Sir John A. Macdonald Historical Timeline

Prepared for: Calgary Board of Education

March 15, 2024

Sir John A. Macdonald Historical Timeline

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Project Description: We were tasked with researching and preparing a historical timeline of Sir John A. Macdonald from birth to death, with a primary focus on his time in Canadian federal politics, for the Calgary Board of Education.

The materials used in the preparation of this timeline are detailed in the accompanying bibliography and represent a range of the most important historical works on Macdonald and his times.

Deliverables:

- Two to four page executive summary.
- 25 to 50 page historical timeline of Sir John A. Macdonald from birth to death with a primary focus on his time in Canadian federal politics.
- The timeline should attend to the Alberta context in terms of decisions made by Sir John A. Macdonald's government that would have impacted Treaty 7 Indigenous peoples and the Chinese community within Alberta.

[1] Clifford is a settler who was born and raised on Treaty 6 territory, the traditional and ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux, and Nakota Sioux. She now resides on and wrote this timeline from the territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin people.

[2] Drs. Peck and Piper are located and work on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse Indigenous peoples including the Cree, Blackfoot, Métis, Nakota Sioux, Iroquois, Dene, Ojibway/ Saulteaux/Anishinaabe, Inuit, and many others whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to influence the University of Alberta's vibrant community.

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Executive Summary

Sir John A. Macdonald (1815-1891) was a pivotal figure in Canada's formation and expansion, renowned for his role as a Father of Confederation and the nation's first Prime Minister. Born in Scotland to a family of seven, Macdonald emigrated to Canada when he was five years old. A practicing lawyer in Kingston, he joined the Conservative Party and in 1844 was elected to the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Canada.

Macdonald quickly ascended the political ladder to a place of influence. He is known for supporting infrastructure policies such as the construction of railways and canals that aided in the province's economic development. By the 1860s, he was one of the most prominent conservatives in Canada due to his tactful ability to unite English and French conservatives across Canada East and Canada West, forming the Great Coalition. Leading up to the *British North America Act* in 1867, Macdonald played key roles in both the Charlottetown and Quebec Conferences, helping guide the legal framework that would be implemented after the Dominion of Canada's establishment.

As Prime Minister, his leadership style supported small 'l' liberal ideas, such as equality before the law, personal property, representation, and enfranchisement.[3] Through these ideas, he promoted a vision of a united and strong Canada, which included lobbying for national unity and western development, Indigenous 'civilization' programs, and racially restrictive immigration policies. At the beginning of his time as Prime Minister, Macdonald successfully negotiated the purchase of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), substantially enlarging the territorial claims of the new Dominion. Macdonald aimed to promote unity amongst the provinces in part through the creation and growth of the heavily subsidized Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). He had hoped that the transcontinental railway would encourage greater settlement in the west, bolstering economic development and supporting more provinces to join Confederation. However, his tenure as Prime Minister was not without controversy, notably involving allegations of corruption surrounding electoral buy-offs and the construction of the CPR. With the CPR mired in scandal, Macdonald resigned in 1873 and the Liberals formed the government until 1878, when Macdonald and the Conservatives won an election focused on the National Policy

In addition to his role as Prime Minister, Macdonald was the longest-serving Superintendent General of Indian Affairs in Canada, holding this office from 1878 to 1887. He thus played a formative role in developing Canada's "post-Confederation Indian policy," including shaping treaty and reserve policies, the residential schooling system, and other assimilatory

[3] Macdonald often called himself a Conservative-liberal. The characterization of small-l liberal was used to infer that someone subscribed to the liberal ideology who was not a member of the 'Liberal' party. Conservative-liberals instead advanced a mixture of conservative and liberal policies.

measures that aimed to undo Indigenous cultural identities and traditional governance structures.[4][5]

Macdonald believed in the superiority of British culture and political traditions. As Donald Smith has written, Macdonald adamantly believed that Indigenous peoples must be "assimilated into the new dominant society" and "leave behind their Indigenous social structure", adhere to new farming norms, move towards individualistic thinking and ways of life, and "abandon the reserve system."[6] In 1857, he brought forward the *Gradual Civilization Act* and one decade later, the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act,* both of which deeply imbued Eurocentric and patriarchal understandings of land ownership and citizenship within Indigenous governance structures. Through Macdonald's leadership, the Dominion of Canada expanded from east to west by deploying the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), policies of starvation to subdue threats of First Nation's resistance on the prairies and Métis resistance at Red River, and the first seven *Numbered Treaties* that brought First Nation signatories in the west under the Canadian state's administration. Lastly, Macdonald's legacy endured well past his death as the Indian Residential School system opened in 1879 under his leadership and did not close until 1996. Many of the other policies he introduced remained unaltered until the mid-twentieth century.

Similar to Macdonald's policies focused on Indigenous peoples, his immigration policies were shrouded in Eurocentric beliefs. While his government heavily promoted the immigration of European settlers to Canada to develop the west with individuals who espoused similar values as the dominant, largely British society, immigration from East Asia did not receive the same support. In the *Electoral Franchise Act of 1885*, East Asian immigrants were disenfranchised and alienated from Canadian society. In the same year, Macdonald passed the *Chinese Immigration Act of 1885*, known colloquially as the *Chinese Exclusion Act*, which imposed a $50 head tax on Chinese immigrants.[7] The rationale for this decision was driven by anti-Chinese sentiment based on fears of economic competition and which viewed Chinese immigrants as a threat to white settler jobs, although Chinese immigrants were often sought out for their willingness to work in debilitating conditions that white settlers refused. Macdonald's perpetuation of anti-Chinese sentiment further impacted Chinese workers, leaving them excluded from society until 1947.

Macdonald's legacy is complex and subject to diverse interpretations. Many Canadians tend to look favourably upon Macdonald's role as a nation-builder and shift blame away from him by insisting that he was a product of his time and should not be judged by present-day

[4] J.R. Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs: The Shaping of Canadian Indian Policy," In *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*, eds. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014), 311.
[5] Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs," 311.
[6] Donald B. Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," In *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*, eds. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014), 64.
[7] The author acknowledges the lack of contextual information regarding Chinese immigration to British Columbia prior to the 1880s, during which time construction on the CPR had begun in the region. While in the 1880s Macdonald espoused anti-Chinese sentiment that sought to alienate and build upon racialized logic, Macdonald was not the first Canadian or European settler to do so. Rather, much of Macdonald's thoughts were co-opted from previous discourse already cemented in the settler's lexicon of British Columbia. As such, the timeline touches upon prior exclusionary themes that became rampant during the Gold Rush and grew into the 1880s but it should be noted that this context is largely invisible in the timeline.

understandings of racism and wrongdoing.[8] Alternatively, others condemn Macdonald for his exclusionary immigration and colonization policies that augmented white supremacy in the Canadian political landscape, undermined Indigenous sovereignty, and supported starvation and cultural genocide; historical experiences that have enduring impact for Indigenous and racialized communities across Canada today.[9] Together, this timeline aims to provide a nuanced discussion of Macdonald's life, inclusive of his policies around nation-building and Confederation but also with necessary attention to the impact of his policies on Indigenous people and Chinese immigrants.

To do so, the document grapples with events across Macdonald's early life and legal practice, his entrance into politics, Confederation, his policies surrounding the HBC and North-West Resistance, as well as his time as Superintendent of Indian Affairs. For years with multiple entries in the timeline, bullet points are used to differentiate between events during the same time period while footnotes are utilized to both provide citation information but at times, to also add additional context. Following this section, the timeline moves into a deeper discussion of some of Macdonald's most influential policies, with particular attention to policies aimed at Indigenous peoples and Chinese and Mongolian immigrants. Lastly, the document offers a section on enduring effects that charts the impact of Macdonald's policies well past his lifetime, as per request by the Calgary Board of Education. An addendum further adds to the current context around renaming practices without offering opinions towards how society should remember Macdonald and his legacy.

Importantly, the timeline uses the following language conventions, drawing on Indigenous scholar recommendations: Indigenous encompasses First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples collectively and also "refer[s] to Indigenous Peoples worldwide collectively."[10] The term First Nations grew out of the 1970s "partly as an alternative to inappropriate terms such as *Native* and *Indian*." It "refers to separate nations that occupied territory before the arrival of Europeans."[11] Aboriginal is only used in direct quotations from secondary literature "as a way to refer to Indigenous Peoples in Canada."[12] Métis "describes an Indigenous People who emerged during the fur trade from the intermarriage of people of European descent and people of Indigenous descent."[13] Lastly, 'Indian' is only used when referring to specific policies or processes of the time, such as the *Indian Act*.

[8] Kelsie Lynn Walker, "Beheading Canada's History: The Desecration of Sir John A. Macdonald's Image in the Canadian National Memory," (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 2023).
[9] Timothy J. Stanley, "Commemorating John A. Macdonald: Collective Remembering and the Structure of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 204 (2019); James William Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life*, vol. 65 (University of Regina Press: Regina, 2013).
[10] Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018).
[11] Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style*.
[12] Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style*.
[13] Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style*.

Historical Timeline

Early Life and Legal Practice

To begin, this section documents the first three decades of Macdonald's life. It introduces his family life, immigration from Scotland to Canada, and his entrance into the field of law in Kingston. Important to note is the influence of Macdonald's Scottish heritage and connections to Britain that can be felt across the entire timeline.

1815: John A. Macdonald was born in the then industrial city of Glasgow, Scotland to middle class parents, Hugh Macdonald and Helen Shaw (married in 1811). The exact date and place of his birth are unknown, with historians such as Gwyn noting a discrepancy between official records from the General Register Office in Edinburgh stating January 10th, and an entry in Macdonald's father's memorandum book stating January 11.[14] John was the second of five children, following the eldest child, Margaret and preceding James, Louisa, and William, who later died.

1820: Due to a string of failed business enterprises, and compounded by the poor economic climate in England post-Napoleonic wars, the Macdonald family immigrated to Upper Canada.[15] Although bankrupt, Macdonald's family sold off their remaining household effects to pay for their transatlantic voyage. John was five. Kingston was a practical choice as it was home to a "cluster of Macdonald relatives and cousins," the most important being Colonel Donald Macpherson who not only aided in housing the Macdonald family but helped "with advice and contacts as Hugh set up his first business".[16] Kingston also offered Hugh Macdonald innumerable business opportunities that were not limited by class divisions, an aspect important to John A. Macdonald's political rise later in life.

- On August 13, 1820, the Macdonald family arrived in Kingston after slowly traversing across the St. Lawrence River from Quebéc City. The family resided with Colonel Macpherson for three months until proper accommodation could be found for them. The family moved to the centre of town where Hugh Macdonald opened a general store, which quickly failed.

[14] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald," accessed February 15, 2024, http://www.biographi.ca/en/theme_macdonald.html; Richard Gwyn, *John A: The Man Who Made us. The Life and Times of John A. Macdonald*, Volume One: 1815-1867 (Random House Canada: Location, 2007), 7.
[15] Gwyn, *John A*, 9-10.
[16] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald"; Gwyn, *John A*, 13.

1821: On July 3, John A. Macdonald's brother, James, was killed at the age of 5 and a half years "by a family servant named Kennedy".[17] The situation around James' death was never verified and is only left to speculation. John became the "last surviving male heir among the original three", with John's other brother having passed prior to their voyage to Upper Canada.[18]

1824: After Hugh Macdonald's second business venture failed, the Macdonald family moved to Hay Bay, west of Kingston, to open another store. John, who was nine, continued his schooling in Adolphustown with his sisters Margaret and Louisa.[19]

1825: Macdonald was sent to Kingston to attend the private school Midland District Grammar School.

1829: At 14, Macdonald "moved to a new establishment for 'general and classical education'."[20]

1830: At the age of fifteen, he left school to pursue his legal career. When speaking to his biographer, Joseph Pope, Macdonald reflected on this point in his life, noting that he "never had a boyhood".[21] While historians such as Gwyn note that Macdonald's adolescence was the norm and that his "boyhood was more agreeable than that of most boys", Macdonald expounded a bitterness towards his lack of university education. In reflecting on his life to Pope, Macdonald noted that he should "have entered the path of literature and acquired distinction therein" and that looking back, Macdonald had expressed "an uneasy sense that politics hadn't stretched his intellect enough and that he had missed out on opportunities to express the creative and imaginative side of his character".[22]

- At the end of 1830, Macdonald began apprenticing for an established lawyer in Kingston. To qualify for the position, Macdonald sat for examinations in Latin and mathematics. There were no formal training or educational requirements to practice law at this time. Macdonald spent his days as a law clerk, which Gwyn notes was a "leap" as Macdonald gained "entry to what was probably the most sought-after legal premises in Kingston - the office of George Mackenzie" after having just left school.[23]

- While apprenticing for Mackenzie, Macdonald specialized in corporate law. In the coming years, Macdonald quickly gained vast independent experience by opening a branch office

[17] Gwyn, *John A*, 27.
[18] Gwyn, *John A*, 28.
[19] Due to lack of future discussion of John A. Macdonald's family, the timeline refers to John A. simply as "Macdonald." Distinction will be given when discussing other family members.
[20] Gwyn, *John A*, 32.
[21] Gwyn, *John A*, 29.
[22] Gwyn, *John A*, 30.
[23] Gwyn, *John A*, 34.

for Mackenzie in Napanee. Further growing Macdonald's legal career, Lowther Macpherson, a relative, gave Macdonald the opportunity to fill in temporarily in his Prince Edward County law office while Macpherson was away due to illness.[24]

1834: Due to the ongoing cholera epidemic, Macdonald began to take over some of Mackenzie's accounts. As a result, Macdonald "became secretary of both the Prince Edward District Board of Education and the Hallowell Young Men's Society."[25]

1835: At the age of 20, Macdonald opened his own law office in Kingston, six months prior to being called to the bar. A notice detailing the office's opening was published in the Kingston *Chronicle* on August 24, 1835.[26]

1836: A year after opening his own firm, Macdonald became an attorney after passing the necessary examinations. Soon after, Macdonald took in two law students at his firm, those being Alexander Campbell and Oliver Mowat.

