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Canadian Natives
From a post-colonial perspective in history textbooks

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Abstract
The aim of this study is to examine the portrayal of Canadian Natives in Canadian history textbooks, through a postcolonial theory, to see if they contain bias or prejudices. With a qualitative method, and in comparison to previously conducted studies of textbook bias, four Canadian high-school history textbooks are analyzed. My conclusions show that textbooks are less bias than twenty years ago, but that they from a postcolonial theory perspective still carry tendencies of colonial conceptions.

Keywords
Aboriginal peoples, Canada, curriculum, Natives, textbook bias, post-colonialism.
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Introduction

“My intention was not to deal with the truth, but with the problem of the truth-teller, or of truth-telling as an activity.”

Michel Foucault.

What is truth and who decides what should be truth? We do not believe everything we read but surely there are texts we consider to be more truthful than others. School textbooks are examples of texts that are considered to contain truths to a very high extent. But as the quote above by Foucault shows, there is a problem whenever we are confronted with what is to be believed as truth; namely, whose truth is it? When reading and writing history truth can be a very sensitive thing, for example: Did the Nazis really kill 6000 000 Jewish people during the Second World War? The roaring and emotional answer and criticism that meets every historian who claims or downsizes the holocaust, shows just that. Also, all historical knowledge can be, and is used to create identities. Through consulting the past we make up images of the present and visions of the future.1 Hence the history that is taught in schools contributes to how students identify themselves and others. It is the responsibility of teachers, curricula and textbooks to decide what the students are to learn, and in a longer perspective, what is to lie behind their creations of identities.

As a developing history teacher I have experience in planning history lessons for students in grade 7 to 9. One experience I have made is that quite often when there is not enough time, or when I felt that my knowledge about the period of time studied was not enough, the textbook was the primary source of inspiration and knowledge. This seems to be a fact that is supported by many scholars. One of whom is James Axtell, who begins his article about bias in American textbooks with: “It would be difficult to overestimate the role played by textbooks in the teaching of American history”.2 The same conclusions are made by Canadian and Swedish scholars, when it comes to history teaching in their countries. From this perspective it is likely that the contents in school textbooks are

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considered as truths. But who is the truth-teller and whose truth is it? All texts are to some extent colored by their authors and the time in which they are written. One question that arises when looking at textbooks, considering their influence on education, is: *What* do we teach our students? In this essay I will through the lens of post-colonial theory look at the portrayal of Canadian Natives in contemporary Canadian history textbooks.

**Aim**

The aim of this study is to examine the portrayal of Canadian Natives in Canadian history textbooks, through a postcolonial theory. Are the textbooks in any way bias. I will also look at the curriculum as stated by the Ontario Ministry of Education, to see if the textbooks meet the demands stated here. I will compare my analysis to previously conducted studies made in Canada and USA, concerning the study of natives and native culture in education. Comparisons will also be made to Swedish studies and the report made by the Swedish institute for teaching material (SIL), about the portrayal of the Saami people in Swedish history textbooks.

**Thesis**

- How are Native peoples identified in the textbooks? Do they use derogatory terms or treat Native peoples as a homogenous group?
- Do the portrayals of Native peoples and Native culture in the textbooks analyzed show bias or prejudices? That is, are the portrayals: *exotic*, *mystic* or *romantic*?
- When in history are the native peoples introduced? Is it only in the connection of the white man’s arrival? Is Native history only a history of conflict? Is Native history viewed as “pre-historic”?

**Limitations**
This study restricts itself to four history textbooks. I have required them through two teachers on a high school in southwestern Ontario. Since Canadian School system does not have a national curriculum or a national list of approved textbooks, this study does not represent all provinces of Canada. Also, teachers can choose what books they find most suiting which means that not all high school students in Ontario may have read these four books. Two of them are on the Ontario list of approved books, the so called *Trillium list*, which increases the probability of wide usage. The point is that this study does not aim to represent all Canadian schools and textbooks, but it suggests that this one school and these four books represent a part of the Canadian education.

