Historical Timeline of Sir John A. Macdonald

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Executive Summary

Sir John A. Macdonald was one of the most significant figures in Canadian political life, with his influence continuing beyond his death in 1891. With this timeline, I want to provide the Committee with an overview of his political career, focusing on Macdonald's role in crafting policy impacting Indigenous peoples and people of Chinese descent, as well as how these policies were shaped by his worldview, a worldview steeped in a faith in Britishness as a "civilizing force." Immigrating to Canada from Scotland as a child, Macdonald made his name in the legal profession at a startlingly young age, defending rebels involved in the 1837-38 Upper Canada Rebellion at 23 years old. First elected to the Kingston Town Council in 1843, he was soon elected to the legislature of the United Province of Canada in 1844 as a Conservative for Kingston, and he spent the rest of his life in elected office. Before Confederation in 1867, Macdonald served as the Attorney-General for Canada West (now Ontario) between 1854-1862, and again from 1864-167, as the Minister of the Militia and Defence between 1860-1867, and as co-premier (along with a representative from Canada East, now Quebec) between 1856-1862, and again between 1864-1867. In these roles, Macdonald introduced several Indigenous policies that would continue into the post-Confederation era; most notably, Macdonald was the Attorney-General and co-premier when the *Gradual Civilization Act* was introduced. This *Act* initiated the enfranchisement process, and continued a goal of clearly delineating who could be considered "truly" Indigenous.

Macdonald was instrumental in the "Great Coalition" between political factions in Canada West and Canada East that negotiated a federal union of the United Province of Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia between 1864-1867. Macdonald was adept at reaching out to French Canadian Catholics who saw the English Protestant population of Canada West as

sometimes hostile and anti-Catholic. It is not a surprise, then, that Macdonald was appointed the first Prime Minister of Canada by Governor-General Viscount Monck in 1867 and was knighted for his role in negotiating the *British North America Act* (Canada's first constitution). Indigenous peoples were only fleetingly mentioned in this document, yet Macdonald quickly enacted legislation that reiterated the enfranchisement process for Indians and added sex-based exclusions to Indian policy. Macdonald also soon turned his attention to Western expansion, as Canada annexed the Hudson's Bay Company's vast Rupert's Land territory in 1869. The lack of consultation with the largely Indigenous population on-the-ground, along with the social disorder caused by an ongoing smallpox epidemic, contributed to an armed resistance to Canadian authority led by Louis Riel. In this case, Macdonald decided to negotiate with Riel, resulting in the entry of Manitoba as a bicultural province into Canada, and which included promises of land allocated to the Métis families in the region. The latter would prove one of Macdonald's most controversial legacies; delays, incompetence, and hostility towards Indigenous peoples would hinder the ability of Métis to get this land and undermine the stability of the Métis community in Red River and later the North-West Territories.

To avoid another armed conflict, to encourage the building of a transcontinental railway, and due to the rapid migration of English Canadians to Manitoba and the surrounding area, Macdonald's government negotiated the first three of the Numbered Treaties, starting in 1871. These treaties remain controversial; it appears that the government's goal was to gain legal title, forever, to Western land in return for annuities paid to First Nations and the relocation of these First Nations onto allocated reserves, opening up land for settlement. For many First Nations, these treaties were solemn nation-to-nation agreements based in mutual obligation and respect, necessitating the fulfillment of promises of aid during famines, disease outbreaks, and other

increasingly frequent emergencies, along with guarantees of hunting and fishing privileges and non-interference in local matters. There is also much disagreement on 1) the actual content of the written treaties when compared to the oral history of the meetings and 2) the meaning of land cession. These early Numbered Treaties would serve as a model for Treaty Seven, signed under the authority of Alexander Mackenzie's Liberal government in 1877. Macdonald's Indian policies would also serve as a model for the *Indian Act*, passed by Mackenzie's government in 1876. The *Act* consolidated Macdonald's policies and remains a key document in the lives of First Nations, especially in their relationship with the Crown.

Upon returning to office in 1878, Macdonald oversaw perhaps his most tumultuous period as Prime Minister, appointing himself Superintendent of Indian Affairs (the latter until 1887). During this time, a brutal famine broke out on the Prairies, killing thousands of Indigenous people. While not intentionally caused by Macdonald, the evidence is clear that Macdonald's government used the famine to push recalcitrant tribes onto reserves by using rations and vague promises of aid. It was during this period when Macdonald's government would amend the *Indian Act* numerous times to increasingly regulate the lives of Status Indians, including being able to dictate the form of government on-reserve, who counted as Status Indian, how much ammunition one could buy, and banning certain sacred ceremonies. Emblematic of this more aggressive stance toward Western settlement and Indian policy, Macdonald commissioned a study into residential schools as an alternative to day schools (which were nearby or on-reserve and which allowed students to go home); this study would eventually become the basis for the state-funded, church-run school system the government launched in Treaty Seven and Treaty Six territory in 1884.

To complete the oft-delayed transcontinental railway, Macdonald modestly encouraged the immigration of low-paid Chinese labourers. Throughout this process, Macdonald maintained a staunchly racist attitude toward the Chinese population, both in private and in public, viewing them as a necessary evil. In his time as prime minister, Macdonald commissioned the first study into the "problem" of Chinese immigration to British Columbia, using the subsequent report to enact the first head tax on Chinese immigrants (initially $50 in 1885), just as the railroad reached completion. Macdonald also explicitly prevented "Chinamen" from voting in federal elections via legislation from that same year, arguing they were too "alien" to Canada's British form of civilization.

Much came to a head in 1885; the railroad was largely finished, a triumph for Macdonald. Yet frustration with the famine, disease, and government corruption plaguing the North-West Territories contributed to another resistance led by Riel. This time, Macdonald did not negotiate, sending troops out West via the railroad to quash Riel and a series of violent uprisings led by starving Cree militants in the region. The results were dire: Riel was hanged for high treason, eight Cree leaders were publicly executed, and several leaders who opposed the violence were imprisoned. Through a combination of formal (amendments to the *Indian Act*) and informal measures (the pass system), government authority over First Nations expanded dramatically, justified by a desire to prevent further disorder. The following year, Macdonald travelled to Western Canada for the first and only time in his life. He would win two more federal elections (1887 and 1891), dying soon after his last victory. Despite his unfamiliarity with the region, Macdonald's role in government irrevocably shaped Western Canada and, for the purposes of this timeline, the lives of Indigenous Canadians and Canadians of Chinese descent.

