



PIONEERS OF LOVE

A STUDY GUIDE BY KATE RAYNOR



SCREEN EDUCATION

1

Introduction

In the early years of the twentieth century, the Illin family fled St Petersburg, Russia, to Australia (they went to South America earlier) to escape persecution by the Czar. They settled in far north Queensland, hoping to find a 'working man's paradise'. Calling their new home 'Little Siberia', they embarked on the arduous, back-breaking task of clearing the rainforest to make way for dairy farms.

Soon the Illins encountered the Ngadjon people, traditional owners of the Atherton Tablelands the Russian immigrants now occupied. Leandro Illin, 28, (pictured top right) son of patriarch Nicholas, became involved with Kitty Clark (pictured bottom right), an Aboriginal woman from the area. They had a child together and Leandro applied to the Protector of Aborigines, J.W. Bleakley, for permission to marry. Permission was denied and the police were dispatched to remove Kitty and her children to a local mission. But Leandro was a man of fierce determination and resolve, and he made every effort possible to protect Kitty and their child, and to formally secure their union.

Pioneers of Love (Julie Nimmo, 2005) is an epic saga, with the twists and turns of Illin family history becoming in some sense symbolic of the vast social upheavals of the twentieth century. Through a powerful personal story, we are given insight into the complex social and historical realities of life for immigrants and Indigenous people back in the early days of white settlement. It is a terribly moving tale, charting the life and times of Leandro and his family, forced to live on the fringes of the frontier by a harsh and intolerant regime. The film makes evocative use of dramatic re-enactments, and also incorporates poignant interview material with the many descendants of this passionate Russian and his Aboriginal lover. Exploring the bond between Leandro and Kitty and the hardships and privations they endured brings the history of our country into sharp focus.

ACTIVITIES AND DISCUSSION POINTS

Spirit of Place: Location

- The story begins in Butcher's Creek, near Atherton. The film was shot in and around Cairns, Milanda, Ingham and Townsville. Locate these places on a map of Queensland. Research and compile a report on the region known as the Atherton Tablelands. Describe its geography and history. Trek the movements of the Illin family across Northern Queensland.
- Why might the Russian settlers have called the district 'Little Siberia'?
- Can you find out what Malanda means?
- Describe the impact white settlers had on the rain forest. What were the conditions attached to taking a selection? How many hectares of land were the settlers expected to clear each year?
- In 1918 a cyclone in the area killed forty-seven people and destroyed Leandro and Kitty's home. This event, coupled with financial problems, endless rain, and tensions in the Russian migrant community, prompted Leandro's decision to move to Gunnawarra, near Mount Garnet. There they worked and lived on an isolated outstation at Christmas Creek. Describe the key differences between the two landscapes.
- In 1998, the traditional land of the Ngadjon people was handed back to the elders. Imagine you are a member of the Ngadjon. Write a poem to celebrate this momentous occasion and your sense of connection to the land.

Front cover: Leandro, with Flora next to him and the other children, Dick, Tom, Harry and Lullie with a few white neighbours and a child; 1. The picture of Kitty with the dog was taken in 1926. Shortly after, she died giving birth to her seventh child. Leandro (top) was to carry on raising the family alone.



'There must have been a lot of love there, that's all I can say.'

Great-grandson of Kitty Clark and Leandro Illin

Curriculum Links

Pioneers of Love will be of interest to senior secondary students of Australian History, Indigenous Studies and SOSE. It is a lively and engaging film with much to recommend it to young viewers.



Leandro Illin: Man of Ideals

'He wasn't frightened of anybody, my father. He didn't care who they were.'

Flora, daughter of Leandro and Kitty

- Using the Internet and resources available in your library, write a brief history of Russian immigrants to this country.
- The Illin family fled Russia to escape persecution by the Czar, arriving in Northern Queensland in 1910 after a short stay in South America. Why did they leave Argentina? What drew them to Australia? Why did Nicholas Illin, Leandro's father, decide to leave Australia and return to South America? In 1921, Leandro's parents and siblings returned to South America, and he wanted to join them. What stopped him?
- What was Leandro's attitude to Bolshevism? What do you know about the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917? Why was Leandro ostracized by his fellow Russians? What were the Red Flag riots?
- What does it mean to be a dissident?
- What is a taboo?
- What is xenophobia?