- Macdonald was called to the bar on February 6, 1836.[27]

1839: On September 10, the prominent Kingston lawyer Henry Cassady passed away, enabling Macdonald "both to take over much of his business and to succeed him to the prime post of solicitor of the Commercial Bank of the Midland District".[28] As a result, Macdonald "never again appeared in the courts, except in civil actions", ending a short yet highly successful career as a defense attorney.[29]

1841: Hugh Macdonald passed away, leaving John A. Macdonald officially as the head of the family.[30]

- In 1841, Britain brought the colonies of Upper and Lower Canada together to form the Province of Canada. The Province of Canada was composed of Canada West, formerly

[24] While not linked to a specific date, biographers such as Gwyn highlight the importance of Macdonald's Scottish connections in Upper Canada. Although not doubting Macdonald's skilled legal abilities, Gwyn also attributes much of Macdonald's success to the Scottish community and their willingness to open doors for other Scots. At the time, Scots were in some of the most powerful institutions in Upper Canada, such as the Bank of Montreal, and inevitably attributed to Macdonald's success as he "naturally played the advantage of Scottishness for all it was worth"; Gwyn, *John A*, 43.
[25] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[26] Gwyn, *John A*, 48.
[27] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[28] Gwyn, *John A*, 47.
[29] Gwyn, *John A*, 54.
[30] James Maurice Stockford Careless, "Province of Canada (1841-67)," The Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed March 7, 2024, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/province-of-canada-1841-67#:~:text=The%20Province%20of%20Canada%20was,and%20Canada%20East%20became%20Quebec.

Upper Canada, and Canada East, formerly Lower Canada. The two regions were governed together until their dissolution in 1867.

1842: Beginning in January, Macdonald embarked on a six-month trip, traveling from Boston to Britain. During the trip, he met his first wife, Isabella Clark, in Scotland. At the time, Isabella was living with her two sisters, Margaret and Jane. Prior to Macdonald's trip back to Canada, Isabella had committed to visiting him in Kingston the following year.

- Britain made its own impression on Macdonald, deepening his "lifelong conviction that whatever was British was best - both in itself and also for Canada".[31] Macdonald's return to Canada signaled the beginning of his life in politics just one year later.

Macdonald's Entrance into Politics

Spanning from 1843 to 1857, this section documents Macdonald's emergence into the Canadian political space. For his first decade in office, Macdonald made very few contributions to policy and continued to maintain his law office in Kingston. Macdonald's involvement changed rapidly with his introduction of the *Gradual Civilizations Act* in 1857, shifting his role in history from an uninvolved member of parliament to a formative figure in federal and Indian affairs.

1843: In February, Macdonald announced he would "contest a vacant seat for alderman in Kingston's Fourth Ward", which he easily won.[32] This was a three-year position.

- September 1, 1843, Macdonald married Isabella Clark in St. Andrew's Church in Kingston.

1844: In the spring, a group of citizens from Kingston requested that Macdonald "run in the [federal] election" as a Conservative.[33] Macdonald agreed and promised to address "the settlement of the back township district, hitherto so utterly neglected, and to press for the construction of the long projected plank road to Perth and Ottawa".[34] He used his dislike for bureaucracy to play to many citizens' interests. Macdonald "intended to get things done in the way they themselves would do it - by being practical". In this vein, Macdonald stated that in "a young country like Canada, I am of the opinion that it is of more consequence to endeavour to develop its resources and improve its physical advantage than to waste the time of the legislature and the money of the people on abstract and theoretical questions of government".[35]

[31] Gwyn, *John A*, 56.
[32] Gwyn, *John A*, 59.
[33] Gwyn, *John A*, 63.
[34] Gwyn, *John A*, 63.
[35] Gwyn, *John A*, 63-64.

- Moving into the election in the fall, Macdonald rearticulated his position in the Kingston *Chronicle*: "I, therefore, scarcely need state my firm belief that the prosperity of Canada depends upon its permanent connection with the Mother Country and that I shall resist to the utmost any attempt which may tend to weaken that union".[36]

- The election ran on Monday, October 14. Macdonald won easily, by "275 shouts against just 42 for his opponent, Anthony Manahan".[37] At the age of 29, Macdonald entered the Assembly of the Province of Canada.[38] Due to ongoing construction in Kingston, Macdonald first appeared in the legislature in St. Anne's Market in Montreal. During his first year, Macdonald remained quiet and rarely engaged in assembly debates.

1845: Macdonald entered his second session of the legislature and found his voice.

- In February, Macdonald "took part in a debate on a motion calling for reform of the law of primogeniture", which requires upon the death of a property owner for all his holdings to be transferred to the eldest son.[39] According to Gwyn, Macdonald was appalled that "some share of such estates might instead be reserved for younger sons".[40] This opinion was partly over a military and security concern, citing that fewer men would take up arms for the country if they shared a part of their father's estate. Nevertheless, the motion was defeated.

- On July 11, 1845, Macdonald wrote to his sister-in-law, Margaret Greene, to inform her of Isabella's illness. Isabella had been battling with an unknown sickness for some time. She was never able to recover and would remain bed-ridden for the rest of her life. In search of a warmer climate to help with Isabella's illness, Macdonald accompanied her to Georgia. Macdonald returned to Kingston later that year, compelled by his political duties.

1846: Slowly becoming more comfortable in the legislature, Macdonald began to interject more frequently. Typically, he focused on strictly local matters, such as petitioning for a Catholic college to be established in Kingston.

- In May, Macdonald interjected in a bill "to change on a trial basis the practice of electors shouting their vote choices at the balloting stations in Montreal" due to the onset of

[36] Gwyn, *John A*, 64.
[37] Gwyn, *John A*, 64.
[38] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[39] Gwyn, *John A*, 72.
[40] Gwyn, *John A*, 72; Macdonald's concern also acts as a reminder of the exclusionary property laws in Upper and Lower Canada in 1845 - prohibiting marginalized groups, including women, from property ownership, with the exception of a family death where the widow may inherit property rights.

violence at the stations.[41] Macdonald argued that moving towards a secret ballot would Americanize the process and that "every man in Canada would, and did, make public his opinion".[42] The public ballot remained.

- In the legislature, Macdonald often vocalized his disagreement towards responsible government, "the secularization of the clergy reserves", abolishing primogeniture, and extending the franchise as he considered these measures 'un-British' and that they might weaken the Dominion's connection to Britain.[43]

1847: Conservative premier William Draper appointed Macdonald to the receiver general junior cabinet post. Macdonald held this position for seven months. Afterwards, he transitioned to the position as Commissioner of Crown Lands for three months in the Draper and Sherwood administration.[44] At the age of 32, Macdonald had only been in the legislature for three years at the time of the appointment.

- On August 2, 1847, Isabella went into labour with their first child. She had been staying in New York to access better care for her illness at the time. They named him John Alexander.

- Macdonald was now living in Montreal as the government had moved again.[45]

1848: Macdonald won his second election in early 1848. However, against his success, the Conservatives were voted out of office and lost half their seats.[46]

- In the late spring, Isabella and their son moved back from New York to join Macdonald in Kingston.

- Later in August, Macdonald's son John Alexander died in his cot. He was buried in the Garrison Burial Ground. After the death of their son, Isabella and John's marriage broke apart. From then on, Macdonald "applied all his passion to politics".[47]

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[41] Gwyn, *John A*, 73.
[42] Gwyn, *John A*, 73.
[43] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[44] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[45] In 1841, Lord Sydenha, the first governor general of the Province of Canada, announced that the Province's first capital would be in Kingston. However, French-Canadians were disappointed in this choice. By 1843, the new Governor General, Sir Charles Metcalfe, announced that the seat of government would rotate every three years between Montreal, Quebec City, and Toronto (for more information, see Gwyn, *John A.*, 65-66).
[46] In June 1848, British Columbia witnessed the arrival of the first Chinese immigrants from California. Increased immigration of people of colour into the region added to white settler insecurities and created additional hostilities. These feelings bled into future incidents of exclusionary policies in the province (see Elsbeth A. Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2017)).
[47] Gwyn, *John A.*, 86.

1850: On March 13, Isabella and John A. welcomed their second child, named Hugh John.

1851: For a third consecutive election, Macdonald won his Kingston seat alongside three other Conservative candidates in the Midland District. The 1851 election marked Macdonald's growth from a local to regional candidate.

1854: Still part of the opposition in the legislature, Macdonald quietly began to advocate for change in the Conservative party. According to Macdonald, his "belief is there must be a material change in the character of the new House. I believe also there must be a change of Ministry after the election, and from my friendly relations with the French, I am inclined to believe my assistance would be sought".[48] Macdonald proposed that the Conservative party expand themselves in two directions to gain both Francophone interest and to embrace voters with a progressive bent while still remaining conservative at the core. Many Conservatives were hostile to Francophones, complicating the matter.

- Macdonald sought to reorganize the Conservative Party in three ways: 1) make the party more centrist, populated with 'progressive' conservatives rather than the Family Compact Tories, 2) shape the party into a "true national party" which required building relationships across Conservatives and Francophones to create the potential of a permanent governing party, and 3) by using patronage to attract newcomers to the party and to maintain old alliances.[49]

- The Liberal-Conservative Party emerged as a result of Macdonald's strategy to reorganize the Conservative Party. While containing liberal in the name, the party's liberal wing was composed of a few Reformers who were promised Cabinet posts. More importantly, in combining efforts with many Francophones, the new Liberal-Conservative Party "would have a quasi-permanent majority in the legislature and, thereby, a firm hold upon power".[50] The party soon emerged as Canada's first stable government.

- In June, an election was held. Macdonald won Kingston handily but the Liberal-Conservatives did poorly in Canada West due to their Francophone alliance. However, the leader of the reform government at the time, Sir Francis Hincks, lost a confidence vote and resigned. Sir Allan MacNab of the Conservative party in Canada West and Augustin-Norbert Morin of the traditional reformers in Canada East were called to form a new government. All French Canadian ministers serving under Hincks kept their posts while MacNab added

[48] Gwyn, *John A*, 121.
[49] Gwyn, *John A*, 125.
[50] Gwyn, *John A*, 126.

six new individuals, three Conservatives and three Reformers. In September, Macdonald became the new Attorney General for Canada West.

- As Attorney General of Canada West, Macdonald became generally responsible for the "nation's laws and their improvement".[51] His first major task in the position was to "steer through the act for the abolition of the clergy reserves".[52] Macdonald was also responsible for investigating questions involving Indigenous land surrenders, but in at least one such inquiry described below, Macdonald decisively in the interests of the Crown.[53]

- In October, Macdonald introduced legislation to secularize the Clergy Reserves and allocate funds to support public schools. Previously in 1791, the *Constitutional Act* reserved one seventh of all land in Canada West to the clergy, with revenues also allocated to the Anglican Church.

- Simultaneously, sectarian divisions across Canada West and Canada East became fervent. Macdonald posed two solutions: 1) compromise and 2) double majority.[54] While Macdonald originally brushed off double majority due to its potential to paralyze government, he later declared that for the matters that affect Canada West solely, "members from that section claimed the generally exercised right of exclusive legislation", while members from Canada East "legislated in matters affecting their own section."[55] Still, concerns on sectarianism remained well into the 1860s under Macdonald's leadership.

1855: Macdonald was responsible for a controversial bill on separate schools in Canada West.[56] He defended the bill on religious grounds and Roman Catholics' right "to educate their children according to their own principles."[57] While a majority of Canadian West members of parliament opposed the bill, it ultimately passed due to strong French Canadian Catholic support. Macdonald

[51] Gwyn, *John A*, 153.
[52] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[53] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 67.
[54] The double majority rule was a supermajoritarian rule that was never formally applied in the Province of Canada. In theory, it required "a majority of members from both Canada East and Canada West [...] to support legislation in order for it to pass." The rule was constructed to protect the French population in Canada East due to their minority of seats in the Provincial Parliament "despite initially holding a majority of the population." (See Adrian Raddtaz, "The Double Majority Rule: Estimating the Impact of a Supermajoritarian Rule in Pre-Confederation Canada" (Master's thesis, University of Calgary, 2016), 1.
[55] Gwyn, *John A*, 201.
[56] Separate schools contrasted the public school system as they institutionalized religious divisions in education. Through this policy, Protestant and Catholic systems, as well as nonsectarian public schools, were created. This was done in part to recognize certain settler minority rights while still maintaining control over the education system. For more information, see The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Separate Schools," accessed March 7, 2024, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/separate-school.
[57] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald.".

was later accused of manipulating parliament and opening up the possibility for French domination.

1856: To avoid the potential of "Indian Wars" that had erupted in the United States around settler acquisition of western territories, a royal commission was established to recommend "the best mode of so managing Indian property as to secure its full benefit to the Indians without impeding the settlement of the country".[58] The commission identified "measures to protect the Indians from 'contamination by the white settlers' and to enable them to 'assimilate the habits' of the white men."[59] Macdonald utilized these findings a year later to form the *Gradual Civilization Bill of 1857*.

- In the spring, the three Reform ministers of the Liberal-Conservative cabinet ministers resigned. Alongside the last remaining Conservative minister, Macdonald resigned, forcing MacNab, the leader of the Liberal-Conservatives, to resign as well on May 21. Afterwards, a new Liberal-Conservative group was formed with Étienne-Paschal Taché in charge. On May 24, the cabinet was reorganized with Macdonald maintaining the attorney general role and becoming co-premier, and in addition, he claimed the position of leader of the Upper Canadian portion of the government.

- As attorney general, Macdonald maintained responsibility for numerous judicial reforms, such as the *Common Law Procedure Act* (1856).

