

Addressing the Accusations against Sir John A. Macdonald



Historical Events and Context

- The first thing students of history are taught is the importance of **cause of events** and the **context of events**.
- A **cause** is something that brings an **effect**, for instance the killing of George Floyd.
- The **context** is understood as the climate of opinion, that surround the issue at hand. They help to understand its urgency, its importance, its shape, or even its timing. That would be Black Lives Matter.
- As we look at the history of Macdonald, we need to look at events farther afield such as the Taiping Rebellion and the Slaughter of the Buffalo in the U.S. and the American Civil War to understand the choices Macdonald faced as he led the nation as Prime Minister.

From Wilfrid Laurier's Eulogy to Macdonald House of Commons 1891

"[Sir John A. Macdonald's] statesmanship is written in the history of Canada.

"It may be said without any exaggeration whatever that the life of Sir John Macdonald, from the date he entered Parliament, is the history of Canada.

"...for he was connected and associated with all the events, all the facts which brought Canada from the position Canada then occupied—the position of two small provinces, having nothing in common but a common allegiance, united by a bond of paper, and united by nothing else—to the present state of development which Canada has reached."



Charges against Macdonald from Petition by Shannon Helm (from Petition to Remove Statue)

- “Violence is violence is violence.” Professor Sinclair.
- Macdonald was the primary perpetrator of genocide in Canada
- He created the Residential School System and the North West Mounted Police, and used these institutions to enact genocide.
- He legislated racism in Canada
- His statue makes people feel unsafe and uncomfortable
- It also brings feelings of great horror, sadness and shame.
- It is embarrassing to see Macdonald, and the colonial violence that he has come to symbolize, honoured in bronze on Main Street especially at the front door of a library, which is a public institution and a community hub



Macdonald Started School Near Hay Bay in a school like this one in Upper Canada

Macdonald's 61 career in law and politics

- Macdonald left school at the age of 15 and began 5 year apprenticeship in law in Kingston, Napanee and Picton.
- He took over his cousin's law practice in Picton as a law student and passed his law exams when he turned 20 and practised as an attorney.
- He returned to Kingston and practised law as a barrister.
- He entered politics at the age of 28
- Over his lifetime, he worked non-stop for 61 years until died in office as Prime Minister after winning 6 elections as prime minister most with an outright majority

Macdonald Practiced as *Pro Tem*
lawyer in Picton at the age of 18 to 20, 1833-35



Why Was Macdonald Popular?

Macdonald was popular in his day because he represented the best aspirations of the people of Canada who admired his tireless efforts to bring Canadians together:

- English and French
- Protestant and Catholic
- Nova Scotians
- British Columbians
- He began the first of eleven treaties with Indigenous peoples rather than cancelling them as did his contemporary, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant

Macdonald and Slavery

- Slavery was abolished in the British Empire in 1834 when Macdonald was in Picton working as an apprentice lawyer
- 42 years earlier, Lt. Gov. Simcoe's Passed an **Act to Ban Slavery** which allowed for the gradual abolition of slavery in Upper Canada, the first colony in the British Empire to do so.
- Macdonald owned no slaves.
- But in the U.S. many Americans including Indigenous people owned slaves until the Emancipation Proclamation of 1865 – 70 years after Upper Canada began

Canada when Macdonald politics in 1843

The capitals rotated among Kingston, Montreal, Quebec City and Toronto



Macdonald's Canada

- Unlike, most nation states, Canada was not created by revolution, nor conquest.
- It was created through extensive negotiations and much compromise followed by a unifying constitution for all Canadians, the British North America Act of 1867.
- In contrast, approximately 800,000 people died in conflict during the creation of the United States of America, e.g. Civil War, Indian Wars.
- In Canada, the number is under 400.
- Why? Sir John A. Macdonald worked with all peoples of all nationalities and religions.
- He tried to avoid conflict and was always willing to compromise.

Some of His Notable Achievements:

- He was Premier of Canada for 6 years
- Prime Minister of Canada for 19 years and at the same time, he held 7 difficult cabinet positions.
 - Receiver General
 - Attorney General
 - Minister of Militia Affairs
 - Minister of Justice
 - Minister of Interior Affairs
 - Minister of Indian Affairs (longest serving 10 years)
 - Minister of Railways and Canals
- He devoted his entire life to Canada and died in office at the age of 76.
- In 1869 (two years after Confederation), he and Cartier negotiated **the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company** for \$1.5 million, in spite of strong competition from the U.S., which was willing to pay much more after purchasing Alaska for \$7.2 million.
- There would be no Canada without this purchase.
- The U.S. would be largest country in the world today.