- Leandro is described in the first episode of the film as a man who lived by the ideals of justice and equality. What evidence can you gather from the film that supports this summation of his character?
- Write an account from Leandro's perspective of his life and marriage to Kitty.
- Take careful notes during the screening of the film and draw a family tree for the Illins.
- What sort of father do you think Leandro would have been? Flora says simply, 'He thought a lot of us. Right to the end. He tried to help us. He was a good father.' Write something meaningful about your father in four simple sentences.
- Leandro took a stand against attitudes he saw as ignorant and unjust. What injustices do you see in your society today? Make a list of six principles that guide your behaviour and inform your values.
- What lengths did Leandro go to in order to ensure Kitty and their first son were not forcibly removed to a mission?
- Why did Leandro choose to walk sixty kilometers through rough terrain with Kitty heavily pregnant in order to marry at Innisfail?
- In 1927, Leandro took a job at Greenvale Station as a gardener, working for

2-3. Two different families, both at the beginning of the 20th century; 2. Leandro's family from St Petersburg in Russia – young Leandro in the center; 3. Kitty's Ngadjon people, first contact Aboriginals in 1900 from the Malanda Rainforest. Kitty on the bottom right will marry Leandro in 1915; 5. Nicholas Illin and two Russian neighbours at Little Siberia, Far North Queensland.

These stills are made up of archival and production stills from the recreations, and a few stills of the family and crew.

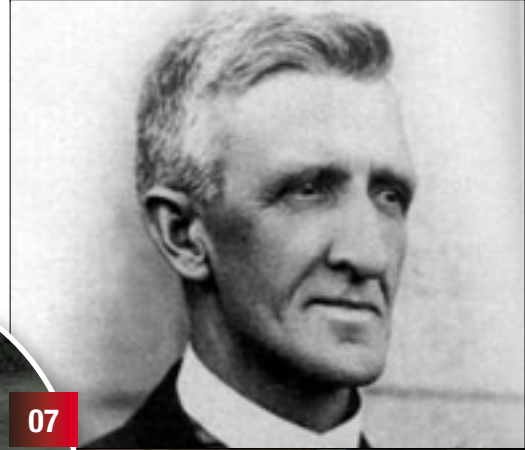
This is a family story that covers the whole of the twentieth century.

Some of these pictures survived a cyclone in 1918 and show it. Other studio shots are much better quality, but each is chosen because it is the best to tell a particular part of the story.



Henry Atkinson, a Queensland cattle baron. This post allowed Leandro to be more available for the children. He was paid two pounds a week. How did this compare to the wages Aborigines could expect for similar work?

- What were Leandro's concerns for Ginger, Kitty's son from her previous marriage?
- During his time on Greenvale Station, Leandro became a prominent advocate for the rights of local Aborigines, often interceding on their behalf. What skills did Leandro bring to bear on this role?
- When Flora was 13 years old, Dick Hoolihan, a 21 year old expert horse-breaker, wanted to marry her. Though Leandro liked Dick, he refused to grant permission for the union until Dick got out of the Act. Why was this so important to Leandro?
- During the Great Depression, Leandro relocated his family to a place called Utopia on the Sugar Coast, at Ingham. While Flora looked after the youngest children, the older boys helped Leandro supply wood to the sugar plantations. Write an account of an average day in the Illin family's life at this point in time.
- According to one of his descendents, Leandro lived his life by the guiding principle: 'Treat others as you would like to be treated yourself'. Can you identify a similar principle that informs the values and behaviour of one of your parents?
- At the age of 64, Leandro became gravely ill. He moved to Townsville, where he spent his last months living with his son Tom. Shortly before he died the two men were singing together. What does this anecdote suggest about Leandro's spirit? Why didn't Leandro want a coffin?
- Flora says at the end of the documentary that she's 'very proud they're making a picture about my father and what he done [sic] for people'. Choose a member of your family whose life deserves chronicling and write an outline for a documentary about this relative.
- Write an obituary for Leandro to be published in a state newspaper. Which of his personal qualities and achievements would you choose to emphasize?