Note on Terminology:

Throughout this timeline, I use various terms in reference to the Indigenous peoples of Canada, including Indian, a term widely regarded as racist. I have tried to only use this term when referring to specific legislation, in direct quotations from historical figures, or when referring to the legal category of Status Indians, a category created by the *Indian Act* which still exists. In all other instances, I have tried to use the broad term Indigenous when referring to the first peoples of Canada, or the more specific terms First Nations or Métis when referring only to these constitutionally recognized groups.[1]

[1] *Constitution Act, 1982*, Section 35(2).

Timeline

Pre-Confederation (1815-1866)

1815

-January 10: John Alexander Macdonald was born in Glasgow, Scotland, to textile merchant Hugh Macdonald and Helen Shaw.[2]

1820

-Macdonald and his family immigrated to Upper Canada (now Ontario), settling in Kingston where they had some family connections, after Hugh's textile manufacturing business failed. Hugh operated several businesses, including shops in Kingston and Adolphustown Township, and stone mills in Prince Edward County, to varying levels of modest success.[3]

1829

-Hugh Macdonald was appointed the local magistrate for Midland District.

1830

-Macdonald began articling in the law offices of local lawyer George Mackenzie.

1835

-Macdonald opened his own law firm in Kingston.

1836

-February 6: Macdonald was formally called to the bar.

[2] Unless otherwise stated, biographical information in the pre-Confederation section is from J.K. Johnson and P.B. Waite, "Macdonald, Sir John A.," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 12 (1990).
[3] Ged Martin, *John A. Macdonald: Canada's First Prime Minister* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2013), 18-21.

1837-1838

-November-November: Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions. The lack of truly representative government, the control of patronage and access to land by small, well-connected cliques, and the underrepresentation of French Canadians in decision-making roles, pushed some in Upper and Lower Canada (now Quebec) to take up arms against the British. Macdonald served as a militia private in defense of British authority in Upper Canada. Historian Ged Martin argues that the radicalism and violence of this period (including among the hidebound Tory establishment defending privilege and hierarchy) influenced Macdonald to adopt a more moderate form of British Conservatism. As a young lawyer, Macdonald would defend some of the rebels charged for their actions in the Upper Canada Rebellions, including the eccentric Nils von Schoultz, who was executed for his part in a raid on Prescott in late 1838. While Macdonald lost most of these cases, it helped to make his name in the legal profession.[4]

1839

-Appointed as solicitor and a director of the Commercial Bank of the Midland District.

1843

-March: Macdonald was elected to the Kingston Town Council. This was Macdonald's first elected office.

-September: Macdonald married his cousin Isabella Clark.

[4] Johnson and P.B. Waite, "Macdonald, Sir John A.," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 12 (1990); Ronald J. Stagg, "Schoultz, Nils von," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 7 (1988); Martin, *John*, 32-35.

1844

-October: Macdonald was elected to the legislature of the United Province of Canada; he sat as a Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA), representing Kingston as a Conservative.[5]

1847

-August: Macdonald's first child, John Alexander Macdonald, was born. John would only live to 13 months old (died September 1848).

1850

-March: Macdonald's second child, Hugh John Macdonald, was born. He would also become a lawyer and politician, dying in 1929.[6]

-The legislature passed *An Act for the better protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada*. It defined an Indian as the following: "First.—All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular Body or Tribe of Indians interested in such lands, and their descendants. Secondly.—All persons intermarried with any such Indians and residing amongst them, and the descendants of all such persons. Thirdly.—All persons residing among such Indians, whose parents on either side were or are Indians of such Body or Tribe, or entitled to be considered as such: And Fourthly.—All persons adopted in infancy by any such Indians, and

[5] After the Upper and Lower Canada Rebellions, Britain dispatched the newly appointed governor-general, Lord Durham, to investigate the causes of the violence. His subsequent *Report on the Affairs of British North America* (1839) recommended unifying the two Canadas into a single legislature with equal representation for both provinces. For Durham, this would allow the British population to better control the French population (which was more numerous at the time) as there was a sizable English population in Montreal and a few other Lower Canadian ridings. Durham and the British believed the ethnic groups would automatically stick together. In 1841 the two Canadas were indeed merged into the single United Province of Canada, with Upper Canada now being referred to as Canada West, and Lower Canada referred to as Canada East. Over time, it proved difficult to legislate when, by convention, the co-premiers (one from each Canada) sought a "double majority" (i.e., majority of votes from each Canada, not just the overall legislature) to pass anything significant. The ethnic groups did not always stick together but cobbled together complex alliances across ethnic lines.

[6] Hal J. Guest, "Macdonald, Hugh John," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 15 (2005).

residing in the Village or upon the lands of such Tribe or Body of Indians, and their descendants." This definition would be repeated in subsequent legislation for several years.[7]

1854

-Macdonald was appointed Attorney-General of Canada West. Macdonald would hold this office until 1862, and again between 1864-1867. He was becoming an influential force in colonial politics and governance.

1856

-In May, Macdonald was appointed co-premier of the United Province of Canada for the first time (represented Canada West, while Étienne-Paschal Taché represented Canada East). In November 1857, Taché resigned and was replaced by George-Étienne Cartier, who became Macdonald's main French-Canadian ally in government. Macdonald proved adept at making compromises with French Canadian Catholics without losing all of his support amongst Anglo-Protestant Loyalists, unlike his main political rival in Canada West, George Brown.

1857

-June: Macdonald introduced *An Act to encourage the gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes in this Province, and to amend the Laws respecting Indians* (more commonly known as the *Gradual Civilization Act*). This act repeated the definition of Indian from 1850 and established "enfranchisement" as a process, legal category, and goal of Indigenous policy. A male Indian, 21 years or older, could apply to the government to become a "full citizen;" this was supposed to mean they could vote if they met property qualifications, would be allotted 20 hectares of land,

[7] *An Act for the better protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada*, 1850, British North America Legislative Database (University of New Brunswick).

and receive a lump sum payment from band monies. The applicant would have to prove to a board of examiners appointed by the government that they were educated, debt-free, of good moral character, declare the name and surname they would from then on be known as, and renounce their Indian status. If after a three-year probationary period the applicant remained suitable, they and their wife and children (if applicable) would be enfranchised for life. While unsuccessful (only one person applied for enfranchisement between 1857-1867), it would serve as the model for post-Confederation enfranchisement laws.[8]

-December 28: Isabella Macdonald died after years of illness.