Macdonald's achievements (continued)

- The purchase paved the way for the construction of the **Canadian Pacific Railway, the largest engineering project of its kind in the world.**
- Unquestionably, without the CPR there could be no Canada. He proposed to build a railway linking the Pacific province to the Eastern provinces within 10 years of 20 July 1871.
- in 1871, he began the first of 11 treaties with Indigenous peoples of the West the same year that President Grant cancelled hundreds of treaties and made “Indians” wards of the state.
- **in 1872, he passed the Trade Unions Act** which gave workers the right to associate in trade unions.
- In 1873, he created the **North West Mounted Police** to bring law and order to the West and to ensure that treaties were honoured and Plains Indians (including Sioux) protected from unscrupulous American traders. In the U.S. the Indian Wars continued for many years.
- In 1885, he introduced the **Electoral Franchise Act that would grant women and Indigenous Canadians the right to vote.** He was the first world leader to attempt it. It was rejected.
- In 1885, he created Banff, Canada's first national park

How Many Attempts Were There to
Annex Canada to the U.S.A.?

Answer: at least nine

- War of 1812 --U.S. Invaded Canada --Macdonald not yet born
- 1837-1838 Rebellion and provisional Republic of Canada, Macdonald carried musket in militia at Macdonald's Tavern in Toronto
- 1838 Hunter Patriot para-military unit of secret society based in the U.S. intended using the beachhead near Brockville as launch pad for further offensives into Canada –Even though Macdonald was member of militia, he defended one of the belligerents in a court martial. Nils von Shoultz was hanged. Macdonald was not allowed to defend him but he assisted him in his final hours
- 1849 Annexation Movement in Eastern Townships and Montreal, led by Joseph Papineau
- 1858–1864 Macdonald was colonial leader as the Premier of Province of Canada when Nova Scotia threatened annexation before Confederation

Four More...

- 1866-1871 Fenian Raids Brotherhood Invasion of Eastern Canada and Manitoba – Macdonald and Cartier leader of Canadian forces – It was a serious threat over 5 years.
- 1869 U.S. tried to purchase Rupert's Land from Hudson Bay Co. Macdonald and Cartier managed the massive land transfer and set up a commission to establish treaties with Indigenous peoples
- 1861-1865 U.S. Civil War Canada was viewed as a belligerent as a British colony. Britain sent troops to defend Canada sensing an invasion was imminent.
- 1871 -- Shortly after joining Confederation, British Columbia threatened to secede after the initial failure of the transcontinental railway promises which were one of its conditions for joining Canada. Macdonald ended threats with signed agreement in 1871.

Macdonald and the Fathers of Confederation

Charlottetown Conference 1864

Britain encouraged a Union among the colonies, hoping that they would then become less economically and politically dependent on the Crown, and provide for greater economic and military power for the region in light of the American Civil War.

Charlottetown Conference 1864





Who is the Leader?

