

Nonreligion in a Complex Future (NCF) Canadian Scoping Exercise Report

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INTRODUCTION

This report outlines the findings of a scoping exercise on nonreligion in Canada across the five key areas of the NCF project: health (Ted Malcolmson), migration (Sana Patel), law (Cory Steele), the environment (Lauren Strumos), and education (Solange Lefebvre). The main purpose of the exercise was to identify research gaps in literature related to nonreligion in Canada by exploring what research has already been done on nonreligion. In addition to peer reviewed articles and books, this exercise incorporated non-academic sources to help identify manifestations of nonreligion currently unexplored in scholarship. These sources include news articles, government surveys and reports, various forms of media, and the websites of nonreligious organizations. Internet sources authored by nonreligious individuals also offered insight into nonreligious ways of thinking that are absent from qualitative research. The following general keywords were used to conduct the scoping exercise: agnostic, atheism, atheist, de-churched, freethinkers, humanists, humanism, infidel, irreligion, irreligious, nonbelief, nonbelievers, nones, secularism, secularists, secular spirituality, spiritual but not religious, spirituality, unaffiliated, unbelief, and unchurched

The first section of this report offers a brief overview of nonreligious demographics in Canada. The second section summarizes the findings of the scoping exercise and is divided by the NCF project's focal areas. Emphasis is placed on existing academic literature though suggestions are also made for future possible directions of NCF research. A list of surveys that may prove helpful for future research is then provided. Appendix I contains a non-exhaustive list of nonreligious organizations in Canada, and Appendix II contains a non-exhaustive list of documentaries and art. The bibliography is divided into three sections: the first contains news sources and blog posts, the second contains journal articles, books, and reports that engage with Canada or have a Canadian author, and the third contains sources that address nonreligion beyond Canada.

NONRELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY

Since the early 1900s, and particularly since the 1960s, there has been a substantial increase in the number of nonreligious Canadians (Clarke and Macdonald 2017). According to the most recent National Household Survey conducted by Statistics Canada in 2011, approximately 24% of the total Canadian population identifies as having "no religion" (Statistics Canada 2011). In contrast, only 7.3% of the Canadian population identified as having "no religion" in 1981, and less than 1% of Canadians identified as nonreligious in 1931 and 1941 (Statistics Canada 2001; Dominion Bureau of Statistics 1931, 1941). However, the actual number of nonreligious Canadians is somewhat unclear as survey findings are influenced by the way questions are phrased and administered. Brian Clarke and Stuart MacDonald point out that Canadian censuses prior to 1971 were not self-enumerated and as a result, individuals who advised enumerators that they had no religion were quite often mis-categorized as having not stated their religion. This caused the number of Canadians without a religion to be underrepresented in official statistics (2017, 227). Moreover, having "no religion" only became a valid census response in Canada in 1971, meaning that those without a religion had no way to properly identify as such prior to the 1970s (Clarke and Macdonald 2017, 227).

Given the complexities surrounding census data and surveys that measure nonreligion, Clarke and Macdonald suggest that the total percentage of nonreligious Canadians is substantially higher than what the 2011 National Household Survey reports. They suggest that 55% of the total Canadian population are now “de- and non-churched” (2017, 209). Furthermore, as Wilkins-Laflamme specifies, “the religiously unaffiliated in Canada do not form one homogenous group devoid of all forms of religiosity” (2015, 495). Nonreligious Canadians may still practice forms of religiosity like prayer or meditation, attend church services, and hold religious or spiritual beliefs to different extents (Wilkins-Laflamme 2015).

Table 1: Data on nonreligious identification for Canada, provinces, and territories, based on the 2011 National Household Survey estimates. Source: Statistics Canada Catalogue no. 99-010-X2011032.

	No religious affiliation (total)	Agnostic	Atheist	Humanist	No religion	No religious affiliation, n.i.e.
Canada	7,850,605	36,285	48,675	3,455	7,745,535	16,660
Newfoundland and Labrador	31,330	155	290	0	30,780	95
Prince Edward Island	19,815	70	345	0	19,365	15
Nova Scotia	197,670	710	1,075	115	195,335	435
New Brunswick	111,435	755	800	55	109,585	235
Québec	937,545	3,165	10,890	370	920,900	2,215
Ontario	2,927,795	13,815	16,710	1,445	2,890,595	5,230
Manitoba	311,100	1,625	1,715	150	307,110	505
Saskatchewan	246,305	1,570	1,470	75	242,685	510
Alberta	1,126,130	5,885	6,810	440	1,110,200	2,795
British Columbia	1,908,285	8,305	8,425	760	1,886,235	4,570
Yukon	16,630	125	60	0	16,400	35
Northwest Territories	12,455	80	50	0	12,310	0
Nunavut	4,105	25	30	0	4,040	10

