# Presentation Script

1. **Introduction**
   * Hello, my name is <name> from the <funeral home>.
   * This program is the story of Sir John A.’s last days and his impressive funeral ceremony.
   * Sir John A.’s funeral, like most all funerals reflect many things in life.
   * Funerals, most all of them reflect sentiment (or the lack thereof), they reflect the religious sentiments of the day, they reflect the life styles of the time, and they reflect a mirror of how people live.
   * The funeral of Sir John A.’s is not only the story of the grand send off for one man, it is also the story of what life was like in Canada in the year 1891. So let’s begin.
2. **Young John Alexander Macdonald**
   * John Alexander Macdonald was born on 11 January 1815 in Glasgow, Scotland.
   * Over his long life he became the dominant figure in the quest for Canadian Confederation, and that was not an easy task to accomplish.
   * Another Prime Minister in later years, Mackenzie King often said that “Canada is not an easy country to govern.”
3. **Prime Minister of Canada**
   * Macdonald’s tenure in office spanned 18 years making him the second longest serving Prime Minister of Canada.
   * The record for length of tenure in office still goes to Mackenzie King who was Prime Minister for a whopping 22 years.
4. **Canadian Pacific Railway**
   * Sir John A. was the major proponent of the national railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway which was completed in 1885 and linked Canada from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.
   * Macdonald also won praise for having helped forge a nation which was sprawling in geographic size he balanced two very different and diverse European colonial origins, numerous Aboriginal nations, and a myriad of cultural backgrounds and political views.
   * In other words Sir John A. was a master politician.
5. **Life was not Easy**
   * Sir John A., immigrated to Canada with his family when he was five years old and they group settled in Kingston, Ontario.
   * Bad luck followed the family to their new country. The father was not successful, one of John A.’s brothers was struck and killed by a servant, and young John A. had to leave school at an early age – a decision what he regretted for the rest of his life.
   * Life was not easy for John A. from the very beginning, and as will be seen tragedy and sorrow were constant companions for his entire life. This image shows the Macdonald home in Kingston.
6. **Fathers of Confederation**
   * Through sheer tenacity Macdonald became a lawyer. In later years Sir John A. would confess that ‘I had no boyhood, from the age of 15, I began to earn my own living.” He enjoyed success as a lawyer from the start and opened up his own law office in Kingston in the summer of 1835.
   * In short order Sir John A. became the dominant legal force in the Kingston Scottish Presbyterian community.
   * As a practicing attorney Sir John A. took on significant cases, but his mark was left on history between the years of 1864 to 1867 which were the years of the Confederation of Canada. Sir John A. is the only man sitting on the steps in this old photograph.
   * In September 1864 he led the Canadian delegation at the Charlottetown Conference in Prince Edward Island to present his idea to the Maritime colonies about a vision of a united and basically independent Canada.
   * After encountering one political battle after another in 1867 the agreement was brought to the British Parliament which passed the act creating the Dominion of Canada. Macdonald while in London was asked by the first Governor General of Canada, Charles Monck, to form the first government.
   * John A. was subsequently knighted by Queen Victoria on Canada Day, 1 July 1867, and was the only colonial leader every to receive that honour.
7. **Ups & Downs of Politics**
   * Macdonald’s terms as Prime Minister were nothing short of a roller coaster ride.
   * He was embroiled in the Canadian Pacific Railroad Scandal and was forced to resign in 1873.
   * One of the problems was that the Canadian Pacific Railroad gave him a private train car named “The Jamaica” which was reported by the press as a bribe.
   * Over the next two decades Macdonald was in and out of office.
   * In 1891 Macdonald won the elections again, but the 76 year old political warhorse was starting to feel the years of overwork, stress, drink and several severe bouts with illness.
8. **Sickness, Death, Drink & Tragedy**
   * Sir John A. for all his political triumphs had a tragic personal life. His adult life was marked by sickness, death, drink, and tragedy. Yet he rose above his private unhappiness and personal failings to become a well-loved and highly successful public figure.
   * His first tragedy was his marriage to Isabella (seen to the left) who was his first cousin. When they were married John A. was 28, and Isabella was 34. For the first year the marriage was happy, but then in 1845 Isabella got sick. The exact illness is unknown, but she suffered from attacks that included headaches and numbness. To relieve the pain she drank liquid opium as well as sherry. The results of this concoction left her groggy, exhausted and bedridden. The marriage was crumbling towards utter ruin. In the midst of the ongoing health crisis’s Isabella unbelievably gave birth to two sons. At age 13 months the first son suddenly died which devastated both parents. Then Isabella gave birth to a second son named Hugh John (see here to the right). Hugh Macdonald grew to adulthood and had a successful career but he and his father were never close. The boy was raised by John A.’s sister after Isabella’s death in 1857.
