also a beautiful love story. I so enjoyed the tales of meeting his partner, Elizabeth, their ability to sustain a love affair at a distance, and their incredibly special and unusual marriage in Zambia. Throughout the book, the challenging stories of poverty and conflict are balanced by examples of Elizabeth's poetry and her artwork.

For me, the most exciting output and outcomes from McKee's design skills are represented by the animated life stories of Meena and Sara and their impact on young people across Asia and Africa. The stories behind their creation make extremely compelling reading. I highly recommend this book to a wide range of readers who care about supporting leaders who balance a focus on high performance with an altruistic focus on humanity and the sustainability of our planet.

Don Simpson, Ph.D.
former Associate Director for Education and
Chief Explorer of the Renaissance Expedition