

LATER LIFE LEARNING

SERIES A: You Say You Want a Revolution? 1968: The Year the World Shook

Fridays, 10:00 – 11:45 am, September 21 to November 23, 2018

Innis College, Town Hall

Lecturer:

Murray Campbell worked for The Globe and Mail for more than three decades as a reporter, editor and feature writer. He wrote a column from Queen's Park for nine years and also served as bureau chief in Los Angeles and Washington. After leaving the Globe, he worked as the director of communications at an Ontario government agency. He was 18 in 1968, had long hair and wore tie-dye T-shirts. He watched with amazement the extraordinary events of that year and, as the editor of his university newspaper, did his bit to shake things up.

Overview:

The year 1968 was unique in modern history. Around the world, a postwar generation erupted in a spontaneous combustion of rebellion against authority in all forms. With the backdrop of an unpopular war in Vietnam, young people challenged governments and conventional behaviour and used the early days of instant global communication to create a new culture of art, music and fashion. This series will look at the explosion of political and cultural events that took place around the globe and will reflect on their impact in 1968 and 50 years later.

1. September 21: Overview of a tumultuous year. Was 1968 unique?

By placing the main events of the year in the broader context of the 1960s, we'll examine how 1968 emerged as the culmination of forces that had been building during the postwar era.

2. September 28: The United States, part I

The Vietnam war came into focus with the massive Tet Offensive by North Vietnam in late January and set in motion a series of events in the first six months of the year: President Lyndon Johnson bowed out, students intensified their protests and the assassinations of Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy left the U.S. reeling.

3. October 5: The United States, part II

The second half of the year was just as eventful as demonstrators rioted at the Democratic Party convention in Chicago, black power activists rallied around a protest at the Mexico City Olympics and Richard Nixon was elected president on the promise to end the war in Vietnam.

4. October 12: Canada gets hip

Just months after the Expo '67 world's fair in Montreal closed, Canada rode a wave of nationalism and the staid politics of the postwar ended with the election as prime minister of the glamorous Pierre Trudeau who ushered in a new wave of liberalism.

LATER LIFE LEARNING

5. October 19: Europe protests against everything

Protests against authority erupted throughout Europe. Young people were the common link but the “authority” being protested varied. We’ll examine the year’s events in France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia and the United Kingdom.

6. October 26: Suddenly, everything became modern

The 1960s saw progress in technology of all sorts, much of it spilling over from the U.S. quest to land a man on the moon by the end of the decades. New satellites brought the world closer together with instantaneous television transmission while microwave ovens changed how people behaved in their homes. The computer mouse was invented and Intel, the semiconductor company that has transformed the world, was founded.

7. November 2: Two enduring revolutions

Many of the events of 1968 had little permanent impact but two movements changed how the world thinks and acts. We’ll examine feminism from its early roots to the pivotal Miss American pageant in 1968 and also sketch the early days of the environmental movement that got a boost from the iconic picture of Earth from the Apollo 8 spacecraft in late 1968.

8. November 9: Staidness takes a fall: the Counter Culture, part I

Popular culture – music, art, literature, theatre, fashion, food (not to mention middle-aged men growing their hair and donning colourful shirts) – was profoundly affected by the 1960s.

9. November 16: the Counter Culture, part II

In Canada, the popularization of the birth-control pill, the quasi-legalization of abortion and the decriminalization of homosexuality had a profound impact on the way Canadians live.

10. November 23: Did any of it matter?

The carnival of events in 1968 seemed to leave the world tired and angry and the promise of revolution faded quickly. The Vietnam war persisted for another eight years and most governments survived with little change to their habits forced on them. The generation that grew up on protest took up self-interest as a cause and became the “Me” generation that dedicated itself to making money. We’ll examine the legacy of a turbulent year.