

A Brief Review of Jan Noel's *Along a River: the First French-Canadian Women* (University of Toronto Press: 2012), available on Amazon], by Suzanne Boivin Sommerville

This book is well-worth reading. Jan Noel presents an overview and synthesis of the status of women in France, in the American Colonies, and in England before turning to French Canada. Some of her findings might surprise you. A strong part of her work is her discussion of the importance of the marvelous women religious, who should be considered as significant as the male secular leaders and founders. She highlights the contributions of the women of noble or upper class society as well as those of the bourgeoisie and also the extraordinary "ordinary" women. Her sections on the role of women in the fur trade need more depth, as she acknowledged to me when I wrote to her about them, but she at least lists many who were active in this area and in other areas usually assumed to be "male". And, she has identified examples that have mainly been ignored by other historians. Her discussion of what happened to women's rights in Canada after the arrival of the British, and her parallel presentation of what happened in France, the American Colonies, and England, is more than valuable and eye-opening. Her writing style is clear and convincing and well-documented, although the book does not have an overall bibliography or an index, two details that made my reading a challenge at times because I check references. I don't know whether it is a trend in modern publishing to use only footnotes or endnotes and an index that is sketchy or absent altogether, but I have seen it in other recent publications. Alas!