FOCAL AREAS

1. Health

Research on nonreligion and health in Canada focuses on how religiosity influences mental health. From a sample of 56 patients undergoing cognitive-behavioural therapy, Baetz et al. (2006) found that those who reported religion as being very important had higher improvements in their anxiety symptoms and perceived stress levels than those who did not. This supports Dilmaghani’s (2018a) finding that those who self-identify as either strongly religious or strongly secular report better mental health than those who are moderately religious. Dilmaghani (2018c) also suggests that secular Canadians have lower fertility rates than the religious, based on data from the Canadian General Social Surveys conducted from 1900 to 2011. Some link high levels of religious service attendance to a low risk of depression (Baetz et al. 2004, 2006; Balbuena et al. 2013), while Speed and Fowler (2016) argue that religious attendance detrimentally impacts those who do not identify as religious. Using data from the 2012 Canadian Community Health Survey, Speed (2018) also concludes that the moderately religious have different behaviours for medical

screenings (e.g., mammograms) than the secular and very religious as they were the ones to most likely follow a screening schedule.

Differences between the religious and nonreligious are also found in topics surrounding addiction. Tuck et al. (2017) looked at data from a Centre for Addictions and Mental Health phone survey and concluded that those who identify as not religious have significantly higher odds of risk drinking compared to those who identify as religious. The British Columbia Human Rights Tribunal is determining whether mandatory Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous (AA/NA) programs, which require one to submit to god or a higher power, discriminate against atheists. This decision comes in response to an atheist nurse who was forced to resign because he did not follow a mandatory AA program (*Wood v. Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and another [No. 2] 2019*). There are a number of organizations that offer nonreligious alternatives to AA. Many are international but have chapters in Canada (see Appendix 1).

Abortion is another public health topic highlighting different religious and nonreligious perspectives. Non-emergency abortions are not required to be performed by hospitals and many will not perform the procedure for various reasons. Ferris et. al (1998) found that some of the reasons why certain Ontario hospitals do not offer abortion services, which includes those related to religious affiliation, recruiting and maintaining trained staff, and the harassment of hospital staff from anti-abortion protestors. Johnstone (2017) notes that hospitals are much less likely to perform abortions than they used to because of budget cuts and the consolidation of secular hospitals with religious ones that have policies against abortion. Approximately 16% of hospitals in Canada perform abortions, compared to 66.7% in 1966 (Johnstone 2017, 128). Moreover, abortions are now more commonly performed in clinics instead of hospitals, making access to abortion limited for those living in rural areas without the population to support a clinic.

Overlap between the areas of health and law occur in legal cases surrounding physician-assisted dying. In the Supreme Court's 2015 *Carter v. Canada* decision, the Court ruled that prohibitions on physician-assisted dying violated section 7 of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. This decision is significant because it transitions away from notions of life and death that have been traditionally rooted in, and guided by, religion. The Ontario Court of Appeal recently ruled in *Christian Medical and Dental Society of Canada v. College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario* (2019) that a physician is required to provide an effective referral for procedures like abortion and physician-assisted dying without undue delay. Medical professionals who acted as interveners argued on religious grounds that this requirement makes them feel complicit in the act of assisted dying. There are also cases in the Ontario Court of Appeal awaiting decision which deal with religious objections to declarations of death based on neurological determinations rather than the cessation of heart beat (*Ouanounou v. Humber River Hospital et al. [2017 ONSC 6511]*; *McKitty v. Hayani [2018 ONSC 4015]*). In addition to physician-assisted dying, palliative care and chaplaincy are two areas where nonreligion is having a visible impact on Canada's healthcare system, but the literature thus far has only approached these topics through broadening the religious category into the idea of spirituality (see Bramadat et al. 2013; Reimer-Kirkham et al. Forthcoming 2020).

If the NCF project takes a broad approach to health to include death and related rituals, one possible area for future research is ghost bikes. These are roadside memorials placed where a cyclist has been hit and killed by a motorist and consists of a non-operational bicycle that has been painted flat white. These memorials generally do not contain religious iconography. Dobler (2011) provides an overview of the development of ghost bikes, which first appeared in St. Louis, Missouri in 2003, and explores their role in collective identity and political action in a primarily American context. Costantini (2019) also offers an American perspective through examining the role of ghost bikes in performance and public grief. Much ghost bike material is online, however, with the largest dedicated website being 'ghostbikes.org.' Ghost

bikes also appear in general online groups for Canadian cyclists as well as dedicated social media pages, such as the Facebook group, 'Vélos Fantôme Montréal - Ghostbikes Montreal.'

The phenomenon of 'ghost bikes' is part of a larger area of ritual expression that is largely nonreligious in nature, and this is the question of public popular (as opposed to official) memorials commemorating traumatic death events like terrorist attacks, mass killings and the violent death of prominent public personalities. This is an international phenomenon that has been explored in the context of various countries around the world, but research in Canada is still lacking (see Margery and Sanchez-Carretero 2011)

Along these lines, another potential research topic is the global phenomenon of death cafes. Death cafes are informal meetups for people to come together and talk about death outside of a religious framework. The first one was held in 2004 in Switzerland by sociologist Bernard Crettaz, who outlines the origins, demographics, and early discussions of death cafes in *Cafes Mortels: Sortir la mort du silence* (2010). Other sociological accounts of death cafes are based in the United States and mostly have small data sets (Fong 2017; Baldwin 2017). There has been some media coverage of the topic and the phenomenon is largely tracked by the website 'deathcafe.com.' Death cafes appear to be in every one of the NCF comparator countries, but most are found in the United States, United Kingdom, and Canada.

