

# I am Canadian

by Brian Lockhart

As Canada Day approaches, it is a good time to reflect on what it means to live in this great country.

Over the past few hundred years, Canada has been transformed from a wild, vast, untamed area into a modern, vibrant, and thriving nation with its own identity, culture, and way of doing things.

This nation was built on the backs of the strong and determined who overcame great adversity and huge challenges.

It was built on the shoulders of those people who picked up an axe to do the back-breaking work of clearing land to create a farm and use the logs from those trees to build their first home in a new place.

As part of my constant research, I am always exploring those cemeteries that are referred to as 'pioneer cemeteries.'

They are the places where the names of those early settlers are carved in stone, telling the story of people who brought civilization, built the mills, created towns, and built the churches where many of these cemeteries were first established.

Many of the names on those cemetery headstones are still alive in their descendants who still live and farm in the same areas their great-great-grandfathers cleared and thrived.

We should celebrate our glorious past and look forward to a future based on the values and basic work ethic that created this nation.

Over the past decade, there have been 'apologists' who, for some reason, think we need to apologize for even being here. They say this while living in their condo in downtown Toronto and taking advantage of everything they've been gifted by others' time and hard work.

They want to erase names like Dundas, Ryerson, and MacDonald for supposed 'bad decisions,' when they should be celebrating our forefathers for having the vision to create a working government and to plan the course of a nation through a very difficult time in our history.

Don't apologize for being successful. Don't apologize for working hard. Don't apologize for showing leadership and creating something from nothing.

Rather, celebrate the accomplishments of this nation.

Celebrate the fact that you can actually drive across this nation from sea to sea. Celebrate the freedoms you enjoy, and probably take for granted.

In many countries, standing in a group on a street corner or criticizing a bad government decision can get you arrested, jailed, and, in some cases, eliminated.

Celebrate the fact that it is not in our nature to be warlike; however, when the call arises, we answer.

Our defining moments as a nation came at Confederation, at Vimy Ridge, and on the beaches at the D-Day invasion of Europe.

It was forged on the Plains of Abraham in a battle that determined the destiny of an entire continent.

The world knows us as a place with a cold climate and a lot of snow. But we have beautiful summers, more lakes than any other country on earth, and the largest shoreline of any nation.

We have the Rocky Mountains, the Great Plains, the Great Lakes, the massive forests of Ontario and Quebec, and East Coast charm. We have more wasteland than most countries have land.

We have unique things that define our identity, like a Mountie on horseback, maple syrup, butter tarts, Nanaimo Bars, canoes, toboggans, and a toque to keep your head warm. We have the Caesar cocktail, which apparently you won't find anywhere else.

We have large modern cities with skyscrapers and professional sports teams, and small towns where the fast lane doesn't exist, but a quality of life does.

We are home to a vast array of wildlife, including deer, bears, moose, muskox, snakes, and every small critter you can think of, and we have laws to protect them.

We are a leader in natural resources and supply the world with much-needed materials.

This Canada Day, don't just wave a flag and join the party; celebrate the fact that you are here and enjoy everything that is available.

While small groups in this country like to protest, wave foreign flags, and call for violence, the rest of us know the real truth.

It is our country, and it is up to all of us to revel in its past and keep it for future generations.