

# HOW DID RAILWAYS CONTRIBUTE TO UNITY AND EXPANSION?

If you wanted to travel across Canada today, you would have many options, such as travel by car, railway, or plane. In 1870, if you wanted to travel from Toronto to Manitoba, the journey would include multiple boats over lakes and rivers, and wagons on rough roads. The idea of building railways was a new way to help join the country together.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF RAILWAYS

As you read in Chapter 2, Prince Edward Island had initially rejected Confederation in 1867. In 1871, Prince Edward Island began to build its own railway. When the plan went over budget, Prince Edward Island was left with two options: join Confederation to pay off the debt or increase taxes to pay for the railway. Read **Figure 3.17**, an excerpt from a local newspaper published two days after Prince Edward Island eventually joined Confederation in 1873. What does this source reveal about acceptance and attitudes toward Confederation in Prince Edward Island?

Also in 1871, British Columbia negotiated to enter into Confederation with Canada. One of the conditions of British Columbia joining Confederation was that Canada must build a **transcontinental railway** to link the province with Ontario. The government promised that the railway would be completed within 10 years. Look at **Figure 3.18**. It shows a modern-day Canadian Pacific Railway with a train travelling through the Rocky Mountains in Alberta. How would a railway have helped Canada to expand in the late 1800s?

**FIGURE 3.18** This modern-day photo shows a train travelling on the Canadian Pacific Railway. **Analyze:** How might people travel through this area today if the railway did not exist?



“The great majority of the people of the Island, it is pretty evident, have accepted Confederation as a necessity.... when the day arrived that the union was a fait accompli [accomplished fact], they had not a cheer to give.”

— *Patriot newspaper*

**FIGURE 3.17** This is an excerpt from an article in the July 3, 1873, edition of *Patriot*, a Prince Edward Island newspaper. **Analyze:** What does the paper mean by “not a cheer to give”?

**transcontinental railway**  
a railway that goes from one side of a continent to the other

## SCANDAL DELAYS THE RAILWAY

Suppose you wanted to build a road so your community would have better access to services. This would require the community’s money. To build it, would you ask a friend who owned a construction company but who charged high prices? This would help your friend’s company prosper, but it would cost more of the community’s money. Or would you hold a competition to see who would offer the best road design at the best price? The Canadian government’s selection of the company who would build British Columbia’s promised transcontinental railway resulted in Canada’s first political scandal.

In 1872, there was a federal election. Macdonald and his government were losing popularity. To help his party win the election, Macdonald asked for campaign donations. Sir Hugh Allan, a Canadian entrepreneur and railway builder, donated over \$350 000 to Macdonald’s campaign. Macdonald won the election. In 1873, Allan’s company, Canada Pacific Company, won the contract to build the transcontinental railway.

Then, in April 1873, a rival politician announced that he had discovered evidence of Macdonald taking a bribe from Allan. In return for the campaign money, Macdonald told Allan that his company would get the contract to build the transcontinental railway. Read **Figure 3.19**, a telegram sent by Macdonald to Allan’s lawyer during the 1872 election. How does this telegram implicate Macdonald in the scandal? What consequences could this scandal have had on the progress of the railway?

Newspapers covered the story, which became known as the Pacific Scandal. Examine the political cartoon in **Figure 3.20**. What information about the Pacific Scandal does it provide?