2. Migration

Research relevant to nonreligion and migration in the Canadian context focuses on the (non)religious identities of newcomers and the religious affiliations of groups that sponsor and support them. Beaman et al. (2016) consider, for instance, how the identities of Muslim and Christian refugees are shaped by public discourse through analysing media sources and online statements from settlement agencies. They show that nonreligious refugees may reconfigure or exaggerate their identities to receive sponsorship and support from religious and nonreligious groups alike. Bramadat (2014) interviewed individuals working or volunteering for religiously affiliated refugee settlement agencies in the Victoria and Vancouver areas. Many did not express direct concern over the projected decline of such agencies, which are primarily Christian, even though it is unclear if other groups or the state will fill their void. Furthermore, Bramadat locates "closed secularism" in relations between religious refugee settlement agencies and the state, for which the former translates their work into a "so-called neutral secular discourse of values" to communicate with the latter (2014, 931). While state support for newcomers is to some degree financial (Wilkinson 2013), there exist in Canada a wide variety of state (federal, provincial, and municipal) services intended to assist newcomers in their adaptation; and these are largely nonreligious in nature and sometimes even expressly so (see Mooney 2009, for Montreal/Quebec; for the country overall, Bloemraad 2006). Yet immigrants often turn to religious communities for spiritual and material support, such as language training and finding a job or a place to live (Angus Reid Institute 2018). However, expressly nonreligious organizations can sometimes also help with the integration process. The Humanist Association of Toronto, for example, has helped sponsor a Syrian refugee family and provide assistance to them after they arrived in Canada (Klein 2017).

Qualitative research also considers the self-identities of immigrants and refugees. Primarily, Nourpanah (2014) conducted ten in-depth interviews with Afghan government-assisted refugees in Halifax to explore their integration and settlement experiences. Some interviewees described religion as an expression of Afghan identity while others stressed that not all Afghans are religious. Beyer (2015) conducted 300 in-depth interviews with adult children of post-1970 immigrants to Canada. He found that participants' lived experiences and self-understandings led to both clear and distinct religious identities, as well as nuanced

identities that range from religious to nonreligious (Beyer and Ramji 2013). Quantitatively, between 2001 and 2011, of 2.2 million immigrants to Canada, 445,000 identified as having no religion, around 20% or close to the average for the overall immigrant population (see NHS Statistics Canada tables at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/index-eng.cfm> <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/index-eng.cfm>).

Recent news stories highlight Canada's role in helping refugees and asylum seekers who affiliate with nonreligion, lack religion or denounce religious faith and face severe repercussions in their home countries as a result. These are often Muslim-majority countries with blasphemy laws such as Bangladesh, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia. Nonreligious organizations have played a role in supporting these asylum seekers, including the British Columbia Humanist Association (Bushfield 2015) and the Centre for Inquiry Canada (Chowdhry 2015). Edmonton Atheists also has a program to help refugees fleeing religious persecution in their home countries (see Appendix I). Though the work of these nonreligious organizations indicates a positive outlook on migration by nonreligious peoples, other sources suggest another perspective. Writing for the Canadian publication *Humanist Perspectives*, Meyer (2018) argues that immigration negatively impacts the environment of receiving countries like Canada, while Danesh (2019) argues that unqualified immigrants are a burden to Canadian society and the environment. One possible direction for future NCF research is to explore with depth the role nonreligious organizations play in assisting immigrants and refugees coming to Canada, as well as the various views that nonreligious peoples have towards immigrants and refugees.

3. Law

It has only been within the last decade or so that scholarship has started to explore intersections of nonreligion and law. Much of this scholarship, however, only addresses nonreligion and law indirectly. As a result, questions about nonreligion are usually of secondary importance and briefly glossed over. This is seen in the freedom of religion literature which primarily focuses on *religion*, not *nonreligion* (Maclure and Taylor 2011; Sandberg 2011; Seljak 2012; Sharma 2011; Waldron et al. 2017). Underlying most of this literature are questions related to how religion is framed in law and what beliefs and practices, particularly those not of Christian origin, should be afforded legal protection in Canada in the context of growing religious diversity (Seljak 2012; Maclure and Taylor 2011). Further, by focusing primarily on religion, this scholarship portrays nonreligion as less important an object of study (Maclure and Taylor 2011; Sandberg 2011; Waldron et al. 2017; Witten 2016). Indeed, it does not portray nonreligion as such at all, pointing to another significant gap, which is the question of what nonreligion might even be in law (as in other areas) so that it could be addressed and researched.