**Previously conducted studies**

There have been several studies and analysis of school textbooks of different nationalities. One of these is James Axtell’s, "Europeans, Indians, and the Age of Discovery, in American History Textbooks”. As the title shows Axtell has analyzed American history textbooks. Axtell points out the importance of textbooks in the teaching of history, and states that textbooks do not receive nearly as much critical review as they should. He claims that the different history textbooks share too much in disposition and contents, and that they contain too many incorrect facts, that help sustain bias and misunderstandings. Among the subjects most susceptible to incorrect facts, Axtell points out “Indians, the Spanish empire and the French colony in Canada”³. He’s conclusions state that the textbook gives an ethnocentric image of Natives as “red man”, “superstitious”, “primitive”, they also talk of native religions as “pagan pantheism”. Another North American scholar who has studied school textbooks, from the same perspective as Axtell, which is to analyze the contents of the books for prejudice and bias is Jim Parsons. In his essay “The nature and implication of Textbook bias”, Parsons comes up with almost exactly the same conclusions in his study as Axtell does. “Savage, blood-thirsty, drunk, monosyllabic, naked and primitive”⁴, are some of the stereotypes of Native Americans in textbooks. Parsons take it even further and accuses many of the

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textbooks of being racist, and that many of them are written from a Eurocentric perspective. In retrospect, whenever Native culture is described or portrayed in history textbooks it is compared to another culture, that of the white Anglo-Canadian. As a consequence schoolchildren get an image that some cultures are more valuable than others.

Ken Osborne is a scholar who deals more specifically with the history of Canadian history teaching, and Canadian curricula and textbooks in “Our history syllabus has us gasping: History in Canadian Schools – past, present and future”. This is a review of Canadian history education over the past century. According to Osborne Canadian history education has seen five crises during this period. These crises have in common that they revolve around the design of textbooks and curricula. Even though curricula and textbooks told a somewhat uniform story already back in the 1920’s, the teaching of history met problems among students. Since the 1940’s there has been demands of a national textbook and curriculum, but it has not yet been accomplished. These demands are being called for again today in the 21st century. One argument for a national curriculum is that it would contribute to a sense of “national identity and citizenship”5. Another observation of Osborne’s, is that Natives and First Nations are neglected in history textbooks and the history told focuses on the white missionaries, explorers and pioneers. However, he points out that the development of the curriculums in the last decade has had a positive impact in that they have become more representative for minority groups such as the peoples of the First Nations.

One interesting remark in Osborne’s text, one that he keeps coming back to, is the importance of history and the teaching of history, to form a Canadian identity and to initiate Canadian citizenship.

Swedish scholar Sture Långström’s book, The Textbook Tradition and the Voice of the Author: A Study in History and Didactics, is a reference that is quoted frequently in Swedish studies about school textbooks. Långström has conducted a study of what is written in Swedish high-school history textbooks. He approaches his survey from the perspective of the textbook authors (turning back to the initial quote by Foucault, these

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5 Osborne, Ken. “Our history syllabus has us gasping: History in Canadian Schools – past, present and future”. 2000. p.15
would be the “truth-tellers and their activity would be truth-telling), through interviews and by analyzing their texts. He observes a clear distinction between the authors that view themselves as historians and the ones that think of themselves as teachers. His conclusions show that the average Swedish high-school history textbook author is a middle-aged, middleclass man from the southern parts of Sweden, who is politically leaning towards liberalism.

Most important for this study however, are Långström’s statements that the textbook has a very central place in history education and often dictates what actually is being taught, not only in Sweden but in other countries as well.6

Two Swedish studies relying on Långström’s text are Therese Karlsson’s, *Exotiska renskötare och trollgummors magi* (2004) and Anne-Louise Häggren’s “Samebilden i undervisningen. En kvalitativ analys av lärarintervjuer och historieläroböcker på gymnasiet” (2003). These are two independent Swedish studies concerning the portrayal of the Saami people in Swedish history textbooks. Both authors see a pattern in the textbooks, when focusing on the Saami people, that involves identification into a “we-them” dichotomy. “We/us” are the white southern Swedish population that make up the norm for Swedish society, while the Saami represent “the others”. According to Häggren the portrayal of Saami in history textbooks has gone through a positive development since the 1980’s, but still there remains an ethno-cultural perspective that results in a “we-they” dichotomy7. Karlsson comes to the same conclusions, and both authors point out that the values ascribed the Saami peoples enhance the identification of the Saami as “the others”. According to their analysis, the description of the Saami appears as exotic, romantic and mystified.