1857: Macdonald acknowledged that the process of settlement prior to 1857 had been "destructive of habits of self-reliance on the part of the Indians".[60] In an effort to continue the civilizing project that began with the 1856 Royal Commission without expending further money, Macdonald drafted the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857*. The purpose of this Act was to allow any Indigenous male who was educated, free of debt, and of good character, to apply and after a three-year period, would "achieve outright ownership of fifty acres of reserve land".[61] Indigenous men would then become full citizens of Canada but lose their Indigenous status. Macdonald's hope was that the act would be a "sufficient inducement to draw [First Nations] away from their old habits."[62] According to

[58] Gwyn, *John A*, 153.
[59] Gwyn, *John A*, 153.
[60] Legislative Assembly, "Civilization of Indians," *Globe*, May 16, 1857, 2. [Accessed through the Toronto Public Library] https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.torontopubliclibrary.ca/docview/1511663069?accountid=14369, cited in Sarah Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy, 1844-1876" (Master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2011), 93; Macdonald's bill was met with some criticism in the House. A.A. Dorion "suggested that all Indigenous territory should be taken and sold to the incoming settlers who needed the land and would use it to its full potential. Money generated would then be provided to First Nations to better their own situation. William Lyon Mackenzie questioned, "What sort of civilization have we here" and was the only member to vote against the bill (Legislative Assembly 1857, 2).
[61] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 540.
[62] Legislative Assembly, "Civilization of Indians," 2, cited in Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 93.

Macdonald, this process would succeed by "let[ting] them have a piece of land, and to encourage habits of providence, by letting them know that, if they alienated their lands, they had nothing to fall back upon."[63] In other words, the acquisition of land rights was seen to help push Indigenous peoples toward becoming more like white settlers (then perceived as ideal citizens). No Indigenous chiefs or councils were consulted prior to the drafting of this Act. Compared to the *Royal Proclamation of 1763* that declared that Indigenous peoples "should not be molested or disturbed" on "their historic hunting grounds", this precedent was later ignored.[64] To Gwyn, the "policy combined paternalist protection with explicit assimilation; it accepted the Aboriginal people were 'wards' of the government" but if they wanted to gain the benefits "of the white man's 'civilization' they had to cease being Indians."[65]

- Macdonald's view of Indigenous peoples at the time was that they "should be protected from whites but assimilated into white society".[66] Still, Macdonald often operated with preferential treatment towards European settlers, as he did when evaluating an 1820 purchase of land along Dundas Street. In July 1857, he argued for the "absolute and unconditional Surrender of Land" with the proceeds of the sale also belonging to the Crown "& in no way are held in trust for the Indians."[67] Documentation from Head Chief Sawyer, Peter Jones, and S.Y. Chesley of the Indian Department noted that the First Nations were completely unaware of the purported sale and hence it should not stand.[68]

- Meanwhile, conversations of western expansion had begun. While some ministers argued that the Red River and Saskatchewan region could attract a great number of immigrants, others feared that expanding westward would be too expensive. Still, many feared the Americans may move into the North-West first. Macdonald did not assert many opinions on the matter.

- The Macdonald-Cartier government supported both the *Independence of Parliament Act* and amended the *Municipal Corporations Act*.

- On December 28, Isabella Macdonald passed. She was buried in a family plot in the Cataraqui Cemetery alongside Hugh Macdonald and their son John Alexander.

[63] Legislative Assembly, "Civilization of Indians," 2, cited in Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 93.
[64] Gwyn, *John A*, 416.
[65] Gwyn, *John A*, 154.
[66] Gwyn, *John A*, 154.
[67] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 67.
[68] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 67.

Confederation

Perhaps the policy he is best known for, Macdonald spent many years setting the foundation for Confederation and the British North America Act. This required Macdonald to navigate between his British loyalties and desires for a self-sustaining nation that could resist American annexation attempts.

1858: Queen Victoria selected Ottawa as the new capital of Canada. Much of the legislature questioned the suitability of Ottawa, resulting in a motion passing against the Taché-Macdonald government. Due to the "insult offered to the Queen", Macdonald and the other cabinet ministers resigned.[69] The Governor General invited George Brown to form a new government but within two days, Macdonald was back in power.

- Early in the year, Macdonald received a letter from Walter R. Jones which suggested the government should support a company to build a railway "through British American territory to the Pacific".[70]

- For the first time, Macdonald expressed more substantive opinions on the possible expansion of Canada in the legislature as to "whether this country remains confined to its present boundaries or swells to the dimension of a nation; whether we are to be annexed to the neighboring Republic or extend the boundaries of this country itself".[71] Macdonald highlighted the country's conundrum: while he remained avowedly pro-British, this British sentiment would not prevent an American annexation. The Liberal-Conservative Party moved towards endorsing the idea of a union between the provinces: Confederation. However, this endorsement remained purely tactical with Macdonald often openly speaking against the idea.[72]

- Two judicial districts, Algoma and Nipissing, were established to tighten the government's control in supposedly under-populated northern regions. Numerous colonization roads were proposed to encourage settlers to move beyond previously cultivated areas. This initiative ultimately failed.[73]

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[69] Gwyn, *John A*, 175.
[70] Gwyn, *John A*, 191.
[71] Gwyn, *John A*, 225.
[72] While outside Macdonald's purview but contextually of note, the summer of 1858 saw the beginning of the gold rush in Fraser River, prompting settlers to cross Rupert's Land and head westward. Due to the large influx of settlers, the loss of the HBC's forms of governance structures, and a dwindling food supply, the gold rush became "a catastrophe for many aboriginal populations", particularly for those in British Columbia (Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains,* 75). Events such as this are occurring simultaneously as Macdonald begins to advocate for westward expansion.
[73] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."

- In British Columbia, news of the gold rush brought settlers to the region. Many settlers, including Macdonald, also worried that non-British settlers threatened the region's loyalties to Britain. The onslaught of Chinese immigrants in the region had large economic consequences as European settlers took advantage and egregiously underpaid Chinese labourers "because they could pay them $1 per day, compared to $3 and $2, for white and Indigenous labourers, respectively."[74]

1860: The Province of Canada assumed "complete responsibility for Indian affairs, previously under Imperial control."[75]

- *The Management of Indian Lands and Property Act of* 1860 made the Commissioner of Crown Lands the Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs.[76]

1861: During the summer, Macdonald won his first and only Liberal-Conservative majority in Canada West. Cartier's Bleus lost some seats, constituting a minor setback. Even with the majority, the double majority convention stalled most national policies.

- By mid-1861, Macdonald wrote "The Government will not relax its exertions to effect a Confederation of the North American Provinces. We must however endeavour to take warning by the defects in the Constitution of the United States, which are now so painfully made manifest, and to form (if we succeed in a Federation) an efficient, central government."[77] Macdonald's concerns over repeating history by creating a constitutional framework similar to the United States infiltrated many of his conversations. At the core of his stance on Canadian Confederation rested the necessity of differentiating Canada from its American counterparts and weakening the provincial system to ensure full federal power.

- As Macdonald faced the question of Confederation, the American Civil War began. Although he had been quiet on the topic for many months, in June, Macdonald argued that the war in the United States "shows us the superiority of our institutions and of the principle on which we are based. Long may that principle - the Monarchial principle - prevail in this land. Let there be 'No Looking to Washington'."[78]

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[74] Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 88.
[75] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald."
[76] Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, *The Historical Development of the Indian Act,* 1978, https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/aanc-inac/R32-342-1984-eng.pdf.
[77] Gwyn, *John A*, 228.
[78] Gwyn, *John A*, 241.

- A core aspect of the American civil war rested on discussions of slavery. According to historian Richard Gwyn, Macdonald remained silent on the issue. However, he also argues that as "a conservative and a believer in hierarchy [...], Macdonald appears to have favoured the South."[79] Macdonald was more concerned over Canada's prospects post-American civil war. Approximately 40,000 Canadians had joined the Northern Armies, most of whom would return to Canada post-war as "sadder and wiser men, with a good deal of military experience that they may perhaps be able to use hereafter against their teachers."[80]

- By the fall, the American threat of annexing the territory west of the Province of Canada, namely Rupert's Land and the North-West Territories, dissipated.

- December 18, Macdonald created a new portfolio, Minister of Militia and appointed himself to the position.

1862: Early in the year, Macdonald set up a high-level commission to "recommend ways to improve the country's defences."[81] As Minister of Militia, Macdonald was the chair of the commission. Later, a Militia Bill Macdonald supported was defeated in the assembly, ousting Macdonald from his post for the next two years.

- Helen Macdonald, John's mother, passed away on October 24th. She was buried in the family plot at Catarqui Cemetery.

1863: The Hudson's Bay Company was sold to the International Financial Society, which signaled the beginning of the end of the HBC's economic dominance in the West. This shift in the economic landscape of Rupert's Land greatly altered socio-economic and political relationships among settlers, traders, and diverse Indigenous communities

1864: Throughout the year, Macdonald spent a great deal of time contemplating the possibilities for union. On June 14, a constitutional committee of which Macdonald was a member, voted in favour of "a federal system of government for the two sections of Canada or for all of the British North American provinces." This would in part relieve the deadlock between Lower and Upper Canada through creating two provincial governments. However, Macdonald refused to endorse this report. Stated a year prior, Macdonald felt that the Province was mirroring the United States' weak central government. On June 16, 1864, Macdonald reversed his decision.

[79] Gwyn, *John A*, 245.
[80] Gwyn, *John A*, 241.
[81] Gwyn, *John A*, 249.

- As a result, the 'Great Coalition' was formed on June 30, 1864, which saw Upper Canadian Reformers join Macdonald's Liberal-Conservatives and Cartier's Bleus "for the purpose of creating a federal union of British North America."[82] Accordingly, Macdonald had changed his mind in the hopes that a unified province could rival the United States' rising regional power. According to the historian Martin, this coalition was "by no means united in its determination to secure a British North American union."[83] On the contrary, he describes Macdonald often as using his energy towards in-fighting with George Brown, arguing against the type of federation that Brown was striving for.

- The coalition government that followed was under the leadership of Taché, but Macdonald personally took up the challenge to first "pursue a federal union of the two Canadas alone" and prioritized a union of all provinces.[84]

- Macdonald was heavily involved in the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences. After the first Confederation conference in Charlottetown, Macdonald gave a speech. He noted that "For twenty long years I have been dragging myself through the dreary waste of Colonial politics [...]. I thought there was no end, nothing worthy of ambition, but now I see something which is worthy of all I have suffered in the cause of my little country."[85]

- A month later in October, the Quebec Conference occurred with representatives from Canada, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland. Macdonald was solely responsible for "50 of the 72 resolutions at the Quebec conference" that created the Confederation's constitutional framework.[86] A meeting with the British government in London occurred between December 1866 and bled into the following year into February 1867.[87]

- The Canadian government announced "that the plains could sustain a large agrarian population," signaling Macdonald's hopes for westward expansion.[88]

1867: The British North American Bill became law on March 29th, 1867 but was not proclaimed until July 1, 1867.[89] Monck requested Macdonald to form the first administration in May, 1867,

[82] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[83] Ged Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation, 1837-67* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995).
[84] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[85] Gwyn, *John A*, 198.
[86] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[87] Both the Charlottetown and Quebec conferences ignored First Nation's involvement in British North America, see Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 70.
[88] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 76.
[89] Macdonald's role in Confederation has been highly contested by academics (see Gwyn, *John A*, and the Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald"). However, the Dictionary of Canadian Biography asserts that "much of

leading Macdonald to become the first Prime Minister of the Dominion. This role continued until 1873.

- Macdonald selected the Department of Justice portfolio of which he "supervised the splitting of functions in 1867, consigning those of his former office, the attorney generalship of Canada West, to the provincial government in Toronto."[90]

- Confederation consolidated the systemic exclusion of Indigenous peoples as it handed over sole responsibility for 'Indian Affairs' to the federal government. This removed all opportunities for Indigenous participation in provincial governing systems. The British North America Act's only mention of First Nations was identifying "Indians, and Lands reserved for Indians are a federal responsibility."[91]

- On February 16, Macdonald married Susan Agnes Bernard.[92]

HBC and the North-West Resistance [93]

From 1868 to 1873, Macdonald's first five years as Prime Minister of the Dominion of Canada were spent negotiating the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, expanding his Indigenous policies, and suppressing Indigenous resistance movements in Red River and on the plains. In 1873, the Pacific Scandal broke out and Macdonald was forced to resign. He spent the next term as the Leader of the Opposition before coming back to power in 1878.

1868: Within the first year of Confederation, Macdonald showed "strong centralist views about the assimilation of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and the Hudson's Bay Company territory."[94] Moreover,

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the constitutional structure of the Dominion was his creation" and that Macdonald had claimed "almost complete responsibility for the Confederation scheme" as "he alone possessed the necessary background in constitutional theory and law." Others have challenged Macdonald's role such as George Brown, who wrote in the *Globe* and "attributed the Confederation plan to his collective efforts of the Canadian cabinet", with "his" referring to Brown.

[90] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".

[91] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 64.

[92] Born in 1836, Lady Agnes was the daughter of sugar plantation owners in Jamaica. However, prior to her birth, the family's fortunes began to dwindle due to the emancipation of slaves in 1833. After her father, Thomas Bernard, died in 1850 during the Cholera epidemic, the family relocated to Ontario. One of Lady Agnes' eldest brothers, Hewitt, came to work for Macdonald as a private secretary while he was Attorney General of Canada West. Reportedly, Hewitt discouraged any romance between Macdonald and Lady Agnes due to Macdonald's "heavy drinking" as he "feared for his sister's happiness" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Lady Agnes Macdonald," accessed March 8, 2024, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/lady-agnes-macdonald).

[93] Well known as the North-West Rebellion, in recent years its title has gravitated towards the North-West Resistance, which we have elected to use. This is due to the shift in classification of Indigenous uprisings as a reaction to European colonization as resistances and acknowledging that many Indigenous nations had governance structures and self-governed their regions prior to European settlement. In effect, the change in language pays attention to the shift in power imbalances (see Barkwell 2011, Thistle 2014 and Bertram 2021 as examples of this use of language).

