

AROUND THE TABLE

This guide can be used by facilitators leading community screenings, educators, and individuals and organizations interested in exploring the film's topics in greater depth.

1. FILM SUMMARY

***Around the Table* is a documentary that explores the connections between a rapidly changing climate, environmental degradation, social inequality, and food insecurity. The documentary is grounded in Epekwitk/Prince Edward Island, but points to issues that face the regional and global population. PEI has a deep agrarian history, agriculture is its largest industry, and yet somehow it is one of the most food-insecure places in Canada. This glaring disconnect is clear evidence that our current global industrial food system is not doing its job: the job of feeding people.**

***Around the Table* tells a large narrative through the personal and the intimate.**

The film is 47 minutes long.



2. Guide Layout

I. POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION (1 PAGE)

- A few quick facts to help spark conversation
- Kickstarter questions

II. DIG DEEPER: Includes film quotes, more background, questions, and resource links to learn more and help you take action

1. Climate change
2. Food insecurity
3. Agriculture & the food system
4. Resilience

III. REFERENCES



I. POST-SCREENING DISCUSSION

A few quick facts to help spark conversation:

FOOD INSECURITY: PEI is "Canada's Food Island", exporting close to 1.5 billion dollars in agrifood and seafood in 2024. And yet, 1 in 4 children on PEI currently go to school hungry every day.

CLIMATE CHANGE: The damage from Post Tropical Storm Fiona has been described as unprecedented. Average shoreline loss in many areas was 7 to 12 meters, with extreme cases over 25 meters. Stronger storms, such as Fiona, are forecast to increase with climate change.

AGRICULTURE: The number of farmers in PEI continued to decline in 2025, driven by an accelerating, "crisis-level" loss of farmland to development and an aging workforce.

Kickstarter questions:

What did you learn from the film about agriculture, food insecurity or climate change that was new to you?

What is the most valuable thing you learned from viewing the documentary?

How do issues explored in the film affect you?

What can you do to keep the conversation going and make change happen in your own community?



Check out the sections below to **DIG DEEPER** and explore more on these topics



In the following sections, you can dig deeper into the topics presented in the film. These sections include quotes from the film's speakers, question prompts, more background, and resources.



DIG DEEPER 1- CLIMATE CHANGE

Voices from the film



“We’re already struggling with how to maintain current levels of biodiversity and current ecosystem health levels. Climate change is going to make that harder.... Every solution we do has to have nature and biodiversity in mind, or else we’re going to find ourselves in a place, in a hole, that we can’t really dig ourselves out of in the not-too-far future.”
— Stephanie Arnold, Associate Executive Director, CLIMAtlantic



“We’re getting the same amount of rain but it’s concentrated so the soil has to absorb so much water in a short amount of time and it can’t, so there’s run off.”
— Soleil Hutchinson, Farmer, Soleil’s Farm

More background

The current food system both impacts, and is impacted by, climate change because the food chain is intertwined at every step with fossil fuels – from fertilizers & pesticides to plastic packaging and transport...

- **the industrial food system consumes 40% of all petrochemicals and 15% of fossil fuels globally (1)**

IMPACTS



FOOD SYSTEM

Extreme weather and climate disruption can result in

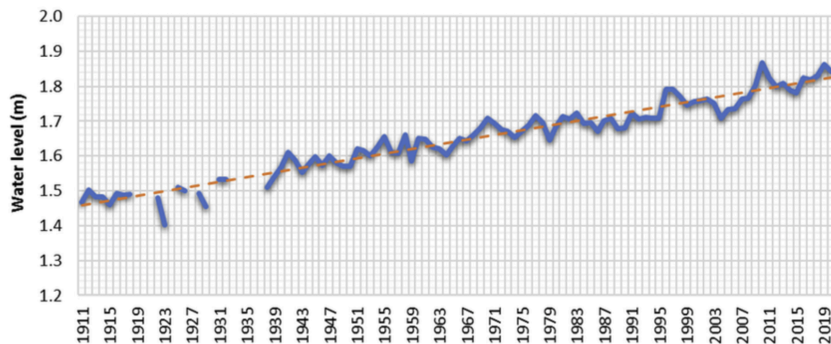
- **lost and damaged crops**
- **disrupted planting and harvest seasons**
- **supply chain breakdowns**
- **flooding or drought-caused soil erosion**

Water security is an issue as well. 100 % of PEI drinking water and irrigation water come from groundwater. Since the 2025 drought, applications and construction of high-capacity irrigation wells are surging (2)



ENVIRONMENT

- **Post tropical storm Fiona caused some areas to lose between 10 to over 25 metres of coastline (3)**
- **Approximately 24,300 hectares or 9.4% of PEI's forest area was affected by Fiona, meaning 70% or more of the trees in those areas were blown down. Trees as old as 300 years were lost (4)**
- **Atlantic Canada is expecting a 1 metre increase in sea level by 2100 and 2 metres or more by 2150.(5)**



Sea level rise at Charlottetown, PEI from 1911 to 2019.

