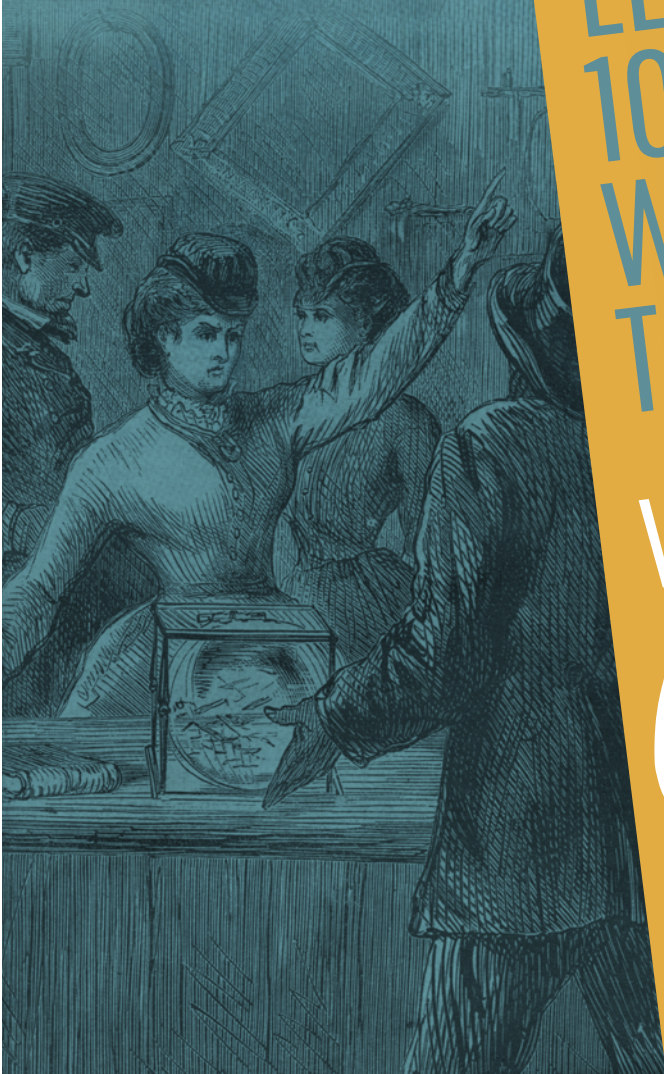


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LET'S EXPLORE 100 YEARS OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE

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WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE IN CANADA:

RAPIDLY AND CALMLY

In Canada, suffragettes worked hard to convince politicians to grant women the right to vote but their activism operated within well-defined groups. It did not reach the masses to become a so-called grassroots movement.

To achieve their goal, suffragettes established associations and repeatedly delivered petitions to the Canadian Parliament. It took the First World War and, of course, the passage of time, to finally convince legislators. However, the winds of change were already blowing in the provinces.

1916 - Manitoba, the first

Manitoba was the first province to grant women the right to vote. Activists such as Nellie McClung, with support from many men, demanded recognition for women as full-fledged citizens. They even made quite a splash holding a mock parliament where suffragettes debated the legitimacy of men's right to vote! Success was finally theirs on January 28, 1916.

1916 to 1919 - The progressive West

Saskatchewan and Alberta followed Manitoba's lead that spring. In these new and progressive provinces, the largely British population was aware of the demands being made by suffragettes in the United States and Great Britain, with newspapers often siding with them.

Until 1925 - Other provinces follow the lead

Within a few years, universal suffrage existed in all of the provinces. In the leadup to 1919, women in British Columbia, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick successively obtained the vote. Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland (which was not yet part of Confederation) followed suit in 1922 and 1925, respectively.

1940 - Quebec is late

Because of a government that is strongly traditionalist, Quebec is late into following the lead of other provinces. Of course, certain groups fought for the right to vote in elections. These included the Fédération nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, the Alliance canadienne pour le vote des femmes au Québec, founded by Idola Saint-Jean in the late 1920s, and the Ligue pour les droits de la femme led by Thérèse Casgrain. Quebec women gained the right to vote in 1940.

Nellie McClung

In Parliament

At the federal level, granting women the right to vote was more of a political move than a democratic one according to political scientist Caroline Andrew. "There was a desire for women to vote in favour of conscription. This was a political calculation, even if women's right to vote was on everyone's lips."