[94] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".

he noted that the North-West Territories were to be "carved out of Rupert's land" and become Canadian colonies.[95]

- With the collapse of the bison herds, starvation loomed in Red River. While the Government of Canada pledged financial relief, this relief came in the form of focused effort on constructing a road linking Lake Superior with the colony. The response "served as a pretext for its annexation of Rupert's Land."[96] By October, the negotiation for Rupert's Land began with Cartier and McDougall negotiating on Macdonald's behalf in London.[97]

1869: Following the negotiations for Rupert's Land, Cartier set to return to Canada on April 1, 1869. Under the *Temporary Government of Rupert's Land Act* reached by Cartier, "a lieutenant governor and council were to administer the territories," which were transferred to Canada on December 1, 1869.[98] McDougall took over the position of Office of Lieutenant Governor in the North-West Territories. In a letter on November 20, 1869, Macdonald advised McDougall that he was "approaching a Foreign country" and that he must give "a most convincing proof that you are not going to leave the half breeds out of the *Law*."[99]

- The Canadian expansion into the region brought the populations of Red River into conflict, primarily due to the Canadian government's oversight in "paying no heed to the Métis at Red River and their acquired rights."[100] Following McDougall's declaration of the North-West's absorption into Canada, Riel established his own provisional government. Macdonald quickly sent out 'emissaries' to mediate with Riel and quell possible dissent. What resulted was the Red River Resistance of 1869-1870 which "delayed the transfer of lands, encouraged American annexationists, and cost the Dominion a considerable amount

[95] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[96] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 77.
[97] After the end of the fur trade in 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company was "the de facto government of Rupert's Land" and attempted to exert authority over the "people and economy of the region" (See Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains,* 59). Post-fur trade, the governor of HBC, George Simpson, took on a reductionist viewpoint and slashed the number of trading posts in the region. What resulted was "a region-wide labour crisis as the majority of fur trade workers found themselves without employment" (Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains,* 59). While HBC's policies had differential effects across the region, Daschuk notes that the company "had profound impacts on the development of First Nations in the northwest" (Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains,* 59-60).
[98] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald"; Canadian Constitutional Documents, "Temporary Government of Rupert's Land Act, 1869," accessed March 12, 2024, https://www.solon.org/Constitutions/Canada/English/tgrla_1869.html.
[99] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[100] Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs," 320; At the time of HBC's monopoly over Rupert's Land and the ensuing fur trade, the Red River community was innately impacted by the onset of western settlement. What resulted were fundamental changes to the community's demographic makeup and economy. The increase in population also strained the community's food supply, namely the sustainability of the bison population, resulting in the growth of conflict due to food insecurity. By 1862, no bison were present in the Red River area, further affecting the community's livelihood.

of money."[101] Afterwards, negotiations became necessary for the Dominion to secure access to the lands purchased from HBC and sparked "a treaty-making initiative" that expanded Canada's influence in the 1870s.[102]

- Macdonald's attitude towards different colonies and whether and how they would join the new Confederation varied dramatically from coast to coast. Towards the end of 1869, Governor Stephen John Hill of Newfoundland proposed the colony could be added to Canada "by imperial fiat."[103] Macdonald blatantly refused, noting that while previous terms had been negotiated with Newfoundland's premier, Frederic Bowker Terrington Carter, Newfoundlanders had voted predominantly against Confederation. This caused Macdonald concern as he "would not impose Canadian rule on another colony without local opinion being tested and found willing."[104]

- *Gradual Enfranchisement Act*: Aimed to simplify the process of the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857*, it "found that an Indian by his education, good conduct, and intelligence was qualified to be proprietor of land" and would receive land from his reserve that could be passed to his children.[105] The Superintendent of Indian Affairs was granted sole authority to "allocate land to band members."[106] It also imposed patriarchal understandings of status through linking a woman's status to her husband's. If a woman with Indian status was to marry outside of her status, she would lose hers and so would any children born out of that relationship. Another aspect that garnered less attention was that it "provided for the election of chiefs and councils in the central provinces. It allowed bands to retain their life chiefs for the time being, but empowered the federal minister to remove them for 'dishonesty, intemperance or immorality'."[107] Additionally, the Act "replaced tribal regulations with municipal powers" in taxation, health, and enforcing bylaws.[108] Indigenous people were not consulted when the Act was developed.

- Building on Macdonald's vision for western settlement, he began setting the stage for the formation of a para-military force similar to the Royal Irish Constabulary in Ireland. This was primarily due to the situation in the west and the growing concern about Indigenous resistance.

[101] Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs," 320.
[102] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains,* 320.
[103] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[104] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald"; Please note the disjoint between Macdonald's treatment of colonies in what is now Atlantic Canada who did not consent to joining the Dominion compared to Macdonald's treatment of Indigenous nations. This demonstrates a hierarchy of respect for some colonies' or nations' opinions over others.
[105] Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 103.
[106] Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 103.
[107] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 540.
[108] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 540.

- On February 8, 1869, the Macdonalds welcomed a daughter, Mary. Within months of her birth, Mary was diagnosed with hydrocephalus, a life-long disability, but her parents chose not to institutionalize their daughter, as was common at this time.

1870: Manitoba entered Confederation, with Canada meeting some of Louis Riel's demands from the 1869-1870 conflict with the Métis.

- On March 3, Thomas Scott was tried for insubordination, convicted, and shot by firing squad the following day.[109] His death came to escalate English-French hostilities and jeopardized Canada's acquisition of the Hudson Bay territory.

- By April 1870, the NWMP "began to take shape" due to an order-in-council that mandated a mounted force to be created and controlled from Ottawa.[110]

- Following negotiations in June with members of British Columbia's government and Cartier, on September 29th, Macdonald informed the colony's governor Anthony Musgrave that the construction of a transcontinental railway to bring British Columbia into the Confederation would face considerable opposition in the House. Rather, he recommended the governor to visit Ottawa to personally negotiate.[111]

1871: In dealing with British Columbia, Macdonald maintained similar patience to that of 1869 and Newfoundland's attempt to join the Confederation. To ensure positive public opinion towards joining Canada, Macdonald insisted on British Columbia holding an election to confirm or deny the province's attempt to join Canada. Through April and May 1871, Joseph William Trutch visited Ottawa on behalf of British Columbia and secured "parliament's approval for British Columbia's terms of union."[112]

- As British Commissioner but Canadian Prime Minister, Macdonald was caught in some diplomatic tension between the British and Americans. Due to British acquiescence,

[109] Scott was an Irish immigrant and took part in a resistance movement against Riel's control over the Red River settlement. He was first captured on December 7th, 1869 but escaped prison one month later on January 9, 1870. He was captured again on February 18, 1870. Due to the tense political climate in 1870 and Riel's dependence on the support of the armed Métis, there was a growing understanding among the Métis that Scott must be punished.
[110] Keith D. Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (AU Press: Edmonton, 2009), 58.
[111] While discussions of the CPR increased, so too did increased Chinese immigration in the region. While beyond the scope of Macdonald's actions, it is important to note the context prior to the building of the CPR. During the 1870s, British Columbia's politics were fraught with discussions of direct taxation due to Macdonald's federal structure that left the provinces extremely underfunded. While white settlers believed that they "bore the fiscal burden of local government services", they "emphasized not Chinese tractability as employees but their intractability as citizens." For ten years, public officials campaigned against Chinese immigration, viewing it as an economic liability (Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government,* 95).
[112] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".

Macdonald signed the Treaty of Washington on May 8, which helped solve numerous conflicts between the US and the UK, including the *Alabama Claims*.[113] However, many Canadians opposed the treaty as it negatively affected Canadian trade for ten years after.

- At this point in Canadian history, Macdonald began negotiating what came to be known as the *Numbered Treaties* with various Indigenous nations in the west. Negotiated between 1871 and 1877, the *Numbered Treaties* "attempted to reconcile the clash between two mutually exclusive economic systems."[114][115] The treaties then made it possible for Macdonald to "secure alliances and 'Dominion' over lands to the west and north", in turn enabling further settlement and the development of agrarian communities. This too would further prevent American annexation of the region.[116] After completed, the *Numbered Treaties* created the blueprint "for conversion of the indigenous *[sic]* population to agriculture and settlement of the prairies with European farmers", a move to further the dominion's assimilation of Indigenous peoples to European standards.[117]

1872: Macdonald survived another election, barely scraping by. Depending on the issue at hand, he managed to maintain a majority of the House until late 1873.

- By the fall, plans for a cross-country railroad began to solidify. At this point, Macdonald delegated responsibility to Sir Hugh Allan to construct a company to build the railway. Allan

[113] The Alabama Claims were a diplomatic dispute between the United Kingdom and United States from 1862 to 1872. The conflict arose from the American Civil War when Confederate agents disguised themselves as non-partisan buyers of British warships. The secrecy employed by the Confederates went against British neutrality laws. After the Civil War, the United States "demanded compensation from Britain for the damage wrought by the British-built, Southern-operated commerce raiders", arguing that British aid prolonged the Civil War by two years and violated its neutrality laws ("The Alabama Claims, 1862-1872," Office of the Historian, accessed March 8, 2024, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1861-1865/alabama).
[114] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 79; Each treaty was not monolithic but had different social and geographical conditions. From the government's perspective, they were "a means to facilitate regional economic and political development" whereas to the plains communities, "the bison economy, which had sustained them for so long, was on the wane, and the arrival of large numbers of agrarian settlers was inevitable" (Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 79). The Numbered Treaties brought security to an unsettled future.
[115] The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) was also a significant factor in the signing of the Numbered Treaties. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, the NWMP often escorted key members to negotiations with the NWMP present at the Blackfoot Crossing during the Treaty 7 negotiation. This often created the feeling that "rejection was not an option" for First Nations (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939. The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015), 119. The report further notes that at the Treaty 7 talks, a NWMP Officer "warned the First Nations representatives that efforts to block settlement would prove futile as trying 'to stop the running waters of the river, as the Queen's soldiers were as thick as the grass on the prairies'." (Hugh A. Dempsey, *William Parker: Mounted Policeman* (Calgary: Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 1973), 23, cited in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Canada's Residential Schools:* 119).
[116] Wabi Benais Mistatim Equay, "The Numbered Treaties," *Canada's History,* last modified April 30, 2018. https://www.canadashistory.ca/explore/settlement-immigration/the-numbered-treaties.
[117] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 99.

was then guaranteed the presidency of the future 'Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) Company' when it was formed.[118]

- Macdonald pushed the Treaty of Washington through the House of Commons by 121 votes to 55.[119] Canadian public opinion had mostly swayed in favour due to the British guaranteeing Canadian railways as compensation for the Fenian raids.

1873: Macdonald established the NWMP to "ensure that Canadian administration and settlement of the newly-acquired North-West Territories was carried out in a peaceful and orderly manner."[120] Importantly, the NWMP were responsible for enforcing the Indian Act and other regulations aimed at Indigenous peoples.[121] This involved surveilling Indigenous individuals and going beyond "acting simply as a coercive or an additional observatory arm."[122]

- As Macdonald's national policies relied upon the consistent settlement of the west, the NWMP also worked to subdue threats of an Indigenous resistance to reduce settler concerns surrounding their security and potential for economic prosperity. [123]The Pacific Scandal took over the House of Commons on April 2, 1873. MP Lucius Sean Huntington called for a motion to investigate the funding source of the CPR and accused Sir Allan of having advanced large amounts of money to senior government members during the 1871 election. Macdonald quickly voted down the motion and called for his own independent investigation. On July 18, telegrams were published in some 'liberal newspapers', demonstrating that key government officials including Macdonald had "accepted large sums of money" from a "financier with whom the government was negotiating a major railway contract."[124] Unable to rally, Macdonald's government resigned on November 5, 1873. Macdonald's resignation also saw the dissolution of the Liberal-Conservative party due to their loss of power, resulting in Macdonald's return to the "Conservative" party.

[118] The railway greatly transformed the economy of the prairies and Indigenous relations to the economy. Daschuk notes that with the railway saw the "invasion of southern traders" and expedited the end of the bison trade (Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 94).
[119] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[120] Roderick C. Macleod, "The North-West Mounted Police 1873-1905, Law Enforcement and the Social Order in the Canadian North-West (PhD diss., Duke University, 1971), iii.
[121] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance, 59*.
[122] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 59; In the late 1870s, the NWMP was concerned about the potential for Canadian Indigenous individuals to cross into the United States to "hunt buffalo and steal horses." As a response, in 1882 the NWMP was instructed to be "vigilant in preventing large groups from leaving the reserves." (See Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 61).
[123] From At its their inception, much of the literature documents the NWMP's involvement in mitigating "violent crimes, crimes with firearms and the selling of banned whiskey to Indians" (see Pierre M. Atlas, "Frontier Violence and Law and Order: Historical and Geographical Variance in the Great Plains of the North American West," *International Journal of Canadian Studies* 57 (2020): 8. Often, the literature on the NWMP's relationship with Indigenous nations at the time of the force's creation reduces their relationship to relative peace. Due to Macdonald's creation of the NWMP and the request that the force be armed similar to a military group, Macdonald's linkages to Indigenous violence is clear.
[124] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".

J. W. Bengough. *We in Canada Seem to Have Lost All Idea of Justice, Honor and Integrity.* September 27, 1873. Cartoon, Grip, Vol. 1, No. 18, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06509_18.

To satirize the event, J.W. Bengough authored the cartoon "We in Canada Seem to Have Lost All Idea of Justice, Honor and Integrity." The cartoon finds Macdonald speaking to Alexander Mackenzie, the leader of the opposition, in a relaxed manner that he admits "I took the money and bribed the electors with it, is there anything wrong about that?"[125] Mackenzie's Liberals took over power from Macdonald after his resignation.