(6)



What impacts from climate change have you experienced?

Think about the relationships between biodiversity and climate change: how does one affect the other?

What does climate change have to do with food inflation?

Resources to learn more and help you take action

Climate Atlas of Canada. “Weather records from across Canada show that every year since 1998...has been warmer than the 20th century average. This means that a whole generation of Canadians has never experienced what most of modern history considered a “normal” Canadian climate.”

<https://climateatlas.ca/climate-change-basics>

Tipping points & planetary boundaries. The planetary boundaries framework and the idea of tipping points highlights the rising risks from human pressure on nine critical global processes that regulate the stability and resilience of the Earth <https://global-tipping-points.org> and

<https://www.stockholmresilience.org/research/planetary-boundaries.html>

Climate Action Tracker - Canada’s Rating is “Highly Insufficient”

<https://climateactiontracker.org/countries/canada/>

The Canadian Climate Institute is Canada’s foremost climate change policy research organization. <https://climateinstitute.ca>

Canada in a Changing Climate is the National Assessment Process of how and why Canada’s climate is changing; the impacts of these changes on our communities, health, environment, and economy; and how we are adapting across the country <https://changingclimate.ca>

IPES-Food, the International Panel of Experts on Sustainable Food Systems, is a global thinktank and expert group guiding action for sustainable food systems around the world: <https://ipes-food.org>

The UPEI Climatelab conducts research and science on climate change vulnerability, impacts and adaptation: <https://projects.upei.ca/climate/>

The PEI Climate Hazard & Risk Information System (CHRIS) is an interactive map portal that you can browse to visualize different climate hazards that affect PEI's communities and properties:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/environment-energy-and-climate-action/climate-hazard-and-risk-information-system-chris>

North Shore Climate Action for Resilience <https://www.nscarpei.com>

Council of Canadians PEI Chapter: <https://canadians.org/group/pei-chapter/>

PEI Department of Agriculture. Changing climate patterns, increasingly erratic precipitation and lack of moisture during critical growing months has pushed many Island agricultural producers to irrigation or expansion of their current irrigation systems. This page provides educational resources for producers, industry groups and the public about irrigation:

<https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/en/information/agriculture/irrigation-and-agriculture>



DIG DEEPER 2- FOOD INSECURITY

Voices from the film



“If it was your daughter or your son [who] all of a sudden lost their job or, you know, a family break-up or something. Put yourself in those people’s shoes, knowing that this could be the reason that they become homeless, or the reason why they have to turn to the food bank.”

— Norma Dingwall, Manager, Southern Kings and Queens Food Bank



In PEI, we just learned in the past year that we had increased to 23% of the population being food insecure. We had the largest increase, year over year, in the country.

– Dr. Jennifer Taylor, Foods & Nutrition Professor, UPEI

More Background



WHAT IS FOOD SECURITY?

"Food security exists when all people at all times have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". PEI Food Exchange

In 2021, PEI was the first province to pass a bill with the explicit goal of reducing food insecurity. Known as the Poverty Elimination Strategy Act, one of the stated targets was that by 2025, the food insecurity rate for children should be 0%.



- $\frac{1}{3}$ of all visits to food banks in PEI are from employed people, the highest rate in the country. (7)
- The most recent data from 2023 shows 31.2% of children live in food insecure homes, far from the target of Bill 107 (8)
- 2021 Census data tells us that racialized, Indigenous and recently-immigrated children on PEI have higher rates of poverty. Children that recently came to Canada had the highest rate of poverty at 36.1 %, followed by racialized children at 35.9 %. (9)
- Incomes for PEI residents living on social assistance fall short of Canada's official poverty line (10)



- The intervention that has been shown to most effectively move the needle on food insecurity is income. Research has found reductions in food insecurity where federal or provincial policies have improved the financial circumstances of vulnerable households. *Support a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot in PEI.* (11)
- *Support local food banks, community fridges, and meal programs.*



Poverty is often depicted as a permanent state in our society. But in fact it's fluid—people are constantly falling into poverty and climbing back out of it, based on countless combinations of circumstance. How does Norma Dingwall's and others statements in the film challenge assumptions about poverty, and perceptions of people experiencing it?

The film points to a tension between systemic forces and individual choices. That tension has been a fault line in debate about social policy for a long time (societal responsibility” vs. “blaming the victim” or a “pull yourself up by your own bootstraps” notion). In what ways does the film touch on these themes? Did the film affect how you view the debate?

