



## **A MACLEOD IN CANADA**

Lieutenant-Colonel James F. Macleod (North West Mounted Police - Canadian Mounties) and later Commissioner of the Force was admired and respected by the Blackfoot people, he was a central figure leading up to the signing of Treaty No. 7.

Fort Macleod, originally named Macleod, is a town in the southwest corner of the province of Alberta, Canada. It was founded as a Bastion and Barracks for the North West Mounted Police.

Founder of Fort Macleod

1836 – 1894 James F. Macleod was born September 25, 1836 on the Isle of Skye in Scotland. His family immigrated to Upper Canada in 1845, where he later attended Queen's College in Kingston. In 1860, he was called to the Bar and practised law near Bowmanville, Ontario.

Earlier, in 1856, he had joined the Canadian Militia as a lieutenant in

the Artillery and, with the outbreak of the Red River Uprising in 1870 he was promoted to brigade major and served in that capacity.

In 1873, a bill was passed in parliament to form a police force, based on military discipline and organization to bring “peace, order and good government” to the North West Territories where American whiskey traders were causing the breakdown of traditional native life. The North West Mounted Police were intended to stop the whiskey trade and prepare the west for the promised railroad and settlement, thus ensuring Canadian sovereignty.

In 1874, as Assistant Commissioner, along with Commissioner George French, Colonel Macleod led the “Great March West”, a grueling 1600 km trek from Fort Dufferin, Manitoba to what is now Southern Alberta. By the time they reached the Sweetgrass Hills, the men and animals were in very poor condition. At that time Macleod traveled to Fort Benton in Montana for supplies and a guide. There he recruited the “half-breed” Jerry Potts who would lead them to their destination.

The men under Macleod's command named the fort they built at the confluence of the Oldman River and Willow Creek after their leader as a gesture of their love and respect for him. Macleod sent patrols out to establish other forts, notably, Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, and Fort Calgary on the Bow River. Within a year, the infamous whiskey trade was at an end. With the help of Jerry Potts, Macleod began laying the foundation of trust and respect with the Blackfoot which would culminate in the signing of Treaty 7 in 1877 and the words of Chief Red Crow at that time: “... he made me many promises. He kept them all – not one of them was ever broken...I entirely trust Stamixotokon (Bull's Head – Macleod's Indian name from the buffalo head mounted on his office wall), and will leave everything to him.”

In 1880, he resigned as Commissioner to act as stipendiary magistrate in a district which included Fort Macleod, Pincher Creek, Fort Walsh, Fort Calgary and Edmonton. In 1887, he became a judge in the Supreme Court of the North West Territories, a position he held until his death in Calgary at the age of 58. He is buried at the highest point in Union Cemetery overlooking Macleod Trail and the City of Calgary.



Also note that Macleod negotiated with Sitting Bull, and US Gen., Terry, for sanctuary for the Sioux in the Indian Wars. In The Indian Camp was a halfbreed relative of Chief White Bird, Duncan McDonald, a grandson of Angus McDonald of Glenelg, a nearby neighbour of James MacLeod's grandfather, Donald. It is a tantalising thought that James and Duncan might have sat at the fire and shared their old families' gaelic tongue in another hemisphere, after their ancestors had emigrated decades before.