

COMMEMORATING JOHN A. MACDONALD:

Collective Remembering and the Structure of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia

TIMOTHY J. STANLEY*

IN THE SUMMER OF 2018, following discussions on reconciliation with representatives of the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations on whose traditional territory their city is located, the city council of Victoria, British Columbia, voted to remove a statue of John A. Macdonald from the entrance to city hall. Macdonald, who never actually visited Victoria and who nationalists often celebrate as the first prime minister of Canada, had been the one-time member of Parliament for Victoria, elected in 1878 for Victoria and also for Marquette, Manitoba, after being defeated in his home riding of Kingston, Ontario. Canadian nationalist narratives often celebrate Macdonald as *the* father of Confederation,¹ the “Nation Maker” who made Confederation work, oversaw westward expansion, and welded the country together through the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway. However, in practice, Macdonald’s nation-making project sought to take over the territories of Indigenous peoples and remove them from the land so that it and its resources could be exploited by people of European origins. For many Indigenous peoples, Macdonald was the chief architect of the residential schools who engineered their cultural genocide and the negative consequences that they continue to bear.²

* I would like to thank Christine O’Bonsawin and John Price for their encouragement, support, and patience with this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their assistance in developing my arguments. Frances Boyle as always is my first and best reader. Any errors or oversights are entirely my responsibility. This article was revised 15 April 2020.

¹ See, for example, Richard J. Gwyn, *Nation Maker: The Life and Times of John A. Macdonald*, vol. 2 (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2007). During his time, official documents and informal usage referred to Macdonald interchangeably as premier and as prime minister.

² Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 1, *Summary* (Toronto: Lorimer, 2015).

The controversy surrounding the council's decision demonstrates the role of what the social psychologist James Wertsch calls "collective remembering" in the ongoing structuring of settler colonialism.³ a factor that needs to be taken into account if projects of reconciliation and decolonization are to be successful. As the Australian scholar of settler colonialism Patrick Wolfe famously noted, "invasion is a structure not an event" as "the settler colonizers come to stay."⁴ The structuring of settler colonialism is not just something from a now distant past; rather, it continues today as it is woven into the material, symbolic, and embodied spaces of Victoria and, indeed, of virtually every other space that makes up the Canadian nation-state. While the structure of settler colonialism is all too real for Indigenous peoples, for most settlers it is largely invisible until such time as monuments get taken away or dominant systems of representation get challenged. These moments act as rips in what Nichole Grant and I have called "the wallpaper of dominance." This wallpaper is made up of banal patterns of cultural representation that constantly repeat themselves, to the point where, for most people, they go unnoticed, becoming part of the background that covers over underlying structures of dominance – until rips in that wallpaper reveal what lies beneath.⁵ As the supporters of the removal of the Macdonald statue have found, even seemingly small acts of reconciliation can run up against this structure. The political and educational challenges involve finding ways to tear down the wallpaper so that the structure can be exposed and undermined, and to do this before settler colonizers once again paste over the holes.

The statue controversy erupted during the summer of 2018 when Victoria mayor Lisa Helps transmitted a request from the "City Family" for the immediate removal of the statue. The City Family is a key element in the city's Witness Reconciliation Program. In announcing this program, Songhees chief Ron Sam noted: "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. Reconciliation must become a way of life." City Family members include representatives of the Songhees and Esquimalt First Nations, a prominent Indigenous artist, the chair of Indigenous

³ James Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

⁴ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 388.

⁵ Nichole E. Grant and Timothy J. Stanley, "Reading the Wallpaper: Disrupting Performances of Whiteness in the Blog 'Stuff White People Like,'" in *The Critical Youth Studies Reader*, ed. Awad Ibrahim and Shirley Steinberg, 172–83 (New York: Peter Lang, 2014).

studies at Camosun College, the mayor, and two city councillors. The City Family was established in the summer of 2017 “to meet regularly to collaboratively generate ideas that lead to a program of actions” that would implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s (TRC’s) Calls to Action for municipalities.⁶

Indigenous participants in the City Family explained that they did not feel comfortable coming to city hall because they had to pass under the Macdonald statue. As City Family member Carey Newman explained at the time of the council’s vote: “I don’t speak my traditional language and that’s because it was taken from my father when he went to residential school so that’s one small way those policies impact my life.” He continued: “Now imagine if you were in residential school, imagine if you were abused in residential school how much more present that pain would be seeing the statue of that person that created the system to begin with.”⁷ The group reached consensus on removal as early as November 2017 but took several months to agree on the wording of a plaque that would replace the statue.⁸ In July 2018, the two local First Nations officially endorsed removal of the statue. The executive director of the Esquimalt Nation, Katie Hooper, another member of the City Family, informed Mayor Helps that the chief and council of the Esquimalt Nation had approved the removal on 23 July 2018, writing: “Removing the statue is an important step in the City’s Reconciliation journey, and is a symbol of progress towards an end to discrimination and oppression.”⁹ Songhees chief Ron Sam echoed the point that the statue’s removal would be “an important step in the reconciliation process” and further noted that it would be “a visible symbol of progress, of rejecting oppression and embracing a new and inclusive way of working.”¹⁰

Mayor Helps presented the proposal to council on 8 August, explaining: “One of the things we heard very clearly from the Indigenous family

⁶ Lisa Helps, City of Victoria, “Victoria Commences Its Witness Reconciliation Program,” Lisa Helps–Victoria Mayor (Blog), 16 June 2017, <https://lisahelpsvictoria.ca/2017/06/16/victoria-commences-its-witness-reconciliation-program/>.

⁷ “Victoria City Council Votes to Remove John A. Macdonald Statue from City Hall,” CHEK: Watch Local, 9 August 2018, <https://www.cheknews.ca/victoria-city-council-votes-to-remove-john-a-macdonald-statue-from-city-hall-477799/>.

⁸ Bill Cleverley, “Macdonald Statue Removal a Surprise Decision Nine Months in the Making,” *Victoria Colonist*, 23 January 2019, <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/macdonald-statue-removal-a-surprise-decision-nine-months-in-the-making-1.23609051>.

⁹ Katie Hooper to Mayor Lisa Helps, n.d., <https://pub-victoria.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=21034>.

¹⁰ Chief Ron Sam to Mayor Lisa Helps, 31 July 2018, reproduced in Nicole Crescenzi, “Macdonald Statue Removed after Limited Meetings Spread over Nine Months,” *Victoria News*, 24 January 2019, <https://ca.news.yahoo.com/john-macdonald-statue-removed-victoria-152502116.html>.

members is that coming to city hall to do this work [of reconciliation], and walking past John A. Macdonald every time, feels contradictory.”¹¹ And, in an interview, she explained: “For people who are Indigenous who are coming into city hall, who may have been in residential schools, or their moms or grandmas or dads or grandpas were in residential schools, this statue is a physical manifestation of that painful colonial history that they themselves or their families have experienced.”¹² Although some councillors complained about the short notice, council voted seven to one to remove the statue on 9 August. It was removed on 11 August and a plaque was mounted in its place reading: “We will keep the public informed as the Witness Reconciliation Program unfolds, and as we find a way to recontextualize Macdonald in an appropriate way.”¹³

The decision drew immediate reaction, almost all negative. On the day of the vote, Victoria resident Eric McWilliam put on a kilt to protest beside the statue. Claiming to be a Scottish Canadian like Macdonald, he called for “disobedience” to prevent its removal and complained that it takes ten years to approve other civic projects like “some stupid bridge we paid three times for” but: “in three days we could have our culture erased, the expedience at which this took place is outstanding.”¹⁴ On 10 August, the *Times Colonist* reported that, by 6:00 p.m. the day of the vote, it had received sixty-seven letters to the editor, all but three of which opposed removing the statue. While supporters of removal, like Arlene Ewert, noted that the genocidal effects of Macdonald’s policies continued into the present, most opponents accused the mayor (in particular) of wanting to erase history. Many admitted that Macdonald was “flawed” but opposed removing his statue. Gloria Snider called for “a prominent plaque erected adjacent to the statue detailing his rights and wrongs,” a position echoed by three other readers. Ron Devian called for adding monuments of Songhees and Esquimalt leaders. David Collins stated that he had “never heard of anything more loopy” than the removal decision and that “erasing his [Macdonald’s] memory reflect[ed] more on us than it [did] on him.” Geoff Robarts questioned the validity of the entire process, calling it “cynical nonsense on Helps’ part and [something that] should be resisted.” Dave Laundry suggested

¹¹ Justin McElroy, “City of Victoria to Remove John A. Macdonald Statue from Front Steps of City Hall,” CBC News, 8 August 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/john-a-statue-victoria-helps-1.4777810>.