The discussion about identification into “we-them” dichotomies and the conception of “exotic, romantic” and “mystified” derives from the theory of post-colonialism. Häggren chooses to lean on the statements by Edward Said, one of the giants within the postcolonial discourse. In his book *Orientalism*, Said argues that there is a divide between the “West” and the “East”, and that this divide originates in a

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6 Långström, 1997. p. 11. (All quotes from swedish books are translated into english by the author).
construction of the eastern culture in the West by westerners, that has become true. A central conception in Said’s studies is *discourse*. Since my study will be implemented through a postcolonial perspective, this will be discussed further in the theory chapter.

Both Hällgren and Karlsson find that the Saami are neglected in Swedish history textbooks, and that they contain incorrect facts which results in incorrect images of the Saami. As an example, Karlsson points out that almost all the pictures in the textbooks of Saami, involved reindeer industry. Hence students get the idea that all Saami are dependent on the reindeer industry, and they fail to understand that the Saamis are not a homogenous group, but that there are different Saamis by which far from all are dependent on the reindeer industry.

Finally there is Quentin Kayne’s essay *Postcolonialism and First Nations in Canada*, at the University of Athabasca, which analyses Native identity in Canadian literature from a postcolonial perspective. One of his aims is to see if the theories of the three giants within postcolonial studies (Edward Said, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak) are applicable to aboriginal Canadian literary criticism. A major part of Kayne’s essay concern the role played of the Métis in Canadian literature, history and society. According to Kayne the Métis seem to have fallen between the chairs in the dichotomy of identification of White and Indian, “Métis are treated as bivalent creatures, either white or Indian, never a combination of the two”8. He also remarks that the dividing into certain identities is a linguistic process. This will be discussed further in the theory chapter. Another conclusion of Kayne’s is that emancipatory history writing and literature, which is the intention of postcolonial theory, may actually work against it own means and sustain the ideologies of colonialism.

**Method**

The aim of this study is to analyze four Canadian history textbooks, to determine whether they contain bias in their portrayal of Natives. In my analysis I will focus on the use of words and language, and to some extent I will also analyze pictures. The philosopher Jacques Derrida writes “the world is structured through linguistic practices […] language must be understood as a system of signs and words that are given meaning through

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implicit and explicit relations of differences and contrasts”\. With this in mind it is crucial for this analysis is to determine what values can be read in a word and an expression. It is therefore my choice to use a qualitative method. When I analyze the pictures I will look at the motives of the pictures and compare them to each other. To some extent I will count how many times a certain word, expression or a motive in the pictures, occur. One could therefore argue that I also use a quantitative method, but since it is my intention to analyze what these texts and pictures tell us, I say the overall method is qualitative.

### Theory

This study will be conducted through a postcolonial perspective. In Anne-Louise Häggren’s study about the Saami people in Swedish history textbooks she refers to Edward Said, when talking about the identification of the Saami as “They”. Said is said to be one of the founders of postcolonial theory, with his book *Orientalism*. In his book Said states that the image of the East and its culture is a creation by western values and academics. Said’s theories do not, however, only fit in when examining the East, but can also be used when looking at the situation in any former colonized country or people, in this case North America and Canadian Natives. Canadian scholar Quintin Kayne in his work *Postcolonialism and First Nations in Canada* agrees stating that “Said’s *Orientalism* seems to be applicable to Canadian First Nations history and experience. “The same regime of political, sociological, military, ideological, scientific, and imaginative actors that was involved in ‘structuring’ the Orient was involved with ‘structuring’ the New World.”

In this chapter I shall give a background to postcolonial theory and how it will be implemented in my study. As main sources I have used the books *Globaliseringens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället* and *Makten över minnet: historiekultur i förändring*.

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According to postcolonial theory, colonialism is not only a thing of the past but it is still present in many different ways. One argument is that the consequences of colonialism are so apparent today that we must be said to live in a postcolonial world. The question that arises then is, when did the postcolonial state occur and when does it end? The logical answer would be: as soon as the colonizers left the land colonized and handed over the responsibilities and authorities to local, native powers, in which case the postcolonial state would begin sometime after 1950. This is not the case however, as Stuart Hill shows when he tries to answer this question. Postcolonial theories argue that European colonization of the world was possible because Europeans implemented a way of thinking which justified their actions. These ideas remain even after the colonizers left the colonies, and they continue to rule the perception of the world today. Therefore, as Stuart Hall concludes, “the postcolonial” cannot be distinguished as a period with clear historical boundaries, when everything changes and new circumstances suddenly occur”.11 One of the focuses of postcolonial theory is to analyze the ideas and perceptions formed during colonialism. Central for these ideas are the creation of identities, and the dividing into “we-them” dichotomies. “The intention is emancipatory; one wants to point out the construction of the Other; the foreign culture and its inhabitants”12. The approach of this study is to see whether these constructions of the Other (in this case the Canadian Natives) can still be found in school textbooks.

