

THIS BORROWED LAND

“Will we leave our children enough land to grow food on?”



A film produced by Studio D, National Film Board of Canada



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This film is about land, and women who farm it.

One of the richest agricultural areas in Canada is the Peace river valley in British Columbia where this film was made. Heat radiated by the river banks has created a microclimate where such delicate crops as melons can grow. The world's finest wheat is found here, with yields that often double the Canadian average. The soil is naturally irrigated and needs little fertilizer. Yet B.C. Hydro is projecting the construction of a hydro-electric dam which would flood approximately 4 000 hectares, destroying homes and farmsteads in the valley.

The Peace river area is a microcosm of a vast problem in which precious farmland is being converted to uses not related to the production of food. The women in the film ask: "Will we leave our children enough land to grow food on?"

Ruth Veiner is a third-generation farmer and an activist on land issues. She thinks of the land as being borrowed from our children, and believes the land should be nurtured for their future use.

Fifty years ago Ethel Rutledge and her husband converted wilderness into farmland. The hydro-electric project threatens them with expropriation and flooding.

Mimi Dennis and her husband farm what used to be raw bushland. After years of work, they now produce most of their own food. They enjoy the challenge of their hard-won lifestyle.

Jean Leahy, farmer and activist, is regional coordinator for the National Farmers' Union. She is vehemently opposed to the construction of the dam.

Diane Suchy is a wheat farmer. After part of her land was expropriated for oil exploration, she formed her own company. She now helps farmers get better compensation from the oil companies.

The film generates a nostalgia for a countryside that still exists, but is under siege. The Peace river valley lies rich and verdant under the eye of the camera. The women speak of their life's work, and their attachment to the land. They farm because they love to farm, despite a legion of difficulties both concrete and imponderable. Producing food gives them a sense of "being someone somewhere."

The film makes the work of farm women visible. It exposes a threat to their way of life, and alerts us to an uncomfortable reality: "If you haven't got the land, where will you grow the food?"

Suggested Topics for Discussion

- Threats to farmland in your region of the country
- Food versus energy
- Ecological agriculture versus overworking farmland
- Family farms versus agribusiness
- The retail food dollar — where does it go?
- Canadian versus non-resident foreign ownership of farmland
- Canada's agricultural policy
- The distribution of agricultural produce

Related Films Available from the NFB

The Disappearing Land (CBC)
Niagara for Sale
Plenty of Nothing
Potatoes
Ruth and Harriet: Two Women of the Peace
Speaking Our Peace
Three Rivers
My Urban Garden
We're Here to Stay
Where Have All the Farms Gone?
Wonderland

Suggested Audiences

- Women's groups
- Agricultural and rural groups (community and education)
- Consumers' groups
- Environmental groups and lobbies
- Colleges and High schools: Canadian Studies, Women's Studies, Geography (B.C.), Agricultural Studies, Ecology
- Public Libraries
- General Public

Director and Writer

Bonnie Kreps

Editor

Haida Paul

Cinematography

Nina Wisnicki

Location Sound

Martin Fossum

Original Research/Production Manager

Sharon McGowan

Original Score

Hildegard Westerkamp

Narrator

Anna Hagan

Poem Written by

Helene Rosenthal

Re-recording

Paul Sharpe

Special thanks to

Dr. Ursula M. Franklin,

University of Toronto

Producer

Signe Johansson

Executive Producer

Kathleen Shannon

Produced and distributed by
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Color

Screening time: 28 minutes 49 seconds

16 mm: 106C 0184 064

3/4": 116C 0184 064

VHS: 113C 0184 064

Beta: 114C 0184 064



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