¹² “John A. Macdonald Statue ‘Painful Reminder’ of Colonialism: Victoria Mayor,” Canadian Press, 8 August 2018.

¹³ McElroy, “City of Victoria to Remove John A. Macdonald Statue.” See also Cleverley, “Macdonald Statue Removal a Surprise Decision.”

¹⁴ “Victoria City Council Votes to Remove John A. Macdonald Statue from City Hall.”

that it was “applying today’s social standards to the leaders of the past” and wondered whether removals of monuments to other prime ministers who supported residential schools would be next.¹⁵

On 11 August 2019, CBC News reported that over two dozen people showed up to observe the removal, “some cheering its removal and others lamenting it.” It quoted a supporter of the removal, Reuben Rose-Redwood: “Macdonald ... was one of the leading architects of the residential schools which instigated the cultural genocide of Indigenous people in this country.” Rose-Redwood also stated: “We’re here to say there’s no honour in cultural genocide and it’s time for the statue to go.” By contrast, Matthew Breeden, reported as having travelled from Vancouver to protest, told CBC: “It’s part of our history I feel is being ripped right out and gutted down. I think that’s just terrible.” He continued: “They just pushed it right through – the public wasn’t allowed to have a say.”¹⁶ By mid-afternoon over one hundred people were protesting at the former site of the statue. Victoria News reported that those present ranged from members of the Indigenous Solidarity Working Group to members of the white supremacist Soldiers of Odin. While some protesters chanted “Hey, hey, ho, ho, white supremacy’s got to go!” others sang the national anthem, wrapped themselves in the maple leaf flag, and carried signs saying such things as “Respect Our History: Save Sir John A. Macdonald from Political Correctness.”¹⁷ Within hours of the new plaque’s being put up, it had been defaced by vandals.¹⁸

The removal quickly became a national and even an international story. On 9 August, federal Conservative leader Andrew Scheer tweeted, “We should not allow political correctness to erase our history.”¹⁹ As he later told the *National Post*, Macdonald had his flaws, “But statues of Sir John A. Macdonald aren’t erected because of his flaws. They’re erected because of the vision that he had, the work he did, the fact that he devoted his life

¹⁵ “Readers Debate Victoria’s John A. Macdonald Statue,” *Victoria Colonist*, 10 August 2018, <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/letters/readers-debate-victoria-s-john-a-macdonald-statue-1.23395748>.

¹⁶ “John A. Macdonald Statue Removed from Victoria City Hall,” CBC News, 11 August 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/john-a-macdonald-statue-victoria-city-hall-lisa-helps-1.4782065>.

¹⁷ Nicole Crescenzi, PHOTOS: Hundreds Gather at Victoria City Hall after Removal of Sir John A. Macdonald Statue. Victoria News, 11 August 2018, <https://www.vicnews.com/news/photos-hundreds-gather-at-victoria-city-hall-after-removal-of-sir-john-a-macdonald-statue/>.

¹⁸ Jon Azpiri and Kylie Stanton, “Plaque That Replaced John A. Macdonald Statue Outside Victoria City Hall Already Vandalized,” Global News, 13 August 2018, <https://globalnews.ca/news/4385980/john-a-macdonald-plaque-victoria-vandalized>.

¹⁹ Andrew Scheer, twitter post, 9 August 2018, 8:01 a.m., <https://twitter.com/AndrewScheer/status/1027570505874907136>.

to building Canada.”²⁰ Doug Ford, the then newly elected Progressive Conservative premier of Ontario, called on Victoria to send Ontario the statue. As his House leader Todd Smith wrote in the official request, “As a Father of Confederation and our first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald holds a significant place in the hearts of many Canadians and should be honoured accordingly.”²¹ The *Globe and Mail* editorialized that Victoria City Council’s decision was “hypocritical” because, in removing the country’s Indigenous peoples from the land, Macdonald was very much a product of his times. The editorial claimed that the case against Macdonald was not equivalent to that made for removing Confederate monuments in the United States because the Confederates sought to destroy their country while Macdonald sought to create Canada: “Even if we removed every totem of our national father from Victoria to Bonavista, and scrubbed his name from every school and highway, Canada would still remain as his statue.”²² An opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* called Macdonald “Canada’s George Washington” and noted, “lacking American-style reverence for their founders, Canadians have allowed leftists to vandalize their historical memory.”²³ In an interview with CTV National News, Liberal federal cabinet minister Catherine McKenna agreed that taking down the statue was not the answer. “You can’t erase history,” she said as she called for recognizing “the good and the bad.”²⁴ By early September 2018, an Angus Reid opinion poll showed that twice as many Canadians opposed the statue’s removal as supported it, while 57 percent of those polled said that Canada spends too much time apologizing for residential schools.²⁵ Meanwhile, other voices denounced

²⁰ Marie-Danielle Smith, “Andrew Scheer Explains His Positions on Sir John A. Macdonald, Campus Free Speech, Abortion, Porn and More,” *National Post*, 25 August 2018, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/andrew-scheer-explains-his-positions-on-sir-john-a-macdonald-campus-free-speech-abortion-porn-and-more>.

²¹ Wendy Stueck, “Victoria Rejects Ontario’s Offer on Macdonald Statue,” *Globe and Mail*, 14 August 2018.

²² “Globe Editorial: Grappling with John A. Macdonald’s Legacy,” *Globe and Mail*, 10 August 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/editorials/article-globe-editorial-grappling-with-john-a-macdonalds-legacy/>. The editorial fails to acknowledge that the Confederates also sought to create a country.

²³ Elliot Kaufman, “Toppling a Statue North of the Border: The City of Victoria Takes Down a Monument to John A. Macdonald, Canada’s George Washington,” *Wall Street Journal Online*, 13 August 2018.

²⁴ “Victoria Took Down Statue of Sir John A Macdonald,” CTV National News, 15 August 2018. Canadian Business and Current Affairs Database.

²⁵ Angus Reid Institute, “In Debate over First PM’s Legacy, Vast Majority Say John A. Macdonald’s Name, Image Should Stay in Public View,” 5 September 2018, <http://angusreid.org/macdonald-reconciliation/>.

the move as window dressing, pointing out that the real issues involved in reconciliation go far beyond removing statues.²⁶

At the time of writing, the issue has not died down. It became a factor in the Victoria municipal election in fall 2018. At the end of August, Mayor Helps announced that, because of her stance on the Macdonald issue, her re-election campaign had run into concerted attacks from online trolls.²⁷ In February 2019, the idea was floated that the statue be donated to the province, an idea quickly shot down by Premier John Horgan who called the statue “a hot potato.”²⁸ In July 2019, Mayor Helps announced that the city would be holding a series of public workshops on reconciliation during the fall and winter of 2019–20, which would include discussion on what to do with the Macdonald statue.²⁹ As late as a year after the removal, the *Times Colonist* was able to publish five letters calling for the statue’s reinstatement.³⁰ Meanwhile, during the October 2019 federal election, while announcing plans for national museums, Conservative leader Andrew Scheer said, “we must never allow political correctness to erase what made us who we are.” And he used Macdonald to illustrate his idea that “Canada’s history should always be celebrated.”³¹

The effect and polarization that the removal of the Macdonald statue has generated parallels other controversies over collective remembering elsewhere in Canada. On the one side are those who are in favour of removing historical commemorations of problematic figures as part of larger efforts not only to make public institutions and spaces more welcoming and inclusive but also to address historic injustices. On the other side are those who accuse advocates of removal of forgetting “our” past, of judging people in the past by the standards of the present, and of

²⁶ Terry Glavin, “A ‘City Family’ Takes on Sir John A. Macdonald,” *National Post*, 16 August 2018.