A condition for the identification into a “we-them” dichotomy, which postcolonial theory points out is that this dichotomy is dependent on comparison. “The colonizers’ identity and the identity of the colonized people are defined by each other and are reproduced, modified and changed in relationship to each other. The civilized, enlightened, rational European’s identity cannot be imagined without the barbaric, unenlightened, irrational Other, that is the non-European, colonized peoples”13. According to this quote the superiority of We/Us is directly dependent of the identification of Them/the Others. Without the Others the conception of Us as superior would be impossible. Crucial for this comparison is that it is created on terms by the

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13 Globaliseringens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället. p. 34.
colonizers’. This way it is impossible for the colonized to question it, since he/she is, and will always be, inferior. By ascribing the Other certain stereotypes as seen in the quote above, colonization was justified. A famous term that shows the conception of the colonizers’ superiority very well is the idea of “white man’s burden”, which meant that the Europeans saw it as their task to civilize the world. In consequence the colonized, the Other, could become almost like Us, but never exactly the same. One of the most important tasks in postcolonial theory is to analyze how to break the stereotypes of colonialism and to develop new ways of thinking that go beyond those created during colonialism. To do this one must first categorize the stereotypes used to identify the Others. The quote above from the introduction of Globaliseringens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället, gives the following examples: barbaric, unenlightened and irrational. Other categories are shown in Hällgren’s and Karlsson’s studies about the Saami people in Swedish textbooks. They come to the conclusions that the Saami are often portrayed as exotic, mystic and romanticized. James Axtell and Ken Osborne find the following stereotypes of Natives in North American textbooks: superstitious, primitive, savage, blood-thirsty, drunk, monosyllabic and naked.

Just as these contemporary studies show, one of the main points of postcolonial theory is that the stereotypes of colonialism still characterizes the world in 2006. and as mentioned earlier it is my aim in this essay to analyze the portrayal of Natives in Canadian history textbooks from the perspective of these stereotypes.

Stuart Hall is one of them who has studied how the racist stereotypes of colonialism are visible in western contemporary culture, and how they sustain the identities of We-Them. One of the most obvious categories as Hall sees it, is that of the Other as exotic. “The Other represents the natural human being, a genuine being, put into contrast with the alienated, westerner’s abortive emotional- and sexual life and her suppressed and perverted aggression”14. From this perspective the stereotype of the Other is not solely negative, but a clear fascination surrounds him/her, a fascination that can result in solidarity across the borders of identities, and interest in the Others’ culture. Hall means that exoticism none the less, is discriminatory since it “rests on the same kind of

projections and stereotypes and involves objectifying of the Others’ identity, which is naturalized and fixed”\(^\text{15}\). This shows how problematic it is to get away from the ideology of colonialism. Our image of the Others, and our conception of the world is given to us from the past, and it is ingrained into our minds. Even when attempts are made to get rid of colonial order, the risk of backlash is apparent, which the example of négritude shows. Négritude is an anti-colonial movement still existing, that aims to end the racist stereotypes by revaluing the African culture.\(^\text{16}\) Franz Fanon, a precursor to postcolonial theory, points out that even though the intention is good, it might work against itself. Negritude wants to show the distinctive character of African culture by going back to its roots before colonialism. Fanon means that this distinctive culture is based on the same stereotypes as during colonialism, and it only results in the stereotypes being reproduced. It is still the same stereotypes, but now they are given a positive value. In the long run however they manifest the old dichotomies of, “white reason as empirical and analytic and African reason as intuitive and mystical that risks to confirm and enhance colonial stereotypes about black peoples incapability of thinking rationally, their uninhibited sexuality and their childish and irresponsible nature”\(^\text{17}\). A form of catch 22 arises.

Marginalized, minority groups all over the world are raising their voices, demanding to tell their own story.\(^\text{18}\) In the process of removing the yolk of colonialism, these groups strive to create a new identity, an authentic identity free from the contamination of the suppressors. The historical dimensions are inevitable for this process,\(^\text{19}\) as they press on their cultures’ distinctive characters, and the differences to that of the suppressors’, to distance themselves from the image of themselves that is created by others. But by striving to be recognized in their authentic identities, they also run the risk of perpetuating the stereotypes of colonialism.\(^\text{20}\) Quentin Kayne gives an example of this phenomenon in his study about Canadian Native Literature.

