

Tarah Brookfield, *Our Voices Must Be Heard: Women and the Vote in Ontario* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018). 256 pp. Hardcover \$26.95.

Tarah Brookfield's *Our Voices Must Be Heard: Women and the Vote in Ontario*, provides a new way in which scholars and those interested in women's suffrage in Ontario can interpret the past. *Our Voices Must Be Heard*, one part of a seven-book series on women's struggle for democracy in Canada, arrives at a new moment in the long struggle for women's political, economic, and social equality. The need for a seven-volume series on women's suffrage is rooted in contemporary struggles with problems such as underlying sexism within professional workplaces, health care, and democratic representation. Even further, the book revisits marginalized narratives, which help to build an understanding of the crucial influence of Black, Indigenous, women of colour, and religious minorities on the feminist project. In an accessible 190 pages (excluding sources and suggestions further reading), the book broadens the scope of study beyond the tiny minority of middle-class white women that dominates the traditional historiography of women's suffrage. Brookfield identifies the influence of rural, urban, and international forces, and shows how a diverse community of women, particularly racialized minorities and other marginalized "voices", were key to political reform and women's rights in Ontario. The series provides a historical understanding of systemic inequities rooted within Canadian politics and society as the book illustrates the long-term struggles of racialized and religious minorities.

Brookfield's analysis utilizes a wide array of personal records, published accounts, and state archives. Her methodology emphasizes stories of women and collective organization. This focus on personal experiences and relationships is useful for understanding how Ontario's complicated history of female activism meshes with parallel histories of abolitionists, pacifists, and socialists, whose ideologies and conception of human rights sometimes linked their causes to the suffrage movement (170). Brookfield captures how the Black, Jewish, and working-class women who were politically active within their own communities remained committed to the idea that enfranchisement was only one way for women's protest against the status quo. Brookfield uses examples such as Edith Anderson Monture (the only First Nations and status Indian in Ontario permitted to vote in 1917), to illustrate the selectivity and tokenistic nature of the process of enfranchisement. Monture was the first female status Indian and registered band member to gain the right to vote in the federal election under *The Military Service Act* because she was a nurse. Yet, Indigenous women could not vote legally until 1960.

The book begins in the seventeenth century with particular attention to gender dynamics before and after colonial contact. Brookfield's focus on histories of Indigenous peoples (Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Delaware, and Wendat) connects the historiography to early teachings of women's roles in Indigenous communities. Brookfield traces how principles of exclusion rooted in colonialism had a lasting influence on women's rights through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chapter two uses the experience of prominent activist figures such as Mary Ann Shadd Carey and Dr. Emily Stowe, to demonstrate how the origins of feminist thought and action came from diverse groups of women. Specifically, Brookfield argues that the biggest changes for women in the 1870s was the shift from charitable to political action and the increasing numbers of women active without supervision of male clergy (40).

Indigenous women, however, had a different experience. Brookfield uses the example of Catherine Sutton (Nahnebahqquay, 1824-65) because she petitioned the Canadian Parliament on behalf of family and neighbours who had lost treaty land and continued to advocate on the injustices of denying treaty rights to women, who, like herself had married white men. Yet, Stowe and Shadd's legacy for championing suffrage are followed through the remaining chapters. Chapter three and four use legislative victories and a series of "female firsts" within male-dominated spheres to exemplify the early reception of feminist concerns in political and legal arenas. Chapter five charts the collective organizing of women, mainly through the efforts of Canadian Suffrage Association President Flora MacDonald Denison and Dr. Augusta Stowe-Gullen (daughter of Dr. Stowe), in the early twentieth century. The chapter documents the strides in reform yet substantial opposition to legislative bills. Finally, chapter six demonstrates how some suffrage activists continued to persist during the grim reality of The Great War, as decades of momentum validated enfranchisement in Ontario. It also highlights the gradual erosion of a sex-exclusive federal franchise and persistence of property restrictions which continued into the 1970s. The final chapter demonstrates changes with respect to some legislation and perceptions of women in professional spaces, but continuity for Indigenous women who were barred from voting provincially in Ontario until 1954 (145).

Brookfield is attuned to the diversity of Ontario's suffrage movement, yet subsequent research on this topic might involve a deeper analysis of points of division and power. *Our Voices Must Be Heard* demonstrates Brookfield's awareness on the importance of *writing in* racialized and marginalized voices of women into traditional Canadian historiography. The book is critical of how inclusion did not equate to much change. She asserts, "as much as the great cause was a progressive idea for its time, it too often focused on inclusion in, rather than transformation of, the status quo," which exemplifies Brookfield's commitment to a theoretical framework that includes less conventional histories (170). However, the author might be reading our present moment of cultural pluralism into the past, and, by

taking an integrationist approach to the conventional narrative, we miss out on the actual dynamics of power and inequality. By committing to looking for “voices” collected from the voiceless, authoritarian silences become neutralized.

In general, the degree and significance of Brookfield’s argument is that women’s suffrage in Ontario would have been impossible without activists that operated at the peripheries. As all women in this time period were at the margins of political participation and representation, and Brookfield remains cognisant of the continuity of earlier trends into contemporary problems, her historical contribution is essential. Brookfield’s observations document the importance of how the political history of women in Canada should not be considered an addition, but rather as part of a collective thrust towards the achievement of offering channels for advancement that made it more difficult to deny anyone access to education, property, and enfranchisement.

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