²⁷ Bill Cleverley, “Victoria Mayor’s Re-election Campaign Highlights Offensive Online Trolls,” *Times-Colonist*, 28 August 2018, <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/victoria-mayor-s-re-election-campaign-highlights-offensive-online-trolls-1.23415013>.

²⁸ Chad Hipolito/Canadian Press, “Horgan Hopes to Stay Clear of Victoria’s ‘Hot Potato’ Sir John A. Macdonald Statue,” *Globe and Mail*, 28 February 2019, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/british-columbia/article-horgan-hopes-to-stay-clear-of-victorias-hot-potato-sir-john-a/>.

²⁹ Bill Cleverley, “Conversation on Future of Sir John A. Macdonald Statue Slated for May 2020,” *Times Colonist*, 21 July 2019, <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/conversation-on-future-of-sir-john-a-macdonald-statue-slated-for-may-2020-1.23891478>.

³⁰ “Letters Aug. 3: What to Do about the Sir John A. Macdonald Statue,” *Times Colonist*, 3 August 2013, <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/letters/letters-aug-3-what-to-do-about-the-sir-john-a-macdonald-statue-1.23904902>.

³¹ Joanna Smith, Canadian Press, “Canada’s History Should be Celebrated, Not Erased by ‘Political Correctness,’ Scheer says,” *Global News*, 7 October 2019, <https://globalnews.ca/news/600074/andrew-scheer-political-correctness/>.

engaging in political correctness gone wild. Very similar discourses were enacted in Halifax concerning commemorations of the city's founder, Edward Cornwallis. The Mi'kmaq Elder and historian Daniel Paul campaigned for twenty-five years to change the name of Cornwallis Junior High School in Halifax after documenting the genocidal and racist nature of the Anglo-European colonization of Nova Scotia. As Paul demonstrated, Cornwallis was personally responsible for a genocidal policy that placed a bounty on Mi'kmaq scalps, including those of women and children.³² In 2011, the Halifax Regional School Board voted unanimously to rename the school.³³ In January 2018, Halifax City Council voted to remove its statue of Cornwallis from a city park.³⁴ When Mi'kmaq women organized a ceremony to mark the removal, the Proud Boys, often identified as a white supremacist and fascist group, responded by trying to disrupt the ceremony.³⁵ In 2017, Montreal City Council renamed a street honouring Jeffery Amherst, the British general who completed the conquest of Quebec, because he called for using smallpox-infected blankets to wipe out Indigenous opponents.³⁶ Following the request of Indigenous leaders, the Government of Canada renamed the building on Parliament Hill that houses the Prime Minister's Office, which had been named after Hector Langevin, the cabinet minister who started the residential schools.³⁷

Macdonald has also been the focus of re-examination elsewhere. In 2012, a local Ottawa controversy erupted when the federal Conservative government of Stephen Harper renamed the Ottawa River Parkway after Macdonald.³⁸ The 2015 celebrations of the two hundredth anniversary of Macdonald's birth in the city of Kingston, the place that is most

³² Daniel N. Paul, *We Were Not the Savages: A Mi'kmaq Perspective on the Collision between European and Native American Civilizations* (Halifax: Fernwood, 2002).

³³ "Halifax Founder's Name to Disappear from School," CBC News, 23 June 2011, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-founder-s-name-to-disappear-from-school-1.1063185>.

³⁴ Jessica Leeder, "Halifax Council Votes to Remove Controversial Cornwallis Statue," *Globe and Mail*, 30 January 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/halifax-council-debates-immediate-removal-of-edward-cornwallis-statue/article37786920/>.

³⁵ "Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia Split with Leadership over Edward Cornwallis Statue and Saturday's Ceremony," APTN National News, 12 July 2017, <https://aptnnews.ca/2017/07/12/mikmaq-in-nova-scotia-split-with-leadership-over-edward-cornwallis-statue-and-saturdays-ceremony/>.

³⁶ Ingrid Peritz, "Montreal Bids Adieu to Amherst, Removing Name from City Street," *Globe and Mail*, 13 September 2017, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/montreal-to-strike-name-of-british-general-amherst-from-city-map/article36246881/>.

³⁷ Bruce Champion-Smith, "PM Renames Ottawa's Historic Langevin Block in Gesture of Respect for Indigenous Peoples," *Toronto Star*, 22 June 2017.

³⁸ See Timothy J. Stanley, "John A. Macdonald Wanted an 'Aryan' Canada," *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 August 2012; Richard Gwyn, "John A. Macdonald Was Ahead of His Time," *Ottawa Citizen*, 23 August 2012.

associated with him, actively sought to include Indigenous views on Macdonald.³⁹ In 2017, the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) called upon school boards to consider renaming schools named after Macdonald because, given his role as the "architect of genocide against Indigenous Peoples,"⁴⁰ naming schools after him was inappropriate. Reaction was swift and, once again, divided. The national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Harry Bellegarde, applauded the decision, asking: "How would you feel if you were a young First Nations person going to that school, knowing full well that Sir John A. Macdonald was one of the architects behind the residential school system? You wouldn't want to feel good about attending that school, would you? Because I wouldn't."⁴¹ By contrast, the premier of Ontario, Kathleen Wynne, said that the ETFO resolution "misse[d] the mark": "We need to teach young people the full history of this country ... the good as well as the bad."⁴² The premier of Saskatchewan, Brad Wall, argued that the renaming was a "slippery slope that threatened [the] preservation of all of our history."⁴³ Federal cabinet minister John Baird referred to removing the name as "just simply trying to erase Canadian history in the guise of extreme and radical political correctness."⁴⁴

The depth of emotion that surrounds what, at the end of the day, are tiny interventions in much larger cultural landscapes (it is not unusual for schools to be renamed, usually after someone famous, and statues are moved around every day) demonstrates the strength of the grip of settler colonialism's construction of collective remembering, which is almost entirely silent on the ongoing effects of colonialism.⁴⁵ Writing about the

³⁹ Laura J. Murray and Paul Carr, "Beyond Sir John: Unsettling Public Memory in Kingston, Ontario," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2016): 61–86.

⁴⁰ Salmaan Farooqui, "Ontario Elementary Teachers' Union Calls for Renaming John A. Macdonald Schools," *National Post*, 24 August 2017, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/ontario-elementary-teachers-union-calls-for-renaming-john-a-macdonald-schools>.