Official documents published by the Government of Canada also exclude nonreligion in the context of religious freedom. The Global Affairs (Government of Canada n.d.) report, "Freedom of religion or belief," for example, fails to mention the nonreligious despite wishing to advance "freedom of religion or belief internationally." Reference to any type of nonreligious worldview is only done so with one mention of "secular humanists." Overall, the diversity that nonreligion entails goes unrecognized in government sources that address questions pertaining to religious freedom, which points to a growing need to examine government approaches to nonreligion.

While literature that directly explores nonreligion and law in the Canadian context is certainly lacking, there is a growing body of research that prioritizes nonreligion and law in the context of religious diversity. Lori G. Beaman, for instance, has published quite extensively on: atheist involvement in Canadian (and international) legal cases (Beaman 2015, 2016; Beaman et al. 2018); the need to include the nonreligious

in questions of religious diversity in social institutions such as law (Beaman 2017c); and the transition from religious to nonreligious ways of understanding topical social issues in law such as access to physician-assisted dying (Beaman and Steele 2018). Beaman (2013a) and Burchardt (2017a, 2017b) have also published on the transformation of religious symbols to “culture” to “preserve religious hegemony.” This transformation highlights how, like religious minorities, the nonreligious are often excluded from equal participation in Canadian society (Beaman 2013a, 2013b, 2016).

Recent scholarship also explores nonreligion through questions concerning the idea of state neutrality in Canadian law (Amarnath and Bird 2016); the beliefs of atheists as portrayed in law (Benson 2011); the historical discrimination and negative portrayals of the nonreligious (or irreligious) by various social institutions including law in Canada (Marks 2017; McAdam 2018; Tomlins 2018); “social historical” surveys of Canadian unbelief and the challenging of various laws such as the Lord’s Day Act (Hanowski 2018); and the participation rates of the nonreligious in political and legal matters (Dilmaghani 2017). Iain T. Benson (2011) has explored the beliefs of atheists in law and critiques the idea that atheists (especially New Atheists) lack any beliefs at all when it comes to legal matters.

Canadian case law also increasingly addresses various aspects of nonreligion, primarily that of atheism. In the Supreme Court of Canada’s 2015 *Mouvement laïque québécois v. Saguenay (City)* case, an atheist from Québec challenged the constitutionality of opening town hall meetings with a prayer. The Court ruled in favour of the atheist, holding that the use of prayer to open town hall meetings violates the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. In a recent report published by the British Columbia Humanist Association, Phelps Bondaroff et al. (2019) analyzed 873 prayers delivered in the British Columbia Legislature between October 6, 2013 and February 12, 2019. Their analysis revealed that 71.2% of all prayers delivered in the legislature were religious and that of the prayers where they could identify the religion, “Christian prayers represented 20.2% of all the prayers delivered in the BC Legislature” (Bondaroff et al. 2019, 9). Perhaps surprisingly, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only legislature in Canada that has never opened with a prayer (Bondaroff et al. 2019, 14).

Other legal cases alongside *Saguenay* come from lower courts and tribunals, such as the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario, which ruled in its 2013 *R.C. v. District School Board of Niagara* decision that the notion of “creed” as protected in Ontario is to include “atheism” and that discrimination against a person because they are an atheist is prohibited under the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. There has also been an influx of Canadian immigration cases involving atheists who are claiming refugee status in Canada after fleeing highly religious countries—particularly those that are predominately Muslim—for fear of discrimination because of their nonreligious identity. Outside of legal cases, the law interacts with (non)religion through zoning bylaws that impact buildings currently or previously used as places of worship (Shum 2017; Lynch 2013, 2016).

Numerous nonreligious organizations throughout Canada actively advocate for the inclusion of nonreligious (or “secular”) beliefs under section 2(a) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. The British Columbia Humanist Association (2017) has, for example, advocated for making “nonreligion a protected class” under British Columbia Law and the British Columbia Human Rights Code. It has also called for a modernization of the charity framework in Canada to treat religious and nonreligious charities equally (British Columbia Humanist Association 2018). Humanists International (2018) publishes an annual global report of laws which violate freedom of religion, belief, and expression, and includes an examination of Canadian laws that discriminate against the nonreligious. Despite the growing body of scholarship pertaining to nonreligion and law in Canada, it remains miniscule compared to available literature in the American and European contexts.

4. The Environment

Research addressing nonreligion and the environment is largely comparative in that the environmental behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs of nonreligious individuals are compared with those who are religious. Dilmaghani (2018d) uses the Government of Canada's 2013 General Social Survey to compare the environmental philanthropy of 'strictly seculars,' 'unchurched believers,' 'nonaffiliates,' and 'very' and 'average' religious peoples. Dilmaghani concludes that strictly seculars donate the most money to environmental causes but are less likely than religious peoples to volunteer, which reflects a low social capital of secularists more generally. Dilmaghani's comparative approach fits within a body of literature that reaches beyond Canada and asks whether religious or nonreligious peoples are more environmentally friendly (Hayes 2000, 2001; Sherkat and Ellison 2007; Morrison et al. 2015).