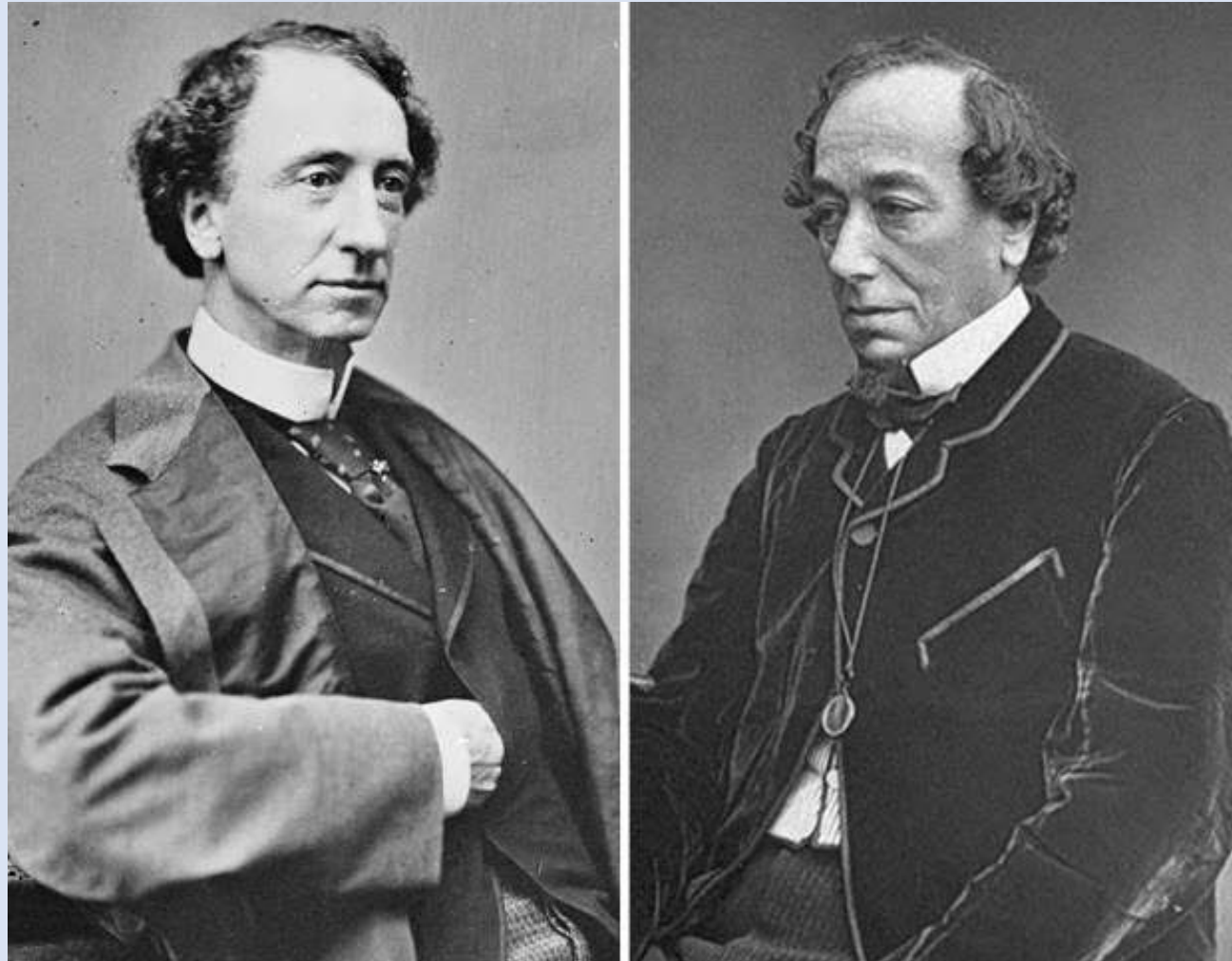


Commemorating Charlottetown Conference Today
This one is not moving.

Delegates of the Legislatures of Canada gathering at the [Quebec Conference](#)—October 27, 1864



Premier Macdonald Meets P.M. Disraeli at London Conference 1866





The Fathers of Confederation 1862

Macdonald/Cartier Purchase Rupert's Land

- In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company reluctantly, under pressure from Great Britain, **sold Rupert's Land** to the Government of **Canada for \$1.5 million**.
- The sale involved roughly **a quarter of the continent**, a staggering amount of land, but it failed to take into account the existing residents - mainly Indians and Metis.
- The **Americans, who had just paid Russia \$7.2 million for Alaska in 1867**, were looking for other properties to expand the Republic and eyed the territory.
- In 1869, after **rejecting the American** government offer of **\$10,000,000**, the company approved the return of Rupert's Land to Britain.
- Macdonald was entrusted with this new land.

Macdonald and Cartier Negotiate Purchase of
Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory in 1871.
Manitoba is also created as a province.



P.M. Macdonald concerned

Macdonald told his political ally George-Etienne Cartier.

"No explanation it appears has been made of the arrangement by which the country is to be handed over,"

"All these poor people [Indian and Metis] know is that Canada has bought the country from the Hudson's Bay Company and that they are handed over like a flock of sheep to us."