1860

-Britain transferred responsibility for "Indian affairs" to the colonial government. Macdonald was appointed Minister of Militia and Defence for the United Province of Canada. He served in this role until 1867.[9]

1864

-Due to consistent political deadlock (see footnote five), a constitutional committee chaired by Reformer George Brown, of which Macdonald was a member, recommended adopting a federal model for the two Canadian provinces, or even for all the British North American colonies (also including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, but not quite as far afield as British Columbia and Vancouver Island yet). The belief was that allowing each province to act in its own interests, while still united under a central government, would solve the political issues built up over several decades. Macdonald was one of three committee members

[8] Donald Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 64-67; J.R. Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs: The Shaping of Canadian Indian Policy," 317-321, both in *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*, ed. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2014).
[9] Miller, "Minister," 318-319.

to oppose the report recommendations as unworkable but was eventually convinced to endorse it, particularly when Brown proposed all the major factions working together. Macdonald's Conservatives, Brown's Reformers, and Cartier's *Bleus* (conservative Catholics in Canada East) formed the "Great Coalition" to negotiate the creation of a federal state.

-Between 1864-1867, Macdonald served as an integral figure, especially as the co-premier of the United Province of Canada (with Taché, 1864-1865, then with Narcisse Fortunat-Belleau, 1865-1867), at the Charlottetown Conference (September 1864), Quebec Conference (October 1864) and the London Conference (on-and-off, December 1866-March 1867). These conferences led to the creation of Canada's first constitution, the *British North America Act,* and the Confederation of Canada, consisting initially of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the re-divided, renamed Ontario and Quebec. Canada would be a federal state, with significant powers residing in the provinces (most notably at this time education, at the behest of Quebec who demanded concessions for Catholic schools and the French language), yet with residual powers flowing to the national government. Confederation did not signal full independence; Britain still controlled Canada's diplomacy and declarations of war, the British parliament could disallow laws passed in Canada and had to approve of any amendments to the *British North America Act*, and the final court of appeal was the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in Britain. Nevertheless, Canada did have greater autonomy over internal affairs (and total independence from Britain was not the goal of the majority of those involved in these conferences), and Macdonald was important to the compromises at the core of this process.

Post-Confederation (1867-1891)

1867

-February: Macdonald married Susan Agnes Bernard.

-July 1: The Dominion of Canada was formally created. Macdonald was knighted and asked by Governor-General Viscount Monck to serve as the first prime minister.[10]

-*British North America Act*, 91(24) granted the federal government jurisdiction over "Indians and land reserved for Indians." This remains the case to the present day.[11]

-August-September: Macdonald's Conservative Party won the first general election in Canadian history, forming a majority government with Macdonald as Prime Minister. Macdonald appointed himself Minister of Justice. He served in this role until 1873.[12]

1868

-Macdonald's government introduced *An Act providing for the organization of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, and for the management of Indian and Ordnance Lands*. This is the earliest legislation pertaining to Indigenous peoples post-Confederation. It established or reiterated several laws regarding how reserve land could be used and sold (i.e., that this land was held in trust for Indians by the Crown) as well as who could reside upon such land (i.e., it repeated the definition of Indian outlined by the *Gradual Civilization Act*). The *Act* enacted several provisions against the sale or providing of liquor to Indians. It also authorized the allocation of funds to "schools frequented by … Indians." The federal government started funding 57 schools, most of which were day schools, usually near a reserve (these schools were

[10] Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald."
[11] John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 20.
[12] Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald."

dedicated to assimilation into Euro-Canadian culture and society; children were usually allowed to return home after school, unlike with residential schools). Two were residential schools: Mount Elgin and the Mohawk Institute in Ontario (joined by Shingwauk and Wikwemikong in 1879). There was no coherent residential school system quite yet however.[13]

1869

-February: Macdonald's third (and last) child, Margaret Mary Theodora Macdonald, was born. Mary, as she was known, suffered from hydrocephaly, which made the labour, her infancy, and much of the rest of her life quite difficult as it impacted her cognition and mobility. It appears that she lived with her parents, who received some help from full-time "carers," as opposed to being institutionalized.[14]

-June: Macdonald's government introduced *An Act for the gradual enfranchisement of Indians, better management of Indian affairs, and to extend the provisions of the Act 31st Victoria Chapter 42* (more commonly known as the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act*). The *Act* repeated the enfranchisement process created in 1857, while strengthening the powers of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs over the lives of Indigenous peoples. It introduced a blood quantum to the definition of Indians eligible for annuities or interest payments (at least "one-fourth of Indian blood"), and this status required a certificate from the chief sanctioned by the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs. It introduced a sex-based distinction to the definition of Indian: if an Indian woman married a non-Indian man (according to the legal definition), she would no longer be considered an Indian, and any children from that marriage would not be considered Indians. If a woman married a man from a different tribe or band, she would cease, forever, to be a member

[13] Milloy, *National Crime*, 52; Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation of Indian Legislation, Volume 2, Indian Acts and Amendments, 1868-1975*, ed. Gail Hinge (1985), 1-10.
[14] Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald."

of her own tribe and band and she and their children would now legally belong to the husband's/father's tribe or band. It introduced the ability of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to force any band or tribe to have elected government (limited to male suffrage), allowing current "life Chiefs" to carry on until their death, or being removed by the Superintendent for "dishonesty, intemperance, or immorality." The Superintendent could also depose any elected officials for the same reasons.[15]

-Western settlement quickly became a key element of Canadian policy. Starting in 1868, cabinet ministers Cartier and William McDougall, along with British officials, negotiated the sale of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company to Canada (HBC). Rupert's Land had been the property of the HBC since 1670, comprising much of contemporary Labrador, Nunavut, northern Quebec, northern Ontario, the Northwest Territories, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. In return for this vast territory, the HBC would receive £300,000, keep title to several trading posts, and title to 5% of the territory. McDougall was to be appointed lieutenant-governor upon Canada's assumption of authority on December 1, 1869, and travelled through the United States to the territory, arriving in November 1869. Preceding him, land survey teams were sent to divide up the land. On the ground, much of the population was Indigenous; there was little to no consultation with the residents of this territory (Indigenous or non-Indigenous) regarding the negotiations and sale. McDougall was also a questionable appointment, as he was a well-known expansionist who held overtly hostile and racist positions on Indigenous peoples, French Canadians, and Catholics.[16]

[15] Miller, "Minister," 321-322, 327-328; Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation, Vol. 2*, 11-15.
[16] Andrew McIntosh and Shirlee Anne Smith, "Rupert's Land," *Canadian Encyclopedia* (2006); Martin, *John*, 118-120.