Other comparative approaches capture religious and nonreligious perspectives of environmental themes like stewardship. De Groot and van den Born's (2007) five Christian and five Muslim interviewees favoured a relationship with nature as stewards with responsibility towards god. All five Native American respondents rejected stewardship and its implied divisions among humans, god, and nature. Nevertheless, some Indigenous peoples in Canada use language of 'steward' and 'stewardship' in discourses surrounding the legal protection of their lands from exploitation and development (De Groot and van den Born 2007; Ross 2005; *Ktunaxa Nation v. British Columbia [Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations]*). The six self-identified secular respondents preferred a steward with responsibilities toward future generations instead of god. This approach demonstrates how although the concept of stewardship stems from religious understandings of nature, it can be conceptualized from nonreligious perspectives (Roach 2000). Through conducting interviews with sea turtle rescue volunteers, Beaman (2017b) shows that nonreligious people may also frame their relationship with nonhuman animals outside of the language of stewardship, using non-hierarchical language and notions of equality instead.

Another comparative theme is emotional responses humans have towards nature, often expressed as 'wonder' and 'awe.' Two of Klassen's (2011) interviewees identified as Atheist Witches and distinguished themselves from other pagans by believing that feelings of wonder with nature do not depend upon an external reality of nature. Two of the three male secularists in de Groot and van der Born's study understood so-called spiritual experiences in nature as emotional responses to nature's beauty. These perspectives exemplify how emotional responses to nature do not presuppose religious belief (Benson 2013) and can be comprehended outside of phenomenological terms (Bauman 2018). Other sources indicate that some nonreligious people understand their emotional connection to nature within a spiritual framework. For example, members of the Sacred Secular Sanctuary, a non-profit secular humanist organization in Ontario, understands "feelings of awe, wonder, mystery and majesty" with nature as expressions of spirituality (see Appendix I).

Connections between nature and 'spirituality' are found in both scholarly and non-scholarly sources. In a document on ecological restoration, for example, Parks Canada (2008) states that in addition to conservation objectives, such as improving biodiversity and landscape connectivity, there are "deeper" reasons for ecological restoration like "spiritual or religious ethics." In their executive summary for the How Canadians Value Nature study, Haluza-DeLay et al. (2009) list multiple reasons for why nature is important to Canadians, the first of which is "spiritual," followed by "aesthetic." The three female secular respondents in de Groot and van der Born's study explained that nature is spiritual, whereas the secular men viewed nature as "pure matter, without having a soul or a spirit" (339). Some call environmentalism itself a form of secular spirituality or religion (Maintenay 2008; Somerville 2013; Johnston 2013) while

others distinguish religious environmentalism from secular environmentalism (Appolloni and Eaton 2016; Gottlieb 2007). Bahan (2016) notes that environmentalism has particularly impacted the secular spirituality of Cascadian millennials which results in an “earth-based spirituality.” Shibley similarly describes a secular spirituality of “beliefs and practices regarding sacred nature” that is found throughout Cascadia and plays a role in public life, although Cascadia itself is a “relatively ‘unchurched’ region” (2008, 37-39).

In addition to ‘spirituality,’ language of the ‘sacred’ also appears in discussions of human-nature relationships. James (1998) locates the sacred outside of a Protestant Christian framework in everyday human experiences which are not usually thought of as religious. These include Canadians’ views of nature and outdoor activities like canoe trips. Watson (2010) argues that people need a biocentric religion that holds nature as sacred to effectively respond to the world’s environmental crisis. This perspective is linked to a broader debate that questions whether or not spirituality is needed to solve the environmental crisis (Murray 2013; Washington 2018). Paper (2012) argues that Canadian courts understand religion from a Christian perspective which contributes to a lack of legal recognition for Aboriginals’ sacred objects and sites. This occurred in the Supreme Court’s 2017 *Ktunaxa Nation v. British Columbia (Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations)* case in which the Ktunaxa Nation framed the significance of their sacred site in accordance to the Court’s belief-based understanding of religion. The Court decided that the Ktunaxa Nation’s sacred site fell outside legal religious freedom protection as found in section 2(a) of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*.

Overlap between the areas of law and the environment emerge in sources dealing with the status of animals in law. Bisgould (2014) critiques federal and provincial law for conceptualizing animals as “unfeeling machines” (154). This approach to animals, according to Bisgould, emerges from John Locke’s theory of property rights which derive from biblical views of creation and human dominion over nature. Though Canada’s animal cruelty laws fall behind those of other Western countries (Gacek 2019), animals and their wellbeing have begun to receive greater attention in legal contexts. In 2019, Ontario opened a public consultation that will help shape new animal welfare laws (Government of Ontario 2019) and parliament passed legislation to phase out the captivity of whales and dolphins as well as prohibit shark finning (Government of Canada 2019). Ethical veganism, described by some animal rights activists as a ‘secular belief’ (Labchuk 2016), can now be protected as a creed under the Ontario Human Rights Code (Ontario Human Rights Commission 2016). Further, a retired lawyer in Toronto has argued in the Ontario Superior Court that activists should be able to represent animals in legal settings like courts (McQuigge 2019). The scoping exercise did not find scholarship addressing (non)religious conceptualizations of animals and their legal standing in Canada, making it a possible future direction for innovative NCF research.