Macdonald/Cartier Diplomacy in London

- The USA recently purchased Alaska from the Russians. It wanted the new territories.
- The sale to the U.S. would have prevented the formation of Canada. B.C. would have been isolated from Canada in the east.
- There would have been no CPR, no treaties, no North West Territories, no second largest country in the world.
- The U.S. would have been the largest country in the world, even today.
- The U.S. wanted compensation for the Civil War damages. Great Britain was willing to pay. Treaty talks in Washington began.
- The Washington Treaty 1871 created permanent peaceful relations among the three countries of the United States, Canada, and Great Britain.
- Macdonald's influence in these critical negotiations is not often acknowledged.

Two Nations Two Strategies

- In 1871, President Ulysses S. Grant ended hundreds of Indian treaties
- In 1871, Prime Minister Macdonald began the first of eleven covering most of Canada today

When Macdonald was studying law and later practising law in Upper Canada, President Andrew Jackson was able to gain Congressional passage of the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which authorized the government to extinguish Indian title to lands in the Southeast and force relocations of approximately 60,000 Native Americans in the United States between 1830 and 1850.

President Andrew Jackson 1829 –1837 and Trail of Tears

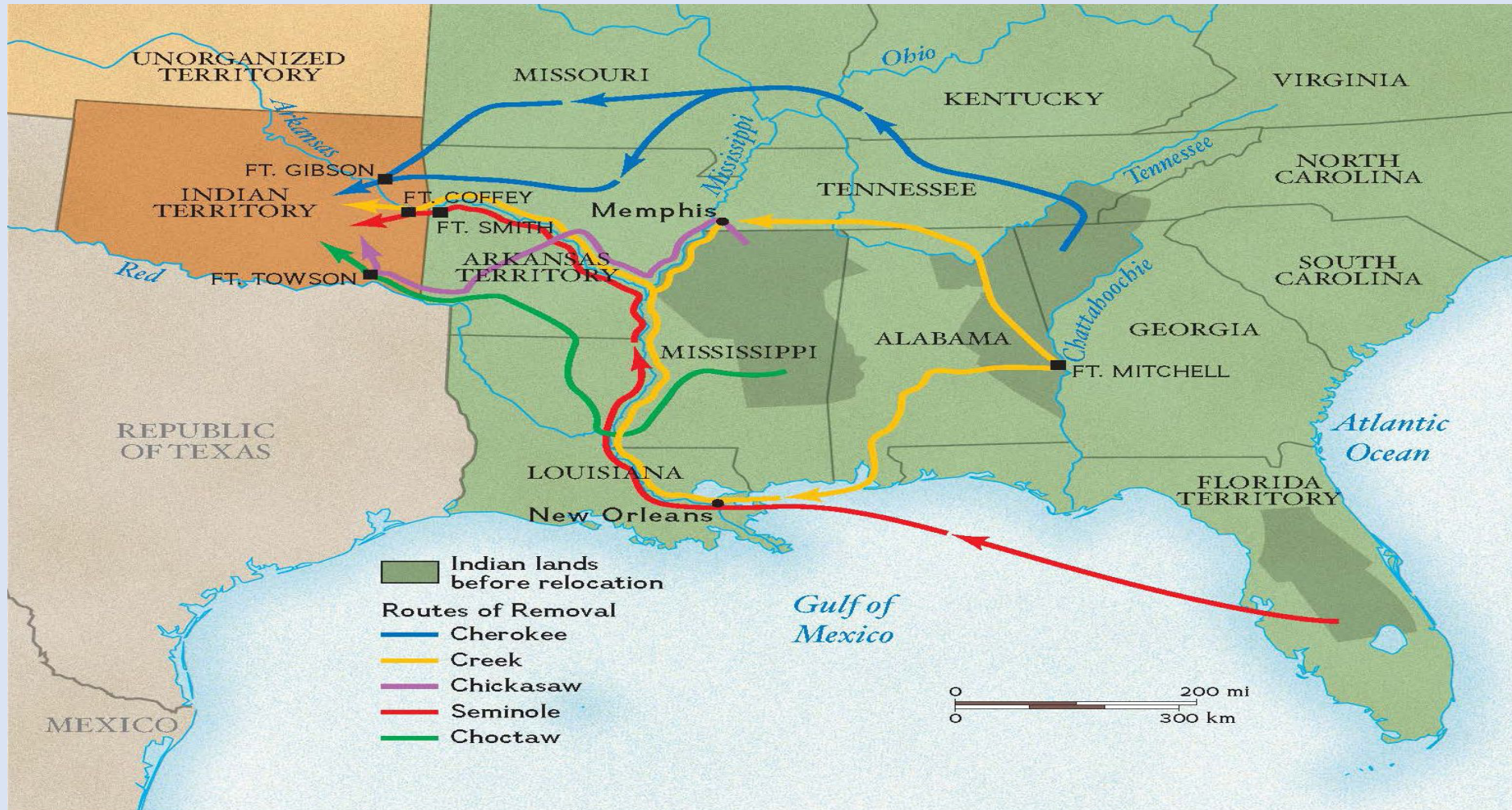


"By persuasion and force they have been made to retire from river to river and from mountain to mountain, until some of the tribes have become extinct and others have left but remnants to preserve for a while their once terrible names. Surrounded by the whites with their arts of civilization, which by destroying the resources of the savage doom him to weakness and decay"

