



A small prairie town has few secrets but in Balgonie, Saskatchewan, Bill Gibson had one. Each night, when most folks were home asleep, Bill was busy in his workshop. You see Bill had a dream. He was building a flying machine.



Direction, Design and Animation  
BRIAN DUCHSCHERER

Producers  
BILL PETTIGREW • BARBARA STEWART

Executive Producers

CHES YETMAN • DOUGLAS MACDONALD • BARRIE ANGUS MCLEAN



8:33 Dolby Stereo Close Captioned ©1991 C9191066

# The Balgonie Birdman



VHS  
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# The Balgonie Birdman



## THE BALGONIE BIRDMAN

Inspired by the success of the Wright Brothers' first flight in 1903 William Wallace Gibson, of Balgonie, Saskatchewan, began plans for original aircraft designs in 1904. Despite proof that flight was indeed possible, he worked secretly for fear of ridicule. After six years of labour Gibson finally made the first free flight with a Canadian-built airplane in September 1910. His 200 foot flight was 30 feet further than the historic Wright Brothers' flight of 1903. One year later he succeeded in flying his airplane in excess of a mile.

Having spent all his money and being unable to procure outside financial assistance Gibson abandoned his dream to perfect the airplane.

Today his engine is on display at the National Aeronautical Museum in Ottawa.

### FOR DISCUSSION

Western Society often attributes major discoveries or inventions to one individual. Other contributors are at times forgotten. This is unfortunate because most major breakthroughs involve a collective effort. For example:

*Marconi, who developed wireless telegraphy and was instrumental in the development of radio, was not the sole researcher in this area. It was Canadian electrical engineer R.A. Fessenden that transmitted the first human voice by radio in 1906.*

*Alexander Fleming discovered penicillin in 1928 but it was not until many years later that it was finally developed. Numerous researchers experimented with penicillin before it became a common product in the mid-1940s.*

*Many worked to develop the photograph. Joseph Nicéphore produced the world's first photograph in 1826 and in 1839 L.J.M. Daguerre improved the process. By 1907 the Lumière Brothers had brought colour photography to the amateur photographer.*

### Suggested Activity

1. Why does western society place so much importance on "winners"? Do you have to be first to be recognized?
2. Have you ever felt that someone else received all the credit for something you helped with? As an inventor, how would you prevent this from occurring?
3. Research examples of discoveries or breakthroughs where more than one person was involved.
4. Create your own tale of the struggles of building a new invention or making a new breakthrough.

## BRIAN DUCHSCHERER



Animator, Brian Duchscherer was attracted to the story of William Gibson because of his unusual character. "I hope the Balgonie Birdman says something about the need for individual spirits in society. Gibson is a loner, an eccentric, and an idealist driven by his dream." Although it is based on a true story Brian explains, "This is not an historical document, it is a tall tale. All legends start with some facts that are then embellished upon."

The Balgonie Birdman is Brian's first film with the National Film Board. His preferred medium is puppet animation. "I encounter all the physical and optical problems that are associated with making live action films. Yet animated stories exist in a world of fantasy. To me, this tension between reality and fantasy creates the magic of puppet animation."

Direction, Design, Animation BRIAN DUCHSCHERER • Narration Written by ROBERT LOWER • Narrated by RANDY C. WOODS • Music Composed by NORMAND ROGER, DENIS CHARTRAND • Film Editor and Post Production Supervisor KEN RODECK • Sound Editor RUSS DYCK • Foley Artist ANDY MALCOLM • Recording Engineer CLIVE PERRY • Costumes Created by P.M. DESIGNS • Assistant Set Designer JENNIFER SMALL • Creative Consultant BELINDA NEW • 2-D Motion Control Services PERKINS AND ASSOCIATES • Technical Coordinator SCOTT COLLINS • Still Photography ROB BARROWS, PATRICK BERNARD • Re-recording Engineers JEAN-PIERRE JOUTEL, SHELLEY CRAIG • Produced by BILL PETTIGREW, BARBARA STEWART • Studio Administrators CYNDI FORCAND, CAROL SMITH • Executive Producers CHES YETMAN, DOUGLAS MACDONALD, BARRIE ANGUS MCLEAN

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8 minutes 53 seconds

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