

# Veronica Strong-Boag on her award-winning book <sup>[1]</sup>

FEDCAN blog

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**Source:** Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences

**Format:** Video

**Publication Date:** 11 Apr 2012

## AVAILABILITY

Full text and video [4:02] online <sup>[2]</sup>

### Excerpts:

Veronica Strong-Boag, whose work *Fostering Nation?* offers the first-ever comprehensive look at the history of Canada's care of marginalized youngsters, says she was relieved to find signs of hope amid much sadness.

"When I started this work, it was depressing," says Strong-Boag, explaining that as her research progressed, she encountered story after story of children being abused and families destroyed through encounters with the child welfare system.

"It was a relief to me - and somewhat of a surprise - that I was able to finish on a hopeful note," says the winner of this year's Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences Canada Prize for Social Sciences for an English-language scholarly work.

From residential schools and Barnardo children to orphanages and foster parenting, Canada has long struggled with providing care for children who for whatever reason are not, or cannot, be raised by the families into which they are born.

Boys in particular have had a tough time, says Strong-Boag, because they are less wanted in foster care than girls, and far more likely to encounter harsh discipline.

She says the good-news stories of successful adoptions are better known and understood than the stories of the children who go in and out of state care. Yet she argues that understanding the failures can teach us about the things that land families and children in difficulty.

"It's hard to avoid the conclusion that families are routinely romanticized," she says, adding that the idea that "love conquers all" ignores fundamental issues like poverty, the place of women in society and the lack of support for what she calls 'caring labour' - the work of caring physically and emotionally for people.

She says there's a belief that if people did not love their children, it is an individual problem, not a social one. She argues that many problems with child welfare stem instead from the lack of value attributed to caring labour - work done largely by women.

Yet Strong-Boag says that as she chronicled the problems, she also started to see hopeful signs.

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Strong-Boag hopes her work will inform the democratic debate about welfare issues such as these.

**Region:** British Columbia <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** gender <sup>[4]</sup>

children's rights <sup>[5]</sup>

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