Andrew Jackson 1829



In 1830, the U.S. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, ... the forced relocation of 60,000 Native Americans to Oklahoma in what became known as the Trail of Tears.



“Trail of Tears” Five Tribes forced onto “Indian Territories,” now Oklahoma – More followed



In 1871, U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant's
Initiates Buffalo Policy:
"A Buffalo Dead Is an Indian Gone"



30 Million Bison Slaughtered in North America

- The slaughter of the 30 million bison was underway. It was seen as a way to starve Native Americans into submission.
- **The U.S. Congress in 1871 prohibited any future treaties.**
- **No longer was any group of Indians in the United States recognized as an independent nation or First Nation by the federal government.**
- **Congress** directed that all **Indians** should be treated as individuals and legally **designated "wards"** of the federal government.
- Major-General Phillip **Sheridan**, was given the task of forcing **Native Americans off the Great Plains** and onto reservations in Indian Territories (Oklahoma).



30 Million Bison Slaughtered and
Replaced with Texas Longhorn to Force Indians onto
Reservations mainly in Oklahoma

U.S. Treatment of Indians 1871

- Long horned cattle displaced bison and settlers flooded the plains as part of a policy of Manifest Destiny.
- 1871 President Grant terminated hundreds of treaties in the U.S.
- In the Indian Appropriations Act of 1871, without any input from Native Americans, Congress prohibited any future treaties. This was steadfastly opposed by Native Americans.

In Canada
Prime Minister Macdonald Began the
First of 11 Treaties in 1871
Two Years after the Riel Rebellion