Another area for future research is natural or green burials. Natural burials benefit the environment by eschewing harmful resources used in traditional burials, such as chemicals from embalming and nonbiodegradable caskets, while also forming protected green spaces that benefit flora and fauna in place of traditional cemeteries. The Green Burial Society of Canada (see Appendix I) describes natural burial as a “spiritually fulfilling alternative to conventional burial or cremation. It is an environmentally sensitive practice: the body is returned to the earth to decompose naturally and contribute to new life.” The Natural Burial Association (see Appendix I), which also focuses on the environmental benefits of natural burial, states, “We work with all faith communities, and those without any religious affiliation in this final rite of passage.” The Natural Burial Association is based in Ontario has met with the Humanist Association of Toronto to discuss how natural burials fit with humanist values (Dowsett 2013).

5. Education and Nonreligion in Québec

The terms ‘nonreligion’ and ‘nones’ are largely absent from research on education in Canada, but the terms ‘atheism’ and ‘nonbelief’ do appear, especially in the context of Québec (e.g. McCarthy 1979). An interest in atheism is evident throughout the writings of historically prominent philosophers (e.g. Sartre, Camus, Marx, Freud, Lacan). Simard (1998) analyzes the influence of these thinkers on Québec education and in particular on studies of philosophy and literature. A well-known columnist in Québec, Patrick Lagacé (2011), has written about leaving Catholicism for atheism during college when he studied Albert Camus. There are studies from the 1990s that reveal how many college students were ‘distant’ from religion but not completely indifferent to it (Côté 1992). The terms ‘individualization’ and ‘personal religion’ also point toward nonreligion by presenting a distance between an individual and institutional religion (Gauthier 1996).

Québec society during the 1970s was characterized by a rupture of religious practices and religious understandings as sources of alienation for many people. This corresponded with greater religious pluralization and the weakening of Christianity. Sociologists and theologians mostly researched these changes during the 1980s and 1990s. Germain et al. (1986), for example, show that during the 1970s, young people under twenty-five years of age did not speak about or show a substantial interest in religion. Lemieux and Milot (1992) analyze more than four hundred statements of belief (*énoncés de croyances*) from qualitative interviews and place them into one of four categories: religious, cosmic, social, and individual. These include religious, supernatural, secular, and nonreligious beliefs. Lemieux and Milot (1992) also analyze the function of belief for individuals and in particular how individuals find it useful, experiment with it, and make sense of it. Additional research shows that people across different generations have moved away from Christianity and towards pluralistic spiritual or secular beliefs. This group includes elderly people who have deep and harsh criticisms of religion, made evident through their sharing of stories on ‘breaking away’ from religion (Grand’Maison and Lefebvre 1994; Lefebvre 2018). The television program *Second Regard* did an episode on young non-believers (*non-croyants*) who demonstrated a higher tolerance of religion than older generations (*Second Regard* 2014).

Further during the 1970s and up until the 1990s, Québec was quite involved in the Catholic Church’s Pontifical Council for Dialogue with Non-believers. This was absorbed into the more general Pontifical Council for Culture in 1993 (Office national pour le dialogue avec le non-croyants 1973; Pontifical Council for Culture n.d.). More recently, a new initiative was launched in Paris in March 2011, called the *Court of the Gentiles* initiative, as a series of events organized in different cities. A website for the initiative was created in 2013 and is available in Italian only (see <https://www.cortiledeigentili.com/>). Writings from these councils contain personal stories by non-believers and reflections on common ground between believers and non-believers.

Debates on the role of religion in public education appeared during the 1970s as Québec’s religious landscape was undergoing change. Hence debates surrounding religion in public education do not exist in isolation but are linked to questions surrounding the role of religion in society more broadly (Beaman and Van Arragon 2015). In general, those against religious or denominational education in Québec have expressed their views in terms of fighting for laïcité and affirming atheism or non-belief. The first activist group against religious education was called *Mouvement laïque de langue française* (cf. Rochon 1971). It was replaced by the *Association québécoise pour le droit à l’exemption de l’enseignement religieux*, later renamed *Le Mouvement laïque québécois* (MLQ). The MLQ is currently fighting against the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program which was implemented by the Québec Ministry of Education in 2008 for elementary and secondary schools, both public and private. Members of the MLQ, as well as

certain feminist groups, have publicly called on the government to remove the religious dimensions of the MLQ program or integrate a more critical approach to religion (El-Mabrouk and Richard 2018).