Resources to learn more and help you take action

2025 Report Card on Child and Family Poverty on Prince Edward Island: Complacency is a disgrace. Includes policy recommendations:

<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/2025-report-card-on-child-and-family-poverty-on-prince-edward-island/>

Report Proposing a Guaranteed Basic Income for PEI :<https://www.gbireport.ca>

The PEI Food Exchange is a registered non profit volunteer group committed to enhancing food security by harnessing the power of food to create positive change on Prince Edward Island: <http://www.foodexchangepei.com>

World Food Programme - Food Security: What it Means and Why it Matters: <https://www.wfp.org/stories/food-security-what-it-means-and-why-it-matters>

Find a Food Bank at <https://foodbankscanada.ca/find-a-food-bank/>

Legacy Garden: <https://www.peifarmcentre.com/legacy-garden.php>

DIG DEEPER 3- AGRICULTURE & THE FOOD SYSTEM

Voices from the film



“We have a really shrinking pool of farms like this on the island. We are seeing the average age of farmers - I think the last number was 56 [years of age]. The pool is aging out and we don’t have a younger group of new farmers coming in to replenish.”

— Lauren King, Farmer, Soleil's Farm



“When you live on an island and the bridge gets closed off in winter, and 3 days later, our shelves are bare?! That’s where small farms, cooperative farms - diversified - are able to weather the storms better than those farms that are just growing 1 or 2 crops.

— Byrin Petrie, Farmer, Sweet Pea Farm

More Background



A FARMLAND CRISIS

[The farmland market is] tilted against food producers and tilted toward speculators. The very farms that could anchor community-based food security are often priced out of reach for families — but remain wide open for large corporations, investors, or developers who see farmland less as soil and more as a “real estate play.”

This is not just an economic issue. It is a political failure to treat farmland as a public good and a strategic asset, rather than a commodity to be auctioned to the highest bidder. (12)



FARM STATISTICS

Between 2001 to 2021

- the number of Canadian farms decreased by 23%, from 246,923 to 189,874 individual farms
- the size of the average farm increased from 676 to 809 acres.
- farmland prices have surged: From 2018 to 2023 prices for farmland on P.E.I. rose 83 per cent. (13)

In the forthcoming 2026 census, it is predicted that more than half of Canada's farm operators will be over 60 years old (14)

In Canada, farm families depend on off-farm income to make ends meet. In 2023, off-farm income made up about 54.1 % of total farm family income. This share is lower for commodity sectors (such as potatoes). For fruits and vegetable farms it can be more than 75%. (15)



Loblaws, Sobeys and Metro own 60 per cent of the grocery retail market share in Canada, according to the Retail Council of Canada. (CBC)

CORPORATE MONOPOLIES

Canada has one of the most concentrated food systems in the industrialized world. 3 companies own 60% of the grocery retail market in Canada (16)



What are some of the reasons (economic, social, etc.) that people are leaving or not going into farming?

What are some social, environmental, and economic advantages and disadvantages of local food production?

Why is biodiversity critical for food production?

Inflation in Canada has been slowing down lately, but food inflation has stubbornly stayed high. What does climate change have to do with food inflation

Resources to learn more and help you take action

Census of Agriculture 2021. A profile of the physical, economic, social and environmental characteristics of Canada's agriculture industry, every five years, (new census coming in 2026) <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/census-agriculture>

Soil First Farming is an integrated and measurement-based series of initiatives that support the protection and enhancement of our Island's most important resource - our healthy soil. <https://soilfirstfarming.ca>

Canadian Organic Growers, COG provides education, advocacy and leadership to help build an agricultural system that empowers farmers and consumers, enhances human health, builds community and mitigates climate change while increasing Canadian food sovereignty: <https://cog.ca>

Corporate Concentration, Food Policy for Canada, York University: <https://foodpolicyforcanada.info.yorku.ca/backgrounder/problems/corporate-concentration/>

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. A proposal for an inclusive farm economy as the antidote to corporate concentration: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/an-inclusive-farm-economy-is-the-antidote-to-corporate-concentration/>

PEI Federation of Agriculture: <https://peifa.ca/member-benefit-2/>

DIG DEEPER 4- RESILIENCE

Voices from the film



“Diversity is a cornerstone of resilience and resilience basically refers to a system’s ability to adapt and withstand different shocks while maintaining essential functions. ...Self-sufficiency – re-localized food production, processing, and distribution – is incredibly important.”

— Phoebe Stevens, Assistant Professor, School for Resource & Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University



“In Mi’kmaw, everything is a being. Everything is alive.... The fact [is] that our broader community is very European-based, colonial-minded, and the words that are associated with those conversations are talking about the plants and animals and the actual space, as a commodity.”