⁴¹ Shanifa Nasser, "Premier Kathleen Wynne Says Proposal to Strip Public Schools of John A. Macdonald's Name Misses Mark," *CBC News*, 24 August 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/toronto/wynne-john-a-mcdonald-schools-1.4261433>.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Aaron Wherry, "AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde Supports Removing John A. Macdonald's Name from Ontario Schools," *CBC News*, 24 August 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/john-a-macdonald-schools-perry-bellegarde-1.4261312>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ There are some notable exceptions. Public inquiry reports, including the TRC, detail the history and ongoing consequence of colonialism. See, for example, *Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women*, https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Final_Report_Vol_1a-1.pdf; and Public Inquiry Commission on Relations between Indigenous Peoples and Certain Public Services in Québec, *Listening, Reconciliation and Progress: Final Report* (Government of Québec, 2019), https://www.cerp.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/Fichiers_clients/Rapport/Final_report.pdf. While it

restructuring of historical memory in the former Soviet Union, Wertsch noted that collective memory is not like individual memory writ large: the people who make up a collectivity can have very different and even competing memories of events in addition to differently weighing the significance of shared events.⁴⁶ Memories of residential schools illustrate this. For many Canadians, residential schools (assuming that they have even heard about them) are at most something from a now distant past for which the country has apologized and from which it has moved on.⁴⁷ However, for the 1.5 million Indigenous people who live in Canada, the negative effects of residential schools continue to be present as part of their personally lived histories, and their communities continue to deal with the trauma inflicted by these schools.⁴⁸ Wertsch argues that collective remembering is a mediated process in which specific material technologies authorize certain acts of remembering while silencing others. These technologies range from public monuments and school textbooks to the tropes of mass popular culture. If we were to inventory the technologies that appear on the streets of Victoria, and the kinds of remembering they urge, we would find repeated patterns enacting settler colonial dominance – patterns that, with local variations, are similar in every city and town in Canada.⁴⁹ These patterns are literally built into the concrete of the city, into the symbolic markings that overlay this concrete, and into the ways in which the resulting repetitive pattern makes certain bodies appear to belong, others appear to be interlopers, and still others conditional upon an explanation.⁵⁰ In Victoria, these material, symbolic, and embodied patterns portray people of European

does not account for colonialism, the new Canada Hall of the Canadian Museum of History actively incorporates Indigenous voices.

⁴⁶ Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering*, esp. 35–40. See also Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ Environics Institute for Survey Research, *Canadian Public Opinion on Aboriginal People: Final Report*, June 2016, https://nctr.ca/assets/reports/Modern%20Reports/canadian_public_opinion.pdf. See also Laura Schaepli, Anne Godlewska, Lisa Korteweg, Andrew Coombs, Lindsay Morcom, and John Rose, “What Do First-Year University Students in Ontario, Canada, Know about First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Peoples and Topics?” *Canadian Journal of Education* 41, no. 3 (2018): 688–725.

⁴⁸ Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, vol. 5, *The Legacy* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2015).

⁴⁹ On public technologies of memory, see Brian Osborne, “Landscapes, Memory, Monuments, and Commemoration: Putting Identity in Its Place,” *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 33, no. 3 (2001): 39–77.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Timothy J. Stanley, “The Banality of Colonialism: Encountering Artifacts of Genocide and White Supremacy in Vancouver Today,” in *Diversity and Multiculturalism: A Reader*, ed. Shirley Steinberg, 143–59 (New York: Peter Lang, 2009).

descent as belonging, marginalize people of non-European origins, and almost completely efface Indigenous peoples.

When it is remembered that the Macdonald statue is, in the end, a material object, the battle over its placement become part of a larger struggle over who controls the material arrangements that make up the city of Victoria. The arguments evidenced against the removal of the Macdonald statue articulate (i.e., give voice to) the structure of settler colonialism at the same time as they articulate with (i.e., are consistent with) this structure.⁵¹ In effect, these arguments state that it is the settler colonizers who get to decide what goes where and for what purpose: that is, they get to determine how the material space is organized, in effect overriding the presence of Indigenous people.⁵² For example, when Matthew Breeden complained that “the public wasn’t allowed to have a say,”⁵³ whether he knew it or not, he was really saying that the settler colonizers should be the ones to decide the issue. This continues the process that created the larger material structure of settler colonialism, of which the statue is simultaneously a part and a product.

Settler colonialism is built into the concrete of the streets, the grid pattern that shapes the city, the design of the buildings; it is in the European-derived fashions that people wear; and it is even in the genetic composition of the bodies of the people of Victoria, most of which traces back to Europe.⁵⁴ The dominant architecture of the city has direct continuities with Europe, especially Great Britain. Indeed, for many years designs from England were fetishized as the city marketed itself as a piece of “Jolly, Olde England,” complete with high tea at the Empress Hotel and its elaborate English-style gardens.

⁵¹ On the concept of articulation, see Stuart Hall, “Race, Articulation and Societies Structured in Dominance,” in *Sociological Theories: Race and Colonialism* (Paris: UNESCO, 1980), 305–45. See also Jennifer Slack, “The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies,” in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, 112–27 (London: Routledge, 1996).

⁵² See Ailleen Moreton-Robinson, “Bodies That Matter: Performing White Possession on the Beach,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 4 (2011): 57–72, for a suggestive discussion of this possession by the colonizers in an Australian context.

⁵³ “John A. Macdonald Statue Removed from Victoria City Hall.”

⁵⁴ The 2016 Canada Census for a total population of 85,792 reports 3,780 self-identified as Aboriginal and 12,370 as “visible minority” (i.e., of Asian or African origins). As a raw measure, this suggests that about 81 percent of the population is of European origins. See Census Profile, 2016 Census, Victoria, City [Census Subdivision], British Columbia and Capital, Regional District [Census Division], British Columbia, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geor=CSD&Code1=5917034&Geo2=CD&Code2=5917&SearchText=Victoria&SearchType=Begins&SearchP R=01&B1=Aboriginal%20peoples&TABID=1&ctype=1>.

To be sure, being an internationally connected city, there are moments when the material cityscape breaks away from Europeaness. City hall itself is located on the same block as are two streets that are part of the city's Chinatown, with its Chinese-style buildings. There are even Indigenous structures, such as Wadit'la, also known as Mungo Martin House, in front the Royal BC Museum. However, these are exceptions in what is otherwise a terrain of taken-for-granted European dominance.

This dominance of a material structure derived from Europe is not an accident of history. Its creation was integral to the beginnings of settler colonialism. The grid pattern of the streetscape and the square shapes of buildings began with the construction of the rectangular Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) fort in 1843. In 1849, when the Colony of Vancouver Island was established, the HBC was given exclusive rights to all the land on Vancouver Island. By 1851, as is shown by a map made at the time, the grid pattern of rectangular HBC plots had been etched onto the landscape that makes up today's Victoria. According to the map, there were no Indigenous territories; although it shows buildings across the harbour from the city, it does not label them.⁵⁵ The application of physical force over the bodies of the people whose existence that map silences enabled this European mapping and marking of the territory. Virtually all of Victoria, and most assuredly the houses of the Songhees in the harbour, were within the range of the cannons of Royal Navy gunboats, the most advanced military technology of the nineteenth century.⁵⁶

What is remembered in most of the collective remembering of Victorians as the peaceful settlement of an empty land is remembered very differently by the Esquimalt Nation:

What is now Victoria used to be shared by five other communities: the Cheko'nein, the Chilkowetch, the Swenghwung, the Hwuywmlith, and the Teechamitsa. We spoke the same language and, to a large extent, shared the bounty the land and sea had to offer us. When the British (under James Douglas) arrived in our territories, our ancestors – led by our ancestor Sisunuq and others – greeted him. A treaty signed with Douglas in 1850 – only six generations ago – guaranteed continued access to fishing and hunting, and maintenance of our spiritual relationship with the land, the resources, and our ancestors.

⁵⁵ See Plan of Victoria District, Lot 24, Sec. 1B., NO. 2, <http://contentdm.library.uvic.ca/cdm/singleitem/collection/collection19/id/83/rec/94>.

⁵⁶ The best account of the military aspects of the colonization of BC remains Barry Gough, *Gunboat Frontier: British Maritime Authority and Northwest Coast Indians, 1846–1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1984).

However, devastating disease and consistent efforts to assimilate us through land and education policies have exacted a devastating toll on our families.

Despite what the world thinks, we have not lost our culture. However, because our culture was tied to and sustained by our lands, we must find new ways to give it voice.⁵⁷

Thus, the material structure of settler colonialism rests directly on the land of Indigenous peoples, obscuring their existence. Today, settler colonialism shapes the landscape of the city, the design of its streets, the traffic flows, which bodies can enter which places and when. It shapes where statues can be placed as well as the existence of such things as mayors and city councils. Even the mayor's chain of office underlines the medieval European origins of settler colonialism in Victoria, British Columbia.