1874: In January, Alexander Mackenzie's new government called for an election and won with a staggering majority. While Macdonald managed to keep his Kingston seat, he remained in opposition for ten months before being removed on "charges of bribery and other electoral malpractice."[126]

- The fall also saw the official arrival of the NWMP. Unlike modern day police forces, the NWMP exercised almost all government functions in the North-West Territories until the mid-1880s.[127] Their main purpose was to "serve the local people" but also to "enforce and

[125] Bengough, John Wilson. *We in Canada Seem to Have Lost All Idea of Justice, Honor and Integrity.* September 27, 1873. Cartoon, Grip, Vol. 1, No. 18, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06509_18.
[126] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[127] By 1874, 300 Mounties arrived in southern Alberta and established Fort Macleod. In 1875, Fort Calgary was established (Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 58).

transplant a way of life onto the prairies."[128] Put another way, the NWMP administration was intended to sustain settler security and "deal with the pacification of Natives".[129]

1876: The *Indian Act* "further regulated who was and who was not 'an Indian,' while circumscribing the lives of Indigenous peoples through a web of government regulation".[130] At this time, Macdonald was not in power but he played an outsized role in framing the legislation as much of the Act was adopted from the *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857* and the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869*.[131]

- As the leader of the opposition, Macdonald responded to the bill's (*Indian Act)* proposal in the House. He noted that "The Bill is a very important one. It affects the interests of the Indians who are especially under the guardianship of the Crown and the Parliament."[132] However, he also doubted "whether it would be well to give every Indian, when he becomes 21 years of age, the right of absolute disposal of his lands."[133] He then vocalized concern that the Act would have the potential to equate First Nations with serfs, to be indentured, and remove them from their 'birth-right'. Macdonald expected that under his civilizing project, First Nations would step out of their government dependency, "be enfranchised, to be civilized, and to have liberty."[134] To Macdonald, the *Indian Act* had the potential to erase his civilization project.

1877: In January, Macdonald informed Sir Hector-Louis Langevin that he would be resigning shortly from the Conservative leadership due to poor health. The caucus refused to accept his resignation.

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[128] Walter Hildebrandt, *Views From Fort Battleford: Constructed Visions of an Anglo-Canadian West* (AU Press, Athabasca: 2008), 33.
[129] Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford,* 33; The NWMP had broad administrative activities, including "the power to administer and enforce British and Canadian law in the territories." Although the power to enforce laws does not equate to the creation of an oppressive state, little help was given to Indigenous populations "in making adjustments to the changing realities they faced." According to Walter Hildebrandt, the NWMP no longer demonstrated "sympathy to the Natives but saw them as the enemy" while R.C. Macleod argues that due to the NWMP's presence, they created "a repressive police state in the West." The NWMP came to represent an attitude of intolerance that perpetuated societal assumptions of Indigenous inferiority (Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford*, 35).
[130] Stanley, Timothy. "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, vol 3, no. 1 (2016): 12; Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs," 320.
[131] Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy, 1844-1876"; During this time, the joint Dominion-Provincial commissions occurred to discuss Indigenous land claims in British Columbia.
[132] Macdonald, "House of Commons Debates," 3rd Parliament, 3rd Session: Vol. 1 (March 2, 1876), 343. http://parl.canadiana.ca/view/oop.debates_HOC0303_03/384?r=0&s=2, cited in Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 106.
[133] Macdonald, "House of Commons Debates," 343, cited in Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 106.
[134] Taekema, "Sir John A. Macdonald's Influence on the Development of Canadian Indigenous Policy," 107.

- Treaty 7 was negotiated in the summer of 1877 to "defuse the increasingly tense situation in southern Alberta caused by armed conflict just south of the border."[135] At this time, the NWMP was "responsible for the day-to-day administration of Indian Affairs in the Treaty 7 region."[136]

Superintendent of Indian Affairs

Macdonald held the position of Superintendent of Indian Affairs from 1878 to 1887. During this time, he was responsible for instituting the starvation of First Nations on the plains, creating the Indian residential school system, subduing the North-West resistance, and enhancing the government's surveillance system of Indigenous peoples to restrict their freedom of movement. Together, his decade as superintendent witnessed his movement from a civilization project to exerting full control over all elements of Indigenous ways of life.

1878: In September, Macdonald regained his position as Prime Minister of the Dominion due to an astonishing victory that saw the Conservatives sweep the Liberals, particularly in Ontario. Although Macdonald lost his seat in Kingston, he chose to represent Victoria, B.C.

- Following the election, Macdonald claimed the Department of the Interior portfolio due to the Dominion's increasing expansion westward, which included "the responsibility for Indian Affairs."[137] This move allowed Macdonald to focus almost solely on the CPR.

- At the beginning of 1878, people in Treaty 7 territory were experiencing a severe famine and faced starvation. By May, the government attempted to secure rations for the population. However, these attempts shifted once Macdonald returned to office. Daschuk notes that, "As if famine and an outbreak of scarlet fever were not enough of a burden [...], the return of John A. Macdonald and his Conservatives to power under the platform of the National Policy brought a new approach to Indian policy."[138] What resulted was a shift from relative ignorance to outright malevolence under Macdonald. While not outwardly spoken, the pacification of the plains Indians was a central component of the government's development program.[139] As further assurance that the west would be ready for expansion

[135] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 106.
[136] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 106.
[137] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 71.
[138] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 108.
[139] By April 1879, the food situation only worsened. Archibald McDonald wrote from Fort Ellice sarcastically predicting that the new administration's Indian policy would fail: "But as the wise men at Ottawa know more of Indians and Indian matters than those who have passed a lifetime among them, it is of little use saying anything on the subject." (Library and Archives Canada, MG 29 B15, *Robert Bell Papers*, vol. 24, f. 88, McDonald to Bell, April 16, 1879, as cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 112).

even during the numerous crises in the prairies, Macdonald "himself became superintendent general of Indian affairs."[140]

1879: As the famine in the prairies worsened, the Dominion government under Macdonald "established its own set of entitlement relations to deal with the famine" that saw First Nations people starve while simultaneously, the cattle industry became established "on the land that had served as pasture for bisons only a short time before".[141]

- Food security became another route for assimilation with many First Nations "trad[ing] their independence for food."[142] Moosomin, Thunderchild, Mosquito, and Little Pine bands, all in the Battleford Agency, accepted treaty in exchange for rations. As Daschuk notes, once many First Nations entered the reserves, they were "at the mercy of officials with little patience for protest."[143]

- On May 1, 1879, the Conservatives exclaimed their 'bewilderment' towards the famine in the west during the Speech from the Throne. By August, Macdonald "set up a council to assess the extent of the food crisis and the threat posed by thousands of First Nations people to the tiny population at Battleford."[144] Before the council could meet, Macdonald was given notice that bison had been viewed out west, which in Macdonald's eyes, meant the food crisis had been averted. He reacted by diverting efforts to address the famine to instead focus on getting troops "to remote settlements such as Prince Albert", to be armed against a possible First Nations uprising.[145]

- Contrary to Macdonald's belief, the food crisis persisted and First Nations such as Crowfoot and other Niitsitapi leaders moved south to Montana.

- The Home Farm Program, established late 1878, came to fruition the year after as a government plan to alter the reserves' economies. The program sought to teach First Nations how to farm using European methods. Composed of 5,000 people, the program was an "abysmal failure". Macdonald held reservations regarding the program's feasibility but still "found it expedient to promote the plan in parliament."[146] At the same time, the preceding Liberal government's work-for-rations policy was suspended and the Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs introduced a new policy that required "labor from able-

[140] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 109.
[141] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 113.
[142] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 114.
[143] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 114.
[144] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 115; Please note that the famine in the west had already occurred for over a year at the point of the Prime Minister's response.
[145] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 115.
[146] Hildebrandt, *Views from Fort Battleford*, 40, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 116

bodied Indians for supplies given them." Supposedly, the policy was proposed for "moral effect" to demonstrate that the First Nations "must give something in return for what they receive".[147]

- While some residential schools run by missionaries in New France and British North America existed at this time, Macdonald made the case for the creation of a ***system*** of Indian residential schools in the *Report on Industrial Schools for Indians and Half-Breeds,* of which both girls and boys were to attend.[148] The schools were to be run by Christian denominations. Macdonald asserted their purpose in acknowledging that his ideal school would ensure that "the Native child would 'be disassociated from the prejudicial influence by which he is surrounded on the reserve of his band."[149] Once finalizing their education, Indigenous children would then enter society "primarily as workers and servants" and placed on the "lower rungs of the economic ladder, and not competitors for jobs with European settlers."[150]

1880: First Nations protests against government officials became more frequent due to ill-treatment, lack of provisions, and worsening health conditions. Rather than supplying rations to those facing starvation, "rations were used as a means of coercing Indians into submitting to treaty."[151] Macdonald acknowledged the government's "absolute failure of the usual food supply of the Indians in the North-West" and pressed Parliament to "save them from absolute starvation."[152] However, Macdonald was also keenly aware of the economic pressure this would cause the Dominion, lamenting that the government would be "rigid, even stingy." Strict food regulations were imposed, such as the work-for-rations policy. Later, in defending the government's policy, Macdonald charged that food was not provided "until the Indians were on the verge of starvation, to reduce the expense."[153] The ration policy also overlooked the "inevitable health consequences of widespread and protracted malnutrition."[154]

- From 1877 to 1880, Dr. Daniel Hagarty was the medical superintendent of the North-West territories responsible for vaccination efforts against smallpox. In the spring of 1880, the

[147] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 116.
[148] Preceding 1879, some missionaries had run residential schools in New France and British North America. Macdonald drew on this structure and implemented a *system* of residential schools that grew across the Dominion of Canada.
[149] James R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 103, cited in David B. Macdonald and Graham Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 45, *no.* 2 (2012): 432.
[150] Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," 432.
[151] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 114.
[152] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 132.
[153] Jean Larmour, "Edgar Dewdney, Commissioner of Indian Affairs and Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories, 1879–1888" (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1969), 35, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 134.
[154] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 132.

Conservatives dismissed Hagarty as his services were "no longer necessary" as they had briefly eliminated the threat of smallpox to the First Nations population. Hagarty's removal at a time when the First Nations population was in most need illustrates the "cynicism of Indian administration while Macdonald served as both prime minister and minister of Indian Affairs" and was a "testament to Dominion indifference."[155]

- Macdonald proposed the development of the Department of Indian Affairs to advance "the interests of the Indians, civilizing them and putting them in the condition of white men."[156] However, Macdonald's relationship with and sentiments towards First Nations was complex and often unpredictable. In this same argument, he went on to state that "We must remember that they are the original owners of the soil, of which they have been dispossessed [...] At all events, the Indians have been great sufferers by the discovery of America, and the transfer to it of a large white population."[157] While Macdonald promoted his awareness of First Nations struggles, this awareness brought no future compassion. Macdonald later reported in the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior that "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."[158] Still, even with this understanding, Macdonald shifted government spending directly to railway development.

- The *Indian Act* was amended in 1880 to formally disenfranchise Indigenous women.

1881: In January, a vote on the CPR contract went through the House.

- Three years into the famine, the crisis continued to deepen. In 1881 alone, 5,000 Treaty 7 First Nations were "added to the rations list" due to the lack of game on the Plains.[159] Relief from the Dominion of Canada was limited. In the fall of 1881, Crowfoot requested additional help for his people and was "branded a troublemaker and reprimanded by Agent Macleod." According to Daschuk, "[r]umors circulated that the government was intentionally starving the Niitsitapi to death."[160] Elsewhere on Treaty 4 territory, the *Saskatchewan Herald* was reporting on the continued deaths due to starvation on the Back Reserve, signaling that the famine was not invisible but still overlooked by the authorities. Still, the Dominion government did not "increase its expenditures to counter the growing crisis", with one government official, Sir Leonard Tilley, noting that First nations "must work

[155] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 105.
[156] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 72.
[157] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 72.
[158] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 72.
[159] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 120.
[160] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 120.

or starve".[161] Food continued to be only provided to individuals on the reserve to limit resistance to the treaties.

1882: Canadians saw another general election in June with Macdonald winning almost as large of a majority as in 1878.

- In 1882, First Nations witnessed the most significant forced removal to date in Cypress Hills due to the decision that the CPR would be built along the southern prairies. On January 1, 1882, Chief Poundmaker announced that "Next summer, or latest next fall, the railway will be close to us, the whites will fill our country and they will dictate to us as they please."[162] By March 24, earlier than predicted, Macdonald made clear to parliament that "all Indians in the territory of Assiniboia would be removed, by force if necessary, from the land south of the proposed railway."[163] Macdonald's removal of First Nations from the southern prairies opened the country "for European settlement" and minimized "the potential threat of a concentrated Indian population to the planned establishment of an agricultural economy."[164]

- The reserve population continued to face malnutrition and sickness. Macdonald acknowledged the situation in front of the House of Commons on April 27, 1882, stating that federal officials "refused food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation."[165] Although the food shortage had subsisted in theory, the Dominion government maintained growing stockpiles of food that was withheld until spoiled, out of reach of the First Nations population.