“Native Literature seems sometimes to have taken on the character of the worst kind of reserve, where community are crushed into a cycle

\(^\text{15}\) Ibid.
\(^\text{16}\) *Globaliseringsens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället*. p. 25.
\(^\text{18}\) *Globaliseringsens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhälle*. p. 41.
\(^\text{19}\) Aronsson, Peter. *Makten över minnet*. s. 20.
\(^\text{20}\) Ibid.
of hopelessness, helplessness, and violation… the things “we” write about are: Our oppression, Our experiences as drunks and druggies and prostitutes, how we miraculously Found Our Culture and got healed, and Eagles and/or Bears and/or Wolves… And if one doesn’t write about these things? One hears that their work is not Native enough…”

The quote shows that not only We maintain the identification of the Others based on old stereotypes, but also the Others use these identities to identify themselves.

An issue that has been subject of debate within postcolonial theory is who is to be considered as postcolonial. “Raging debates have occurred whether for instance Australia, Canada and New Zealand should be viewed as postcolonial societies or if the term should be reserved for “non-western” formerly colonized societies.” The answer given by Stuart Hall is that all societies are in one way or another affected by colonialism. Since all countries, even in Sweden who did not participate in the colonization directly, there were and are attempts to build up barriers for the explicit “Swedish”, which in retrospect affected the way the foreign world was interpreted.

As a closure to this theory chapter I want to point out the meaning of language to postcolonial theory, since it is of relevance for this study. Postcolonial theory is influenced by poststructuralist theory. Poststructuralist theory emphasizes the role of language for the creation of identities, institutions and politics. The world is created through the use of language, which is our way of expressing ourselves. Whether we like it or not all words have certain meanings attached to them. Words are only given meaning by putting them in contrast to another word. The word man for instance would mean nothing without the counterpart woman. The same idea goes for white and black, We – They. According to poststructuralist theory we see one of the words in these binary oppositions as dominant. Man is dominant to woman, white to black. This is important when analyzing textbooks, to see if their portrayal of a people are bias, since the values put into words are crucial for what they say.

21 Kayne. p. 7.
22 Globaliseringens Kultur: den postkoloniala paradoxen, rasismen och det mångkulturella samhället.p.16.
23 Ibid.
The Canadian Curriculum & Textbooks

“The term curriculum encompasses all learning experiences the student will have in school”.25 These words can be read in the guidelines for Antiracism and Ethnocultural Equity in School Board handed out by the Ontario Ministry of Education in 1993. It gives an indication of the broadness and importance of curriculum. This study will focus on how ethnicity, minority groups (in this case Canadian Natives) and discrimination are dealt with in the Ontario curricula.

A curriculum dictates what is to be studied in each course, but also the policies of education and activities in an overall perspective. It is therefore important that a curriculum is straightforward and easy to interpret. In Canada there has been a long debate, with demands for a national curriculum.26 One of the arguments for this is that it would help the forming of a Canadian identity, a process where history as a subject is of uttermost importance. Hence one can see the wide consequences curricula are considered to have. Teachers are to follow the curriculum in their planning of lessons to make sure that they cover what the curriculum says, so that the students learn what is decided that they should learn. The question is if all teachers really make use of the curriculum in their planning of lessons to a satisfying extent? Sture Långström writes about the “conflict” between curriculum and textbooks. As he points out it is unusual that a teacher sends a student home with a curriculum to present to his/her parents. What the parents see as proof of the child’s learning in school are the textbooks he/she brings home. Hence “for the public, the textbooks are the visible manifestation of the school’s beliefs and intentions”27. Furthermore this tends to lead to a tendency where the textbooks are the Truth and they tend not to be questioned. The most interesting remarks in Långström’s study is that 88% of the teachers often used the textbook as a source of inspiration when

26 Osborne, Ken. “Our History Syllabus has us gasping”. p.15
27 Långström, p. 17.
planning lessons, while only 25% used the curriculum. Even though Långström’s figures concern Swedish teachers, they are backed up in an international perspective by James Axtell when he writes “it would be difficult to overestimate the role played by textbooks in the teaching of American history”. I will not continue talking about the reasons behind the role of textbooks, but am satisfied with concluding that textbooks play a significant role when it comes to what students learn and what teachers decide to teach.

