

## *One Hundred Years of Struggle: The History of Women and the Vote in Canada* by Joan Sangster

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[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

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control of lands and resources and treaty rights promised to Indigenous groups. The dictates of the Ontario Game and Fisheries Act denied Indigenous groups the ability to hunt commercially (only allowing subsistence hunting), failing to consider that commercial hunting had long been a vital part of Indigenous economic systems. While challenged in legal cases, the Ontario Courts were often compliant with the limitations brought about by provincial legislation, which led to a “de facto refashioning” of federal responsibility regarding treaty rights (278).

The conclusion by Alan C. Cairns expresses how the rise of a politicized academic field relating to Indigenous history will often mean that a book “may not be evaluated solely or primarily on its merits as a piece of academic research but in a number of cases it will additionally be viewed through a political lens” (404). As an academic work, *Roots of Entanglement* provides several valuable case studies that show how Indigenous citizens worked within colonial systems to achieve their own objectives, often on their own terms. Cairns is correct that as a work of Indigenous history, other factors should be considered besides content. Therefore, it is

worth noting that this book primarily interprets history through the lives of Euro-Canadian citizens and how they viewed or interacted with Indigenous groups, as opposed to focusing on the perspectives of Indigenous citizens (as told by Indigenous scholars). A stronger balance between these two approaches would provide interesting counterpoints.

Lastly, Cairns includes a problematic statement that implies Euro-Canadian scholars are inherently in a difficult position when writing on Native-newcomer relations due to the rise of identity politics that will find fault in most interpretations (404). Cairns further states that “although the evidence is fragmentary, it appears that there are tacit understandings that Indigenous scholars will not criticize each other,” a generalization that, even if based on ‘fragmentary evidence,’ is highly doubtful (418). Cairns concludes this book with a statement by J.R. Miller that says a balance needs to be met to neither underemphasize Indigenous agency or overemphasize Indigenous victimhood. This collection achieves that goal.

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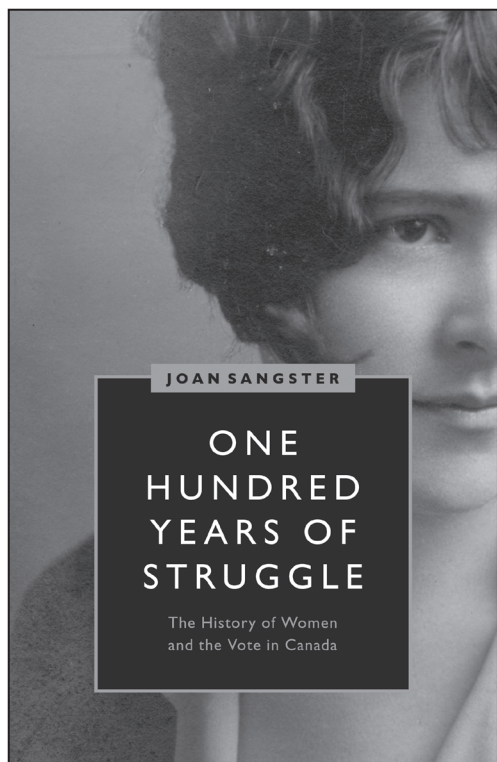
## *One Hundred Years of Struggle* *The History of Women and the Vote in Canada*

By Joan Sangster

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As a historian with a strong feminist education, I thought I already knew a lot about the history of suffrage. Joan Sangster’s engaging text, however, illustrates how much is missing from the

canonized history of women’s suffrage in Canada and disrupts some of the myths that many historians will have learned from older studies. Sangster opens her work with an introduction that highlights



the diversity of the suffrage movement: rather than a single movement spearheaded by prominent feminists, suffrage was the product of the fractured and contested efforts of an array of women and their allies. It was also, she argues, complicated by ideas about land ownership in a settler-colonial context.