NORTHWEST TERRITORIES 1870

BRITISH ARCTIC ISLANDS
transferred to Canada
1880

*North-Western
Territory*

North-West Territories
transferred to Canada
1870

BRITISH COLUMBIA
joined Confederation
1871

Rupert's Land

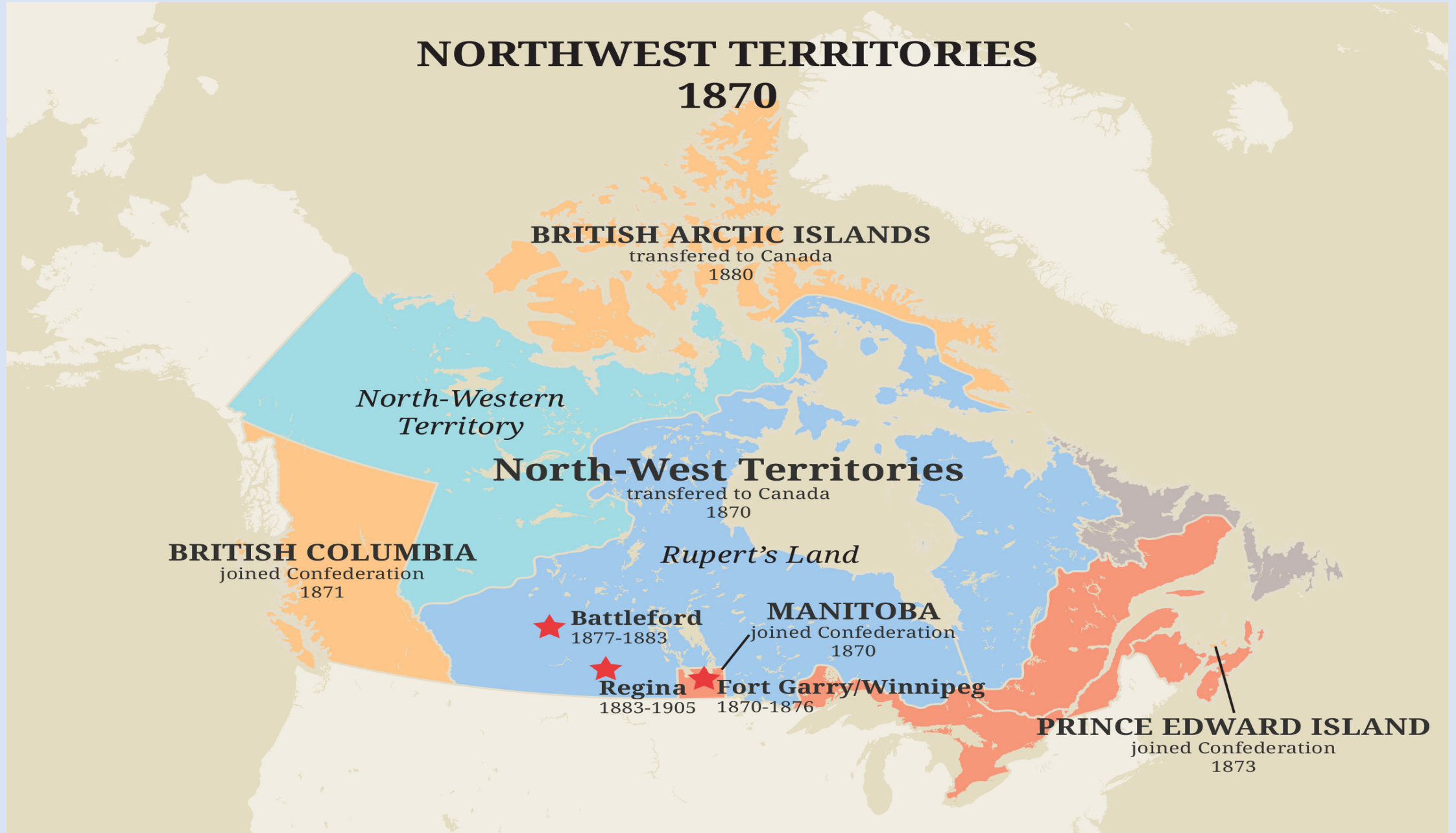
★ **Battleford**
1877-1883

MANITOBA
joined Confederation
1870

★ **Regina**
1883-1905

★ **Fort Garry/Winnipeg**
1870-1876

PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND
joined Confederation
1873



“Creation of Indian Reserves on the Canadian Prairies 1870-1885” -- D. Aidan McQuillan Geographical Review

- In 1871 the Canadian government began a program to settle Indians on reserves so that the Indians would not interfere with the spread of agricultural settlement across the prairies.
- The government signed treaties, surveyed reserves, and encouraged the Indians to adopt farming by providing agricultural instruction.
- The Indian, bedeviled by alcoholism, smallpox epidemics, disappearance of the bison, and subsequent famine, had no alternative but to accept that program.
- Government policy during the first fifteen years set the pattern for the segregation of prairie Indians from Canadian society, despite government rhetoric that promised to assimilate the Indian in Canadian life.

Cree Wigwams on the Prairies 1871 (Alberta)



