

Canada is the world's first woke nation

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Canada, with the exception of French-speaking Quebec, is becoming the world's first woke nation. That is, wokeness is increasingly becoming its identity. To glimpse what happens when a nation is captured by John McWhorter's "religion of anti-racism", look no further than my country.

Earlier this month, mobs pulled down statues of Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth II on the grounds of the Manitoba provincial legislature. From Victoria in the west to Charlottetown in the east, statues of Sir John A Macdonald, the closest thing Canada has to a founding father, have also been toppled or removed. The wave surged in mid-2020 as a response to the Black Lives Matter protests.

As the result of the supposed discovery of mass graves of indigenous schoolchildren on church property – claims which have never properly verified by the media – nearly 30

Catholic churches have been torched or defaced in the past week.

The response from the country's woke prime minister, Justin Trudeau, has been tepid and tardy, even describing the actions as "understandable". Meanwhile, protest from conservative politicians and media has had little cut through due to the relative weakness of conservatism compared with Britain or the US. Despite the rebukes of conservative premiers in Alberta and Manitoba, there has been nothing to match the decisive action to protect heritage taken by leaders like Emmanuel Macron in France or Boris Johnson in Britain.

The reason given for the vandalism is the country's residential schools programme for aboriginal children. Schooling became mandatory for the indigenous population, and while most attended day schools, some were sent far away to buildings maintained by the Anglican and Catholic churches. This ill-conceived project was motivated in part by a desire to assimilate natives into Anglo-Canadian culture and to improve their dire economic prospects. In so doing, it disregarded the wish of many to retain their culture and blithely assumed that an English boarding-

school ethos could be transplanted wholesale. Conditions were often poor, with a failure to isolate ill students. Many struggled, and when pandemics like the Spanish flu of 1918 hit, many paid the ultimate price. Some 150,000 children went through the system, with as many as 6,000 dying.

This tragedy was shameful, but those fired by the religion of "anti-racism" have failed to keep it in perspective. Many native children on reserves and non-native children at boarding schools also died. Moreover, callous disrespect for native culture cannot be equated with the deliberate genocidal events that mar the pasts of many countries. In historical terms, Canada's record is among the best. But activists airbrush the sins of others and bury the country's achievements in order to centre what is sacred in the woke religion: the white mistreatment of minorities. This allows them to construct a simplistic morality play, vent their hatred for the nation's British-European settlers and signal their virtue.

What explains Anglo-Canadian exceptionalism? First, a weak attachment to national history. The country's British population embraced a fervent empire loyalism after 1776, but



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when the empire declined in the 1950s, a vacuum was created. Instead of an emerging popular nationalism based on its northern landscape and culture, socialist intellectuals like Frank Underhill invented the idea of Canada as a Left-wing nation, which became the elite narrative.

In 1971, the country's Left-liberal prime minister, Pierre Trudeau, enshrined the Multiculturalism Act into law, with its duty to promote this new state ideology. Along with some of the highest levels of immigration in the West, this established the foundation for Canada's guiding project of equity and diversity.

Since then, several generations have been taught an official culture of politically correct ultra-sensitivity to minorities in which the pre-1971 past is cast as a racist Gomorrah. Trudeau's son Justin, despite his groping and blackface scandals, has distinguished himself as the world's most politically correct head of state, describing Canada as having "no core identity". This year, he even symbolically cancelled Canada Day by flying the flag at half-mast. As activists destroy the past to arrive at Year Zero, the world's first postnational state is rising from the ashes.