This does not mean that the curricula are of no value; on the contrary, studies show that the curricula affect the contents of the textbooks. In a report from SiL (Statens institut för läromedel) 1990, it was obvious that the Saami people were neglected in Swedish history textbooks. One of the measures that were called for to deal with this problem was to specify the Saami’s role in the curriculum, “if you want the textbooks to bring up Saami, this should be expressed in the directives in the curriculum”. In 1994 a new curriculum was introduced in Sweden, and in it, it was specified that minority groups were to be brought up when studying history. Ann-Louise Hällgren has followed up the report from 1990 to see if there has been any changed since the curricula of 1994. She concludes that textbooks written after the introduction of the new curriculum have put more effort into the Saami, but that the portrayals still carry an ethnocentric perspective, which results in a romantic image.

This is of certain interest since Ontario’s Ministry of Education revised the curriculum for the course Canadian and World Studies which involves history as a subject, in 2005, a process which is performed regularly. The last curriculum for Canadian and World Studies was from 1999. As mentioned above, Ontario’s Ministry of Education handed out the text Guidelines for Antiracism and Ethno cultural Equity in School Board where one of the core objectives was “effective mechanisms are in place for identifying and addressing forms of bias in learning materials and discriminatory elements in existing curriculum and programs”. In this text the subject of Aboriginals is specifically mentioned. Looking closer at the curriculum of Canadian and World Studies for grades 9-10 and 11-12 and the obligatory course Canadian History Since World War

28 Långström, p. 17.
29 Axtell, p. 1.
31 Antiracism and Ethno cultural Equity in School Board, p. 18.
First Nations and Natives are brought up on several occasions. Among the aims in this course the students are expected to “evaluate the impact of social and demographic change on Aboriginal communities” and “describe the achievements of Aboriginal organizations”. A central aspect in this course is the forging of the Canadian identity. The question then is, what is this identity made up of and who does it involve? Reading the expectations “by the end of this course, students will: identify contributions to Canada’s multicultural society by regional, linguistic, ethnocultural, and religious communities (e.g., Aboriginals, Franco-Ontarians, Métis […]” it seems as if several minority groups as well as Aboriginals are included. Therefore one can only conclude that these topics should be presented and analyzed in textbooks.

Another important aspect of the curriculum, as it is brought up in the report from SiL, is how the study of a certain subject is presented. If it is described as a subject of conflict and problem, students will go into the studies with negative presumptions. Overall the history courses in Canadian and World Studies avoid this tendency. In the grade 11 & 12 course American History, however, a lot of the focus tends to be on conflict and problem. “Describe the conflict of ideas between Aboriginal peoples and European Americans”, “describe the experiences of Aboriginal peoples in the United States to present time (e.g., acculturation, assimilation, relocation, education, discrimination, stereotyping). It is not a very positive picture one receives of Native history in America.

Compared to the Swedish curriculum from 1980, and also that of 1994, the Ontario curriculum definitely pays more interest to its native minority groups. Assuming that teachers follow the curriculum it leaves few doubts that a Canadian student cannot go through a history course without receiving a certain input about Native history. Also, when looking at the conclusion in the report from SiL which says that the directions in the curricula affects the contents of the textbooks, one can only assume that the Canadian history textbooks deal with the history of Natives. It is not, however, for certain that their portrayal will be free from bias and ethnocentric perspectives (which is the aim of this

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study to determine), even though it is clearly pointed out that the courses are to contain an anti-discriminatory angle.

Antidiscrimination Education in Canadian and World Studies:
In Canadian and World Studies, students learn about the contributions of a variety of peoples, in the past and the present, to the development of Canada and the world. The critical thinking and research skills acquired in Canadian and World Studies courses will strengthen students’ ability to recognize bias and stereotypes in contemporary as well as in historical portrayals, viewpoints, representations and images. Learning activities and resources used to implement the curriculum should be inclusive in nature, reflecting diverse points of view and experience, including Aboriginal perspectives. They should enable students to become more sensitive to the experiences and perceptions of others.35

The directions are very clear, which only strengthens the demand on textbooks to deal with Native history, and to do so without stereotypes and discrimination.