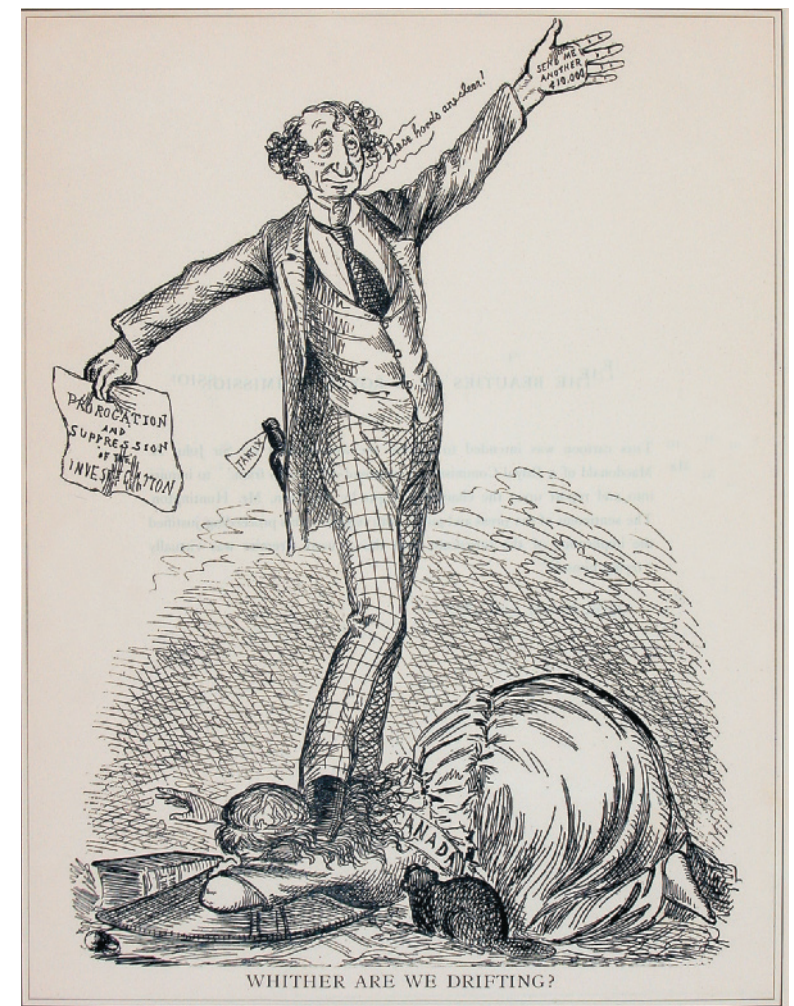
Macdonald resigned as prime minister in November 1873. The opposing Liberal Party was under the leadership of Alexander Mackenzie, who won the election after Macdonald’s resignation.

**FIGURE 3.20** This political cartoon drawn by John Wilson Bengough was published in 1873. John A. Macdonald is depicted with “send me another \$10 000” written on his hand. **Analyze:** What do you think the woman and the beaver represent?

How do you think a similar political scandal would be handled today?

“I must have another ten thousand; will be the last time of calling; do not fail me; answer today.”  
— Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald

**FIGURE 3.19** This telegram by Macdonald was published in the *Globe* newspaper. **Analyze:** What tone do you read in this message?