-Between 1869-1870, amidst the increased presence of American traders on the Canadian Plains, combined with increased Canadian settlement largely from Ontario, a smallpox epidemic broke out in Spring 1869. It killed roughly 3500 Indigenous peoples (including 2500 from the Blackfoot Confederacy). Many chiefs and elders died, undermining traditional lifeways and socio-political stability; according to scholar James Daschuk, the mortality rate among the Tsuut'ina was likely much higher than reported, as only roughly 300-400 in total survived the year. In one gruesome instance, a Stony witness referred to Banff as looking like a "'a graveyard.'" Lack of clear authority in the area, combined with lack of communications, social disorder, and Canadian ignorance of the conditions in this part of the continent, prevented any significant amount of vaccine from arriving until April 1870. Aid and medical treatment were carried out largely by local missionaries, HBC factors (trading post employees), or medical personnel in the area. Macdonald's government did not establish a Board of Health to address the epidemic until October 1870, when the crisis was largely over, nor did it establish any kind of quarantine precautions until this point. Tensions between the Indigenous population and the white population increased significantly, as did actual instances of violence, as circumstances became increasingly dire.[17]

-In November 1869, Canadian expansion into the Red River Colony was halted by an armed force led by Louis Riel, who had earlier also confronted the land survey teams, sending them away. Riel demanded negotiations between the local populace and the new authorities. The population was under a lot of pressure, as the smallpox epidemic continued to ravage Indigenous communities, including at least 375 Métis. Macdonald requested that Britain delay the land transfer to give him time to "pacify" the inhabitants of Red River and explain to them what

[17] James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, the Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013), 81-91.

Canadian authority would look like. Unfortunately, McDougall, hiding out in Minnesota after being rebuffed by Riel's forces, did not receive this order in time. In December 1869, McDougall proclaimed the end of HBC rule and the immediate assumption of Canadian authority but had little to no means to enforce this authority. Riel established a provisional, elected government designed to both govern Red River and negotiate entry into Canada as a new province. In March 1870, Riel's forces captured aggressive Ontarians attempting to overthrow the provisional government, executing Thomas Scott, inflaming Anglo-Protestant sentiment in much of the country. Despite this, Macdonald's government decided to negotiate with Riel, concluding that a large-scale military intervention in a region so distant from Canada-proper and against a well-organized force would be difficult. The result of the negotiations was the creation of the province of Manitoba with the *Manitoba Act* (May 12, 1870) (the rest of Rupert's Land became part of Canada, known as the North-West Territories).

A key component of the *Act* was the granting of 1.4 million acres of land to the Métis population, to be divided up and distributed by the government to families. However, this process was marred by delays, errors, and malfeasance, on the part of government officials throughout the 1870s and 1880s. With little to no consultation with the Métis population, the *Manitoba Act,* and the *Dominion Lands Act* (see below) were amended to include scrip, promissory notes in lieu of actual land, in 1874 and 1879; even by 1885, it had not been properly distributed. These delays led to many Métis families never being able to purchase and settle on a homestead, as well as the widespread selling of potential or actual scrip and land rights to speculators to ensure some kind of income for these families. While this process has provoked divergent historical interpretations, the Supreme Court ruled in 2013 (*Manitoba Métis Federation v. Canada (Attorney-General)*) that the federal government had violated the

constitutional obligation of the Crown to the Métis by not properly distributing this land in a reasonable time, as well as undermining the stability of the Métis community in Manitoba by complicating their ability to purchase land. There is also some evidence that Macdonald's government intended not to allow the proper distribution of land. For example, the head of Canada's Dominion Police and longtime intelligence agent for Macdonald, Gilbert McMicken, was appointed a Dominion Lands agent (see below) in Manitoba, not to mention the province's assistant receiver general, immigration officer, and secretary of the Intercolonial Railway Commission. Macdonald was suspicious that the Lieutenant-Governor, Adams George Archibald, was too sympathetic to the Métis and wanted McMicken to keep an eye on him. McMicken wrote to Macdonald that he would ensure "'actual settlers' received land without enraging 'French half breeds' [the common term of the time for Métis] over violations of their 'fancied rights,'" and was the one who introduced a random lottery for land allotment, undercutting the systematic approach Archibald had been trying to implement. Macdonald did not provide amnesty for Riel and his supporters as promised verbally via Bishop Alexandre-Antonin Taché, and sent troops into the area that Summer, leading Riel and many other leaders of the resistance to flee. To avoid further armed conflict, and in response to demands from First Nations communities to engage in treaty-making made more pressing by anger within these communities at European-descended Canadians for bringing disease to their lands, Macdonald's government turned to negotiating treaties with the Indigenous peoples of the Plains. The speed of migration from Ontario to the new province of Manitoba also startled many on the ground and in Ottawa, pushing the need for treaties to ensure certain rights even more.[18]

[18] For the divergent historical interpretations, see Thomas Flanagan, *Métis Lands in Manitoba* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 1991) and D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988). Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald"; Martin, *John*, 118-122; Daschuk, *Clearing*, 81-82, 92-93; Andrew Parnaby and Gregory S. Kealey, with Kirk Niergarth, "'High-handed, Impolite, and Empire-Breaking

1870

-Macdonald's government agreed to build a transcontinental railroad in negotiations with a delegation of British Columbian leaders to bring BC into Confederation as a new province. The delegation was promised that work would begin in two years and the entire railroad would be completed in ten years.[19]

1871

-July 20: British Columbia joined Confederation as the sixth province of Canada.

-August: Treaty One was signed at Fort Garry, Manitoba, by representatives of the Crown and of the Anishinaabe, and Swampy Cree. It would serve as a model for several future treaties. While Macdonald was prime minister, the first three of the Numbered Treaties were signed (Treaty Two, August 1871; Treaty Three, October 1873).

1872

-Macdonald's government introduced the *Dominion Lands Act*. The *Act* created a system by which individuals or corporations could apply for and receive land grants. The land and resources of the area were under the direct control of the federal government. The *Act* did include some protections for lands reserved for Indians; it also regulated the scrip system. To redeem scrip, Métis had to travel to Dominion Lands offices created by the *Act* and then to the land itself, something many were unable to do.[20]

Actions': Radicalism, Anti-Imperialism, and Political Policing in Canada, 1860-1914," 483-515, in *Canadian State Trials, Vol. 3: Political Trials and Security Measures, 1840-1914*, eds. Barry Wright and Susan Binnie (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 488-489; *Manitoba Métis Federation v Canada (Attorney-General)* (2013); Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation of Indian Legislation, Vol. 1: United Kingdom and Canada*, ed. Gail Hinge (1978), 320-324.

[19] Martin, *John*, 125.

[20] Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation, Vol. 1*, 320-324.

