



# Women Suffrage and Beyond

confronting the democratic deficit

ISSN 2292-1060



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Welcome to Women Suffrage & Beyond!

(Ottawa, Canada — This monument commemorates Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, the “Persons Case”, and the suffrage movement in Canada. — Photo by flickr user Richard Baer.)

Welcome to Women Suffrage & Beyond!

(Ottawa, Canada — This monument commemorates Nellie McClung, Emily Murphy, the “Persons Case”, and the suffrage movement in Canada. — Photo by flickr user Richard Baer.)

Looking for something or someone in particular? Try using our search function in the upper right hand corner!

(Quito, Ecuador September 2008 — Women and men turn out for a “get out the vote” rally in the Grand Plaza. — Photo by flickr user maverick2003.)

Learn more about the variety of ways you can contribute to Women Suffrage via our Submission Guide page.

(Manilla, Philippines March 8th 2008 — Thousands march on International Women’s Day in Manilla, Philippines. — Photo by flickr user Simon Oosterma.)

2012’s Summer Olympic Games in London began with an opening ceremony that featured a celebration of Emmeline Pankhurst and other British suffragists. It was a fitting beginning to the first Games ever to see female athletes competing from every participating nation.

(London, England August 2012 — Photo via Flickr user Stewart Cutler.)

The Fathers of Confederation, a Painting by Robert Harris (1884).

Canada and Soviet Russia grant women the right to vote. Image via the public domain.

Icelandic women celebrate the right to vote.

Women’s rights gathering in Tokyo concerning universal women’s suffrage. Image via US Library of Congress.

A classic political cartoon depicting the expansion of women’s suffrage in the United States. Cartoon by Hy Mayer via US Public Domain/Wikimedia Commons.

Demonstrators for women’s suffrage present a strong turnout in the USA. Image via US public domain/Wikimedia Commons.

Demonstrators in the US carry a banner reading “President Wilson Favors Votes for Women”. Image by George Grantham Baine (1865-1944), via US public domain/Wikimedia Commons.

“Inspired by Gandhi’s salt march some 25000 people have walked over 280 km to demand land reforms from the Indian government. The protesters, mostly low-caste tenant farmers and landless indigenous people, say they have been left behind by India’s economic boom.”

Photo and description via Flickr user [photosquirrel](#).

“Lady Florence Norman, a suffragette, on her motor-scooter in 1916, travelling to work at offices in London where she was a supervisor. The scooter was a birthday present from her husband, the journalist and Liberal politician Sir Henry Norman.” Image via public domain.

In 1881 Tynwald approved the Election Bill and delivered the first instalment of women’s right to vote in parliamentary elections within the British Isles. This step also made the Isle of Man the first country in the world to give women the vote in national elections. Image via public domain.

Learn more about the people and organizations that influenced the women suffrage movement worldwide.

(Cairo, Egypt November 2011 — Women wait outside a polling center to vote. The first day of the first round of Parliamentary elections begin in Cairo, Egypt after a week of violence threaten to mar the election process. The day was free of violence though plagued by confusion among voters and electoral observers. After two days of voting there will be three more rounds till the parliament is decided. — Image by Monique Jaques/Corbis)

Find out how suffrage has involved more than gender prejudice and how race, class, and disability, among other human characteristics, have made a difference in who gets to vote and run for office.

(Tunis, Tunisia/October 2011 — Voters showing ink mark on their fingers (to prevent multiple voting) after voting at the October 23, 2011 national election in Megrine, Tunisia. — Image by Philippe Lissac / Godong/Godong/Corbis)

Think about the transnational connections among suffrage and equal rights activists and movements, and their opponents. What has it meant to live in different nations when it comes to political opportunities?

(Kigali, Rwanda August 2010 — Women and men line up to vote in Kigali, Rwanda. — Image by flickr user kigaliwire.)

Explore articles on the site via recent posts or via the tag cloud displayed below!

(New York City 1912 — Suffrage parade. — Photo via US Library of Congress).



**For a long time, today’s democracies have taken the franchise largely for granted.**



## Grace Lore’s Talk on CKNW

*Women Suffrage and Beyond’s* staff member, Grace Lore, Ph.D. Candidate and Teaching Assistant in the Department of Political Science at UBC talks on CKNW. She was outraged at victim blaming. Click [here](#) for the talk.