Concerns that removal of the statue of Macdonald, a relatively small material object, was somehow erasing what Andrew Scheer and others called "our history" are belied by the weight of the material artefacts of settler colonialism by which they are surrounded. But the statue is not only a material object, it is also a highly contested symbolic one. As John Dann, who created the statue, explained in an opinion piece in the *Globe and Mail*, he did not design the statue to put Macdonald on a pedestal but to present "a portrait of the man, not an image of an idol." He wrote: "It did not aggrandize the man, but was a reflection of his humanity, on our shared humanity, with all of its strengths, weaknesses, confidence and insecurities."⁵⁸ However, for Ktunaxa writer Troy Sebastian/nupqu ʔa:kʔam', the two-and-one-half metre high statue, "standing watch at the entrance to Victoria City Hall," was not simply a work of art but "a haunting, imposing and judgmental visage that represents one thing and one thing only: power."⁵⁹ This view was shared by other Indigenous people. For example, the Métis-Cree writer/director Barbara Todd Hager told APTN News that, in her twenty-five years of living in Victoria, she had never once looked in the statue's face: "During the Northwest Rebellion, three of my relatives died. Killed by the Canadian military,

⁵⁷ See "Our Nation," Esquimalt Nation, <https://www.esquimaltnation.ca/our-nation>.

⁵⁸ John Dann, "Removing My Statue of John A. Macdonald from View Is Not Going to Change Our History," *Globe and Mail*, 14 August 2018, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/article-removing-my-statue-of-john-a-macdonald-from-view-is-not-going-to/>.

⁵⁹ Troy Sebastian, "Comment: Macdonald's Statue Removal Is Classic Macdonald Politics," *Times Colonist*, 2 September 2018, <https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/op-ed/comment-macdonald-s-statue-removal-is-classic-macdonald-politics-1.23419688>.

that was sent out by Sir John A. Macdonald and that's always part of my family history."⁶⁰

That the power of the statue goes unremarked by non-Indigenous commentators points to the ways in which the power of settler colonizers – the power that created the statue, Victoria, and Canada itself – has become naturalized. In this respect, settler colonialism has been as much a cultural project as a material project.⁶¹ The symbolism of the statue is read within systems of meaning, which, like Victoria's material structures, originate in Europe. Everywhere in Victoria, the material structures of the city are covered or otherwise marked by signs, symbols, and devices that are overwhelmingly in English, a language that originated eight thousand kilometres away. The cultural system obliterates Lək'wəḡən, the Salishan language that has been spoken for millennia in the territory today called Victoria. Today 86 percent of the population report that English is their parental language. Out of the 83,030 people who identified their parental languages in the census, only ten people identified Salish (less than 0.03 percent of the overall population).⁶² Most Victoria residents take for granted the fact that they use English in their daily lives. Today, street signs, storefronts, and advertisements are in English, as are most people's electronic media. English, along with French (another language that originates on the other side of the world), is the predominant language of instruction in the city's government-controlled public schools. To be sure, other languages occasionally peek out from the sea of English; here and there we see signs written in Chinese, such as those on restaurants facades or in store windows that say "We speak Chinese here" (as well as their Japanese and even French equivalents). Thanks to the efforts of the Songhees Nation to remark their territory, there are even signs in Lək'wəḡən, such as those that mark the city's "Signs of Lək'wəḡən" walking tour.⁶³ But these are exceptions, occasional rips in the wallpaper of English language dominance.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Amber Bernard, "Sir John A. Macdonald Statue Comes Down in Victoria," 11 August 2018, <https://aptnnews.ca/2018/08/11/sir-john-a-macdonald-statue-comes-down-in-victoria/>.

⁶¹ Arguably, this is about state formation as a process of "cultural revolution." See Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: English State Formation as Cultural Revolution* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985).

⁶² Statistics Canada, Census Profile, 2016 Census, Victoria [Census metropolitan area], British Columbia and British Columbia [Province], <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=5917034&Geo2=CD&Code2=5917&Data=Count&SearchText=Victoria&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&BI=All&TABID=1>.

⁶³ See "Lək'wəḡən Traditional Territory: Signs of Lək'wəḡən," Songhees Nation, <https://www.songheesnation.ca/community/l-k-ng-n-traditional-territory/>.

⁶⁴ Grant and Stanley, "Reading the Wallpaper."

What Patrick Wolfe correctly refers to as invasion created the local dominance of the English language. The late eighteenth-century explorations of Captain James Cook first brought English speakers to the area, as did the maritime sea otter trade. Interestingly, this trade brought Cantonese speakers to the area almost as early as it brought English speakers.⁶⁵ The overland and maritime fur trade brought Gaelic, French, and Hawaiian languages. The integration of the area into the British Empire and the Anglosphere began in 1843 with the establishment of the HBC trading post and fortress eventually called Fort Victoria. Fort Victoria and the rest of what is today British Columbia was formally incorporated into the British Empire with the 1846 Oregon Treaty. This was followed by Victoria's establishment as the capital of the Colony of Vancouver Island in 1849. It was then the most distant part of the world from Europe in terms of travel time. British military power, and an accompanying curriculum of statecraft that, to date, had built the largest empire in history, was actively applied in what became British Columbia. Between 1846 and the 1880s, gunboats ensured British and (later) Canadian authority over anything within cannon-shot through direct force, up to and including the shelling of villages and the hanging of the alleged murderers of white men.⁶⁶ British and Anglo-Canadian power was then extended through diplomacy, statecraft, and disciplinary practices that, as the historical geographer Cole Harris has noted, compressed five hundred years of European modernity into a single generation in British Columbia.⁶⁷ English was (and is) the language of this colonizing state system. However, it only gradually replaced or marginalized the other languages spoken on the territory. Until the late nineteenth century, the common language of the culturally diverse population of British Columbia was, as often as not, Chinook Jargon, the Indigenous trade language.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ John Meares brought Chinese workers to Vancouver Island during his first two voyages, some of whom became the first permanent settlers. See Jim Chliboyko, "Brief Empire: Canada's First Chinese Settlement," *The Beaver* 81, no. 4 (2001): 22–27.

⁶⁶ Gough, *Gunboat Frontier*.

⁶⁷ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997). See also, Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2003); Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849–1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849–1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1977).

⁶⁸ For example, Emma Lowman, "Mamook Kom'tax Chinuk Pipa/Learning to Write Chinook Jargon: Indigenous Peoples and Literacy Strategies in the South Central Interior of British

The only settler language that could have challenged the dominance of English was Chinese. Since the 1858 gold rush, Cantonese has been continuously spoken in Victoria, but Chinese language signs are not now as prominent as English language signs. This is despite the fact that, by the early 1880s, people from China, mostly Cantonese speakers but also Hakka speakers, may have formed the majority of the non-Indigenous population.⁶⁹ After Confederation, the British Columbia and Canadian governments worked actively to keep people from China out of the territory. They did this through racist immigration legislation, political disenfranchisement, and a myriad of anti-Chinese measures.⁷⁰

Government-controlled schooling has been the key technology for creating the dominance of English and for imbuing the population with the habits, dispositions, and knowledge that made this dominance seem normal. Schooling not only engineered the cultural genocide of Indigenous peoples, it literally formed the settler colonial state into the selves of the colonizers.⁷¹ By the early twentieth century, elementary schooling in British Columbia was a mass phenomenon, while the school curriculum made the area's connection to the British Empire appear to be as right, proper, and natural as the Earth going around the sun.⁷²

A project of replacing Indigenous names of people and places with European names came with the dominance of English and has made it seem as though settler colonial dominance has always been the norm. As Gikino'amaagewinini notes, his family lost their names when the Indian agent renamed his father and his father's siblings. At the same time, "the present-day map of British Columbia is speckled with a litany of European names, giving the false impression that it was these people who have the most legitimate claim to these mountains, rivers, lakes, and settlements."⁷³ The renaming of the territory by European invaders, which blotted out the existence of Indigenous names, is evident in maps as early as 1855.⁷⁴ In 1886, writing one of the first histories of

Columbia in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Historical Studies in Education* 29, no. 1 (2017): 77–98.