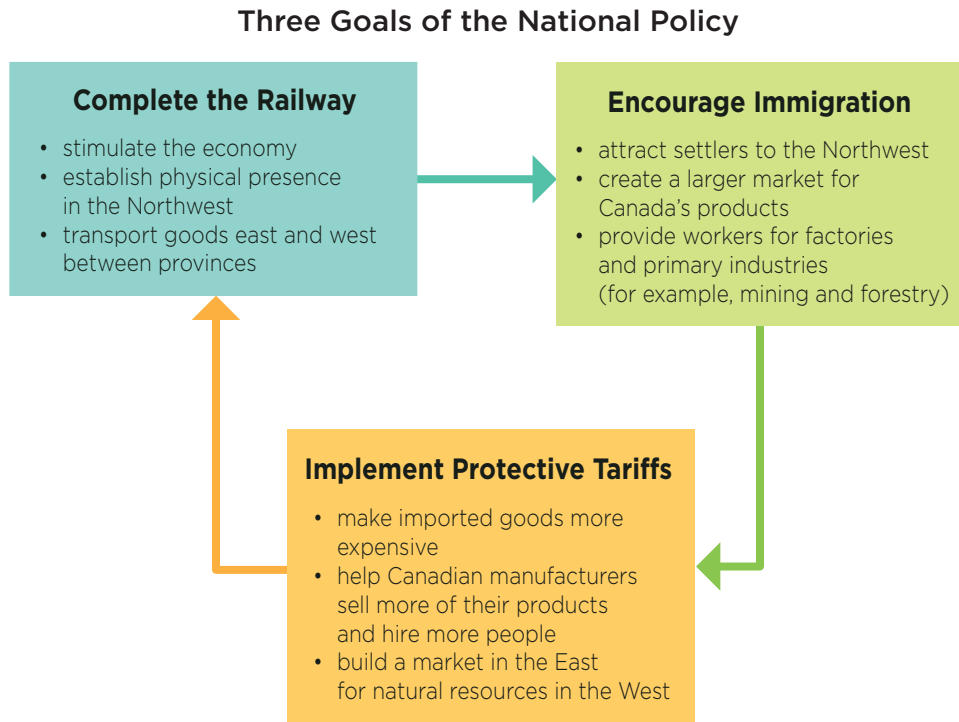
MACDONALD’S NATIONAL POLICY

After winning the election in 1873, Mackenzie’s new government faced many challenges. Canada’s economy was suffering. Unemployment was high, businesses failed, and people were moving to the United States to find work. The poor economy meant that the Canadian government could not afford to build the transcontinental railway for British Columbia as fast as it had promised.

In September 1878, it was time for another federal election, and Macdonald was back. He was elected prime minister again, despite the Pacific Scandal that had temporarily ruined his reputation. Many Canadians supported his political and economic vision for Canada’s future, which Macdonald called the **national policy**. Examine Figure 3.21, which shows the policy’s three main goals. Macdonald believed that this policy would unite Canada and would protect the economy and land from the United States. Read the quote in Figure 3.22. Do you think the national policy promoted a united nation?

**national policy** Macdonald’s 1878 political and economic vision to develop Canada

**FIGURE 3.21** This diagram shows the three goals of Macdonald’s national policy. A tariff is a tax paid on goods imported from another country. **Analyze:** What groups would benefit from the national policy? Who would not benefit?



“We desire to have the trade kept on our own side—that not one of the trains that passes over the [Canadian Pacific Railway] will run into the United States if we can help it, but may, instead, pass through our own country, that we may build up Montreal, Quebec, Toronto, Halifax and Saint John by means of one great Canadian line, carrying as much traffic as possible by the course of trade through our own country.”

— Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald

**FIGURE 3.22** This quote is from a speech Macdonald made in 1881 to the House of Commons. **Analyze:** How does this quote support Macdonald’s national policy?