## Dr. Veronica Strong-Boag Attended Royal Society of Canada’s Annual General Meeting

Dr. Veronica Strong Boag attended the Royal Society of Canada’s Annual General Meeting and Annual Symposium from November 14-17

2013.

A key element of the Royal Society of Canada's (RSC) Strategic Plan is to "expand the reach of the RSC's Annual General Meeting (AGM) and Annual Symposium". Between 1945 and 1980, the AGM of the RSC was hosted at least once in every province of Canada, at 25 universities from coast to coast. Beginning in 2013, the RSC will resume the practice of moving the AGM around the country, beginning with a visit to the Fairmont Banff Springs resort in Banff, Alberta, on November 14-17, 2013. This initiative is the lynchpin of the Fellowship and Institutional Member Engagement plan.

## **Dr. Veronica Strong-Boag: Knowledge and Action in Aid of Democracy**

**November 12, 2013**

The Department of History presents a special lecture:

**Dr. Veronica Strong-Boag, FRSC**

**Knowledge and Action in Aid of Democracy: Women Suffrage and Beyond to Idle No More**



**Date: November 12, 2013 Time: 7:00 pm**

**Place: Grad Commons, Emmanuel & St. Chad (1337 College Drive)**

Everywhere we look democracy seems to be trouble. Its failings threaten our collective ability to solve national and global crises. Like the women suffragists who recognized that 'information deficits' sustain 'democratic deficits', the pro-democracy website [womensuffrage.org](http://womensuffrage.org) connects past and present, power and privilege, Canada and the world, all the while viewing the position of women and girls as a key indicator of the health of social democracy. This lecture extends that website's commitment to evidence and action as the surest foundation for democratic public policy. In particular, it addresses reactionaries' investment in public ignorance, the role of two generations of Canadian feminists in raising consciousness of social justice, and feminism's potential for countering the current democratic deficit.

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Dr. Veronica Strong-Boag, a historian and founding director of UBC's Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice, has been awarded the 2012 Tyrrell Medal from the Royal Society of Canada for outstanding work in the history of Canada. Strong-Boag has authored or edited some 20 volumes and numerous articles and book chapters. She has won the John A. Macdonald Prize for the best book in Canadian history (*The New Day Recalled*), the Raymond Klibansky Prize for the best book in the Humanities (*Paddling Her Own Canoe: the Times and Texts of E. Pauline Johnson*), and the Canada Prize in the Social Sciences (*Fostering Nation: Canada Confronts its History of Childhood Disadvantage*). Most recently, Strong-Boag has been making connections between history and today's relations of power in her SSHRC funded website: <http://womensuffrage.org>

Special thanks for sponsorship from the Humanities Research Unit, The Department of History, the Department of English, and the Canada Research Chair, History of Medicine.

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### **About the Site**

For a long time, today's democracies have taken the franchise largely for granted. Canada's federal government, for example, recently

'forgot' that anniversaries to be celebrated in the second decade of the 21st century necessarily include the beginnings of provincial and federal franchises for women. Unless the right to the vote was one part of a larger campaign, as with the American war against slavery or the struggle to end apartheid in South Africa, most citizens, except those directly involved, have paid little attention. Women's suffrage has been especially likely to suffer indifference and neglect except when its absence provides further justification for the targeting of suspect cultures, as with today's western criticism of Saudi Arabia. For the most part, it is trivialized as an inevitable and peaceful concession. That woman suffrage represents one of the great extensions to democracy in the modern world, that it is frequently fiercely opposed, and that women's exclusion from power persists needs to be far more widely appreciated.

The franchise and other forms of meaningful participation in government are the fruits of historic struggles against tyranny and privilege. They promise peaceful ways to confront longstanding inequities of gender, class, race, religion, sexuality, and region. While their visions were regularly incomplete, the women and men who devoted and sometimes lost their lives in struggles against slavery, apartheid, the caste system, the male franchise, and special privilege in general, expanded hopes for inclusion and equality. That story of determination and sacrifice forms a continuous thread in human history from at least the 1790s slave revolt in Haiti and the British Chartist movement of the 1830s to the 1848 Seneca Falls U.S. Women's Rights Convention, Winnipeg's 1912 'Parliament of Women,' Gandhi's 1930 Salt March to Dandi, Iranian women's 1963 suffrage victory, and today's worldwide 'Take Back the Night' anti-violence and 'GLBT Pride' marches. Whether it rises to the top of such campaigns, the democratic franchise is central to their ultimate success.

