



Nishnawbe Aski Nation

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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIR JOHN A. MACDONALD'S LEGACY OF COLONIALISM CONTINUES TO DEFINE CANADA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FIRST NATIONS

THUNDER BAY: Nishnawbe Aski Nation (NAN) Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler says the commemoration of the birth of Sir John A. Macdonald this weekend is an opportunity for Canadians to recognize how the legacy of Canada's first prime minister continues to define Canada's relationship with First Nations.

"Canadians have been shocked to learn about the horrendous treatment of Canada's Indigenous peoples, including the Indian Residential School system and many other transgressions, but the federal government's colonial approach has not significantly changed over the last century," said NAN Deputy Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler. "The government is currently withholding desperately needed funding from the impoverished Algonquin community of Barriere Lake for not complying with new legislation. This is as unjust today as withholding food to starving First Nations was a century ago."

Under Sir John A. Macdonald, who also served as Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, the Government of Canada forcibly suppressed the 1885 North-West Rebellion by Métis, and Cree and Assiniboine First Nations, and also starved western First Nations to force them onto reserves and make way for the development of a national railway.

Such shocking treatment of First Nations by the Government of Canada continued with the physical and sexual abuse of Indian Residential School students and, as has been recently revealed, abhorrent nutritional experiments on First Nations people in the 1940s.

"The many transgressions against First Nations are a sad but significant part of our shared past, but are rarely found in history books or taught in the classroom," said Fiddler. "It is imperative that all Canadians learn the truth about the devastating impacts the federal government has had, and continues to have, on the lives of First Nations people."

NAN is committed to reconciliation and understanding with its Treaty partners, the governments of Canada and Ontario, and supports healing and reconciliation for all Canadians.

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