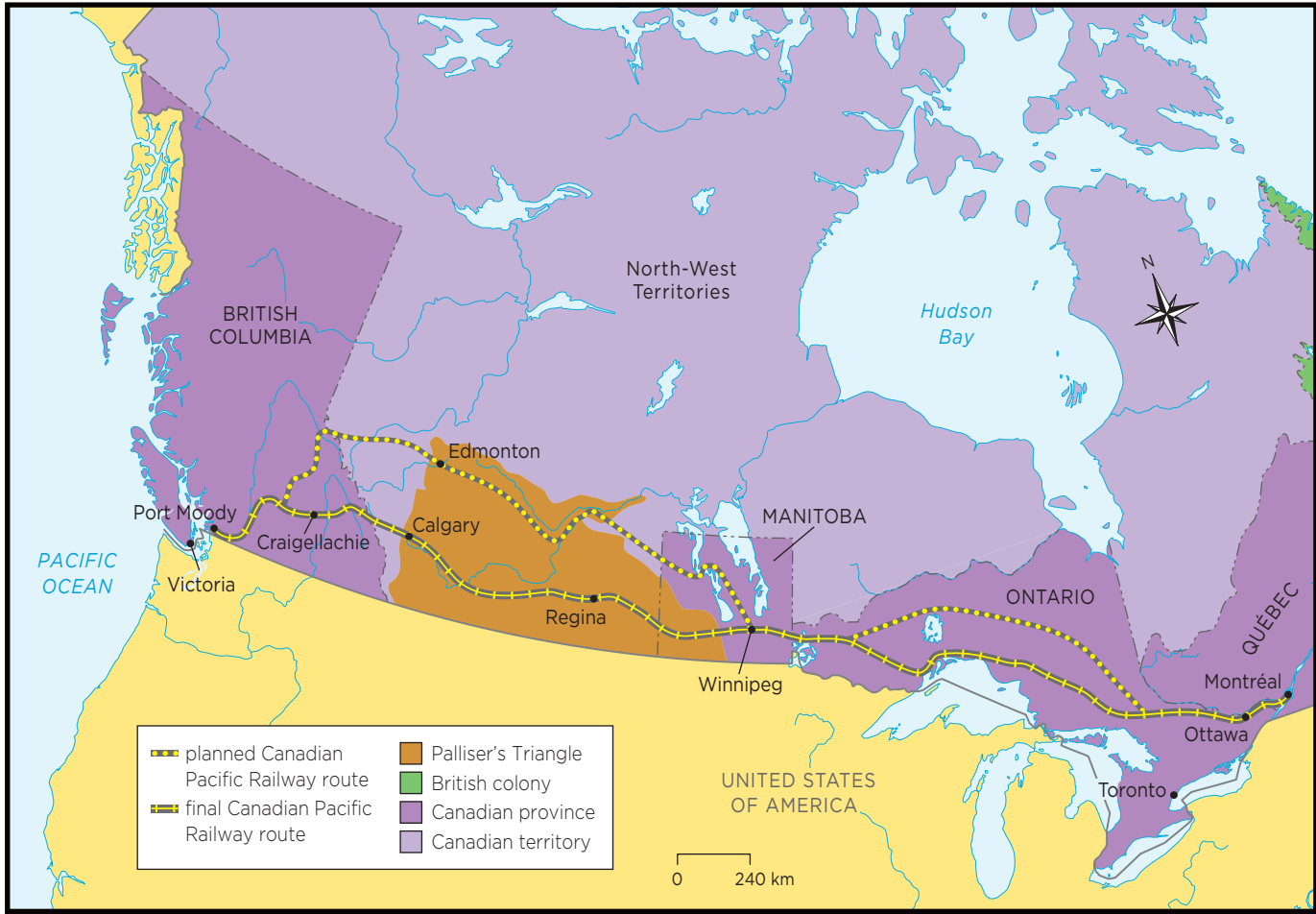
THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

The newly elected government’s national policy made the transcontinental railway a priority again. Due to the Pacific Scandal, the government needed to find a new company to build the railway. In 1881, the government hired a new private company called the Canadian Pacific Railway Company for the huge task. The transcontinental railway then became known as the Canadian Pacific Railway. The contract was very generous. The railway company was given \$25 million and an enormous amount of land along the railway’s route that it could sell to future settlers. When the route was being surveyed, geologist John Macoun discovered that the region between Winnipeg and Edmonton, known as Palliser’s Triangle, was fertile and could support settlement. This meant that the railway could be built farther south than originally planned. What other reasons might the government have had for wanting the railway to be built farther south?

Examine the map in Figure 3.23. It shows the original planned route of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the final, chosen route. What do you notice about the route of the railway and the border of the United States?

Does the construction of the railway indicate progress or decline for some groups or individuals?

The Canadian Pacific Railway Route, 1885



**FIGURE 3.23** This map shows the original route of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the final route. **Analyze:** What impact could the original planned route have had on the development of Canada?