In 1917, the first groups able to vote supported the government and participation in the war. The Military Voters Act extended the vote to all British subjects who were members of the Canadian Armed Forces and normally residing in Canada, regardless of sex or age, which had the effect of including military nurses. Then the *Wartime Elections Act* went on to extend the vote to mothers, spouses, sisters, and daughters of men at the front, provided they met the age and citizenship conditions.

The measures involved quickly became more flexible. In 1918, all citizens aged 21 or over who were Canadian born and owned property officially obtained the right to vote in federal elections. The following year, they were also authorized to run as candidates.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN CANADA OVER THE YEARS...

1867: Confederation takes place. The British North America Act grants landowning men aged 21 years or older the right to vote. Consequently, 11% of the population has a voice in the democracy.

1876: The first female doctor in Canada, Emily Stowe, founds a women's literary society in Toronto. Its activities are more of a political nature: it is a group of suffragettes.

1894: New groups for women's suffrage appear, such as the Women's Enfranchisement Association (New Brunswick) and the Manitoba Equal Suffrage Club. The Women's Christian Temperance Union files a petition with the Canadian Parliament demanding universal suffrage but it is rejected. This type of petition will regularly be filed with Parliament, to the point of becoming the object of mockery.

1912: Nellie McClung, an activist for women's right to vote, helps found the Political Equality League in Manitoba. The Montreal Suffrage Association is also founded. At this time, 25% of the population is eligible to vote.

1914-1918: Canada is at war. In 1917, the federal government already enlarged access to ballots, allowing women to the front and mothers and spouses of soldiers to vote.

Canadian women and British women

Canada was among the first countries to grant women the right to vote. Despite the fact that the suffragettes led a fierce battle, no blood was spilled. "Canada proceeded in a very 'civilized' manner", says historian Denyse Baillargeon.

"This is the self-image that English Canada prefers", Ms. Baillargeon states. The thinking is that "we're not violent but doing things calmly, with British reserve."

However, this stands in stark contrast to British suffragettes who actually took shocking action to be heard. "They engaged in urban guerrilla warfare and acts of violence, even planting bombs", the historian explains. "They went on hunger strikes. Emily Davison even died throwing herself under the hooves of the King's horse. Very, very real events have given rise to a whole mythology."

English women had to be patient. They only obtained the right to vote in 1928, 10 years after Canadian women.

British female activist Emmeline Pankhurst address the crowd in 1910. Credit: The Women's Library Collection / LSE on flickr.



DESPITE THIS SYMBOLIC VICTORY,

there is still ground to cover!

LET'S TAKE OUR PLACE IN SOCIETY!



After the federal election of 1921, women occupy a real space in public life. They can become candidates, get elected and named ministers.

"In a certain sense, women's right to vote was the first step in recognizing women as participants in public life," explains political scientist Caroline Andrew of the University of Ottawa.

Even today, parity has yet to be reached. The House of Commons, for example, brings together just fewer than 90 women and nearly 250 men. The Senate has approximately 30 women, 50 men, and 20 vacant seats.

However, the winds of renewal appear to be blowing. "In secondary schools, girls are much more involved in politics than boys," observes the new president of Nouveau-Brunswick's French youth federation, Sue Duguay. When I read Jean Chrétien's biography, only one female politician stood out. In the adult world, we see far fewer women. It's shocking."

"Obtaining the vote was the first step", explains Chi Nguyen, who won a Governor General's Award in 2004 for her work on sexual health and encouraging young women to vote. It's recognition of women as a people. It's the starting point for the issue of equality. The work to change society and make it more egalitarian must continue. There has been much progress but much remains to be done, especially for indigenous and minority communities."

It's in 2007 that the first parity Cabinet was created by the Quebec government. Ottawa will follow their lead in 2015.

Trudeau cabinet 2015. Photo: Canadian Press.



1916 : Manitoba women obtains the right to vote on January 28 1916, followed closely by Saskatchewan on March 14 and Alberta on April 19 of the same year.

1917-1919 : 4 other provinces grants the right to vote to their female citizens (British Columbia - April 5 1917, Ontario - April 12 1917, Nova Scotia - April 26 1918 and New Brunswick - April 17 1919)

1918-1919 : The rules governing universal suffrage continue to be relaxed; female citizens aged 21 years or older who were born in Canada and are landowners officially obtain the right to vote in federal elections. The following year, women can run as candidates in federal elections.