— Helena Perry, Indigenous Chartered Herbalist



We started out making 50 meals, and now we make at least 100, sometimes 150 meals. They’re getting increasingly complex and we’re getting increasingly ambitious with the kind of food we prepare. But it really is about building community around food. -

-Karen Murchison, Board member PEI Food Exchange & Executive Director, Canadian Organic Growers Association

More background

STEPS TO RESILIENCE

- **Strengthening local food infrastructure:** local supply chains (e.g., abattoirs, food hubs) reduces dependence on long-distance transportation and vulnerability to external shocks.
- **Sustainable Agriculture:** Adopting practices like no-till, cover cropping, and rotational grazing enhances soil health, reduces dependence on synthetic fertilizers, and improves crop resilience.
- **Indigenous Food Sovereignty:** Supporting Indigenous-led food initiatives recognizes traditional hunting and fishing rights, enhancing food self-determination and nutrition
- **Reducing Food Loss/Waste:** Implementing circular economy approaches, such as Loop Resource which turns food waste into animal feed, minimizes waste and boosts efficiency.
- **Building Community Around Food!**



Several references have come up to ways we treat land, foods, and nature as commodities. What might our food system look like if we were to understand the “land” (water, soil, air, plants, animals...) as part of a community to which we belong?

How might our food system change if it was based on the idea that food is a human right?

In what ways is community important to resilience?

Resources to learn more and help you take action

Resilience is a program of the nonprofit organization Post Carbon Institute. “We support building community *resilience* as a hopeful and practical response to multiple emerging ecological and social challenges.” <https://www.resilience.org>

Indigenous Climate Hub, Reconstituting indigenous food economies
<https://indigenousclimatehub.ca/2025/10/re-constituting-indigenous-food-economies-the-promise-of-plant-based-regeneration/>

The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI is a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting an empowered Mi'kmaq and Indigenous community in the journey towards self-determination. <https://mcpei.ca>

Government of Canada, Food Policy for Canada
<https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/departement/initiatives/food-policy-canada>

Government of Canada, Climate resilient coastal communities program:
<https://natural-resources.canada.ca/climate-change/climate-resilient-coastal-communities-program>

Right to Food. “Together, we’re building a movement of responsive and effective community food organizations that understand food is never just food: It’s about dignity, well-being, community, and justice.” <https://righttofood.ca/support-us/>



III - References

- (1) Dr. Irena Knezevic, Carleton University, Connections 2025 Food Forum
<https://youtu.be/GMSrE7sCw2o>
- (2) <https://www.saltwire.com/prince-edward-island/after-pei-summer-drought-farmers-seek-to-build-high-capacity-wells> and https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/irrigation_strategy_2022.pdf
- (3) <https://cccca.upei.ca/upei-data-analysis-confirms-island-suffered-shocking-coastline-loss-from-fiona/>
- (4) https://www.princeedwardisland.ca/sites/default/files/publications/post-fiona_forest_update.pdf
- (5) <https://climatlantic.ca/impacts/sea-level-rise/>
- (6) Jardine, Don & Wang, Xiuquan (Xander) & Fenech, Adam. (2021). Highwater Mark Collection after Post Tropical Storm Dorian and Implications for Prince Edward Island, Canada. Water. 13. 3201. 10.3390/w13223201
- (7) FOOD BANKS Canada <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://content.foodbankscanada.ca/wordpress/2024/06/PEI-1PAG-EN.pdf>
- (8) 2025 report from Maytree, a national anti-poverty research organization
<https://maytree.com/changing-systems/data-measuring/welfare-in-canada/prince-edward-island/>
- (9) <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&source=web&rct=j&opi=89978449&url=https://campaign2000.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/2025-Report-Card-on-Child-and-Family-Poverty-on-PEI-1.pdf>
- (10) 2025 Report on Child and Family Poverty in Prince Edward Island
<https://www.policyalternatives.ca/news-research/2025-report-card-on-child->

[and-family-poverty-on-prince-edward-island/](#)

(11) <https://www.gbireport.ca> and <https://proof.utoronto.ca/2021/prince-edward-island-the-first-jurisdiction-to-set-explicit-targets-for-reducing-food-insecurity/>

(12) <https://between-the-lines.ca/canada-farmland-loss/>

(13) and (14) <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/en/census-agriculture>

(15) <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/260130/dq260130b-eng.htm> and <https://www.fcc-fac.ca/en/knowledge/economics/deteriorating-farmland-affordability>

(16) <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/grocery-giants-control-9.7055067>



Around the Table is a production of the
Atlantic Food Action Coalition

This project was undertaken with the financial support of
The Government of Prince Edward Island
The Government of Canada