Sangster approaches this study thematically while maintaining a chronological thread between her chapters. Her earlier chapters overlap chronologically, as she examines efforts to achieve the vote in the context of race and socialism. Most of Sangster's chapters open with a short portrait of a suffragist—or, in one case, an anti-suffragist—using this as a springboard to discuss the broader thematic concerns of the chapter. By positioning a chapter

on race early in the text, Sangster introduces the mid-nineteenth-century work of Mary Ann Shadd Cary, a black anti-slavery advocate in what became Ontario, before studying the efforts of many of the white, middle-class suffragists who have been more recognized and mythologized in popular histories of suffrage. Similarly, Sangster's final chapter opens with the story of Hideko Hyodo, a Japanese-Canadian woman who advocated for Japanese-Canadian franchise in 1936. This organization of chapters bolsters Sangster's arguments about the diversity of the movement. I noticed, however, that outside of the two chapters that emphasized race, Sangster's study predominantly focused on white suffragists. I would have appreciated less segmentation between chapters, as in the remaining chapters race appeared to be a backdrop or foil for the actions of white suffragists, rather than a central category of analysis.

One unique element of this book is a chapter on anti-suffragists. By examining opposition to suffrage, Sangster shows the intersections between critical issues in the suffrage movement. This chapter illustrates how similar rhetoric could produce significant ideological divergences. For instance, while suffragists used maternalist ideas to underpin their arguments, Clementina Fessenden, a Hamilton anti-suffrage advocate, objected to suffrage partly based on maternalist grounds, believing that suffrage would interfere with the "near divinity" of motherhood (128-29). By including the stories of anti-suffrage women in this chapter, alongside that of prominent male antis such as Stephen Leacock, Sangster reminds us that suffrage was not a universal movement among women.

As Sangster notes, many historically prominent suffragists are those who left ro-

bust written records, particularly autobiographies. For this reason, the “Famous Five” women involved in the Persons Case often become representative of suffrage history as a whole. Instead of emphasizing their stories, Sangster examined a broader array of women, showing the regional diversity of suffrage efforts. *Ontario History* readers will appreciate learning about many Ontario-based suffragists. In addition to Shadd Cary, Sangster provides readers with glimpses into the work of numerous other suffragists, including Laura James, and Adeline Hughes; Emily Stowe and Augusta Stowe-Gullen; and Flora Macdonald Denison. While Denison did not leave an autobiography, and thus has been overshadowed in suffrage history, Sangster devotes attention to Denison’s newspaper columns to portray a woman who strategically “injected political commentary” into a feminized section of the *Toronto World* newspaper, and whose published writings illustrate the ambivalence that many suffragists felt towards the First World War (145, 147).

For those interested in the politics of commemoration, Sangster offers an insightful discussion of the mythologizing of the suffrage movement and its purported heroines. For instance, rather than repeating the claim that women’s work during the First World War led to them achieving suffrage, Sangster points to the significant fragmentation that the war caused in an already diverse, conflicted movement. Critically, Sangster’s analysis does not end with the achievement of suffrage for most women in 1918. Instead, she devotes her penultimate chapter to inter-war feminist organizing, and a final chapter to the struggles of racialized women seeking the vote in the post-Second World War era. In this manner, she strengthens her claim that

rhetoric about land and race were central in suffrage history.

In her effort to address persistent myths in the history of suffrage, Sangster presents a nuanced portrayal of Nellie McClung’s legacy. After being taught as a child to valorize the Famous Five and later on to lionize them for the racist ideologies some suffragists espoused, I particularly appreciated Sangster’s reminders that a belief in eugenics was not universal amongst suffragists. In a political climate that is seeking to re-evaluate the legacies of key figures in Canadian history, Sangster aptly remarks, “there are no unambiguous heroines in suffrage history, only reminders that we ourselves need to exercise both humility in the present and vigilance in our efforts to re-examine the evidence of the past, wherever it may lead us” (274).

Reflecting Sangster’s assertion that publishing political cartoons was a key strategy for suffragists, she has illustrated *100 Years of Struggle* with these evocative cartoons. Sangster has drawn extensively from published and unpublished print sources, including a handful of personal papers of suffragists. As Sangster notes, the absence of a unified suffrage organization means that records of the suffrage movement are scattered. As such, she drew from newspapers, the writings of suffragists and anti-suffragists, and government documents, alongside a comprehensive selection of secondary sources. The breadth of Sangster’s research here enables her comprehensive and nuanced portrayal of the multifaceted suffrage movement. Overall, this work is an informative and engaging read, suitable for leisure readers, historians, and instructors in women’s history.

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