- Macdonald became the only member of Canada's legislature to "speak of the 'Aryan' nature of Canadian society."[166] During this time, Macdonald agreed that he shared amongst others a general feeling across Canada and the United States "against a Mongolian or Chinese population in our country as permanent settlers as the Chinese were 'an alien race in every sense, that would not and could not be expected to assimilate with our Arian *[sic]* population'."[167] Moreover, Macdonald is the only member of the Canadian legislature to put

[161] Noel E. Dyck, "The Administration of Federal Indian Aid in the Northwest Territories, 1879-1885" (MA Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1970), 42, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 122.
[162] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 123.
[163] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 123.
[164] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 123.
[165] Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, April 27,1882, vol. 2, 1186, cited in Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 76.
[166] Canada, Parliament, House of Commons [Commons Debates], *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada vol. xii* (Ottawa: T. J. Richardson, 1882), 1477, cited in Timothy Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada. *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry*, vol 3, no. 1 (2016): 23.
[167] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 23.

forward “extreme polygenesist views, representing Chinese and Europeans as biologically different and likely meaning as separate species.”[168]

- Macdonald acknowledged that the only reason that he permitted Chinese immigration was that, “At present it is simply a question of alternatives - either you must have this labor or you cannot have the railway”.[169]

1883: Over 5,000 First Nations were forcibly removed from Cypress Hills. As a result, the Canadian government formally “accomplished the ethnic cleansing of southwestern Saskatchewan of its indigenous *[sic]* population.”[170] Food continued to be an assimilatory tool of the Dominion government. Macdonald asserted this fact by stating that, “We cannot allow them to die for want of food. [… we] are doing all we can, by refusing food until the Indians are on the verge of starvation, to reduce the expense.”[171]

- By August, the first train of the CPR had reached Calgary and the Dominion’s progress of relocating First Nations to reserves was almost complete. This marked the start of the full-scale settlement project in the region.

- Another environmental disaster gripped the entire Dominion in the fall and winter of 1883. The plummeting of temperatures during the harvest season resulted in crop failures and the loss of food systems for those on reserves. As malnutrition climbed, Macdonald worried that the Department of Indian Affairs file would come under discussion in the House. Macdonald wrote to Edgar Dewdney, Indian commissioner, ordering a “full & favourable report on the progress of Indians set. on the reserves - amt. Of crops raised and the prospect of diminished expenditure” - effectively covering up the potential of any government response to the crisis.[172] Despite the rising death toll on reserves, Dewdney’s report noted that “the progress of the Indians is generally very satisfactory… and… the

[168] Stanley, “John A. Macdonald, ‘the Chinese’, and Racist State Formation in Canada,” 23.
[169] Canada, *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada (vol. xii)*, 1477, cited in Stanley, “John A. Macdonald, ‘the Chinese’, and Racist State Formation in Canada,” 23; Compared to discourse in the 1870s, the 1880s brought in a new way of thinking that equated wage slavery with anti-Chinese sentiment. David Gouter notes that the Chinese in British Columbia faced similar structures of racism in the United States against African Americans as the Chinese epitomized “the threat that industrial capitalism posed to the dignity and autonomy of the workingman: wage slavery.” Chinese workers were viewed as subordinate and dehumanized, with Gouter arguing they were “without manhood, without ambition, and without self-respect.” (Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 95).
[170] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 123.
[171] Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease, Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880–1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 69-70, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 123.
[172] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 136.

Department has been able to reduce considerably the rations of flour issued to them on several of the Reserves."[173]

- Parliament approved Macdonald's request for three 'industrial schools', with one located on Treaty 7 territory. Originally designed to "help Aboriginal people to adapt better to life in a white-dominated country" and mediate between Indigenous and western worldviews, this focus soon gave way "to a far more coercive system which entailed forced assimilation and cultural destruction."[174] Unlike in their originally proposed form as on-reserve education, residential schools were off the reserve, separating children from their families. Children were prevented from interacting with each other in their native language or from practicing their culture or religion. Physical, mental, and sexual abuse were all pervasive, as was neglect and poor medical treatment that resulted in an extremely high death rate from tuberculosis.[175] The schools also imposed patriarchal understandings of gender roles that aimed to undo understandings of many First Nation's matrilineal governance structures. Attendance for children from the age of five to sixteen was compulsory.[176]

- In November, Macdonald was informed of a NWMP concern that Indigenous women in the North-West were camping near towns. Macdonald acknowledged that the women's presence near settlements needed to be restricted. In his annual report, Macdonald believed that the Tsuu T'ina's location, close to Calgary, "operates detrimentally, to their improvement" and causes "demoralization of their women."[177] In response, Macdonald brought together the Indian Commissioner of the North-West and NWMP Commissioner "with a view to the adoption of some plan to prevent the indiscriminate camping of Indians in the vicinity of towns and white settlements in the North-West Territories."[178] All camps without pre-authorized passes were removed.

1884: Previously, the North-West Mounted Police's approach to policing was less restrictive and the NWMP was aware of the ongoing famine in the prairies. In October 1884, the NWMP was moved under the responsibility of the Department of Indian Affairs, controlled by Macdonald. This shift marked a turning point in the NWMP's relationship with the Indigenous population of the

[173] CSP, John A. Macdonald, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs*, January 1, 1884, x–xi, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 136.
[174] Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," 431.
[175] Alan Cairns, "Coming to Terms with the Past," in *Politics and the Past: On Repairing Historical Injustices*, ed. John Torpey (Lanham MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), 77-78, as cited in Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," 432.
[176] James R. Miller, *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), cited in Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," 431.
[177] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 62.
[178] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 62.

North-west as they "became the ambivalent agents of their subjugation" rather than "the saviours of the indigenous population of the west" that they had been previously.[179]

- Macdonald brought in the *Indian Advancement Act* which further imposed European voting systems on Indigenous peoples and aimed to further reduce what remained of Indigenous self-government. His comments towards First Nations in the House of Commons further demonstrate his assimilatory mindset, for instance when he stated that "Indians all over the Dominion [were] in all stages of civilization, from near barbarism upwards."[180]

- The federal government amended the *Indian Act* to ban the potlatch. The government justified this decision in arguing that it prevented the process of assimilating Indigenous peoples.[181]

- Macdonald appointed the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration to research the possibility of enforcing restrictions on Chinese immigration.

1885: At the hand of Macdonald, the Saskatchewan crisis ensued. The North-West Resistance was brutally suppressed via the Macdonald government's "policy of starvation" to "bend the Prairie Aboriginals to its will."[182] Simultaneously, Macdonald embarked on numerous enfranchisement and disenfranchisement policies that set the stage for future discriminatory practices in the Dominion of Canada towards Indigenous peoples and East Asian immigrants.

- Saskatchewan crisis: Due to a series of disappointments and administrative strain, the Saskatchewan River valley lacked serious government attention. This was a culmination of the CPR line moving further south in 1882 and poor harvests in the region in 1883 and 1884. Louis Riel supported petitioning Ottawa for assistance in December 1884. By January 28, 1885, the cabinet decided to assess the Saskatchewan Métis's position "with full enumeration and probably land scrip in mind."[183] Macdonald rarely approved of land grants and scrip but formed a three-person commission to investigate Métis claims of those who were eligible but had not received land under the Manitoba Act, which he later granted. Macdonald later reneged on this approval of land claims. On March 26, a clash occurred between the NWMP and white volunteers with the Métis. By July 6, 1885,

[179] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 127.
[180] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 73.
[181] Potlatch is a traditional ceremony of the "Indigenous Peoples of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia and the interior western subarctic." Potlatch ceremonies differ across different Indigenous nations and Clans but often "coincide with important events," generally "include feasting, ceremonial dancing, singing and theatre," and may include the redistribution of wealth. Today, this ban is "recognized as an aspect of cultural genocide" (The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Potlatch Ban," accessed March 7, 2024, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/potlatch-ban
[182] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 539.
[183] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".

Macdonald declared in the House that if the Métis were given scrip, they "will either drink it, waste it, or sell it."[184] Later in his comments, Macdonald referenced the Plains Indians in the Northwest: "I have not hesitated to tell this House, again and again, that we could not always hope to maintain peace with the Indians; that the savage was still a savage, and that until he ceased to be savage, we were always in danger of a collision, in danger of war, in danger of an outbreak."[185] Macdonald went on to voice his surprise that his government was able to sustain peace for such a long duration.

- North-West Resistance and the Battleford Trials: Riel first returned from the United States to Saskatchewan to aid the Métis with their land claims. On May 12, the Canadians took Batoche and Riel was captured. On June 4, 1885, two weeks after Riel's capture, Macdonald confessed in a letter that if Riel were to be convicted, "he certainly will be executed but in the present natural excitement people grumble at his not being hanged off hand."[186] Despite French Canadians exerting pressure, Macdonald "refused to commute Riel's sentence - a decision that damaged the Quebec branch of the Conservative party and paved the way for the rise of Honoré Mercier's Parti National."[187] Eight men were sentenced to death with a public execution "even though Canadian law already banned such spectacles."[188] Riel was executed on November 16, 1885.[189]

- The figure below visualizes the political pressure Macdonald was facing, with him nestled between French and British Canadians arguing for different outcomes for Riel. However, the cartoon also makes apparent that Riel's life was wholly in Macdonald's hands, who made the ultimate decision to follow through with his execution.

[184] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 74.
[185] John A. Macdonald in Canada, House of Commons, *Debates*, July 6, 1885, 3119, cited in Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 74.
[186] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald"; Worth noting is that Riel's execution had lasting effects between Ontario and Quebec's political dynamic, with the biography stating that Ontario "took up fear of Catholicism and the French; Quebec took up fear of Protestants and the English." These dynamics played out while the prairie provinces "went on to become prosperous, with ranches, railways, immigration, and wheat." Important to note is how prosperity is defined and *who* the biography notes is reaping from these benefits, notably European settlers.
[187] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[188] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 75.
[189] One year later, Macdonald delivered a speech documented by the *Brantford Daily Courier* in which he argued that, "The government had followed every clemency possible and in not a single instance among half-breeds or Indians had they decreed the sentence of hanging, save where it was actually proven that the offenders had murdered in cold blood." ("The Great Chief. A Rousing Address on General Topics. The Action of the Government on the Riel Question. A Noble Indication of Administrative Action," *Brantford Daily Courier*, September 8, 1886, 1, col. 3, cited in Smith, Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 76). Although Macdonald had previously assented to the executions, he later attempted to absolve himself from all implications.

J. W. Bengough. *What will he do with him?* May 23, 1885. Cartoon, Grip, Vol. 24, No. 21, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06509_626.

- Additional resistance movements at Battleford occurred. Diverse accounts of the events and deaths are present in the literature but unquestioned is the violence meted out by the Prime Minister in retribution for the resistance. Many executions against Cree individuals who had committed violence occurred, with Macdonald acknowledging that he "ought to convince the Red Man that the White Man governs."[190]

- Out west, the NWMP concurrently began attempts to further its policy of surveillance of Indigenous people by instituting a pass system. With the North-West Resistance heightening fears over settler security, the NWMP alongside the Indian Commissioner recommended that "all Indians should be required" to carry passes.[191] Macdonald supported the implementation of the pass system to take "advantage of the change pressed upon them" but also recognized that it could not be institutionalized into law.[192] Following Macdonald's support for the idea, the new agent for Tsuu T'ina and Nakoda, W. De Balinhard, wrote that "measures must be taken to keep Indians at home, and to prevent them from visiting Calgary or elsewhere for immoral or other purposes."[193]

[190] Blair Stonechild and Bill Waiser, *Loyal till Death: Indians and the North-West Rebellion* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1997), 221, cited in Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 156-157.
[191] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 64. Please note that no one from Treaty 7 participated in the North-West Resistance but yet policies of reprisal were still far-reaching.
[192] Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to John A. Macdonald, August 17, 1885, Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, vol. 3710, file 19550-3, cited in Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance and Resistance*, 64. Macdonald's comments are embedded in the margins of Vankoughnet's memorandum.
[193] Dewdney to De Balinhard, 19 August 1885, LAC, RG 10, vol. 3716, file 22,173. Cited in Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 64.

- Macdonald began proposing disenfranchising people from China "by amending the clause defining a 'person' to read 'a male person including an Indian and excluding a Chinaman'."[194] According to Macdonald, the Chinese needed to be disenfranchised as they have "no common interest with us" and "if they came in great numbers and settled on the Pacific coast they might control the vote of that whole province".[195] This could lead to the introduction of "Chinese eccentricities, Chinese immorality, Asiatic principles [...] which are abhorrent to the Aryan race and Aryan principles, on this House".[196] Macdonald continued to draw on notions of the 'Aryan' race to further explain his racialized logic of exclusion: "If you look around the world you will see that the Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics. It is not to be desired that they should come; that we should have a mongrel race, that the Aryan character of the future of British America should be destroyed by a cross or crosses of that kind."[197]

- Macdonald enacted the *Electoral Franchise Act* which was "a piece of legislation designed to create a federal franchise system that he would personally control."[198] All British subjects who met a property qualification would be eligible, including women and First Nations individuals. However, after being proposed in the House, Macdonald dropped women's eligibility and altered First Nation's eligibility to only First Nations men east of Manitoba. The Act also aimed to disenfranchise East Asians, specifically Chinese and Mongolian immigrants.[199] Macdonald was later commended for this Act by Peter E. Jones,

[194] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 18.
[195] According to Stanley, some historians have argued that Macdonald's racism towards Chinese immigrants was highly performative and did not fall outside of what was normal at the time. Stanley also highlights that in British Columbia, anti-Chinese sentiment was high and Macdonald was often dependent on British Columbia Members of Parliament for support, many of whom were elected on anti-Chinese platforms. However, Stanley argues that the "idea that Macdonald was merely expressing the prejudices of his age underplays the significance of this particular moment in Canadian history" as his political views and particularly the 1885 *Electoral Franchise Act* represent "key moment[s] in racist state formation." (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: Reflections and Legacies,* eds. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall (Toronto: Dundurn, 2014): 115). Stanley denounces the notion that Macdonald was simply expressing popular sentiments and instead was injecting notions of scientific racism as a way to organize hierarchies of races.
[196] Canada, Parliament, House of Commons [Commons Debates], *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada,* vol. Xviii (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1885), 1582, cited in Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 22.
[197] Canada, *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 1589, cited in Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 23.
[198] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 7.
[199] Macdonald had a more positive relationship with First Nations in Central Canada compared to the Plains. Some First Nations in Ontario saw the *Electoral Franchise Act* of 1885 as a positive step to "elevat[ing] the aborigines to the position more approaching the independence of the whites." (Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 78). This included support from the Georgina Island Ojibwe community, Chief Charles Big Canoe, and James Ashquabe, a band councilor. Ashquabe wrote to Macdonald to express similar sentiments and thanked him for his "earnest efforts to promote the welfare of the Indian people throughout the whole Dominion [...] we thank you cordially for the gift of the franchise" (Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 78). Positive sentiments were also coupled with negative sentiments, the first of which was expressed in 1886.

the chief of the Mississaugas of New Credit, who wrote "My Dear Sir John, - I should have written to you some time ago to thank you for making the Indian a 'person' in the Franchise Bill."[200] Macdonald read this letter to the House of Commons.[201]

- Several members of the House, including Louis Henry Davies, Matthew Hamilton Gault, and Arthur Hill Gillmor, challenged Macdonald's amendments to the *Electoral Franchise Act*.[202] Debate in the House discussed that the Chinese were "industrious people" and had "as good a right [to] be allowed to vote as any other British subject of foreign extraction."[203] Following the debate, Macdonald altered his disenfranchisement justification, citing his decision not due to "alleged biology" but rather "their numbers".[204] Later, this amendment included not only Chinese but also Mongolian immigrants.