1921 : Some 50% of the Canadian population can vote during the federal election.

1922-1925 : Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland (which has not yet joined Confederation) follow suit in 1922 and 1925, respectively.

1916

1917-1919

1918-1919

1921

1922-1925

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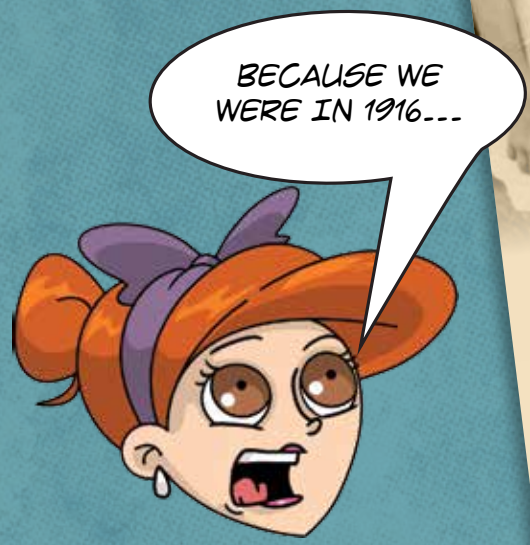
LET'S EXPLORE 100 YEARS OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE WITH GERMAINE

IN THE LAND DOWN UNDER...

It appears that women's right to vote spread around the world by region. New Zealand was the first country to grant women the vote, doing so in 1893. Australia followed suit in 1901.



Getty Images - Toronto Star Archives



BECAUSE WE WERE IN 1916...

Women against the right to vote

Politicians were not the only ones to come out against women's right to vote. A number of groups of French-Canadian women also did as well.

The historian Denyse Baillargeon relates to the gender roles of the period. In French Canada, women's primary focus was the family and ensuring the survival of the nation by bringing children into

the world. "They were not to be distracted from this national mission and had to devote all their energy and efforts to educating their children. By having large families and raising their children they were allowing the French-Canadian people to continue", Ms. Baillargeon states.

However, the suffragettes also presented the responsibilities inherent to motherhood as a plus for democracy. They believed that "women knew better [than men] what was needed to protect the family, raise children in a fair, balanced, and healthy society, and produce good citizens."

THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN CANADA OVER THE YEARS...



1940: Quebec women are now entitled to vote in provincial elections.

1940



1950: The Inuit are granted the right to vote.

1950

1955: The restrictions related to race and religion are removed from Canadian electoral legislation.

1955

1960: "Registered Indians" (including women) obtain the right to vote in federal elections and can run as candidates.

1960

1970: The minimum voting age is lowered from 21 to 18 years of age.

1970

La chaîne qui unit les francophones du pays.



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INDIGENOUS VOTE

Women yes, others no

By the time the 1921 federal election rolled around, women had acquired the vote in Canada and several provinces. However, only 50% of the population could exercise this right.

Even if this election was historic for large numbers of women, some groups would still remain unable to cast their ballots for several decades. For example, people with an intellectual impairment as well as judges (with their duties requiring them to be apolitical) could not vote before the 1990s. Other citizens were also deprived of the right to vote based on their race or religion.

Indigenous people

Indigenous people must be added to the list of the disenfranchised, despite the fact that they had a long history of democratic decision-making. The Iroquois represented one of the oldest existing participatory democracies, and it was the custom of the Mohawks, women included, to democratically select their chief.