-October: Macdonald and the Conservatives were re-elected in 1872. During the campaign, Macdonald accepted a donation from Hugh Allan, a banker who held an overdraft of $80,000 owed by Macdonald due to previous poor business decisions and bank closures, and who headed one of the two major syndicates seeking the contract to build the transcontinental railway. Allan also demanded Cartier approve the contract in exchange for campaign funds for Cartier's Montreal riding. The amount Allan contributed was estimated at $160,000. Allan did indeed receive the contract. This information was eventually leaked to the Liberals, and the House of Commons and media became consumed by these affairs; it became known as the Pacific Scandal. It was such a serious scandal that by November 1873, thirteen months after the election, Macdonald's government resigned, and Alexander Mackenzie's Liberal Party formed the new government. It also significantly delayed the construction of the promised Pacific Railway.[21]

1873

-July 1: Prince Edward Island joined Confederation as the seventh province of Canada. It was the final province to join the country in Macdonald's lifetime (and in his time as prime minister).

1874

-January: The Liberal Party won the general election. This was the only general election Macdonald would lose as party leader.

-Between 1874-1877, Mackenzie's Liberal government signed Treaties 4-7.

1876

-April: The Mackenzie government introduced *An Act to amend and consolidate the laws respecting Indians* (commonly referred to as the *Indian Act*). The *Act* consolidated all the

[21] Martin, *John*, 131-140.

previous legislation pertaining to Indians and remains integral to the lives of Indigenous peoples and their relationship with the federal government. It defined being Indian as "First. Any male person of Indian blood reputed to belong to a particular band; Secondly. Any child of such person; Thirdly. Any woman who is or was lawfully married to such person." It created the legal category of Status Indian (sometimes referred to as Registered Indian), placing the authority over determining Status entirely in the hands of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs and the federal government, working from lists created over the years by local officials and Indian Agents. It added coercive enfranchisement to the voluntary enfranchisement process; if a Status Indian were admitted to a university, was admitted to the bar in any province, became a notary public, or became clergy in a Christian church, they would be automatically enfranchised. It expanded the criteria for removing elected band council leaders or "Life chiefs," which now included "dishonesty, intemperance, immorality, or incompetency." In its initial stage, Status meant one was exempt from some federal taxation, could not have property seized for payment of debt, could access social supports offered by the community and/or federal government, could share in band council interest payments, could vote or run in band council elections, and, through treaty, could share in annuities, live on reserve, and maintain some hunting and/or fishing rights. Status Indians could not vote in any non-band council elections (municipal, provincial, or federal) and Indian Agents often enforced strict residency (i.e., living on reserve consistently) and behavioural requirements (i.e., being a "moral," "good" citizens) for receiving any of these rights. Community-based definitions of belonging and identity, in other words, were replaced by those of the government.[22]

[22] Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation, Vol. 2*, 24-52; Robin Brownlie, "'A better citizen than lots of white men': First Nations Enfranchisement – An Ontario Case Study, 1918-1940," *Canadian Historical Review* 87 (2006), 32-33.

1877

-September: Treaty Seven, the final treaty negotiated with the Indigenous peoples of the Plains, was signed at Blackfoot Crossing in contemporary Alberta by representatives of the British Crown and of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney-Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee). The treaty remains controversial, as many elders from these First Nations do not accept the final text as accurately representing the negotiations or accept that this was to be the end of negotiations. As written, in return for ceding title to the tract of land under negotiation to the Crown, and pledging to uphold peace between one another and in relation to the Crown, the signatory nations would be allowed to hunt in that territory, would be given reserves (measured as one square mile per family of five), payment for land encroached upon by "improvements" (e.g., roads built by the state), an immediate payment to each Indian, annuities for each Indian in perpetuity, guaranteed ammunition, pay for teachers when schools are established, cattle, and farm implements.[23]

-Mackenzie's government hired Dr. Daniel Hagarty as medical superintendent of the North-West Territories. Hagarty spearheaded a successful vaccination program against smallpox on the southwestern Prairies, likely saving thousands of lives. In 1880, Hagarty was dismissed by the Macdonald administration and his program was abandoned due to being too expensive at the height of a deadly famine (detailed below). Hagarty also acted as a whistle-blower as the famine got worse.[24]

[23] Treaty 7 Tribal Council, et. al., *The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty Seven* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 230-237.
[24] Daschuk, *Clearing*, 105.

1878

-September: Macdonald's Conservative Party won the general election. Macdonald had campaigned on the National Policy; he promised to raise tariffs to protect domestic markets from American competition and use the transcontinental railway to people the Prairies with settlers who would help cement Canadian authority over the area, expand agriculture and food production for the urban centres of Central Canada, and become customers for Central Canadian manufactures. Macdonald appointed himself Minister of the Interior, and thus also Superintendent General of Indian Affairs that same year. He held this office until 1887, making him the longest-serving minister responsible for Indigenous peoples in Canadian history. Western settlement was central to Macdonald's political agenda, and he quickly began to systematically build the long-delayed transcontinental railroad, founding the heavily subsidized, but still privately-owned, Canadian Pacific Railway company (CPR) in 1880. This project pushed the federal government to speed-up the continued relocation, or removal, of Indigenous peoples to reserves. Historian Ged Martin provides revealing quotations in relation to Macdonald's view of this process: "'The Indians are the aborigines – the original occupants of the country, and their rights must be respected.' But he distrusted 'any philanthropic idea of protecting the Indian,' especially by preserving 'semi-savage customs.' 'The whole thing is a question of management,' he pronounced, and 'management' meant keeping Aboriginal communities quiet while settlers took over the West." Historian J.R. Miller also captures the importance Macdonald ascribed to his Superintendent office in the following correspondence between Macdonald and Edgar Dewdney (Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories): "'I have no intention of giving up my present Department so long as I remain in the Government. Routine matters may be attended to by the permanent Heads, but Indian matters, and the land granting system, form so great a

portion of the general policy of the Government that I think it is necessary for the First Minister, whoever he may be, to have that in his own hands.'" Upon assuming this office and after lobbying by Christian missionaries, shifting Indigenous schooling away from day schools near reserves became a key part of Macdonald's Indian policy.[25]

-Between 1878-1884, the need for workers to build the railway led many employers to recruit cheap Chinese labourers, either from Hong Kong (a British possession at the time), mainland China, from the Chinese population in the American Pacific Northwest, or from the small Chinese population that had been in British Columbia since at least the 1858 gold rush. Macdonald's reaction to this was twofold: he saw the Chinese population as a necessary labour force to finish the railroad, but, as early as 1879, stated he supported an investigation into the issue "'before the over-mastering Chinese population came upon us.'" Initially, Macdonald did little to either assuage racist fears of Chinese immigration, or to stop Chinese immigrants from arriving to work on the railroad. In 1881, Macdonald's government helped railway contractors in getting the governor of Hong Kong to officially recruit labourers, while publicly stating in 1882 that Chinese people were "'an inferior race,' 'semi-barbarians,' or 'machines with whom Canadians could not compete'" but whose labour was important.[26]