   * Because of his frequent absences from his law practice to care for Isabella, the medical expenses and nursing care John A. found himself deeply in debt. Adding to these already tenuous circumstances John A. was now turning to the bottle for solace during his 12 year lonely marriage to Isabella. He found his companionship in bars, lounges and smoking rooms where he could drink to forget and pass the empty time. John A. was not an alcoholic in the strict term, but instead was a binge drinker. He would have long periods of abstinence which would then be preceded by bouts of intense drinking sometimes lasting for weeks.
9. **Molson's Ale**
   * Sir John A. had a sense of humour about his use of alcohol.
   * Remember this was a time when drinking, particularly for male society, was seen as a terribly masculine thing to do. Macdonald was known his wit, and his wit was evidently sharpened when he was under the influence.
   * One famous apocryphal story is often repeated. This happened during an election debate in which Macdonald was so drunk that he began vomiting while on stage, which prompted his opponent to quickly ask “Is this the man you want running your country? A drunk!” Collecting himself Macdonald stood up and fired back “I get sick not because of drink, but because I am forced to listen to the ranting of my honourable opponent. It goes to show that I would rather have a drunken Conservative leading than a sober Liberal.”
   * Sir John A. also had a famous temper. In one incident in the House of Commons one Honourable Member angered the Prime Minister so much that Macdonald charged across the Commons floor to physically attack him. While he was being restrained, Macdonald was unrepentant proclaiming “I’ll lick him faster than Hell can scorch a feather!”
10. **Susan Agnes & Margaret May**
    * In 1867 Macdonald married for a second time. He married Susan Bernard who lived to be 84 dying in 1920 and surviving Sir John A. by 29 years.
    * Sir John A. looked forward to personal happiness but in 1869 the couple had a daughter who was named Margaret Mary Theodora. Margaret May was born with hydrocephalus and suffered from physical and mental disabilities until her own death in 1933.
    * In an about turn from his surviving son Sir John A. insisted that “Miss Mary” have as normal a life as possible, and refused to shut her away in an institution. She hosted parties and was well known in the neighbourhood, even though she had to use a wheelchair and assistants. Sir John A. always hoped she would recover, but of course she never did.
11. **Death of Sir John A. Macdonald**
    * By 1891 the Prime Minister was exhausted and ill. He suffered so much from gallstones that he turned his office into a sick room.
    * By the spring of 1891 is was apparent to everyone that Sir John A. was not holding onto his responsibilities and it was rumoured that it was time for the old politician to resign from office. However there was no need for any resignation for on 29, May 1891 Macdonald suffered a severe stroke which robbed his of his greatest asset – his ability to speak. The stroke also paralyzed his entire left side. His personal physicians attempted to halt the effects of the stroke but of course nothing worked.
    * Hours turned into days and on June 6, the doctors issues a bulletin to the press announcing that “Sir John A. has stopped all nourishment.” Throughout this day the clergy from Macdonald’s church St. Alban’s in Ottawa held prayer services with the Macdonald family.
    * Then at 9:00 p.m. the great heart of this great Canadian began to fail rapidly and he lapsed into a total state of unconsciousness. Sir John A. Macdonald died at 10:15 p.m. he was still the Prime Minister of Canada when he died.
12. **S. Rogers & Son Undertakers and Embalmers**
    * Early in the morning on Sunday the funeral directors from the firm of S. Rogers & Son arrived at Earnscliffe to perform the embalming and make preparations for Macdonald’s state funeral.
    * Mr. Hamilton McCarthy a Toronto sculptor took a death mask of Macdonald. Death masks were a common funeral practice in 19th century customs.
    * A negative was made out of plaster of Paris and then a positive cast was taken from the negative.
    * As popular as death masks were the process was usually only available to the rich a famous, and while Sir John A. was not rich he was indeed famous.
13. **Casket for Macdonald**
    * On Monday morning the funeral directors delivered the finished casket to Earnscliffe.
    * Up until this time Sir John A.’s remains rested in the bed that he died in. This was the standard custom in 19th century funeral practices. The remains were usually dressed in a shroud, placed back in their bed following the embalming (which also took place in the home) and the family would visit the deceased and one person or several people taking shifts would sit up all night with the body – hence the term “wake.” Macdonald’s casket was made of rolled steel, finished in rosewood graining with silver handles extending the full length of the burial case. It had a full glass sealed cover and was decorate with solid silver wreaths and leaves.
    * The lids of the casket were fastened with silver knobs in the shape of a pair of angel wings. The interior was of pure white satin fastened in place with white silk cords. Attached to the inside head panel was the emblem of the Masonic Lodge indicative of Macdonald’s longtime membership in that fraternal organization. On the exterior of the casket was a polished silver nameplate engraved with the inscription:

*JOHN ALEXANDER MACDONALD  
BORN – 11TH JANUARY, 1815  
DIED – 6TH JUNE, 1891*

1. **Earnscliffe Mansion**
   * On Tuesday the reverend clergy read the Burial Service of the Dead from the Church of England Prayer Book in the main dining hall at Earnscliffe mansion.
   * Macdonald had been raised in the Presbyterian Church be had changed to the Anglican Church during his first marriage.
   * When this service was completed the remains were transferred to Parliament where over 15,000 Canadians filed by the open casket in the Senate Chambers.