Members of the MLQ and other organizations have criticized the ERC program for not devoting sufficient space to atheists and nones. The MLQ collaborated, for example, with the *Association humaniste du Québec* to publish a report on the fact that atheists and nones are underrepresented in the program (Baril 2015). In February 2019, politician Paul Bérubé put forward a motion in the National Assembly of Québec to abolish the ERC program, claiming that it is neither laïcité enough nor critical enough of the religions that it includes. He relied on a report from the *Conseil du statut de la femme* which describes the program as too religious, too sexist, and promoting religious stereotypes while not devoting enough space to atheists. The motion was not debated. Debates surrounding the MLQ program show a divide between religious and nonreligious perspectives on religion and education. In the context of Ontario, however, this social divide is most often seen among different forms of religion (Van Arragon 2015).

SURVEYS

Surveys on nonreligion in Canada are lacking. Most surveys that have been conducted among Canadians measure religion and religiosity, rather than nonreligion and nonreligiosity. With this in mind, however, surveys still usually provide *some* data about nonreligion and the nonreligious. Notable surveys that provide useful data about nonreligion in Canada include the following:

1. Statistics Canada

Statistics Canada runs the Canadian census program every 5 years, but the religion question is only asked every 10 years. In fact, religion is the “only census topic that is available every 10 years” (Statistics Canada 2019). The next census question about religion will be asked in 2021. Statistics Canada’s 2011 National Household Survey indicates that 24% of the Canadian population has “no religious affiliation” (NHS tables are available at <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/dp-pd/dt-td/Index-eng.cfm>). Statistics Canada’s General Social Survey (GSS) also measures the religion and religiosity of Canadians and is also conducted every 5 years. Unlike the Canadian census, however, the GSS includes variables concerning spirituality and the importance of religion. According to Cycle 30 of the GSS, when asked “how important are your religious or spiritual beliefs to the way you live your life,” 23.2% of Canadians responded “not at all important” (Statistics Canada 2018).

2. Angus Reid Institute

The Angus Reid Institute (a Canadian non-profit foundation) has conducted numerous surveys concerning the religious affiliation and religiosity of Canadians and the way religion shapes social attitudes toward topical social issues. These social issues range from the banning of religious symbols in Québec to physician-assisted dying. Although the surveys primarily focus on religion, they often include reference to those who identify as having “no religion.” A comprehensive list of Angus Reid’s surveys can be found at: <http://angusreid.org/category/faith-values/>.

3. World Values Survey

The World Values Survey measures changing social values and the impact such values have on social life. However, data for Canada is not available for all waves of the survey. Canada is only included in three waves: Wave 2 (1990-1994); Wave 4 (2000-2004); and Wave 5 (2005-2009). The surveys do not measure nonreligion, but rather measure the importance of religion in a person’s life, the preferred religion of an

individual's neighbor, and to what extent people trust those of another religion. The data for the surveys in which Canada is included can be accessed here: <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSONline.jsp>.

4. Project Canada

Project Canada consists of national surveys conducted by Reginald Bibby. Project Canada Surveys were conducted every five years and ended in 2005. There are seven surveys in total: 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, and 2005. These surveys explore a number of variables related to religion, such as the interest teenagers have in religion. The surveys can be found at: <http://www.reginaldbibby.com/codebooksdata.html>.

5. The Pacific Northwest Social Survey

The Pacific Northwest Social Survey was administered as part of the *Religion, Spirituality, Secularity and Society in the Pacific Northwest* project, led by Paul Bramadat. The survey was conducted in 2017 and contains questions related to "(non)religious and (non)spiritual affiliations, beliefs and practices, friendship networks as well as social and inclusivity attitudes" (Wilkins-Laflamme 2018, 5). Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme's (2018) statistical analysis of the data is available in the report entitled "The Religious, Spiritual, Secular and Social Landscapes of the Pacific Northwest – Part 2." A PDF of the report is available at: <https://uwspace.uwaterloo.ca/handle/10012/13406>.

6. Association for Canadian Studies

The Association for Canadian Studies (ACS) has several studies that indirectly provide useful information about nonreligion. Studies range from the banning of religious symbols in Québec to the accommodation of religious minorities in Canada. A full list of studies can be found at: <https://acs-aec.ca/en/studies/>. A comprehensive list of publications can also be found here: <https://acs-aec.ca/en/publications-en/>.

7. International Social Survey Programme (2008)

The International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) consists of 3 surveys from 1991, 1998, and 2008. Canada only took part in the 1998 and 2008 surveys. The ISSP report on religion addresses "religious attitudes and beliefs, religious socialization, past and current religious practices, religion and governmental connections and aspects of secularization" (International Social Survey Programme 2008). The 2008 religion data for Canada, however, is not integrated into the general data file as there was a low response rate (it is available separately). The data for both surveys can be found here: <https://www.geis.org/issp/modules/issp-modules-by-topic/religion>.