Kitty Clark: Ngadjon Woman

- Kitty Clark belonged to the Ngadjon community. What can you find out about this Indigenous tribe?
- How did Kitty sign her marriage certificate?
- What did the black cockatoo symbolize for Kitty?
- What do you learn about the fates of Kitty's three children from her first marriage, Emma, Molly and Ginger?
- Imagine you are Kitty, and that you keep a journal. Write an entry explaining your feelings about leaving your tribal ground. The narration in the film says that she was never the same after leaving her land, 'she was lost'. Why is the Aboriginal connection to the land so strong? Do you think Leandro could have understood what Kitty suffered on being separated from her people and her place? How far is it from Atherton to Christmas Creek?
- Leandro spent the years after they moved west to Christmas Creek mustering cattle, which entailed lengthy absences from home. Why did Kitty find the solitude particularly difficult? How did she feel about staying in the house while Leandro was away?

6. Leandro meets Kitty and they have a baby; 7. The Chief Protector of Aborigines forbids it and sends police to arrest Kitty and her children; 8. They escape into the bush, Leandro and Kitty win permission to marry and their family grows; 9. Leandro is played by his great grandson Dale Gertz; 10. Leandro at 30+

- Kitty died in childbirth in May 1925 after three agonizing days of labour. The child was a big baby, and stillborn. What can you find out about the history of death in childbirth?
- Leandro was left with six children between the ages of 3 and 14 years old to raise. As Flora, the eldest daughter, observes, 'I wasn't a child much after my mother died.' Expand on Flora's comment, detailing the many ways in which a child's life may change with the passing of a parent.
- Leandro initially chose to tell the children that Kitty had been taken to hospital, even though they could see where the fresh grave had been dug. Why might he have told them this?
- Write an epitaph for Kitty's grave.

Bleakley: The Aboriginal 'Protector'

- Write a profile of J.W. Bleakley. What do you think motivated him? How did he come to be appointed Protector? How long did he serve in this position? Did his views shift at all over his long career? How significant was his Anglican background?
- Imagine you are a descendent of Kitty and Leandro. Write a letter to Bleakley, explaining your perspective on his role in the Illin family history.
- Imagine you are Bleakley. Write a manifesto outlining the principles behind your policies.
- Imagine you are Bleakley. Write a letter to Leandro Illin refusing his request to be granted permission to marry Kitty Clark. Detail at least three reasons for your refusal.
- Bleakley presided over the systematic removal of children from their homes and their segregation on missions. What reasons were typically given for removing children from their families?
- Bleakley's 'Removal Order' for Kitty Clark used the phrase, 'for her own benefit'. Do you think Bleakley could really have believed it would be to her advantage to be placed on a mission? Consider the concept of the 'well-meaning racist'.
- Consider the irony of this official figure who perpetrated so much damage being called the 'Protector'.
- Bleakley implied that Leandro intended to steal Dick Hoolihan's money should it be released from protection, and he also accused Leandro of profiteering from his association with the Aborigines. Do you think Bleakley bore Leandro any personal animosity? If so, why?
- Ultimately, Bleakley's Department was publicly condemned for incompetence and for making a profit from the Aborigines. Bleakley was judged unfit due to failing mental health and given the opportunity to resign. Imagine you are writing for a national newspaper of the day. Write a report on the disgraced Protector and the scandal around the workings of the Department he presided over.
- Explain the various laws that governed the lives of Aborigines during the period covered by this film. What was the Aborigines' Protection Act? What was the Aborigines' Welfare Board?
- Had Bleakley done anything good for the welfare of Aborigines? Had the Aborigines' Protection Act had some positive impact?
- It was widely believed at the time that the Aborigines were a dying race. Was there evidence to support this position?
- What evidence can you find in the film that white Australians generally perceived Aborigines to be an inferior race?



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11-15. After 1918, cyclone and political persecution in Australia; 11. Nicholas' dream is shattered, he decides to go to South America; 12. Leandro is not allowed to take Kitty's Aboriginal children, he decides to move further West in Queensland

- What is the theory of eugenics? How has it been manifest in other times and places?
- The narration quotes a Child Removal Officer from West Australia: 'The removal of a child is felt no more deeply than the bitch a loss of a pup'. Examine and discuss the many prejudices evident in this statement. Do you think people today might still support such a position?
- For other films on the stolen generations and related Indigenous issues, see *Lousy Little Sixpence* (Alec Morgan & Gerry Bostock, 1982), *Stolen Generations* (Darlene Johnson, 2000), *Land of the Little Kings* (Des Kootji Raymond, 2000) and *Yolngu Boy* (Stephen Johnson, 2001). ATOM study guides are available for all of these texts.