2. **Funeral Day**
   * June 10, Wednesday was the funeral day and Ottawa was alive with excitement and activity.
   * Canada had never seen such a funeral as was planned for Sir John A. Every hotel was packed to capacity and every train brought in more people who wanted to participate in the activities of the day.
   * For all his human frailties Sir John A. saw his dream of the creation of the Dominion of Canada a reality and this alone was reason enough for a grand state funeral.
   * This day over 20,000 Canadians filed past Macdonald’s open casket.
3. **St. Alban's Church**
   * Macdonald’s remains were taken to St. Alban’s church where 600 invited guests had been admitted to the sanctuary.
   * A 40 member choir lined up the aisle singing Sir John A.’s favorite hymn “For All the Saints, Who from Their Labors Rest” as the casket was brought to the chancel rail of the church.
   * The formal funeral service lasted exactly 30 minutes and Sir John A.’s name was not mentioned once.
   * There was no eulogy. At the completion of the benediction the organist played Handel’s “The Dead March from Saul” as the assembly was ushered from the church.
4. **Macdonald's Funeral Procession**
   * Macdonald’s funeral procession to the train station was long, and it was estimated that every available carriage in Ottawa was in use. The livery companies in the city were empty.
   * At the train depot a highly decorated funeral train (which is seen in this image) was furnished by the Canadian Pacific Railroad and would take Macdonald back home to Kingston for final interment on Thursday.
   * The funeral train arrived in Kingston at 9:00 p.m. that evening and Macdonald’s body was transferred to the Kingston City Hall where it was immediately placed in the public hall and the doors opened for an all night vigil.
   * Interestingly the funeral director who conducted the Kingston funeral for Sir John A. was a gentleman named William M. Drennen who at the time was serving as the Mayor of Kingston. The funeral director and Macdonald had been longtime political associates.
5. **Kingston, Ontario**
   * Thursday morning was a beautiful June day, and by 6:00 a.m. already over 10,000 people had congregated around the Kingston City Hall.
   * Throughout the morning hours the temperature climbed, but this did not stop the crowds from wanting to see the remains of Sir John A.
   * Between 11:30 a.m. and the burial hour which was set at 3:00 p.m. over 30,000 Canadians filed by the casket.
6. **Final Resting Place**
   * At 3:00 p.m. the casket was closed and the final funeral procession began for the Cataragui Cemetery.
   * The Macdonald plot as you can see is prominently located on one of the hills in this beautiful burial place.
   * Today Sir John A.’s grave is prominently marked by the Canadian government as the final resting place of the Dominion’s first Prime Minister.
7. **Masonic Funeral Honours**
   * At the grave the members of the Masonic order claimed their ancient precedent to have the last word at the graveside of a fallen brother Mason. Sir John A., was a Freemason, and was initiated in 1844 at St. John’s Lodge No 5 in Kingston.
   * In 1868 he was named by the United Grand Lodge of England as its Grand Representative near the Grand Lodge of Canada (in Ontario) and the rank of past Grand Senior Warden was conferred upon him. He continued to represent the Grand Lodge of England until his death. His commission together with his Masonic apron is in the Masonic Temple at Kingston along with his regalia as Past Grand Senior Warden.
   * At the end of the Masonic service each mourner in attendance took a shovel of dirt and tossed it into the grave which was a standard 19th century funeral custom. By 4:00 p.m. all was completed and the gravediggers began their chore of filling in the grave. When the grave was closed mounds of flowers were placed on top. The state funeral of Sir John A. Macdonald was completed, but his memory would live on to this very day.
8. **Legacy of 1st Prime Minister**
   * Sir John A. is depicted on the Canadian ten-dollar bill. There are bridges, airports, and highways named after him as well as statues and scores of schools across Canada.
   * The Law School at Queen’s University in Kingston is named in his honour, and the Macdonald House, part of Canada’s high commission in London is named in his memory.
   * In 1999 after a survey of Canadian historians covering all the Prime Ministers by Granatstein and Hillmer the conclusion was that Macdonald was ranked second in the Great Prime Minister list, only beaten out of first place by William Lyon Mackenzie King.
   * Finally in 2004, Macdonald was nominated as one of the top 10 “Greatest Canadians” by viewers of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation.
9. **Old Chieftain, Old Tomorrow, Canada's Patriot Statesman**
   * He was known in his day as "Old Chieftain," "Old Tomorrow" and "Canada's Patriot Statesman.". Sir John A. Macdonald set the master pattern for all future Canadian Prime Ministers just as George Washington set the master pattern for all future U.S. Presidents.
   * Macdonald balanced with genius at times differences of region, religion, class, profession because he understood instinctively how to govern a nation what was as diverse as any nation on earth. By force of will and strength of a national vision, against all odds, Sir John A. made it work, and in the end, for all his human faults and weaknesses Canadian’s embraced his monumental vision of the future and hence Macdonald became the midwife at the birth of the Dominion of Canada. Not bad for a boy from Kingston.