For all such significance, no readily accessible website today concentrates on the historic evolution of woman suffrage or connects the various movements for suffrage and political equality that predate and follow franchise extensions. This site, hosted by the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at the University of British Columbia, addresses that omission.

## Canada and the World

While its leaders have often claimed exceptionalism when it came to bad behaviour, Canada is a prime site for comparative work. Beginning with the Indigenous peoples, it has hosted diverse communities variously bound to one another and to populations elsewhere in the world. Its continuing debates about the proper political and other relations of French and English 'founders', of Indigenous and newcomer populations, and of European- and African- and Asian-descent communities, which regularly in their turn imbed notions of preferred gender behaviours, make Canada a site where a wide variety of ideologies and practices with global significance play out on a smaller stage. Our section titled 'Glocal' above makes the case for the significance of and the connections among politics both on local (or more intimate) and on international stages. While the latter often gets by far the lion's share of scholarly and press attention, its roots lie in individual homes and communities.

Canada is also centre stage here because so often not it is not. The world's 'big' players, notably the United States, China, Russia, Germany, and the United Kingdom, routinely demand and get attention. This website suggests that in order to promote more equitable relations, whether at home or abroad, Canadians need to learn about themselves at home and in a global context and we hope this initiative will help that exploration.

When it comes to the rest of the world, this website will make hard choices. We anticipate being especially interested in the British Commonwealth, the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, the United States, China, Japan, and leading Islamic nations. We understand, however, the limitations of this perspective and invite contributors to right imbalances with attention to other countries.

## Themes

Understanding suffrage and related campaigns begins with nations, individuals, and organizations but issues are often over-arching. Our approach is designed to encourage consideration of the broad themes of 'the democratic deficit', 'activism and democratic movements,' and 'intersectionality' or the relations of 'gender, race, class, religion, sexuality' and so on. These are all pressing concerns that we believe merit attention both in the past and today. While we invite contributors to think about their posts through these thematic lens, we welcome any perspectives that help readers better understand the complicated relations of advantage and disadvantage that have shaped political opportunities over the last two hundred years anywhere in the world. To this end, we hope to receive discussions of both the champions and the opponents of equal rights.

### • The 'Democratic Deficit'

In the 21st century, the limits of the franchise and democratic rights headline stories in newspapers and social media around the world. Comparisons are often memorable. Much of the so-called 'First World' or the Global North, including Canada, questions low voter turnout and pervasive popular disinterest in elections. In May 2011 little more than 60% of Canadians voted in the federal election; in October 2011 less than 50% of Ontario's eligible voters marked their ballots in the provincial contest. Such voter apathy stands in sharp contrast to the agitation of Ukraine's Orange Revolution (2004-2005) and the Arab Spring (2011 and beyond) not to mention the globally pervasive 'Occupy Movement' (2011 and beyond).

Concern or congratulation about women's representation tends to focus on elected representatives. That long and unfinished struggle in the world at large is set forth here under 'Global Representation.' Canada has not been a leader. In May 2011, for example, 76 women became Members of Parliament, the largest number in Canada's history but only 25% of the House of Commons. In the November 2012 election, the United States was also setting records but again women's, like Black, Asian, and Latino, numbers were less than their proportion of the electorate: 20 female senators (including the first openly LGBT) and 81 congresswomen. Also noteworthy was the repudiation of Republican

candidates who mused about ‘legitimate rape’ and ‘God intended pregnancies’.

The continued shortfall in women’s representation is of course only one expression of ‘the higher the fewer’ rule that describes so much of the experience of marginalized populations. We would argue that democracy and its antithesis begin at the base of human society in the family. Children’s experience of adult relations is the first step to building engagement and rights. We envision that some part of the conversation in this site may address that critical starting point. Early exponents of the suffrage were in fact often champions of progressive child-rearing. Thus we encourage attention to all the places where the democratic deficit is combated and fostered. In the interests of ‘knowing the enemy’, we welcome discussions of how patriarchy and other relations of power are nurtured within intimate settings.