- *Chinese Immigration Act*[205]: Commissioners from the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, founded in 1884, concluded that rather than being a negative, Chinese immigration was beneficial to British Columbia's development. Nevertheless, the commissioners called for a $10 head tax that would align with the American and New Zealand government's restrictions on Chinese immigration. Macdonald passed the *Chinese Immigration Act* on July 20, 1885, calling for a $50 head tax. Rather than using the money for health inspections as called for by the commissioners, Macdonald increased the tax to act as an "obstacle for entry".[206]

- The CPR line towards the west was completed on November 7. More than 4,000 Chinese workers lost their lives during the transcontinental railway's construction due to unsafe working conditions.[207]

1886: In the fall, the first test of the *1885 Franchise Act* occurred in a by-election in Haldimand, Ontario. Conservative candidate William Hamilton Merritt Jr. warned Macdonald that the "majority

[200] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 77.
[201] The distinction drawn in the *Electoral Franchise Act* highlights that First Nations people had a different relationship to the Canadian state than Chinese immigrants. Macdonald understood that it was difficult to outright remove First Nations from the country and the "whole point of government policy was to coerce them into signing treaties and then assimilate them into the European population" (see Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 77).
[202] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 22.
[203] Canada, *Official report of the debates of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada*, 1585, cited in Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 22.
[204] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 24.
[205] Macdonald's views towards a Chinese Head Tax were earlier vocalized in 1872 by Robson, who "moved for a $50 annual tax on every Chinese person in BC" as he believed that their habits warranted further payment (Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 99).
[206] The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Chinese Head Tax in Canada," accessed February 26, 2024, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-head-tax-in-canada.
[207] After the railway's completion, Chinese labourers struggled finding menial work. Lacking the ability to return to China, many workers "drifted in near destitution along the completed track." Toronto Railway Museum. 2021. "Remembering the Chinese Railway Workers," June 26, 2021, https://torontorailwaymuseum.com.

of the Indians in the Six Nations Reserve in Brant and Haldimand do not want to vote and at present will not do so."[208] To subdue concerns, Macdonald visited the Six Nations Confederacy shortly thereafter.

- Following the 1885 resistance movements, the Dominion "initiated a serious bureaucratic assault on what it called the 'tribal system'", which were the traditional governance forms First Nations practiced.[209] The government subdivided reserves, also known as 'severalty'. All actions done with reserve lands would require prior authorization from the Department of Indian Affairs. As a result, most were prevented from joining the broader agricultural economy and were limited to subsistence farming, which kept "those who toiled in their fields both poor and alienated."[210]

- In the summer, the Dominion announced the 'Half-Breed' Scrip Commission, which allowed "treaty Indians with white ancestry to apply for scrip" and move away from the Indian Act's restrictions.[211] The policy aimed to reduce the reserve population.[212] Macdonald's involvement in the policy is not apparent. However, as the Department of the Interior first initiated a claims commission in the North-West, Macdonald's involvement can be assumed.[213]

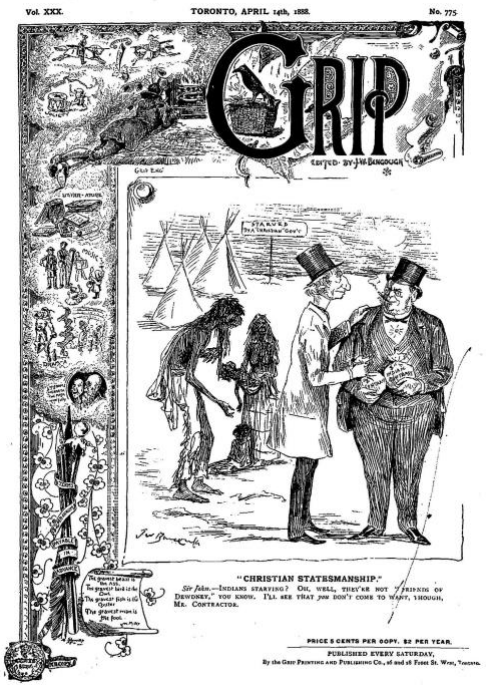
- While rallying for additional support to Macdonald's *Electoral Enfranchisement Act* of 1885, Macdonald visited Ohsweken on the Six Nations Territory on September 6, 1886. At this meeting, Macdonald "did his best to convince the chiefs to endorse the *Franchise Act*. The hereditary chiefs ultimately rejected the Act as they questioned why they would desire to participate in the Canadian electoral system as the Grand River Nations had their own political institutions. Although the Macdonald government "did not pressure the Grand River Six Nations to adopt the elected system," it did to other Haudenosaunee communities, such as Akwesasne and Kahnawake.[214]

[208] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 548.
[209] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 160; Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP, 2019).
[210] Carter, *Lost Harvests*, 2019.
[211] Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*, 163.
[212] At a similar time, Robert Steinhauer, a young Cree man, wrote a critique of Macdonald's Indigenous policy called "The Indian Question." In this document, he described the disappointment of First Nations in the west: "Ever since the treaties were signed, there has been much discontent, and complaints made by him [the Indian]. He asks those who have taken the ownership of his country to give him his rights, at least the fulfillment of the promises made to him." (Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 73). While not a quote from Macdonald, it is beneficial to place Macdonald's actions in the context of those most affected.
[213] Library and Archives Canada, Métis Scrip Records, accessed March 2, 2024, https://collectionscanada.gc.ca/metis-scrip/005005-3200-e.html.
[214] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 80.

1887: Despite some complaints from settlers, the NWMP employed some Indigenous individuals in its surveillance efforts at the request of Macdonald. Similar methods of internal surveillance had succeeded in British India, which Macdonald had hoped to mirror. In Treaty 7, Macdonald authorized "up to twenty-five people to fill these positions."[215] Thirteen took up positions, six Kainai, four Siksika, and three Piikani.

- Macdonald's term as Superintendent of Indian Affairs ended this year.

1888: The cartoon below from the *Grip* illustrates John A. Macdonald reassuring a contractor, seemingly handing over two large bags of money, titled "Contract" and "Indian Contract". Behind Macdonald are two First Nations individuals with two children, drawn to resemble a skeletal shape. In the background, a sign reads "Starved by 'Christian' gov't." Below it reads "Christian statesmanship". Sir John states, "Indians starving?" He goes on to articulate, "Oh well, they're not friends of Dewdney, you know. I'll see that you don't come to want, though, Mr. Contractor. The cartoon draws a dichotomy between Christian values and Macdonald's treatment of the First Nations population while simultaneously noting the economic incentives at play with Macdonald's policy of starvation.



J. W. Bengough. *Christian Statesmanship,* April 14, 1888, Cartoon, Grip, Vol. 30, No. 775, https://www.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.8_06509_776.

[215] Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance,* 87.

1890: Macdonald refused to "use the federal power to protect separate schools in Manitoba."[216] When Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870 the province was officially bilingual and schooling was provided by Catholic, Presbyterian, and Anglican churches. Significant demographic changes after 1870, including the immigration of many people from Ontario, left Francophones as only a small minority. In 1890, the province eliminated official bilingualism and passed a bill that "established a publicly funded, non-denominational school system in Manitoba." These measures were both seen as attacks on the linguistic minority and prompted national controversy. Macdonald attempted to leave the problem for the courts to solve.

1891: In February and March, Macdonald began his last electoral battle. At the age of 76, he was "overcome with exhaustion and remained out of the public eye for the duration."[217]

- The election began to encapsulate a vote for two separate identities, pushing voters not to decide between two parties but rather two visions for Canada: remain with the British or "sell your birthright and your soul to Washington."[218]

- On February 9, Macdonald delivered his last campaign manifesto. In summary, it drew on language around direct taxation, questioned becoming part of the American union, and asserted that "a British subject I was born, and a British subject I will die."[219] This year saw the last time Macdonald would be Prime Minister of the Dominion.

- While recovering from a cold, on May 29 Macdonald suffered a severe stroke that prevented him from speaking again. He died one week later, on June 6, 1891. Macdonald is buried in Cataraqui Cemetery in Kingston.

[216] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[217] Patricia K. Wood, 2001, "Defining 'Canadian': Anti-Americanism and Identity in Sir John A. Macdonald's Nationalism." *Journal of Canadian Studies* 36, no. 2 (2001): 50.
[218] Wood, "Defining 'Canadian'", 50.
[219] Queen's University Archives (QUA), Macdonald Papers, Vol. 68, 27493, cited in Wood, "Defining 'Canadian'," 52.

Policies

To allow further elaboration, this section centres around some of Macdonald's most prominent policies, the *Gradual Civilization Act, British North America Act, Gradual Enfranchisement Act, Indian Act*[220]*, National Policy*, *Indian Advancement Act*, *Electoral Franchise Act, Chinese Immigration Act*, and the *1885 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration*.

Gradual Civilization Act (1857):

- In May 1857, Macdonald brought forward the proposal to the Assembly. It outlined the process for First Nations to gain 'full legal rights'. The bill "stipulated that any Indian adult male judged by a special board of examiners to be educated, free from debt, and of good moral character, could apply." If the individual demonstrated their success over three years, they "could gain ownership of fifty acres of land that subsequently would be removed from the reserve."[221] However, these individuals would also lose all rights granted to them as First Nations and would instead become "full citizens of Canada."[222] The individual would also be required to sever all ties with their nation.
- If married, the individual's partner and children would also lose their status.
- The impetus behind the *Gradual Civilization Act* was for education First Nations to enfranchise themselves and within a few generations, they would cease to exist along with their reserves.
- Little opposition to the bill existed. Although the bill directly contravened the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which stated that reserve land "was to be exclusively controlled by their governments, and could only be alienated with their own consent", the bill passed in the assembly without amendment.[223]
- First Nations leaders denounced the Act as it "sought the ending of their land base and increased non-Aboriginal control over their lives."[224] Little attention was paid to the thoughts and requests of First Nations leaders. As David Thorburn highlights, "[i]gnorance and indifference characterized the dominant society's approach to Aboriginal issues in the Province of Canada."[225]

[220] Please note that the Indian Act was not Macdonald's policy but that it still remains linked as it reflects his logic around assimilation and colonization.
[221] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 67-68.
[222] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 68.
[223] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 68.
[224] Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 68.
[225] David Thorburn, "Transmits Minutes of a Great Council […] with the Six Nations & a deputation of Chiefs from 15 different Bands from the 20th to 29th Sept. 1858," RG 10, vol. 245A, Docket #11,486–11500, Library and Archives Canada, cited in Smith, "Macdonald's Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples," 68.

British North America Act (1867):

- In February and March 1867, the British parliament debated and passed legislation that would bring Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick together as a single Dominion. The British North America Act, which oversaw this change, stated that "such a Union would conduce to the Welfare of the Provinces and Promote the Interests of the British Empire."[226]
- Macdonald attempted to have a government as centralized as possible to avoid the defects he saw in the United States. Federally, the executive would have control over the areas in which Macdonald felt "real power lay", including finance, trade, taxation, national defence, banking, and currency.[227] Macdonald also believed that other American weaknesses, such as universal suffrage were avoided. Canada would instead be run by "people who had a genuine stake in the community."
- Intentionally, Macdonald constructed the provincial governments as "subordinate legislature[s]" that he hoped would "cease to exist".[228] This was particularly visible in the BNA Act's tax structure, which was "designed to empower the federal government at the expense of the provinces."[229] Macdonald did so by employing direct taxation to keep the provinces at a similar status of municipalities, keeping them "small and accountable."[230]

Gradual Enfranchisement Act (1869):

- Compared to the *Gradual Civilization Act,* which barred Indigenous women from voting, this Act expanded its gender discriminatory purview and argued that "henceforth any woman with Indian status who married a man who did not have status, would lose hers."[231] Additionally, all children from this relationship would also not have status.
- The Act gained some initial support from the Algonkian bands but most opposed it, including the Haudenosaunee, such as the Six Nations.
- The policy remained in place until 1985, effectively removing status from a large number of Indigenous peoples.

Indian Act (1876)

- The Act "was to lead First Nations from a state of alleged barbarism to civilization through enfranchisement, the process in which men gave up Indians status and received part of band property as private property."[232]
- The *Electoral Franchise Act* in 1885 built on the Indian Act and further supported the enfranchisement of First Nations (more on this Act below)

[226] Martin, *Britain and the Origins of Canadian Confederation,* 1.
[227] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[228] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[229] Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 88.
[230] Heaman, *Tax, Order, and Good Government*, 89.
[231] Miller, Macdonald 200, 322.
[232] Stanley, "The Aryan Character of the Future of British North America," 125.

- An 1884 revision to the Act prohibited the potlatch.