⁶⁹ Robert Galois and Cole Harris, "Recalibrating Society: The Population Geography of British Columbia," *Canadian Geographer* 38, no. 1 (1994): 37–53.

⁷⁰ For Victoria especially, see Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2011).

⁷¹ Bruce Curtis, *Building the Educational State: Canada West, 1836–1871* (London, ON: Althouse Press, 1987). See also Paul Axelrod, *The Promise of Schooling Education in Canada, 1800–1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

⁷² Timothy J. Stanley, "White Supremacy and the Rhetoric of Educational Indoctrination: A Canadian Case Study," in *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism*, 144–62 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990).

⁷³ Gikino'amaagewinini, "Naming as Theft and Misdirection," *BC Studies* 195 (2018): 107.

⁷⁴ See "An 1855 Map of Greater Victoria," University of Victoria, Libraries, Map Collection, <https://www.uvic.ca/library/assets/images/Victoria%201855.jpg>.

British Columbia, Hubert Howe Bancroft pointed out what he called the “Extermination of Savage Nomenclature” was integral to European colonization:

BACK [original emphasis] into the woods, you greased and painted redskins! Go! And take your belongings – all of them, that is, all except what civilization would have. But chiefly take yourselves, your past, your future; take your names of things and places; take your *lares et penates*, take your legends and traditions. Begone! Blot yourselves out! Why should you be remembered? ... Go! Be forgotten! Be not! And let not your late home breathe of your former being.⁷⁵

Whether satirizing or agreeing with the sentiments of his colonizing contemporaries, Bancroft was acknowledging the cultural nature of the colonizing project. Even the name of the city showed this. Bancroft pointed out that Victoria’s original name had been Camosun, an anglicization of the Lək’wəḡən term for “rushing water.” However: “It was now deemed advisable, not to say necessary, to eradicate all traces of nature and the natural man; it was thought in better taste, with the levelling of forests and the tearing up of rocks, to blast from memory the sylvan race that once were masters there.”⁷⁶ Thus, Bancroft’s and his contemporaries’ anglicizing of Indigenous names and terminologies remade them in European terms, while their discourse implicitly justified colonization as the rule of “the civilized” over “the savage.”

The names imposed on the territory by colonizers commemorate colonizers. The city of Victoria has streets named after Richard Blanshard and James Douglas, the first two governors of the Colony of Vancouver Island. The name of another street can be traced back to Joseph Trutch, the first lieutenant-governor of British Columbia, who created the reserve policy that radically dispossessed the Indigenous peoples of the southwestern part of the province.⁷⁷ The mountains to the west of the city bear names of other settlers; Mount Finlayson is named after Roderick Finlayson, the one-time commander of Fort Victoria, while Mount Helmcken is named after John Sebastian Helmcken, the long-time

⁷⁵ Hubert Howe Bancroft, *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft: History of British Columbia, 1792-1887*. Volume XXII, *History of British Columbia* (San Francisco: History Co., 1887), 117.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 118. Bancroft had previously published a five-volume account of the “native races” of the Americas, including those on the BC coast. See *ibid.*, vols. I-V.

⁷⁷ See John Lutz, “Joseph Trutch, BC’s First Lieutenant-Governor, Left Trail of Controversy,” *Times Colonist*, 17 June 2018, <https://www.timescolonist.com/islander/joseph-trutch-b-c-s-first-lieutenant-governor-left-trail-of-controversy-1.23338472>. See also Tennant, *Aboriginal People and Politics*; Harris, *Making Native Space*; Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy*.

HBC doctor and the first speaker of the Legislative Assembly.⁷⁸ The Tsawout people have formally called upon the government to recognize the traditional name of PKOLS for Mount Douglas, named after James Douglas.⁷⁹ As noted, the city of Victoria was named for an English queen. The island on which the city is located is named after George Vancouver, the British sea captain who charted the area. Meanwhile, the province of which Victoria is the capital is named after the person who carried out the genocide of the Arawak people on the Island of Hispaniola.⁸⁰

Lək'wəḡən people have been resisting this project for 176 years. The Songhees resisted their ethnic cleansing from Victoria's inner harbour until 1911.⁸¹ As elsewhere in the Americas, the European project of "settlement" was in fact one of massive depopulation: by 1911, when they were removed from their traditional territory, the Esquimalt and Songhees populations had fallen from approximately eighty-five hundred people in the 1850s to a mere two hundred in the 1920s.⁸² Despite this, the Lək'wəḡən have not totally disappeared and continue to assert their uninterrupted presence in the Victoria area.

Yet because of how settler colonialism layers over the concrete and bricks of the city, most settler colonizers see their own meanings reflected back at them. They consequently have great difficulty engaging with the meanings of Indigenous people, even when these are clearly presented to them, as they were with regard to removing the statue of Macdonald. For Indigenous people, Macdonald's statue was a barrier to their entering city hall; hence, steps towards reconciliation required its removal. Even though the members of city council overwhelmingly recognized the need for this, public reaction indicates that most Victorians did not. Critiques of the move failed to recognize the fact that the statue presented a barrier to Indigenous people, as it did to Chinese people (Councillor Charlayne Thornton-Joe noted that Macdonald took their vote away

⁷⁸ Eleanor Stardom, "Finlayson, Roderick," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlayson_roderick_12E.html (viewed 24 February 2019); and Daniel P. Marshall, "Helmcken, John Sebastian," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/helmcken_john_sebastian_14E.html.

⁷⁹ Judith Lavoie, "It's Pkols, Not Mount Douglas, Marchers Proclaim," *Times-Colonist*, 22 May 2013, <https://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/it-s-pkols-not-mount-douglas-marchers-proclaim-1.228920>.

⁸⁰ British Columbia was named after the Columbia territory, which was named after the river, which was named after the *Columbia Redivida* (the first European sailing vessel to enter the river), all of which were named after Christopher Columbus.

⁸¹ See Jeannie L. Kanakos, "The Negotiations to Relocate the Songhees Indians, 1843–1911" (MA thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1982).

⁸² See "The Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations," Victoria Harbour History, 2016, <https://www.victoriaharbourhistory.com/harbour-stories/lekwungen/>.

and implemented the Chinese head tax).⁸³ To most Victorians, passing underneath the gaze of the statue was not problematic, not something to be upset about. Indeed, the material arrangements and cultural markings of the territory naturalized Macdonald's presence. Macdonald, like Eric McWilliam, was a Scottish Canadian whose presence in a place eight thousand kilometres from his place of birth was not problematic. McWilliam, like most Victoria residents, spoke English. His clothes were of English design and he was part of the imagined community that constitutes the "our" when most people speak of "our history."⁸⁴ This community links the material and symbolic constructions of settler colonialism in Victoria to the rest of Canada.

Most people take for granted the process of "somatic dissonance" identified by the post-humanist feminist scholar Nirmal Puwar; the same markings and material structures, which tell them that they and Macdonald belong, tell other people that they do not. This is the sense she describes when she entered the Westminster Parliament and passed under the portraits of the former prime ministers, all white, and, except that of Margaret Thatcher, all men. Taken together they told her that she did not belong there: her soma, her body, did not fit.⁸⁵ It is against the cultural tagging of who belongs and who does not that racisms get enacted. Indeed, one of the most common experiences of racism that people in Canada report is being asked where they are from (the assumption being that they are not from here).⁸⁶

Once again, this calculus of which bodies fit in the cultural and material spaces of Canada and which do not is a product of the settler colonialism of which Macdonald was the chief architect. Macdonald's entire project was to create not only a territory in which people of European origins belonged but also a territory that belonged to them. At its heart, Macdonald's efforts at colonization centred on transforming Indigenous lands into the private property of Europeans and, in particular, of men such as himself (i.e., those who were from Great Britain). As the Australian Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson has pointed out, creating a regime of private property derived from Europe (and, in

⁸³ Kristyn Anthony, "Removal of Macdonald Statue Prompts Confusion over City Process," Victoria News, 9 August 2018, <https://www.vicnews.com/news/removal-of-macdonald-statue-prompts-confusion-over-city-process/>.