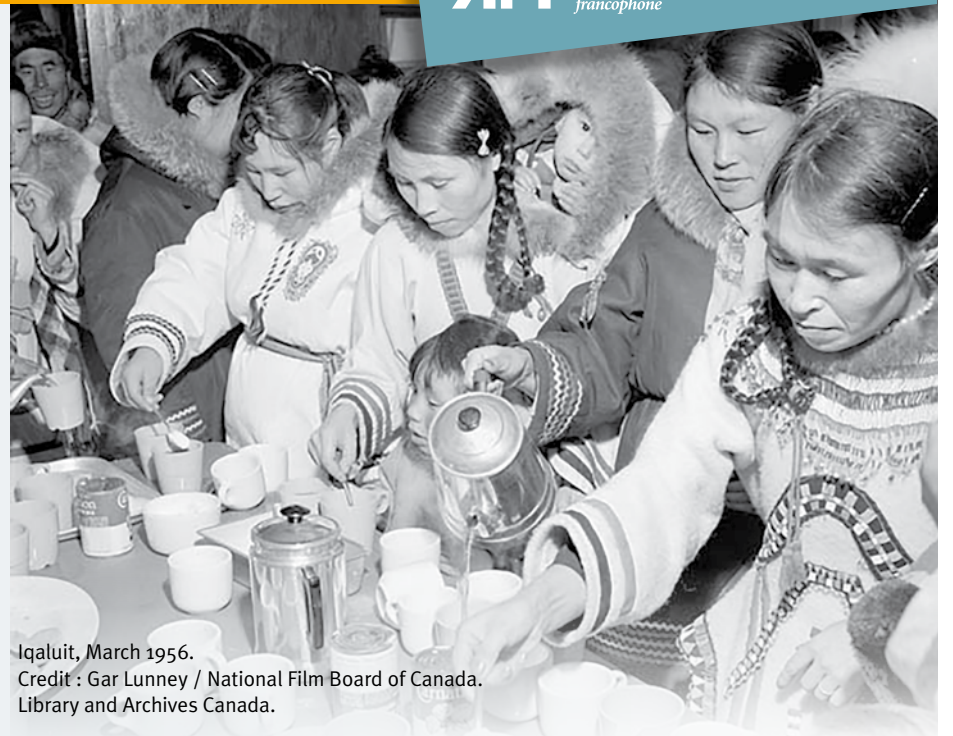
Indeed, at the time of Confederation, indigenous people did in fact have the right to vote, provided they met the requirements in the electoral

legislation and, in particular, renounced their “Indian status.”

But in 1898, racial prejudice, the measures in place in most of the provinces, and the fear that the indigenous people would vote as a group turned the tide and their right to vote was taken away. This news went largely unnoticed, with Canada’s parliamentary system attracting little interest among peoples who had their own political traditions. Indeed, democracy and governance already existed within a number of First Nations.

It would take 50 years for things to change. In *A History of the Vote in Canada*, Elections Canada explains that to protect Canadian sovereignty in the country’s northern territories, communities were established and their residents recorded on a voters list. As a result, “residing” Inuit were the first indigenous group to reacquire the vote in 1950.

Then, in 1960, the government of John Diefenbaker granted the right to vote to the entire indigenous population, with the vote in Parliament on this question being almost unanimous.



Iqaluit, March 1956. Credit : Gar Lunney / National Film Board of Canada. Library and Archives Canada.

Around the world

Canada’s Aboriginals were not alone in being forced to wait to exercise their right to vote. In Australia, both male and female Aboriginals obtained this right in 1967, i.e. 65 years after Australian women.

“New Zealand stands out as an exception”, argues Gertrude Mianda, professor in the Gender and Women’s Studies Program at Glendon College. “Indeed, Maori women obtained voting rights at the same time as other women in 1893.”

The situation in the United States

The situation in the United States was also unusual. Native Americans, both men and women, were granted American citizenship and the right to vote in 1924, i.e. four years after American women. However, there was a dark side to this progress, with African-American women “being unable to go to the polls until 1965”, explains Gertrude Mianda, professor in the Gender and Women’s Studies Program at Glendon College. “They only received full political rights much later, with the passage of the *Voting Rights Act of 1965*, and not in 1920 when the United States extended universal suffrage to women.”

1982 : The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is adopted. Under Section 3, “Every citizen of Canada has the right to vote in an election of the members of the House of Commons or of a legislative assembly.”

1992-1993 : Accessibility to polling stations for persons with reduced mobility is now required by law. Individuals with intellectual impairments and federally appointed judges are now entitled to vote. Prisoners serving sentences of less than two years can exercise their right to vote.

2002 : The entire prison population can vote.

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Choices about

In 2018, the Bank of Canada will issue a bank note featuring an eminent woman in Canada's history. This will mark the first time that a woman other than the Queen has appeared on a bill. Over 460 candidates have been studied by an advisory committee that made recommendations this summer.

According to you, which woman from the suffragette to the Member of Parliament or the engage citizen deserves this distinguished honour?

We also asked the question to some leaders.

For the historian Denyse Baillargeon, Thérèse Casgrain should be considered since she founded the league for Women's right. She also mentions Idola Saint-Jean, who founded the Canadian Alliance for the vote of Women in Quebec in 1927 and has been a candidate in the federal elections of 1930.