Australia Then – Black and White: A Hostile World

- Define the following colloquial terms: black velvet; gin; gin jockey; burnt cork.
- Why was it illegal for a white person to have sex with or marry an Aboriginal person in 1914? What principle did intermarriage supposedly violate? What is miscegenation? When were these laws revised?
- Under the 1897 Aborigines' Protection Act, police wanted to send Kitty to a mission because she had a half-caste child. Why did the authorities pursue half-caste children? The film notes that half-castes were viewed with suspicion, as aberrations that 'bedeviled the authorities'. Why?
- What can you discover about the history of the missions in the area? What was life on a mission like?
- Kitty's generation was the first to have white neighbours. The Aborigines from this district only saw white people for the first time twenty years before Leandro's arrival. What changes did the arrival of white settlers bring to the Aborigines' lifestyles and environment? Imagine you are an Aborigine seeing a white person for the first time. Describe your impressions to your tribe, noting in particular points of difference.
- As an Aborigine under the Protection Act, if you signed on for work at a station you were bound by very stringent conditions: the proprietors virtually owned you. Imagine you have to work under these conditions. Write a poem or a short prose piece describing how this situation makes you feel. Do you agree that enforced labour under the Act was akin to slavery? What was done with the Aboriginal workers' pay?
- What grounds did you need to meet for exemption from the Act? How many times did Dick Hoolihan apply for exemption?
- 1919 was a time of strong anti-Russian sentiment in Queensland. Why?
- The Russians came to Australia in search of a 'working man's paradise'. Did the reality live up to their ideals?
- What was the White Australia Policy?
- During the early stages of World War Two, when Russia was aligned with Nazi Germany, Leandro published letters in the state newspaper declaring his loyalty to Australia and his total rejection of communism and fascism. Four of his sons – Dick, Tom, Harry and Ginger – entered the armed service, at a rate of pay one third that of white soldiers. How did the government of the day justify such blatant injustice? Given the discrimination Leandro and his children faced, what do you make of his loyalty to his adopted country?
- Dick and Flora sent their sons to Townsville Grammar, and they were the



16-21. The family group. Flora, now 13, had taken over as mother. They move to Stone River near Ingham, where the two youngest children go to school and Leandro runs a firewood business.

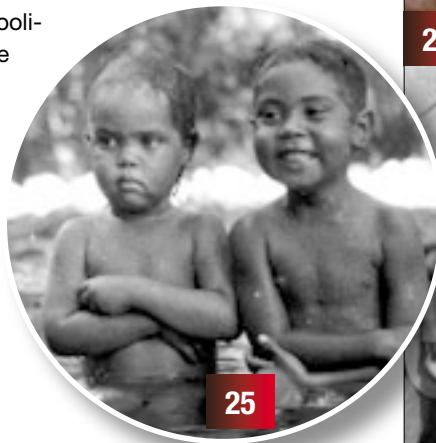
22-23. Flora [circa 1935] marries Dick Hoolihan, but the Protector holds his money; 24. They do get five pounds for the wedding; 25. They have two sons: John and Ernest; 26. Ginger, friend, Dick Hoolihan, Lullie, Flora with baby

first Aboriginal students to attend that school. Imagine you are one of the Hoolihan boys. Write an account of your impressions on entering this white bastion and the reception you received from the white student population.

- Dick and Flora separated after fourteen years of marriage and she began a relationship with Bert Cook. Both Bert and Dick were active members of the Communist Party. Their movements were closely scrutinized by ASIO: this was at the height of the Cold War, at the time of the Menzies referendum to outlaw the Communist Party. Flora declares herself a Communist: 'I think we should be all equal. Maybe they'd shoot me for that!' Flora suggests that the traditional Aboriginal way was communist in the sense that no-one owned anything. She also says that if she'd had an education, she probably would have ended up in jail, she would have 'fought so hard for the downtrodden'. What appeal did the Communist Party hold for disenfranchised Aborigines?
- Kitty's mother, Emily, was sent to Palm Island Mission in her late nineties. How far is Palm Island from the Atherton Tablelands? What were conditions like at the Mission? Emily died soon after being transported, fretting at being removed from her land. A white man from Malanda who used to write letters for the illiterate Aborigines to send to family on the Mission says: 'When you put a wild bird in a cage, he dies of fright.' Imagine you are Emily, elderly and frail. Write an account of your forcible removal from your home.