⁸⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991).

⁸⁵ Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies Out of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

⁸⁶ For example, Adrienne Shadd, "'Where Are You Really From?' Notes of an 'Immigrant' from North Buxton, Ontario," in *Talking about Identity: Encounters in Race, Ethnicity, and Language*, ed. Carl James and Adrienne Shadd, 10–16 (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2001).

British colonies of settlement like Canada and Australia, from British common law) on the territories of Indigenous peoples is at the heart of colonization.⁸⁷ Creating this regime of European property owners links histories of Indigenous colonization with those of Asian exclusion, as Patrick Wolfe shows in the case of Australia.⁸⁸ In effect, while Asians were needed as labourers, they were not wanted as property owners: the property created out of Indigenous territories was for Europeans only.

Macdonald personally oversaw the largest land grab in the history of the British Empire: the purchase of Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869. This purchase was based on the fiction that these lands were, in practice, controlled by the HBC rather than by Indigenous peoples.⁸⁹ Until after the 1885 Northwest Uprising, much of Macdonald's efforts were devoted to enabling the Government of Canada to gain control over these territories. These efforts included fighting two colonial wars, creating a paramilitary occupation force known as the North-West Mounted Police, and extending a system of law and authority over the territory that stretched in an unbroken chain all the way back to England. Macdonald was not only an important player in the union of the British North American colonies, he was also the principal architect of "Indian Affairs." In 1857, while he was the attorney general for Canada West, in effect the head of government, he introduced the principle that has shaped the Government of Canada's approach to Indian affairs ever since. The Gradual Civilization of the Indian Tribes Act was designed to achieve the enfranchisement of Indigenous peoples and to convert whatever lands they controlled into private property. In effect, this would advance them to a state of "civilization" (including ownership of private property) in which they would cease to be Indigenous.⁹⁰ Although the Indian Act of 1876, was enacted by the Liberal government of Alexander Mackenzie, it consolidated many of the policies Macdonald had

⁸⁷ Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

⁸⁸ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism* (London: Continuum, 1999); and Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (Los Angeles: American Indian Studies Center, 2016).

⁸⁹ See, for example, Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870, with a New Introduction* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

⁹⁰ See Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, An Act to Encourage the gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in this Province, and to amend the Laws respecting Indians, S.C. 1857, c. 26. See also James R. Miller, "Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs: The Shaping of Canadian Indian Policy," in *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies*, ed. Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall, 311–40 (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2014). See Timothy J. Stanley, "John A. Macdonald, "the Chinese" and Racist State Formation in Canada," *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (2016): 6–34.

developed as the first superintendent of Indian affairs, and it was broadly supported by him in Opposition. This act imposed the system of bands and band councils, federal regulations pertaining to membership, and made adult “Indians” into wards of the government.⁹¹

The creation of this regime of property for settlers also underlay the exclusion of Asians. We can see the logic of this regime at work in Macdonald’s role in the passage of the Electoral Franchise Act of 1885, the legislation he called his “greatest triumph” because it created a federal electoral system that he would personally control.⁹² As Veronica Strong-Boag has shown, this legislation was all about creating the federal polity out of those who owned significant property. This meant that Macdonald was even willing to extend the vote to women property owners, although he quickly abandoned this idea when he saw that it would not be supported by his coalition in the House of Commons.⁹³ Macdonald also extended the vote to First Nations men in eastern Canada who met the property qualification. While this was at least in part motivated by his mistaken belief that they would vote for him, granting First Nations property-owning men the vote was also motivated by his vision of the “civilized Indian” being a man like himself: someone who had gone to school, who associated with white men, who owned property, and who paid taxes.⁹⁴

From its inception on the West Coast, Asian exclusion was central to the project of enabling people of European origins to control this property regime. Converting the territories of Indigenous peoples to those of Europeans was evident in 1849, when the British imperial government created the Colony of Vancouver Island and “gave” all of its land to the HBC. In the case of British Columbia (and indeed most of the rest of Canada), English common law understandings shaped settlers’ views of what property was: something that had a fence around it or had defined boundaries was someone’s property. To whom that property belonged might be in question, but the fact that it was property was not. We can see this common law notion at work in the Douglas Treaties, a series

⁹¹ Bob Joseph, *21 Things You May Not Know about the Indian Act: Helping Canadians Make Reconciliation with Indigenous People a Reality* (Port Coquitlam, BC: Indigenous Relations Press, 2018), provides an excellent overview of the act. See also Miller, “Macdonald as Minister of Indian Affairs.”

⁹² Gordon Stewart, “John A. Macdonald’s Greatest Triumph,” *Canadian Historical Review* 63 no. 1 (1982): 3–33.

⁹³ Veronica Strong-Boag, “The Citizenship Debates: The 1885 Franchise Act,” in *Contesting Canadian Citizenship: Historical Readings*, ed. R. Adamoski, D.E. Chunn, and R. Menzies, 69–94 (Toronto: Broadview Press, 2002).

⁹⁴ Stanley, “John A. Macdonald,” 17.

of treaties negotiated between Indigenous peoples on Vancouver Island and Governor James Douglas that provided that “the Chiefs and People” surrendered land so that it became “the Entire property of the White people for ever,” with the exception of “our Village Sites and Enclosed Fields.”⁹⁵ In the months following the 1858 gold rush, a colonizing regime of property consisting of surveys, fence lines, watchmen, and jails, from which the Indigenous people and Asians were excluded, was extended to the mainland of British Columbia.⁹⁶ By the mid-1860s, people from China, almost entirely adult men, formed a significant part of the settler population of British Columbia, comprising the majority in certain districts.⁹⁷ Starting in 1865, colonial and later provincial land laws excluded them, along with First Nations people, from pre-emption rights, although people from both groups could buy land that had already been pre-empted. In effect, the emerging state system reserved Indigenous lands for the first choice of those of European origins.⁹⁸ There were few if any Indigenous people in British Columbia who were wealthy enough to buy pre-empted land. However, the Chinese included relatively wealthy merchants who were among the largest landowners after the HBC and the family of James Douglas. These Chinese men had participated in colonial elections and in the first elections of the province of British Columbia. In establishing the provincial franchise, new legislature barred the Chinese and Indigenous peoples from voting. For example, the Qualification and Registration of Voters Act of 1875, provided: “No Chinaman or Indian shall have his name placed on the register of voters for any electoral district, or be entitled to vote in any election of a member to serve in the Legislative Assembly of this Province.”⁹⁹ The new system of rule in British Columbia was to be that of a white minority.¹⁰⁰

In 1885, Macdonald extended Asian exclusion to the federal level to ensure that Chinese property owners had no control over the

⁹⁵ See the text of the Teechamitsa Treaty, cited by Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*, 18–19. In what was almost certainly a colonizing act in and of itself, Douglas had chiefs sign a blank document upon which he later inscribed the wording of the text. See *ibid.*, 19. See also Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*, 100–1, and *Making Native Space*, 19–20.

⁹⁶ Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*.

⁹⁷ Galois and Harris, “Recalibrating Society.”

⁹⁸ See, for example, Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics*; Harris, *Making Native Space*. On the gendered nature of the colonizing project from settler perspectives, see Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*.

⁹⁹ Qualification and Registration of Voters, S.B.C. 1875, c. 2, s. 3. This legislation was the third bill approved by the legislature in 1872 during its very first session. However, believing that the bill interfered in the federal jurisdiction over “Indian affairs,” Lieutenant-Governor Joseph Trutch refused to sign it into law. After Ottawa ruled that the vote was solely a provincial matter, the legislature re-enacted the same legislation in 1875.