To increase the demands on textbook writers and publishers, the Ontario Ministry of Education has created the so called Trillium list, which has been active since 2002. On the Trillium list are only textbooks approved by the ministry, which means they have been subject to a thorough evaluation. The criteria for this evaluation that is of most interest here, is that of bias.

The content must be free from racial, ethnocultural, religious, regional, gender related, or age-related bias; bias based on disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic background, occupation, political affiliation, or membership in a specific group; and bias by omission. The material should present more than one point of view, and be free from discriminatory, exclusionary, or inappropriately value-laden language, photographs, and illustrations.36

Reading the quote above, it shows that the textbooks have gone through rigorous evaluation, from more or less the same perspectives as will be done in this study. Therefore one could argue that this study is a valuation of the Trillium list, but I argue it also validates the importance of it. Before the Trillium list there was the Circula 14, that was around for 113 years, meaning that Canada has a long history of textbook reviewing.

But does the Trillium list guarantee that pupils are protected from bias or racist textbooks? Ken Montgomery, PhD at University of Calgary, has analyzed Canadian

history textbooks, to see how they represent the idea of “race” and to determine whether such representations have changed over time. The subjects of his analysis are textbooks written in the 1940’s and -60’s, but also from the 21st century, of which two are the same as are analyzed in this study. Montgomery does not accuse history textbooks of being straight out racist, on the contrary he points out that they have the intention of being if not anti-racist then non-racist, but he means that they contain hidden elements of ideologies deriving from colonialism. The racism, he means, lies in the fact that the term race and racist are used but the creation of the term is never made problematic.

Race is woven into these narratives about the people who were historically affected by racism and it is made to matter. These representations are by no means explicit affirmations of natural or biological “races”, but in the absence of any discussion whatsoever about what the “race” idea might mean, they do act to naturalize “race” according to categories infused with biological assumptions (about skin color and descent).37

Montgomery’s text supports the importance of this essay, as it points out how colonial conceptions still rule our minds, even if we are not aware of it or whether we like it or not, which is the essence of postcolonial theory.

Analysis and discussion

The following analysis concerns four Canadian history textbooks for high school. The two newest of the books can be found on the Trillium list, and these are Canada: A Nation unfolding, Ontario Edition, 2000 and Canadian History 1900-2000, 2000. The other two are a bit older, but they are still used by at least one Canadian history teacher in Ontario, the one who gave them to me. These are Canada: A North American Nation, 1989 and The Story of Canada, 1992. The analysis will be conducted according to the criteria described in the theory chapter. As mentioned these criteria have been used in former studies in the same field, and they derive from postcolonial theory. I examine how the textbooks identify Native peoples. Do they use derogatory terms? Do they treat all Native peoples as a homogenous group? Also, whether the textbooks’ portrayal of

37 Montgomery, sid.21.
Canadian Natives carry any form of bias in their use of vocabulary, do one get the image of natives as exotic, mystic or romantic? When in history are natives introduced, is native history only interesting in relation to “white” European history, is it a history of conflict? I will examine the books in the order of these criteria starting with the identification of Native peoples and so on.

**Identification of Native peoples**

In “The nature and implication of Textbook bias”, Jim Parsons lists some of the derogatory terms used for natives in American history textbooks, such as “savage, blood-thirsty, drunk, monosyllabic, naked and primitive”. None of these terms are used to identify Natives in the Canadian textbooks analyzed here. On the other hand the books point out that there have been many different terms for Natives over the years, and that many of them carry derogatory meaning and prejudices. In *Canada: A North American Nation*, the proper naming of Natives is somewhat problematized. It points out that the term Indian is a misnomer stated by Christopher Columbus, that has remained until today. Instead the author prefers to use the term Amerindians, when writing about the Aboriginal peoples of North America. “Amerindian is a comprehensive term comparable to European, Asiatic or African; it designates a wide range of cultures, languages and traditions that historically shared a continent and were perceived by ‘outsiders’ as sharing certain broad social, political and intellectual attributes.”

Not only does this quote show an identification of North American aboriginals by outsiders, but it also makes it clear that one can not view these peoples as a homogenous group. The author then switches into the term of Natives, when dealing with Native history later than what he calls “prehistory”, and uses this term parallel to Amerindians. The tendency of Native history as “pre-history” will be dealt with later in this analysis. The colonial conception of white man as superior and the diversion into a We-Them dichotomy is pointed out when explaining why conflicts arose between Natives and colonists, which opens the door to postcolonial theory thinking. “Most English colonists saw the Native peoples through their Europocentric perspective as inferiors or ‘noble savages’ at best.”