Aboriginal Affairs

- How would you describe the current state of reconciliation between Black and White Australia?
- In what ways can today's white Australians address and make reparation for some of the crimes committed against Aborigines in the past?
- Why do you think Prime Minister John Howard refuses to say 'sorry' for the crimes of the past?
- Explore the connection between the Illins and Eddie Mabo. (Dick Hoolihan started the Townsville Chapter of the Aboriginal Advancement League with Eddie Mabo in 1962. Leandro was acknowledged by Eddie Mabo when he won the historic High Court case awarding him the first Native Title claim in Australia.)
- William Cooper established The Aborigines' League in 1932. What were the aims of this body? What can you find out about the growth of Aboriginal activism? What did Charles Perkins contribute to the advancement of Aboriginal rights? What was the Wavehill Walkout Strike?
- In the 1967 Referendum on Aboriginal Rights, ninety-eight per cent of the public voted YES. What does this result suggest about community feeling?
- In what year were Aborigines granted the right to vote?
- In what year did the High Court find in favour of Eddie Mabo's land rights claim?
- Write an account of Dick Hoolihan's family background.
- Before he died of Parkinsons Disease, Dick Hoolihan embarked on a project to record his native language. He is described as a 'fighter to the end'. Why was it so important to him to keep the culture alive?
- Essay topic: 'Dick Hoolihan was a hero.' Discuss.
- In what measure do you think the descendants of Kitty and Leandro consider themselves Russian, Aboriginal and/or Australian?



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27. Leandro buys a truck, but life is still tough; 28. Flora and Dick's daughter, Margaret; 30. Richard Illin; 31. Tom Illin; Both boys join the army; 32. Leandro on left with Harry on right. Accused of being a Communist, Leandro can now claim he has raised an Australian Family.

- Today, there are 200 descendants of Leandro and Kitty. Many are leaders in their communities and are tireless fighters for human rights. What legacy did Kitty and Leandro leave their offspring? The narration says it was not a legacy of wealth or property or possessions, but of ideas. Expand on this statement, and discuss: What ideas and ideals did Leandro and Kitty imbue in their children?
- In the year 2000, half a million people marched for reconciliation. What do you think such public demonstration of support for a cause such as reconciliation achieves? In what other ways can white people help the country achieve equity and justice for the Indigenous population?
- In 2002, Queensland Premier Peter Beattie publicly acknowledged the injustices that had been perpetrated against the Aborigines. He offered a flat rate of compensation of \$4000, on the condition that individuals would sign away their rights to further legal action or recompense. The offer met with widespread rejection. Do you think the offer was fair? Why/why not?

The Film

- In what ways is *Pioneers of Love* a love story?
- The film uses dramatic re-enactments of various incidents to recapture and invoke a sense of the events of the time. How effective do you think this is? What other methods are available to the filmmakers to conjure a feeling for a time long past?
- Describe the tone of the narration.
- What sort of music is used throughout the film?
- Essay topic: 'This is truly a tragic love story of Shakespearean proportions.' Discuss.
- The filmmakers had recourse to only a few archival photos of Kitty and Leandro. Describe one of these photos in detail.
- Describe the significance of the documentary's title, *Pioneers of Love*. What does it mean to be a pioneer? Make three other suggestions for possible titles.
- Design a poster to promote the film. Who is the audience for this film? What aspects of the film would you choose to highlight in marketing it?
- Make a list of four storytelling devices utilized by the documentary-makers.
- In what ways could it be argued that this film demonstrates the principle that 'the personal is political'?

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33. Flora and the children; 34. Dick Hoolihan. Flora and Dick work to send their boys to Townsville Grammar but their marriage fails. They remain good friends and members of the Communist Party; 35. Eddie Mabo; 36. Dick Hoolihan starts the Aboriginal Advancement league with Mabo. They are both tracked by ASIO. Leandro's ideal moves on with the generations; 37. Family and crew; 38. Flora (left), now 89, is the storyteller in our film which follows four generations. Director Julie Nimmo (right); 39. Producer Richard Dennison (left); 40. Elena Govor and her book, which inspired this film