¹⁰⁰ Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy*.

governing system. He accordingly introduced an amendment barring any “Chinaman” from voting. When he was asked whether Chinamen included Hong Kong-born and naturalized British subjects, he changed his proposal to barring all those of “Mongolian or Chinese race.” He justified this by introducing race as a biological category: a Chinese vote would not only threaten what he called “the Aryan nature of the future of British North America,” but, he told the House, “Aryan races will not wholesomely amalgamate with the Africans or the Asiatics” because their cross was like that of “the fox and the dog.”¹⁰¹ Macdonald’s usage of such terminology so shocked his contemporaries that not only was the amendment strenuously opposed in the House of Commons but, when the bill reached the Senate, even some of Macdonald’s own Senate appointees opposed it. Notwithstanding the fact that it had taken Macdonald two years to get the bill passed in the House of Commons, senators debated whether they could get away with voting it down because of its invidious distinctions.¹⁰² The very next piece of legislation that the House passed, the Chinese Immigration Act of 1885, had a similar reception in the upper chamber when it introduced a head tax on the immigration of Chinese workers and their families.¹⁰³ In effect, Chinese workers and their families were to be restricted from entering Canada, while Chinese merchants were excluded from the polity of colonial property owners.

When the Northwest Rebellion threatened Macdonald’s colonizing project, he responded with military force. Most of this was used against the Plains Cree, especially those nations that had not taken treaty.¹⁰⁴ Following the rebellion, Macdonald made an object lesson of those who had resisted. He imprisoned Mistahimaskwa (Chief Big Bear) and Pitikwahanapiwiyyin (Chief Poundmaker), who had not participated in the rebellion. Through a trial at which neither translation nor defence was provided, he engineered the judicial murder of those accused of perpetrating the Duck Lake massacre. He also ordered twenty-seven bands that he accused of fomenting an insurrection be confined on reserve through the illegal pass system, and then he cut off their rations

¹⁰¹ Canada, Parliament, House of Commons Debates, 5th Parl., 3rd Sess, vol. xviii (4 May 1885).

¹⁰² Stanley, “John A. Macdonald.”

¹⁰³ C.G. Anderson, “The Senate and the Fight against the 1885 Chinese Immigration Act,” *Parliamentary Review* 30, 2 (2007): 21–26.

¹⁰⁴ John L. Tobias, “Canada’s Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879–1885,” *Canadian Historical Review* 64, no. 4 (1983): 519–48.

so that they starved. Under the pass system, First Nations people could only leave reserves with the signed consent of their Indian agent.¹⁰⁵

When all of this is put together, it is evident that John A. Macdonald was an unapologetic imperialist and white supremacist who not only began a cultural genocide through the residential schools but also, at least in the case of the bands confined on reserve without rations, organized an out-and-out genocide. There are disturbing echoes in how Macdonald's actions parallel the ways in which the control of property was central to other genocides.¹⁰⁶ The Indigenous studies scholar Robert Alexander Innes reminds us that Macdonald was responsible for starving thousands of Indigenous people who sought shelter in the Cypress Hills: "Perpetrators of genocide should never be forgotten, but they should not be celebrated either."¹⁰⁷ In this light, merely adding plaques to existing commemorations of Macdonald, explaining what commentators have called his "dark side," would not suffice: such additions would continue to celebrate him despite his active role in genocide.

Indeed, in many ways the issue of the commemoration of John A. Macdonald is symbolic of a much larger issue: collective remembering in Canada (not just Victoria) has failed to come to terms with the centrality of genocide, of racism, and of their ongoing effects in the process of making people and things Canadian. In this respect, the situation in Canada parallels that in the United States, where collective remembering has failed to come to terms with the enslavement of African Americans. As the philosopher Susan Neiman points out, in the United States, museums and other commemorations devoted to documenting slavery are few and far between. And there is almost complete silence on the racist terror known as Jim Crow. She contrasts this to Germany, where, she argues, collective remembering has indeed come to terms with the role of Germans in the Holocaust. Today in Germany there are no historic plaques marking the former residences of the Nazi leadership, nor are there statues of them. Instead, there are many different remembrances of the victims of the Nazi regime. These include not only big things such as Holocaust museums and the preservation of concentration camps as national historic sites but also small things. One of the most successful projects is that of the artist Gunter Demnig, whose *Stolpersteine*

¹⁰⁵ On Macdonald's use of starvation as a weapon, see James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

¹⁰⁶ Timothy Snyder, *Black Earth: The Holocaust as History and Warning* (New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2015).

¹⁰⁷ Robert Alexander Innes, "John A. Macdonald Should Not Be Forgotten, Nor Celebrated," *Conversation*, 13 August 2018, <https://theconversation.com/john-a-macdonald-should-not-be-forgotten-nor-celebrated-10503>.

(Stumbling Blocks) commemorates the victims of Nazi terror,¹⁰⁸ principally Jews, but also homosexuals, Romani, and the disabled. This project consists of brass blocks installed in front of these people's former addresses or places of work. Each block records the name of the person, their birthdate, and the date and manner of their death. The blocks force people to literally stumble over what their parents and grandparents (and now great-grandparents) did to real people. Thus, Nazism and its consequences becomes not merely an issue of intellectual engagement but an inescapable reality.¹⁰⁹ Racism and its consequences literally become part of the material and symbolic structure of everyday life.

In this respect, the controversy over Macdonald shows that there is much work to be done in encouraging Canadians to come to terms with their own complicity in settler colonialisms and racisms. Here are two suggestions regarding what to do with Macdonald monuments. One comes from a man from the Muskeg Lake Cree Nation in Saskatchewan who has the unfortunate name of John A. McDonald. He suggests melting the statues down and making medals to give to residential school survivors: "He stole a piece of you, here's a piece of him ... you survived, and he didn't, and let's give it to every survivor of residential schools, everybody that survived the cultural genocide that he attempted."¹¹⁰ The other comes from Garret Smith, a Siksika man from the Piikani Nation in southern Alberta: "If you want to keep the statute, our point of view is erect monuments or statues of the children or the First Nations leaders who were affected by [Macdonald's] policies. Put a statue up next to John A. Macdonald, have the Indian Act right next to him and have a pile of children in a monument that were murdered right next to him."¹¹¹ As Stuart Hall reminds us, since the meanings attached to particular cultural representations always are in flux, to effectively challenge racism and other oppressions, we need to move beyond simply replacing bad cultural representations with good ones; rather, we need to make such representations "uninhabitable."¹¹² Tripping over monuments to Macdonald's victims and the other victims of settler colonialism would begin to inject the reality of that colonialism into the collective remembering of everyone who lives in Canada in material, symbolic, and embodied ways.

¹⁰⁸ See, "20 Years of Remembering the Holocaust on German Streets," *Local*, <https://www.thelocal.de/20160503/20-years-since-the-first-stolpersteine-were-laid>.

¹⁰⁹ Susan Neiman, *Learning from the Germans: Confronting Race and the Memory of Evil* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019).

¹¹⁰ Danny Kerslate, "Sask. Indigenous Man John A. McDonald Calls Name an 'Albatross Around My Neck,'" *CBC News*, 17 August 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/john-a-mcdonald-john-a-macdonald-name-burden-1.4789341>.

¹¹¹ Even Radford and Andy Zloedziowski, "Why These Indigenous Activists Say Macdonald Statue Can Stay," *Star*, 28 August 2018, <https://www.thestar.com/calgary/2018/08/28/calgary-first-nations-advocate-looks-beyond-john-a-macdonald-statue-debate.html>.

¹¹² Stuart Hall and Jut Jhally, *Representation and the Media* (Northampton, MA: Media Education Foundation, 2002), video recording.