-While a long-developing process caused largely by overhunting to use bison hide for luxury robes and machinery belts, by the end of the 1870s the bison herds had collapsed on the Canadian Plains, undermining the lifeways of the Indigenous peoples of the region, and contributing to the outbreak of a devastating famine. Between 1878-1884, tuberculosis re-

[25] Miller, "Minister," 323-325, 335; Milloy, *National Crime*, 31-32; Martin, *John*, 148-154, 160-161, 166-167.
[26] Timothy J. Stanley, "'The Aryan character of the Future of British North America': Macdonald, Chinese Exclusion, and the Invention of Canadian White Supremacy," in *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*, ed. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2014), 128; Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 47-63.

emerged with widespread malnourishment and overcrowding on reserves, compounded by the ecological damage caused by the introduction of millions of Texas cattle into the north, cattle that introduced a virulent strain of bovine tuberculosis to the Plains to desperate people supplied with the beef as emergency rations. 1878 was also a year of drought and widespread Prairie fires caused by a lack of snowfall the previous Winter. In the Summer of 1879, newly appointed Indian commissioner Edgar Dewdney reported 1300 Indians near starvation at Blackfoot Crossing, while in Calgary the Stoney, Métis, and Blackfoot populations were starving to death, resorting to eating grass. Macdonald himself stated the following in his annual report as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in April 1879: "'The rapid disappearance of the buffalo, which is the staple article of food of the Indians and half-breeds of the North-West Territories, induces the belief that these people must in a few years be fed at the expense of the country, unless they in the meantime acquire some other means of subsistence than the buffalo hunt now affords. To enable them to become self-supporting as soon as possible, facilities must be provided by which they may acquire some practical knowledge of agriculture and of the care of stock. They will probably require some small supply of provisions each year while they are engaged in tilling and sowing their lands.' At the same time, he indicated that aid would not be liberal: 'Such assistance, however, should only be extended to those Indians who prove to be in earnest in endeavouring to become self-subsisting.'" He added "'The Indians were reduced to such extremities that they eat mice, their dogs, and even their buffalo skins, and they greedily devoured meat raw when given to them.'" Even with this, the policy of the government officially remained to provide food only to those who absolutely could not work and using the offer of rations as a means to coerce "rebellious" Indigenous peoples onto reserves.

In these circumstances, Siksika chief Crowfoot requested more aid for this people in Fall, 1881, and was branded a "troublemaker" and officially reprimanded by the local Indian Agent. This could be dangerous, as Cree leader Big Bear found out when he rejected the terms of Treaty Six; his people were refused rations until mass starvation pushed Big Bear into signing the treaty in 1882. In March 1882, Macdonald announced that the CPR would travel through the southern Plains, necessitating the removal of the thousands of Indigenous peoples who had gathered around the Cypress Hills chasing the dwindling bison herds. The government used force and the withholding of rations to move 5000 Indigenous peoples from this area. Macdonald defended his policy, and what some of his Liberal opponents claimed was over-expenditure on helping the populations in the West, to the House: "In case of apprehended famine, the matter is to be dealt with on the spot. … When the Indians are starving, they have been helped, but they have been reduced to ½ or ¼ rations. But when they fall into a state of destitution, we cannot allow them to die for want of food. It is true, that Indians, so long as they are fed, will not work. I have reason to believe [the agents] are doing all they can by refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation, to reduce the expense. The buffalo have disappeared over the last few years, some few came over this year, and while their arrival relieved the Indians, I was rather sorry looking to the future, that such was the case. As the Blackfeet, Bloods and Peigans, who had settled on reserves at once, returned to their nomadic habits and abandoned their settlements. … We hope that the Indians will now settle down, but Indians are Indians, and we must submit to frequent disappointments when civilizing them." Rations and expenditures continued to be cut throughout 1883, encouraged mostly by Macdonald's main lieutenant in Indigenous affairs, Deputy Superintendent General (and whose sister married Macdonald's son) Lawrence Vankoughnet. The railway continued to be built, and in August 1883, the first train reached Calgary from the

east. In November 1883, the medical officer for Treaty Seven Dr. F.X. Girard told the government that the flour I.G. Baker had supplied (the main supplier for all food on the Prairies at the time) was unconsumable and had killed several people, including 20 Kainai in six weeks. I.G. Baker was fined after a government investigation but continued as supplier. According to scholar James Daschuk, conditions on reserves were so bad and so well-known to the Macdonald administration that the prime minister ordered Dewdney to fabricate the annual report on progress in the West in early 1884.[27]

1879

-Macdonald commissioned journalist (and future Conservative MP) Nicholas Flood Davin to examine and complete a report "'on the working of Industrial Schools . . . in the United States and on the advisability of establishing similar institutions in the North-West Territories of the Dominion.'" Davin travelled to schools in the United States and in Winnipeg. He submitted his *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds* that same year to the Macdonald government. Davin recommended that, to pursue "aggressive civilization" and "self-reliance," the federal government should establish federally funded industrial schools off-reserve, mandating that the children live at the school. Davin recommended that the schools be funded per capita, to encourage recruitment of students, and be operated on a day-to-day basis by the major Christian denominations (i.e., Roman Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist). Davin's recommendations were not implemented immediately but laid the groundwork for the eventual creation of a system of federally funded residential schools in 1884.[28]

[27] Daschuk, *Clearing*, 99-102; 110-112, 119-123, 127-128, 134-139; Miller, "Minister," 330; Smith, "Aboriginal Peoples," 72; John A. Macdonald, *House of Commons Debates*, April 27, 1882.
[28] Milloy, *National Crime*, 7-8; Miller, "Minister," 324-325.