What does the President of New Brunswick French youth, Sue Duguay, think about the question? She would like to underline the example given to the career women who followed the traces of the suffragettes. "The first female indigenous to have a seat to the federal Parliament, Ethel Blondin-Andrew, does not only represent women but the power of minority women like the indigenous people", she says in example.



Thérèse Casgrain

MEN AND WOMEN: TWO DIFFERENT ATTITUDES

People's perception of their political influence varies by sex. It appears that, in general, men see themselves as able to influence politics. On the other hand, women see themselves as having strength in numbers. "We realized that women feel they have influence as a group rather than as individuals. Their sense of collective effectiveness is in fact much more realistic", according to political scientist Caroline Andrew.

Does this explain why there are fewer women parliamentarians? It bears repeating that a record number of women took their places in the House of Commons in the fall of 2015, with 88 female Members of Parliament elected that October. Here as well as elsewhere, female parliamentarians are gaining ground.

"We note that in the Scandinavian countries, for example, women have a strong parliamentary presence compared to certain other parts of the Western World," points out Gertrude Mianda, professor in the Gender and Women's Studies Program at Glendon College. "Certain countries currently stand out as a model in the pursuit of parliamentary parity. In other democracies, however, pressure is coming from women to achieve parity."

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Model Parliament in the Senate of Canada.



According to you, which woman from the suffragette to the Member of Parliament or the engage citizen deserves the distinguished honour of appearing on a bill?

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LET'S EXPLORE 100 YEARS OF WOMEN'S RIGHT TO VOTE WITH GERMAINE

AND WHAT IF PEOPLE COULD VOTE AT 16?

Since 1867, 70% of the people entitled to vote in federal elections have actually done so, on average. The 1958 election represents the record high, with nearly 80% of registered voters actually casting their ballots. The October 2008 election represents the record low, with only 58% doing so.

"The right to vote is also the right not to vote", notes Alec Boudreau, outgoing president of the Federation of French-Canadian Youth. "It's a choice."

However, the October 2015 federal election appeared to show a slight recovery among Canadian voters, particularly among young people. Elections Canada recorded the highest participation rate since 1993, with 68.3% of registered voters taking part. "The participation rate among young people increased by 12%, going from 40% to 52%",

Alec Boudreau explains. "This is excellent news. Young people showed they were engaging."

New Brunswick, his home province, has experienced the highest youth voting rate in Canada. While the national average for young people was 40%, the rate in New Brunswick has exceeded 50% in recent years.

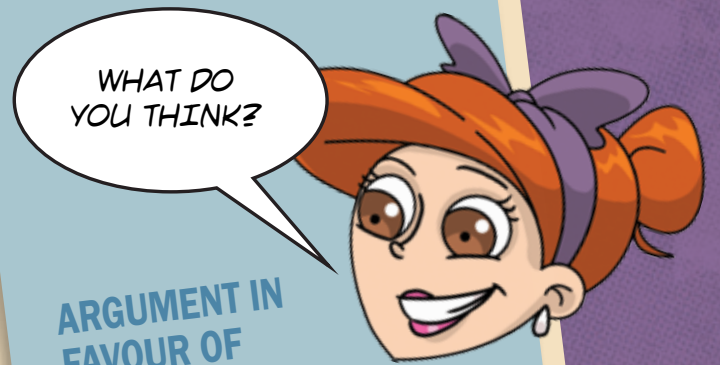
"The fact of living in small communities probably promotes political engagement", Alec Boudreau suggests. "If you like your community and feel heard in your community, you are going to vote." Sociologists and political scientists echo that view. People who are attached to their community and understand how their government works are more inclined to vote and actively participate in public life.

ARGUMENT IN FAVOUR OF VOTING AT 16

It is precisely for this reason that a number of youth associations within the Canadian youth community are campaigning for the right to vote at 16.

Studies show that the younger that voters are the first time they vote, the more likely they are to make voting a habit. It appears that people become better equipped to vote. "With some young people still living at home and attending school, an electoral campaign is an opportunity for them to learn their role in society", explains Alec Boudreau. Discussions in class or at home could encourage these young people and their parents to vote.

Sue Duguay, president of the Federation of New Brunswick French Youth and still a Grade 12 student herself, agrees. With elected officials making decisions affecting young people, young people should be consulted! "We need to wake up and follow the same path as women. People must understand that we have a voice and know what we're doing", explains Sue Duguay.



Young Canadian Leaders (FJCF)

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