Metis of the Red River



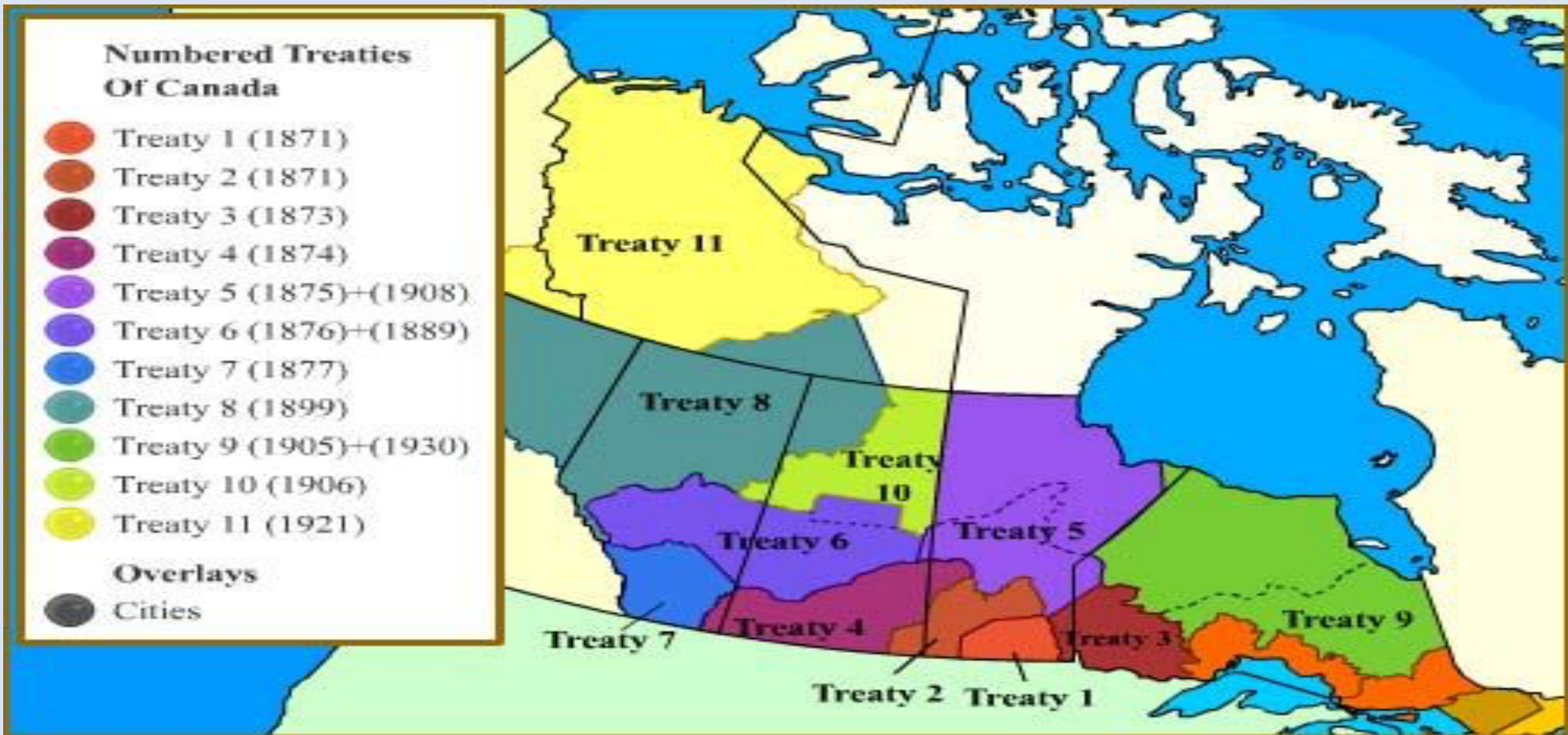
1871 Macdonald began the process of negotiating 11 treaties of Canada West

- Macdonald began with the creation of Manitoba (Treaty 1) following the Red River Rebellion of 1869 and provisional government structure of Louis Riel.
- The **collapse of the massive Buffalo herds** on the Western Plains of the U.S. and Canada was long anticipated, but nevertheless occurred with **shocking speed in the early 1880's**.
- **The Plains Indians were starving to death.**
- Sir John A Macdonald immediately implemented **the largest relief program in Canadian history** (to that point, and for 50 years thereafter, until the Great Depression). His prompt action, for which he received more than a little criticism over the cost and scope, without a doubt saved thousands of native lives.
- He was criticized for being too generous because the Federal government was not, at the time, in the business of providing relief programmes. The spending amounted to more than 3% of the Federal budget on a relief programme (6 to 8 billion in today's dollars).
- In Parliament, in 1885, **Sir John A Macdonald was criticized** for the continuing expense in providing land, agricultural tools, agricultural education and general education for Natives and the slow progress in moving Natives from a hunter gatherer society into the modern world.

Smallpox and Food Relief

- Sir John A's government also carried out a wide-ranging programme to vaccinate all Native Canadians against smallpox during the 1870s and 80s. Smallpox was a terrible scourge for Europeans (4,000 died of it in Montreal in 1884) and more so for Native Canadians.
- The programme was expensive and difficult to implement since there were no roads or railways across Western and Northwestern Canada. But it worked and saved thousands of Native lives.