## BUILDING THE CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY

Construction on the Canadian Pacific Railway began in 1881. The route of the railway travelled through the Northwest, where many Aboriginal peoples lived. Read the quote in **Figure 3.24** from Chief Poundmaker (also known as Pitikwahanapiwiyin), a Plains Cree First Nation chief. What is Chief Poundmaker's perspective on the railway?

There was a shortage of workers to build the railway so the government recruited people from China to come to Canada to help build it. Many Chinese people who came wanted to save enough money to return to China when the railway was finished. As many as 17 000 of the labourers hired were Chinese. They constructed the most challenging and dangerous parts of the railway, such as on the Rocky Mountain passes and over rivers. One of these dangerous jobs included lighting explosives to blast tunnels through rock. According to oral history, one Chinese worker died for every mile of railway.

What does **Figure 3.25** reveal about some of the experiences that some Chinese workers had while building the railway?

The Chinese workers lived in camps near the railway, sleeping in tents and boxcars. They received \$1.00 per day, compared to white workers who were paid between \$1.50 and \$2.50 per day. Read **Figure 3.26**, a quote from Kevan Jangze, a descendant of a Chinese railway worker. His grandfather, Cheng Ging Butt, immigrated to Canada from China in 1871 and later worked on the railway. How does oral history help to tell the story of the Chinese railway workers?

"Next summer, or at latest next fall, the railway will be close to us, the whites will fill the country, and they will dictate to us as they please. It is useless to dream that we can frighten them; that time is past; our only resource is our work, our industry, and our farms."

— Chief Poundmaker, Plains Cree First Nation

**FIGURE 3.24** In 1881, Chief Poundmaker told his people to prepare for the coming of the railway. **Analyze:** What does Chief Poundmaker propose that the Cree focus on?



**FIGURE 3.25** This photo shows Chinese railway workers building the Canadian Pacific Railway in the mountains in 1884. **Analyze:** What does this photo tell you about the kind of work that went into building the railway?

"We were told about separate camps where one camp was Chinese the other camp was white and how the pay wouldn't include allowances for food ... the meagre amount they got they would have to use it to cover everything, whereas the white camps got much more."

— Kevan Jangze, descendant of a Chinese railway worker

**FIGURE 3.26** In this 2010 quote, Jangze retells a story from his grandfather, Cheng Ging Butt, about the working conditions on the railway. **Analyze:** What does this quote reveal about how the experience of the Chinese railway workers compared to the experience of the white workers?



**FIGURE 3.27** This photo shows Donald Smith, an investor in the railway, driving the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway on November 7, 1885, in Craigellachie, British Columbia. **Analyze:** What do Smith's placement and action in this photo tell you about his possible importance?

## THE LAST SPIKE

In 1885, there was a ceremony to commemorate the completion of the railway. Look at **Figure 3.27**. This is a posed photo showing workers and Donald Smith, an investor in the railway, driving in the last spike at the ceremony. Which workers are not included in this commemorative photo and celebration? Standing behind Smith in the photo is 18-year-old Edward Mallandaine. Mallandaine had wanted to be a part of history and squeezed his way to the front of the photo. Read **Figure 3.28**, an excerpt in which Mallandaine reflects on the celebration 50 years later. What do the last spike photo and quote tell you about the significance of the Canadian Pacific Railway for different people?

"Finally, there remained but one more spike to be driven. It was partly driven in and a hammer was given to Sir Donald Smith to drive it home.... Everybody cheered; the locomotives whistled and shrieked; several short speeches were made; hands were shaken."

— Edward Mallandaine, attendee at the last spike ceremony

**FIGURE 3.28** Fifty years after watching the completion of the railway, Mallandaine reflected on the "last spike." **Analyze:** How do you think others would have reacted to this ceremony 50 years later?

## CHECK-IN

- HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE** How was the labour of the Chinese railway workers important in completing the union of Canada?
- GATHER AND ORGANIZE** What additional information and evidence would you need to explain how the Canadian Pacific Railway impacted the lives of First Nations peoples?