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36



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www.athertontablelands.com

www.tropicalnorth.com/tnq/atherton-tablelands.html

The Ngadjon People

www.dreamtime.net.au/indigenous/timeline3.cfm

www.reconciliation.qld.gov.au/stories/malanda.html

Glossary of some Ngadjon words

www.users.tpg.com.au/julhrty/ngadjonji/History/history11.html

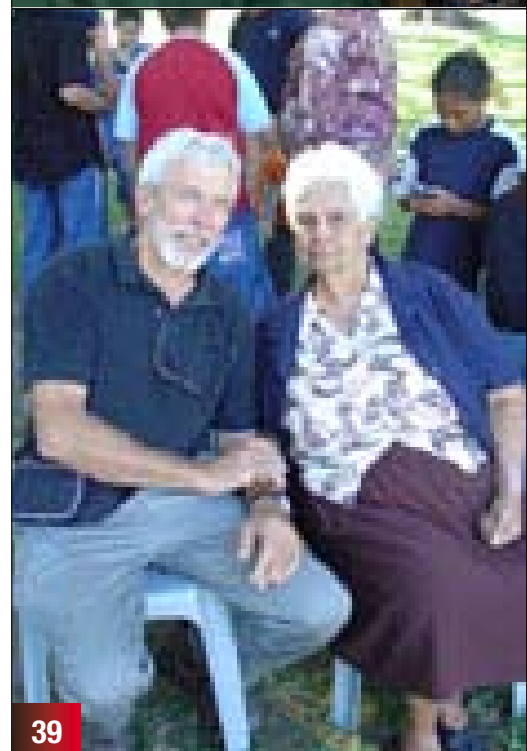
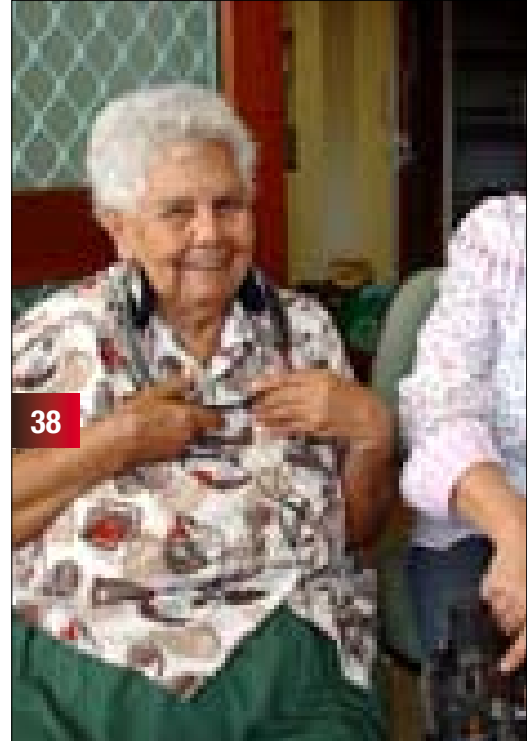
Introduction to Ngadjon History

www.users.tpg.com.au/julhrty/ngadjonji/History/history1.html

Selected Bibliography of material on the Ngadjon held in the AIATSIS Library

www.aiatsis.gov.au/lbry/fct_shts/NgadjonFeb05.pdf

Account of Reconciliation Picnic, 1998, hosted by the Ngadjon Elders in



Malanda Park

www.athertontablelands.com/reconciliation/picnic.html

An environmental history of the Ngadjon Country and Community

Aboriginal Issues

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Department of Indigenous Affairs

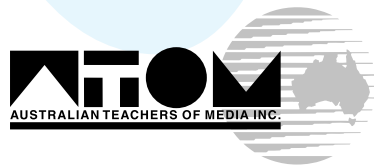
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Indigenous and Aboriginal Affairs Resources

www.aph.gov.au/library/intguide/sp/spindigenous.htm

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC)

www.atsic.gov.au



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PIONEERS OF LOVE

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Co-producer: Mark Chapman

Editor: Michael Balson

Script Editor: Michael Balson

Director of Photography: Ulrich-Stephan Krafzik ACS

Co-Director Re-creation: Jan Cattoni

Art Direction: Mark Norris

Narrator: Lydia Miller

Music: David Skinner and David Page

Location Sound: Warwick Finlay

Props and Sets: Anthony Giltrap

1st Assistant Director: Jan Cattoni

Assistant Camera: Shaun Smith

Production Managers: Chiara Gee and Tony Gordon

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Archival Research: Lesley Holden

Cast: Leandro - Dale Gertz, Kitty - Mandy Edwards

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