• .



Following the Purchase of Rupert's Land,
Macdonald Began the First of 11 treaties in 1871



In Contrast to President Grant's Forced Assimilation, Macdonald Negotiated 7 of the 11 Treaties--1871-1877

Was Macdonald the One Who Created
Residential Schools for Indigenous Youth?

History Before Residential Indian Schools 200 Years before Macdonald.

- Residential schools were established first in the 17th century in New France and New England.
- In 1634 Society of Jesus established a mission in what was once British territory. The purpose of the mission was "to extend civilization and instruction to his ignorant race, and show them the way to heaven."
- Harvard College had an "Indian College" on its campus in the mid-1600s
- Indian schools were created in the East, where Indian reservations were less common than they became in the late nineteenth century in western states.
- In the late eighteenth century, reformers starting with President Washington tried to "civilize" and assimilate Native American children into American rural agriculture.
- 1819 The Civilization Fund Act U.S.A. allowed benevolent societies to provide education for Native Americans as part of the "civilization process".

Indigenous Schools during Macdonald's Term in Office 1855-1891

- The first Industrial School was created in Brantford in 1828 called the Mohawk Institute when Macdonald was 13 and in a grammar school. The Anglican Church ran the school with aid from the U.S. It was successful in providing practical knowledge and skills for Indigenous youth on the Six Nations Reserve.
- When it became a residential school in 1834, Macdonald was 19 and studying for his law exams in Picton.
- **Public school attendance** for Canadians **was made compulsory** for Ontario, New Brunswick and Nova Scotian children in 1871. This was the beginning of a strong state-run progressive public educational system that we have today.
- In Ontario, Egerton Ryerson, a Methodist fought for secularization as a means of keeping power out of the hands of any church.

(Indigenous schools)

- In contrast to compulsory public schools, the schools for Native Canadians were voluntary under Macdonald's term in office, but were available when requested by Indians through the 11 treaties beginning in 1871.
- Church run residential schools operated during the terms of 20 prime ministers. (R.C. 60% Anglican 30% and rest were Protestant)
- The Indian Act was amended following the Davin Report of 1879 based on U.S. President Grant's legislation to assimilate Indians through schooling.
- But in Canada they were not compulsory for Natives despite pressure from government to make them mandatory.
- However, Prime Minister John Thompson made the schools compulsory 3 years after Macdonald's death in 1891.
- Most Native Canadian children attended schools for only one year.
- The schools were administered by the churches: Catholic churches 60% and the Anglican church 30% and rest Protestant.
- Macdonald did not start the residential schools that are so heavily criticized today.

Two Views on Law and Order in Canada

Indigenous and European

- Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea)
- Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald

Mohawk Chief Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea) on Law and Order

- In the government you call civilized, the happiness of the people is constantly sacrificed to the splendor of empire.
- Hence the origin of your codes of criminal and civil laws; hence your dungeons and prisons.
- We have no prisons; we have no pompous parade of courts; we have no written laws; and yet judges as highly revered among us as they are among you, and their decisions are as much regarded.



Mohawk Chief continues:

- We have among us no exalted villains above the control of our laws.
- Daring wickedness here is never allowed to triumph over helpless innocence.
- The estates of widows and orphans are never devoured by enterprising swindlers.
- We have no robbery under the pretext of law.

John A. Macdonald's Views on Law and Order

Macdonald Wrote

- The statement that has been made so often: that this is a conquered country is *à propos de rien*.
- Whether it was conquered or ceded, we have a constitution now under which all British subjects are in a position of absolute equality, having equal rights of every kind — of language, of religion, of property and of person.
- There is no paramount race in this country; there is no conquered race in this country; we are all British subjects, and those who are not English are none the less British subjects on that account.”

--Macdonald's Speech to the House of Commons 1890.

- John A. Macdonald played a large role in shaping the Quebec Resolutions.
- The Upper Canadian politician was the only one at the conference with a background in constitutional law.
- Macdonald drafted 50 of the 72 resolutions that were the founding principles of the Constitution Act of 1867 and his desire for a strong central government was reflected in the document.



Without Macdonald there would be no Canada.

FIN

19 Year Old Macdonald Slept Here at Cousin Macpherson's Property 11 Fairfield St., Picton