1881

-Macdonald's government passed the *Act Respecting Naturalization and Aliens*. The *Act* explicitly stated that Indians were "'not entitled to all the privileges of British subjects unless they are enfranchised,'" despite not being required to naturalize since they were not aliens.[29] Macdonald's government amended the *Indian Act* to create the so-called "permit system." Indian farmers on-reserve had to get the written permission of an Indian Agent to sell produce in town to non-Indigenous customers. The government also amended the *Act* to extend the authority of Indian Affairs officials; they were now ex-officio justices of the peace and magistrates with jurisdiction over reserves.[30]

1883

-May: In the House of Commons, Macdonald argued in a now infamous speech for the creation of residential schools to help solve the horrible conditions on the Prairies in an economical fashion by encouraging the Indian to be "better men, and, if possible, good Christian men." He said the following: "When the school is on the reserve the child lives with its parents, who are savages; he is surrounded by savages, and though he may learn to read and write his habits, and training, and mode of thought are Indian. He is simply a savage who can read and write. It has been strongly pressed on myself, as the head of the Department, that the Indian children should be withdrawn as much as possible from the parental influence, and the only way to do that would

[29] Veronica Strong-Boag, "'The Citizenship Debates': The 1885 Franchise Act," in *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings* eds. Robert Adamski, Dorothy Chunn, and Robert Menzies (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2002), 70-71.
[30] Miller, "Minister," 332; Mary-Ellen Kelm and Keith D. Smith, *Talking Back to the Indian Act: Critical Readings in Settler Colonial Histories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), 10.

be to put them in central training industrial schools where they will acquire the habits and modes of thought of white men."[31]

1884

-Macdonald's government amended the *Indian Act* to ban the potlatch, an integral element of the socio-economic and cultural lifeways of many coastal peoples in BC (along with tamawanas, or winter dances) . When arguing for the ban, Macdonald stated that the potlatch was a "'debauchery of the worst kind'" and that when it occurred those involved "'meet and carry on a sort of mystery … and carry on all kinds of orgies.'" The government also amended the *Act* to prohibit the sale of ammunition to Indians in Manitoba or in the North-West Territories, due to the brewing violence in the area.[32]

-Macdonald's government introduced the *Indian Advancement Act*, which mandated elected band council governments on all First Nations east of Lake Superior. Indian Agents were to monitor these elections closely.[33]

-The government of BC enacted several anti-Chinese laws it knew would be disallowed by the federal government or struck down by courts (on jurisdictional grounds). The goal was to get the federal government to acknowledge the seriousness of the issue of Chinese immigration to British Columbians. It worked. Macdonald did disallow one of the acts (to prevent Chinese immigration to BC) but agreed to create a royal commission to study the economic concerns and "'all those moral considerations which make Chinese immigration inadvisable.'" Macdonald appointed Joseph Adolphe-Chapleau and John Gray as commissioners.[34]

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[31] John A. Macdonald, *House of Commons Debates*, May 9, 1883.
[32] Constance Backhouse, *Colour-Coded: A Legal History of Racism in Canada, 1900-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 65; Smith, "Aboriginal Peoples," 73; Kelm and Smith, *Talking Back*, 10.
[33] Miller, "Minister," 327-328.
[34] Roy, *White Man's*, 47-63.

-The first state-funded industrial schools were opened, enthusiastically supported by Macdonald and Vankoughnet, through amendments to the *Indian Act*. High River Industrial School, which became St. Joseph's Industrial School operated by the Catholic Church, was in Treaty Seven territory (the other two were in present-day Saskatchewan). It remained open until 1922. The infamous problems and abuses these schools have become so known for in subsequent years started immediately. The system expanded slowly at first, but by 1923 there were 71 state-funded schools in operation.[35]

-July 1884-February 1885: Riel returned to Canada after being visited by a delegation of angry Métis and other residents of the North-West Territories, asking him to help them negotiate with and/or resist the policies of the federal government. Riel submitted a petition of the grievances of his people in December of that year; while the Macdonald government did officially state it would investigate those grievances in January 1885, little to nothing was done on-the-ground or to robustly communicate with Riel and his supporters.[36]

1885

-March: Riel declared another provisional government in the North-West Territories. After hearing rumours of the imminent arrival of police reinforcements, his forces confronted the Northwest Mounted Police (NWMP) at Duck Lake in present-day Saskatchewan later that month to retrieve supplies, engaging in a battle that killed twelve NWMP and five Métis. This was the beginning of what is now known as the Northwest Resistance (or Northwest Rebellion). Macdonald responded to the action by linking the quashing of Riel's forces with the completion of the financially struggling railroad; by using this railroad to send out troops, and by completing

[35] Milloy, *National Crime*, 51-52, 61-62.
[36] Martin, *John*, 168-172.

it in due course, the country would be safer and more united. Macdonald sent thousands of troops to join the local authorities and quash the resistance for the last time.[37]

-April: Anger at government inaction and corruption during the famine led Cree militants to attack the settlement of Frog Lake, killing ten. The day before, Assiniboine travelling to join a large group of Cree at the Battleford settlement had killed two settlers. This began the Cree uprisings, which were related to, but not directly coordinated with, the Riel-led Northwest Resistance.[38]

-May-July: After another Métis victory at Fish Creek, the Canadian forces waited for reinforcements to attack the Métis stronghold at Batoche on May 9. Outnumbered and out of ammunition, Riel surrendered on May 15. During this battle, General Thomas Bland Strange, head of the Calgary-based Alberta Field Force, marched his troops from Calgary to Edmonton. They came across the Cree who carried out the killings at Frog Lake. An indecisive battle near present-day Lloydminster resulted, followed by another skirmish at Loon Lake between the Cree and NWMP under Sam Steele, killing between four Cree on June 3. Poundmaker and the bands at Battleford surrendered on May 26; the Cree at Frog Lake released their remaining prisoners on June 21. Finally, Big Bear surrendered on July 2.[39]

-July: Macdonald introduced *An Act Respecting the Electoral Franchise*, which sought to centralize voters lists, giving the federal government control over who could vote in federal elections. In its initial form, the Bill gave the vote to spinsters and widows who met male property qualifications, and Indians who held land in fee simple with improvements of at least $150 without having to formally enfranchise (renounce their Indian Status). After a lengthy

[37] Martin, *John*, 168-172; Sprague, *Canada and the Métis*, 174-177.
[38] Bob Beal and Rod Macleod, "North-West Resistance," *Canadian Encyclopedia* (2006); Daschuk, *Clearing*, 152-156.
[39] Beal and Macleod, "North-West."

debate, Macdonald agreed to remove any mention of women voting and, in the context of the ongoing Northwest Resistance, limited the voting provisions only to those Indians living east of Lake Superior. Some First Nations expressed thanks to Macdonald for the provision, but it is not clear how widespread voting became in these communities. Macdonald also added a prohibition on all "Asiatics" or "Chinamen" from voting. In justifying these restrictions, Macdonald spoke in strong language against the Chinese population, arguing that if their population increased in BC "'they might control the vote of that whole Province, and they would send Chinese representatives to sit here, who would represent Chinese eccentricities, Chinese immorality, Asiatic principles altogether opposite to our wishes; and, in the even balance of parties, they might enforce those Asiatic principles, those immoralities … the eccentricities which are abhorrent to the Aryan race and Aryan principles, on this House. … The Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics … the cross of those races, like the cross of the dog and the fox, is not successful; it cannot be, and never will be. … We would have a mongrel race … [and] the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed.'" When Macdonald was questioned about why the Bill should allow some Indians to vote but not any Chinese people, he responded: "'Indians are sons of the soil; they are Canadians and British subjects; and, there, they have the proper qualification. ... they ought to be treated as other British subjects. The Chinese are foreigners. ... [with] no British instincts or British feelings or aspirations.'" The *Act* went into effect in July.[40]