APPENDIX I: NONRELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS IN CANADA

1. General nonreligious organizations

- Association Humaniste du Québec - <https://assohum.org/>
- Atheist Freethinkers - <https://www.atheology.ca/>
- British Columbia Humanist Association - <https://www.bchumanist.ca/>
- Canadian Secular Alliance - <http://secularalliance.ca/>
- Centre for Inquiry Canada - <http://centreforinquiry.ca>
- Humanist Association of Ottawa - <https://ottawahumanists.net>
- Humanist Association of Toronto - <http://www.humanisttoronto.ca/>

- Humanists, Atheists and Agnostics of Manitoba - <http://mbhumanistsatheists.ca>
- Humanist Canada - <https://www.humanistcanada.ca/>
- Kelowna Atheists, Skeptics & Humanists Association - <https://askuskelowna.ca/>
- Mouvement Laïque Québécois - <https://www.mlq.qc.ca/>
- Oasis Toronto - <https://torontooasis.org/about-us/>
- Secular Connexion Séculière - <http://www.secularconnexion.ca/>
- Society of Edmonton Atheists - <http://www.edmontonatheists.ca/>
- The Society of Ontario Freethinkers - <https://sofree.ca>
- Victoria Secular Humanist Association - <https://victoriasecularhumanists.ca>
- The Winnipeg Skeptics - <https://winnipeg skeptics.com/>

2. Secular alternatives to AA and NA in Canada

- Life Ring
 - Based out of Victoria, B.C. but has expanded across Canada
 - Website: <http://liferingcanada.org/>
- Secular AA
 - International, but mostly located in the United States and Canada
 - Website: <https://secularaa.org/>
- SMART recovery
 - International, but mostly located in the United States and Canada
 - Canadian website: www.smartrecovery.ca
- Women For Sobriety
 - Women-only secular alternative to AA that is found in the United States and Canada
 - Website: <http://womenforsobriety.org>.

3. Organizations related to the environment

- The Donkey Sanctuary of Canada
 - A sanctuary for donkeys, mules and hinnies founded in 1992 near Guelph, Ontario
 - Aims to “promote the responsible stewardship of all animals through humane education.”
 - Website: <https://www.thedonkeysanctuary.ca>
- Green Burial Society of Canada
 - Advocates for natural burials as an environmentally sustainable death-care practice
 - Website: <http://www.greenburialcanada.ca/greenburial>
- The Living Centre
 - An “eco-spiritual community” founded in 1983 and located in London, Ontario
 - Website: <https://www.thelivingcentre.com>
- Natural Burial Association
 - Founded in 2005 and focuses on the environmental benefits of natural burials
 - Website: <http://www.naturalburialassoc.ca/about-us/>
- The Sacred Secular Sanctuary
 - A spiritual and humanist organization with “green ethics” founded in 2012 and located in Waterloo, Ontario
 - Website: <http://sacredsecularsanctuary.com>
- The Sacred Trust

- An initiative of the Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN) in B.C. to stop the Trans Mountain Expansion Project
- "TWN has a sacred, legal obligation to protect, defend, and steward the water, land, air, and resources in their territory."
- Website: <https://twnsacredtrust.ca/about-us/>

APPENDIX II: NONRELIGION IN DOCUMENTARIES AND ART

Galerie C.O.A. 2019. Isaac Cordal, Ego Monuments, Montreal, September 12 to October 12, 2019.

- Part of Cordal's Cement Eclipses series, which "intends to catch the attention on our devalued relation with the nature through a critical look to the collateral effects of our evolution."
- Features mini sculptures of men in suits whose eyes are closed as they are distracted by electronics like smartphones and virtual reality headsets
- Source: <https://www.galeriecoa.com/blogs/news/isaac-cordal-ego-monuments>.

Haggan, Nigel. 2018. *Unsettling Environmental Review: Thoughts from the Pipelines and the Poetics of Place Project*. Film.

- A short documentary that captures moments from the "Pipelines and Poetics of Place" workshop held at the University of British Columbia in April 2017
- At one point, the filmmaker states that environmental assessments in Canada should include the values of Indigenous, nonreligious, and spiritual peoples
- Film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4hCg0bGsBuU>

Kaldor, Leif, and Leslea Mair. 2017. *Losing Our Religion*. Film.

- "...a feature length documentary about preachers who are not believers, and what atheists do when they miss church. Allowed access to the 600 members of The Clergy Project – a safe haven for preachers from all faiths who no longer believe – the documentary follows ex-members and clergy who are still undercover."
- Official website: <http://www.losingourreligion.ca/about>

Snow, Sasha. 2015. *Hadwin's Judgement*. Film.

- A documentary about the events that led Grant Hadwin to destroy the 300-year-old Golden Spruce tree sacred to the Haida in 1997 on the banks of British Columbia's Yakoun River
- Hadwin, a logger turned radical environmental activist, "butchered" the tree to deliver his message about humans' destruction of nature
- Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/149766822>

Wilson, Tim. 2008. *Griefwalker*. Film.

- A documentary about Stephen Jenkinson, former leader of palliative care counselling at Toronto's Mount Sinai Hospital
- Shows how he talked to patients about accepting death as natural and inevitable without using explicitly religious language
- Film: <https://www.nfb.ca/film/griefwalker/>

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