

Canadian history is being erased

Margaret Bird - August 2026

To ensure national heritage is preserved, citizens can take direct action. Express your concerns about the removal of historical monuments and landmarks, and support heritage organizations in their dedication to preserving Canadian heritage, such as the Dominion Institute (now Historica Canada, 2013) or various local historical societies.

Participate actively in municipal elections to have your voice heard.

Promote balanced education -- advocate for comprehensive curriculums that include traditional historical milestones, foundational figures, and exploration alongside critical modern contexts.

Support museums and archives -- by engaging with these institutions, you directly contribute to the funding and preservation of physical artifacts and regional history.

Raise community awareness – use online platforms to rally community support; submit opinion pieces to local newspapers or speak at city council meetings when debates arise over the removal of historical statues or the renaming of civic infrastructure.

Erasing Canada's history is a bad idea. As part of the ever-accelerating agenda to cancel all things deemed offensive, Sir John A. Macdonald's name and likeness is rapidly disappearing from the public square. Even though he was Canada's first prime minister and key architect of Confederation, his statues are being taken down and his name removed from buildings, particularly schools, arguing that his role in establishing Indigenous residential schools, and his racist views, disqualify him from any place of honour in Canada today.

But here's the problem. If you cancel Macdonald, why stop there? Many 19th Century historical Canadians held unacceptable views, which is why many other buildings will soon (supposedly) need new names. For example, trustees for the Thames Valley District School Board in London, Ontario, recently voted to rename 12 schools named after historical figures with ties to racism or colonialism including Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Queen Victoria, Lord Elgin, Lord Nelson, Louis-Joseph de Montcalm and others. Sadly, it isn't surprising to see Wilfrid Laurier on this list. Although considered one of Canada's greatest prime ministers, he also held racist views evidenced by the fact that his government expanded Indigenous residential schools and enacted discriminatory immigration policies. If Macdonald deserves cancellation, so does Laurier.

Several major Canadian cities (Victoria, Regina, Prince Albert) are named after Queen Victoria or one of her immediate relatives, yet trustees at Thames Valley apparently believe students will be traumatized by attending Victoria Public School because Queen Victoria and other British officials, such as Lord Elgin and Lord Nelson, represent British colonialism. But when will Thames Valley trustees realize in what fair city their school board resides? Hopefully, this discovery won't be too traumatic for them!

Perhaps the most surprising name on the list is Louis-Joseph de Montcalm, the French general who tried to defend Quebec City from British attack during the famous Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759. One could argue that naming a school in London, Ontario, after a major French general, is an honourable gesture. But, since Montcalm lived during the 18th century, his views were likely even more unacceptable than those held by people living in the 19th century.

The estimated cost of Thames Valley's renaming project will not be cheap -- \$47,000. This doesn't include the cost of new signage for each building nor the opportunity cost of trustees spending time renaming things rather than improving academic achievement. Schools are supposed to educate students about our history, not erase it. By naming schools after major historical figures, we ensure these individuals are not forgotten, instead of erasing them, and remaining ignorant about our past.

Fortunately, there's a better option. Instead of renaming schools, we should educate students about the legacy behind their current names and make sure students know about both the good and the bad things these people did, along with an understanding of historical context -- use these names as teaching opportunities, now and in the future.

By keeping the names of historical Canadians on schools, we don't endorse racism or colonialism; we recognize that Canada's history is sometimes messy and that our past prime ministers, monarchs, generals and governors general were real people with strengths and weaknesses -- people of their times.

Students must learn more about Canadian history, not less. Let's not rename buildings or tear down statues to satisfy ill-conceived notions of social justice in contemporary times (Michael Zwaagstra – teacher & Senior Fellow of the Fraser Institute).

The Dominion Institute asked Canadians to rank historical figures, online. Twenty-eight thousand people voted in the survey, held to mark Canada Day 1999. Among the honoured men and women were scientists, activists and politicians. Rudyard Griffiths, of the institute, says the list reflects the importance Canadians give to their civil heroes. [CBC News, last updated Nov 2000].

Here's the top ten: Terry Fox who raised \$250 million for cancer; Sir Frederick Banting who saved millions of lives through the discovery of insulin; Former prime ministers Lester Pearson and John A. Macdonald; Metis

leader Louis Riel; Tommy Douglas, the father of Medicare; Sir Isaac Brock and Laura Secord, heroes of the War of 1812; Billy Bishop, Great War flying ace; Nellie McClung, the Manitoba feminist who fought for women’s voting rights.

Harrison Faulkner says “Canadian history is under attack! Canadian statues, landmarks, schools, churches and roads are being renamed, toppled, burned and erased before our eyes. The campaign to erase and rewrite Canadian history has unfortunately been relentless. This must be stopped and all these items restored and rebuilt!”