National Policy (1878):

- At the core of Macdonald's vision of Canada was his National Policy, which included a transcontinental railway to physically connect the entire country together, imposing protective tariffs to "safeguard Canada from the economic power of the United States", bringing the province of British Columbia into Confederation, promoting the settlement of the Northwest Territories, and modernizing Canada's economic capacity.[233]
- Macdonald introduced the National Policy to the House in 1876. After the Conservative Party regained power in 1878, Macdonald began implementing the policy a year later in 1879.
- The policy succeeded in broadly accomplishing its main goals. However, it was tarnished by three core events: the Pacific Scandal that removed the Macdonald government from power in 1873, Macdonald's exclusionary and racialized immigration policies that pointedly disenfranchised Chinese and Mongolian immigrants, and "the use of hunger to force aboriginal peoples onto reserves and thus clear the way for the railway's construction."[234]

Indian Advancement Act (1884):

- The policy "instituted elected councils for 'the most advanced bands of Indians in Canada'."[235] According to Little, the *Indian Advancement Act was* "Macdonald's act". It aimed to "replace the use of provincial voting lists with uniform nation-wide franchise qualifications for federal elections".[236] The Six Nations chiefs voted against the policy's "limited local self-government" and resisted internal demands for a "streamlined elected council until 1924."[237]

Electoral Franchise Act (1885):

- The Act had two aspects. The first aimed to take "the right to vote away from men racialized as Chinese on the grounds that they were biologically different from 'Canadians' and that their presence threatened 'the Aryan character' of Canadian society". The second aspect was to enfranchise property-owning Indigenous men who Macdonald believed "would vote overwhelmingly Conservative".[238] Macdonald drafted and championed the franchise bill and is later quoted as stating that it was "the greatest triumph of my life".[239]

[233] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[234] Dictionary of Canadian Biography, "Sir John A. Macdonald".
[235] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 541.
[236] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 541.
[237] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 541.
[238] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 539.
[239] Donald G. Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Old Chieftain (Volume 2)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 427, cited in Timothy J. Stanley, "John A. Macdonald and the Invention of White Supremacy in Canada," *Canadian Issues/Thèmes Canadiens* 2014: 31; Also see Donald Creighton, *John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician (Volume 1)* (Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd, 1965) for additional information.

Publicly, Macdonald argued to "uplift" and assimilate First Nations "not only through the ongoing expansion of the residential school system, but also through the inculcation of responsible citizenship by participation in the country's elections".[240]

- The Act became a key moment that informed the development of what Timothy Stanley refers to as "the racist state of Canada", doing so in three ways:
    - It expanded the state system to newly colonized territories through the creation of "a separate federal electoral system" that Macdonald would personally maintain through his extensive use of patronage;
    - The Act reinforced "the dominance of private property owners" by restricting franchise to land owners, "which represented a final sanctioning of the ending of Indigenous control of land"; and
    - It changed the relationship between racialized East Asians and Indigenous peoples through constructing hierarchies of access and control to Macdonald's emerging state system.[241] Macdonald felt that property owners from China threatened "European dominance in British Columbia" and thus required restricting.[242]
- Many First Nations peoples did not welcome the Electoral Franchise Act. Due to the Riel Resistance, First Nations in the Northwest as well as those in British Columbia were excluded from the act.
- Local opposition to the 1885 *Electoral Franchise Act* continued and resulted in a petition to the Governor General, signed by three Mohawk women "who were presumably clan matrons" in 1899.[243] This included Kanyendih, Aonwhenyondih, and Dawawenrouh, who represented the Turtle, Wolf, and Bear clans. The women argued that the 1885 Act "violated the Wampum Belt Treaty with its two parallel rows illustrating that 'the British will remain in his vessel that is his Government."[244]

Chinese Immigration Act (1885):

- Passed on July 20, 1885, the Act required a $50 payment, also known as a head tax, for all Chinese immigrants entering Canada. The Chinese were the only group who were required to pay the head tax. The Act included numerous restrictions, including that "[s]hips were permitted only one Chinese passenger for every 50 tons of the ship's total weight" compared to one person per 2 tons for ships carrying European immigrants.[245] All Chinese immigrants with known diseases were also denied at the border, including "any known sex workers."[246] Lastly, even Canadian-born or naturalized Chinese immigrants were required to pay a 50-cent registration fee.

[240] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 539.
[241] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 14.
[242] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 6.
[243] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 539.
[244] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote," 539.
[245] The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Chinese Head Tax in Canada."
[246] The Canadian Encyclopedia, "Chinese Head Tax in Canada."

- Senators almost defeated the Act and managed to defeat "further restrictive immigration measures" in 1886 and 1886. They also attempted to repeal the 1885 *Chinese Immigration Act*.[247]
- Future amendments to the *Chinese Immigration Act* included the 1887 exemption of Chinese women married to non-Chinese men from paying the head tax. In 1892, a second amendment required any Chinese person temporarily leaving Canada to re-register.
- The Act was "designed to control and severely limit the migration of racialized Chinese workers and their families without killing the China trade" that the railway depended on.[248]

1885 Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration[249]

- The report had two commissioners, Macdonald's Secretary of State Joseph-Adolphe Chapleau and BC Supreme Court Justice John Hamilton Gray. Its mandate was to "prove the necessity of regulating Chinese immigration" to Canada.[250]
- It found that "there still exists, and always will exist the objection, that there is no homogeneity of race between them and ourselves, nor can they comprehend or assimilate themselves to our institutions."[251]

[247] Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, 'the Chinese', and Racist State Formation in Canada," 26; Canada, Senate, 1885, pp. 1291-1301.
[248] Stanley, "The Aryan Character of the Future of British North America," 131.
[249] Canada Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese immigration: Report and evidence* (Ottawa: By order of the Commission, 1885).
[250] "Royal Commission on Chinese Immigration, 1885," Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, accessed March 13, 2024, https://pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/royal-commission-on-chinese-immigration-1885.
[251] Canada Royal Commission, 1885, p. lxxii.

Enduring Effects

Indigenous Nations

To many, Macdonald is known for being the architect of the Indian Residential School System (IRS).[252] From 2009, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) began investigating "crimes committed against several generations of Aboriginal children" in Canada's IRS system.[253] By the time the last IRS school closed in 1996, 150,000 children had attended 125 schools with approximately 80,000 survivors alive today. In Treaty 7 territory alone, there were 10 residential schools with the last operating until 1990.[254] Many of the challenges Indigenous peoples face today are a direct result of the inter-generational trauma and lasting effects caused by the IRS. This includes a myriad of social difficulties due to childhood turmoil and improper social education, a loss of language and culture, continuing cycles of emotional, sexual, and physical abuse, as well as substance abuse and high suicide rates. According to Woolford, these are all "considered residual effects of the residential school experience."[255] The TRC concluded in 2015 and identified the residential school system as an actor in Canada's cultural genocide towards Indigenous peoples.[256]

Beyond residential schools, Macdonald introduced and supported policies that served to marginalize Indigenous and non-white settlers with effects in almost every sphere of life. According to Stanley, Macdonald's policies of Chinese exclusion and Indigenous cultural genocide marked one of the first coordinated political instances of white supremacy in Canada. Systemic racism became institutionalized in Canada, with effects in health, education, and law enforcement. To illustrate, Indigenous women, girls, and Two-spirit individuals experience disproportionate rates violence and inattention by law enforcement that has culminated in the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG) movement. The movement emerged in response to the systemic failure of both law enforcement and the Canadian government to bring awareness to the

[252] Little, "Courting the First Nations Vote"; Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains*; Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada".
[253] Macdonald and Hudson, "The Genocide Question and Indian Residential Schools in Canada," 428.
[254] Government of Canada, "Recognized Indian Residential Schools," accessed March 1, 2024, https://rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100015606/1581724359507; For a more detailed overview of the residential schools that operated in Treaty 7 territory, please see Meghan Grant, "'A war on Aboriginal children': Alberta's 25 residential schools," *CBC*, September 30, 2021, https://cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/indigenous-residential-schools-trc-alberta-25-truth-reconciliation-1.6185579.
[255] Andrew Woolford, "Ontological Destruction: Genocide and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* 4, no. 1 (2009): 81–97, cited in Macdonald and Hudson, 2012, 432.
[256] David B. Macdonald, "Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Assessing Context, Process, and Critiques, *Griffith Law Review* 29, no. 1 (2020): 151; Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015. For more information, please visit the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation for access to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Reports, particularly the Commission's Calls to Action (2015).

deep historical roots of intergenerational trauma, colonization, and systemic racism affecting Indigenous communities and settlers' views towards Indigenous communities.[257]

Chinese and Mongolian Immigrants

The head tax lasted for 38 years, from 1885 to 1923. Starting at $50, the tax was later raised to $100 and then $500. During this period, approximately 82,000 Chinese immigrants entered Canada and paid $23 million in tax. According to Arlene Chan, "It was the first legislation in Canadian history to exclude immigration on the basis of ethnic background."[258] In 1906, Newfoundland passed the *Act Respecting the Immigration of Chinese Persons*, which introduced a $300 head tax. Mirrored from Macdonald's policy, this Act remained in effect until the province joined Confederation in 1949. Even after his death, the Chinese Immigration Act continued to have serious repercussions for the Chinese population in Canada. In 1908, Chinese students were mandated to pay the head tax, although they had originally been exempted. By 1917, immigration officials were allowed to arrest any Chinese person they believed to be illegal immigrants. Lastly, in 1921, any Chinese person who left Canada for more than two years and did not register would be required to re-pay the head tax upon arrival to Canada.

Beyond policy, race became one of the few determinants in deciding who was or was not Canadian and "began the re-articulation of other relationships."[259] Although Chinese immigrants had called Canada home for decades prior to Macdonald's *Electoral Franchise Act*, after 1885 they became permanent outsiders with their access to services restricted. Once engrained in policy, Chinese alienation continued until 1947. The systematic exclusion of Chinese and Mongolian immigrants from public space prevented their acquisition of citizenship for decades after Macdonald's death.

[257] Jerry Flores and Andrea Roman Alfaro, "Building the Settler Order: Police (In)Actions in Response to Violence Against Indigenous Women in 'Canada', *Gender & Society* 37, no. 3 (2023): 391-412. DOI: 10.1177/08912432231171171; please also see Jack J. Nestor, "To Convince the Red Man that the White Man Governs: John A. Macdonald and Canadian Indian Policy in the North-West," In Canada and the Challenges of Leadership, edited by Kelsey Lonie, Corey Safinuk, and Jonathon Zimmer (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2023).
[258] Arlene Chan, "Chinese Head Tax in Canada," last modified June 3, 2020, https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/chinese-head-tax-in-canada.
[259] Stanley, "The Aryan Character of the Future of British North America," 132.

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Addendum

Renaming and Finding New Ways to Remember

This section serves to offer additional context to the ongoing debate around Macdonald's legacy and how, as a society, we should remember. While we do not seek to offer opinions on the process of remembrance, we do include reflections on the current debate to ground this timeline.

Under the pretense of reconciliation, Macdonald's legacy has been "the focus of re-examination" across the country, although positions taken are far from consistent. For example, in 2012, Stephen Harper "renamed the Ottawa River Parkway after Macdonald", a move that elevated Macdonald's identity as nation-builder over his complicity in cultural genocide.[260] In 2013, a statue of John A. Macdonald was defaced with the words 'murdered' and 'colonizer' spray painted in red in Kingston, Ontario. The defacement coincided with two events, Macdonald's 198th birthday and the Idle No More demonstration. In 2015, the city of Kingston celebrated Macdonald's 200th birthday but heavily incorporated Indigenous views in the event. In 2017, the Elementary Teacher's Federation of Ontario "called upon school boards to consider renaming schools named after Macdonald because "given his role as the 'architect of genocide against Indigenous Peoples', naming schools after him was inappropriate."[261]

In 2018, Victoria's city council voted to remove a statue of Macdonald from the city hall's entrance. In applauding the decision, Songhees chief Ron Sam stated that "Reconciliation is a journey honouring the truth and reconciling the future. It is about respect, both self-respect for Aboriginal people and mutual respect among all Canadians."[262] Reconciliation must become a way of life." As Macdonald's nation-building efforts were based on Indigenous people's removal "from the land so that its and its resources could be exploited by people of European origins", removing Macdonald's statue was the first step in reclaiming Indigenous agency and asserting settler discontent with Macdonald's actions.[263] However, others argued that the statue's removal was "linked to cultural erasure".[264]

To Stanley, Macdonald's legacy goes beyond the removal of a statue or the changing of a school name and speaks to the larger settler-colonial project: "the power that created the statue, Victoria, and Canada itself - has become naturalized. In this respect, settler colonialism has been

[260] Timothy J. Stanley, 2019, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald: Collective Remembering and the Structure of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* (204): 97.
[261] Stanley, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald," 97; Salmaan Farooqui, "Ontario Elementary Teachers' Union Calls for Renaming John A. Macdonald Schools," *National Post*, August 24, 2017, https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-elementary-teachers-union-calls-for-renaming-john-a-macdonald-schools.
[262] Stanley, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald," 90.
[263] Stanley, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald," 89.
[264] Stanley, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald," 92.

as much a cultural project as a material project."[265] While there lacks consistency in how cities and school boards have embarked on the process of celebrating or removing Macdonald, what remains is the acknowledgement of his complicity in Canada's settler-colonial project.[266]

[265] Stanley, "Commemorating John. A Macdonald," 102.
[266] On this topic, we recommend the following further reading: Lauren Beck, *Canada's Place Names and How to Change Them* (Edmonton: Concordia University Press, 2022), https://www.ubcpress.ca/canadas-place-names-and-how-to-change-them; "Sackville 'name bank' could help town bring more diversity to street and place names," *CBC News,* February 27, 2022, https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/new-brunswick/sackville-place-name-review-1.6363233; Lindsay Gibson, 2021, "The Case for Commemoration Controversies in Canadian History Education," *Canadian Journal of Education* 44, no. 2 (2021): 434–465, https://doi.org/10.53967/cje-rce.v44i2.4451.