At the same time, the commissioners released their *Report on Chinese Immigration*. The *Report* recommended a $10 head tax on every Chinese person trying to enter Canada (each entrant had to pay this fee in addition to the other immigration fees and processes). Macdonald's

[40] Stanley, "Aryan," 115, 122; Strong-Boag, "Citizenship Debates," 69-70, 89.

government accepted the *Report*, implementing the *Act to Restrict and Regulate Chinese Immigration to Canada* (commonly known as the *Chinese Immigration Act*), raising the head tax to $50 with few exemptions (e.g., diplomats, government representatives). Ships carrying Chinese immigrants to Canada were limited to one Chinese person per 50 tons of the ship's weight (for Europeans, the ratio was one person to two tons). It is revealing that this *Act* was only passed (as of July 1885) upon the near completion of the CPR.[41]

-June-August 1885: Riel was charged with high treason. There were several unconventional procedural decisions made for this trial. Even the charge was curious; of the 84 trials held in relation to the resistance and uprisings, only Riel was charged with high treason (as per an English statute of 1352). This charge carried a mandatory death sentence. Riel was an American citizen, so his status as a British subject was legally unclear. The trial was shifted from Winnipeg, where he would have had a jury of 12, with significant Francophone representation, to Regina (the territorial capital), which meant a jury of only six, all of whom were Anglophone. The entire trial was done in English (Riel could speak English, but it was not his main tongue), the judge was a stipendiary magistrate (Hugh Richardson), and Riel was denied a formal indictment and a pretrial evaluation of his mental state. Stipendiary magistrates did not have the same distance and independence from the government as a superior court judge, who would have heard Riel's case if tried in a province, not a territory; they served entirely at the pleasure of the government. Riel was found guilty on August 1, although the jury recommended mercy. Richardson enforced the death penalty regardless. Riel's appeals to higher courts were denied. Thousands of petitions for commuting his death sentence, and counter-petitions supporting his execution, were sent to Macdonald; Riel's pending execution became a national issue that further polarized the always-

[41] Daniel Meister, et. al., "Chinese Immigration Act," *Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21*.

present French-English divide in Canada. While not necessarily supporting Riel's advocacy for the Métis, some French Canadians saw in Riel another example of French-speaking Catholics in Canada being bullied and harassed by an aggressive, Anglo-Protestant majority.[42]

-Summer 1885: In correspondence with Governor General Lord Landsdowne, Macdonald minimized the seriousness of the Northwest Resistance and the Cree uprisings. Landsdowne was surprised, as he was under the impression that Canada had been very close to a full-scale Indian war, similar to the United States. Macdonald's response is revealing: "We have certainly made it assume large proportions in the public eye. This has been done however for our own purposes, and I think wisely done."[43]

-October: Due to pressure from French Canadian cabinet ministers and public outcry, Macdonald agreed to have Riel's sanity evaluated formally. Two doctors ruled he was sane, one doctor ruled he was insane. These diagnoses were not made public, and the report of the doctor who concluded he was insane was not shared with the House until 1886. Macdonald rejected clemency for Riel. This is not surprising, given that Macdonald had written to his long-time correspondent, J.R. Gowan, two weeks after Riel's capture that if he was convicted "'he certainly will be executed.'"[44]

-November: The "last spike" of the transcontinental railway was hammered on November 7. Riel was hanged publicly in Regina, November 16. After a trial presided over by magistrate Charles Rouleau, whose house had been burned down during the Cree uprisings, eight men were sentenced to death. Dewdney lobbied for this mass hanging to be a "'public spectacle'" (even

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[42] Lewis Thomas, "Riel, Louis," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* 11 (1982); Jeremy Ravi Mumford, "Why Was Louis Riel, a United States Citizen, Hanged as a Canadian Traitor in 1885?" *Canadian Historical Review* 88 (2007), 249-250.

[43] W.A. Waiser, "'For our own purposes': Prime Minister Macdonald Deliberately Portrayed Indians as Rebels in 1885," *Champlain Society* (2016).

[44] Thomas, "Riel"; Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald."

though public executions had been banned in Canada). Macdonald agreed, telling Dewdney that these executions should "'convince the Red Man that the White Man governs.'" The local reserve population was forced to attend the execution, as were the students at the just-opened local Battleford Industrial School. Occurring on November 27, this was the largest mass execution in Canadian history. Cree leaders who had not participated in any violence were also arrested and imprisoned, such as Poundmaker and Big Bear. 27 bands were officially labelled "disloyal," and had extra regulations placed upon them. Dewdney introduced what became known as the pass system, an informal system requiring anyone leaving or entering a reserve to receive the written permission (a pass) from the local Indian Agent. This significantly curtailed the freedom of movement of First Nations people.[45]

1886

-July 10-August 31: Macdonald travelled to Western Canada for the first and only time. Macdonald and his wife visited Calgary for a social event. He met with the Siksika nation in Gleichen (in contemporary Alberta), in honour of the loyalty Siksika leader Crowfoot showed to the government by not siding with Riel during the resistance. They did not discuss Indigenous grievances in the region (and the Siksika were neutral, not pro-government, during the conflict).[46]

1887

-February: Macdonald won another federal election.

-Macdonald's government amended the *Indian Act* to give the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs the ability to appoint officials to examine the membership of bands. The Superintendent

[45] Daschuk, *Clearing*, 156-157; Smith, "Aboriginal Peoples," 74-75; Miller, "Minister," 330-331.
[46] Martin, *John*, 173-174.

General then had the final authority to remove, or add, Indians to the band membership list. This expanded the Superintendent's control over Indian Status.[47]

-Macdonald's government amended the *Chinese Immigration Act*. It added two exemptions to the head tax: Chinese women married to non-Chinese men (since according to Canadian law women were automatically the nationality of their husbands), and Chinese people simply "travelling through" Canada on a train to the United States.[48]

1888

-The *Indian Act* was amended to allow band councils to approve the subdivision of a reserve into separate tracts of private property.[49]

1891

-June 6: After a series of debilitating strokes, Macdonald died at the age of 76. He led the Conservative Party to victory one last time in March of that year.[50]

[47] Indian and Northern Affairs, *Consolidation, Vol. 1*, 166-167.
[48] Meister, "Chinese."
[49] Miller, "Minister," 333-334.
[50] Johnson and Waite, "Macdonald."

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