- **Activism and Democratic Movements**

The vote and political rights did not fall from the sky. Elites have rarely (never?) spontaneously handed over power. The excluded have had to demand a share in government. They have banded together in groups small enough to be represented by the famous ‘tea party’ statue of Canada’s ‘Famous Five’ on Parliament Hill and swelled streets in their thousands as with the 2012 Quebec student protests. While demands have sometimes been narrow, alliances have been common. Indeed only inclusive partnerships provide any sure guarantee of progress.

Historically, social movements have often nurtured linkages and diverse agendas. The Political Equality Leagues that championed suffrage for Canadian women in the early 20th century were named just that because connections across boundaries of difference were possible. Some earlier anti-slavery activists extended sympathies to women and Indigenous populations. Modern unions often agitate for a fair deal for everyone. ‘Making connections’ among those vulnerable because of gender, race, class, sexuality, disability, and other sources of discrimination is typical of today’s ‘Occupy’ campaigns.

Links among diverse global campaigns for equity and fairness in politics and life generally lie close to the heart of this website. It begins with women’s rights and with Canada and then extends its reach to include diverse efforts to enhance democracy.

- **Gender, Race, Class, Religion, Sexuality ...**

This website emphasizes the significance of intersectionality and standpoint. No human being is a singular identity. Each is imbedded in multiple relations, gender being frequently only the earliest. Our various identities encourage particular perspectives on the world. Awareness of multiple and shifting identities reminds us all of the dangers of over-generalization. We need always to ask about whom, at what time, and even exactly ‘for whom’ are we speaking. Canada’s first generation of women suffragists for example tended to speak for the mainstream settler group, those who were white, middle-class, able-bodied, and heterosexual, although few acknowledged this focus. Only a few maintained a persistently inclusive vision of social equality. Those few should not, however, be forgotten. The choices of the first suffragists were sometimes self-consciously pragmatic: only certain arguments could win over certain audiences. They had always to remember that enfranchisement depended on the support of a male electorate and male political elite. This website encourages contributors to be self-consciously sensitive to the meaning of difference for their subjects and themselves and to the interplay of principle and pragmatism that persists as a feature of democratic engagement.

## Content and Conversation

‘Women Suffrage and Beyond’ provides various points of entry to the debates over suffrage and the extension of democratic rights. As today’s gatherings and protests in every part of the world suggest, politics at its best requires conversation. We embrace that insight. In order to evolve, we invite readers to submit suggestions and to add to its coverage. We are very interested in contributions that speak to a wide and diverse audience. We are trying to avoid technical jargon and contributors are expected to use inclusive language: this means non-sexist, non-racist, non-homophobic, etc... We think of ourselves and the users of the website as intelligent but not expert consumers of political education.

We intend to produce and to invite short analytical and descriptive essays (of some 500 words) to introduce readers to the franchise and pro-democracy politics of individual nations, key figures and groups. We also invite reflections from activists for our section ‘Front Lines’ and about current electoral politics for our section ‘At the Ballot Box.’ Our ‘In the Classroom’ section welcomes submissions of bibliographies, course outlines, original documents, and images in the public domain. All contributions will be properly credited. If copyright allows, material will sometimes be directly provided but we also anticipate using electronic links to documents available on sites such as those of the United Nations or Elections Canada/Élections Canada. We ask contributors to list at least two additional sources that readers can follow up and to use the [APA guide to citations](#).

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Women Suffrage and Beyond is an electronic academic journal (ISSN 2292-1060) that is always open to new submissions. If you are interested in contributing, please contact us at [submit@womensuffrage.org](mailto:submit@womensuffrage.org)

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## Who We Are

We are based at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. The head of our team is [Dr. Veronica Strong-Boag](#), Canadian historian with the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Social Justice and Educational Studies at the University of British Columbia. You can learn more about the [current Women Suffrage and Beyond staff at this page](#).

Women Suffrage and Beyond is an electronic academic journal (ISSN 2292-1060) that is always open to new submissions. If you are interested in contributing, please contact us at [submit@womensuffrage.org](mailto:submit@womensuffrage.org).

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