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discussion about the origin of this perspective and why it had to mean that Natives were
to be viewed as inferior would be interesting, but the author chooses to leave it at that. At
least the book brings up the subject which means the teacher can take it further from
there. Overall the four books are consistent in using the terms Natives, Aboriginals and/or
First Nations people when referring to the native peoples of Canada and North America
as a group. Canadian History 1900-2000, states very clearly what terms have been used
in the past and which ones are acceptable today.

In the first half of the twentieth century the following terms were used to refer to
Aboriginal peoples: Indian, Eskimo and Métis. In the second half of the twentieth
century the following terms were used: Native peoples and Aboriginal peoples.
Aboriginal peoples is the term used most commonly today. Aboriginal peoples
refers to Inuit (replacing Eskimo), Métis, First Nations (legally defined Indian
nations consisting of Status Indians), and non-Status Indians. The term Indian is
only used when referring to legislation (e.g. the Indian Act), in historical sense
(e.g. the National Indian Brotherhood), or when referring to legal status (e.g.
Status Indian).

Hence it leaves no doubts what are the proper terms to use when referring to Native
people of Canada, but it opens the door to another issue. The construction of identities is
a matter that reveals its problems in the textbooks, and the authors occasionally make
brave attempts in bringing it up. One of the demands in the curriculum for Canadian and
world studies is to be able to recognize and understand a Canadian identity, and the
different contributions it is made up of. The Aboriginal peoples are specifically
mentioned here. The question that arises then is whether Natives are Canadian or not,
and if they are Canadian when did they gain this identity. The fact that they in the
curriculum are considered to have contributed to the Canadian identity suggests that they
are Canadian, but what do the textbooks say? The textbooks consistently refer to
aboriginal peoples as “Canadian Natives”, “Canada’s Aboriginal peoples” or simply
as “Canadians”, which definitely gives the impression of Natives considered as
Canadian.

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44 Canadian history 1900-2000, p. 275.
Another discussion deriving here is the definition of Natives within Canadian society. As any minority Natives as a group is compared to general Canadian society, and also when discussing their role and status in Canadian society. The quote above suggests what problems may occur when one’s ethnical and cultural belonging is to be determined legally, as in Status or non-Status Indian, an opinion shared by Quentin Kayne, “In Canada, the Indian Act regulates who is and is not entitled to government recognition of “Indian status”. This has a rather complicated and confusing number of definitions of Native identity”\(^{45}\).

The subject of legally determining who is to be considered Status Indian is brought up in two books found on the Trillium list. The author of Canadian History 1900-2000, approaches the subject very neutrally and basically only gives the facts of the legal definition. For instance: “Status Indian are those who have legal rights under the Indian act. They have rights under treaties, or when no treaties have been signed, rights as Registered Indians. Non-Status Indians are those who have given up their Native legal status, while still retaining their cultural identity”.\(^{46}\) This could work as an obvious approach to a discussion about what the identity of Native really involves, but again the author leaves it alone. The same issue is presented in Canada: A Nation Unfolding, when talking about the rights of aboriginal women, “Aboriginal women who married non-Aboriginal men and their children lost their “Indian” status”\(^{47}\). Here too, the author decides to leave out a discussion about the identity of “Indian” and what lies behind the identification, but it is treated merely as a legal term involving rights of land usage. This cannot however be considered as sign of prejudice, but from a postcolonial perspective it is a very interesting issue. If we view cultural identity as a marker of ethnical belonging the case of Canadian and Native cultural identities parallel to each other can be seen as a remnant of colonialism. In her essay about Greenland natives, Cecilia Treter quotes Robert Petersen, professor in eskimology, who writes that “colonialism is a state where one group of people is dominated by another, politically, economically, intellectually and physically. The point of the definition according to him self, is that the dividing line goes

\(^{45}\) Kayne, p. 4.
\(^{46}\) Canadian history 1900-2000, p. 248.
between ethnical and not regional borders”⁴⁸. Hence the dividing between Native and Canadian culture is a remnant of colonialism. In Canada however, as seen in the curriculum,⁴⁹ the different cultures in the country are not seen as competitors but as contributors to a multicultural Canadian identity.

All of the books show injustices committed towards the Native population of Canada, in a past and in recent years. Canada: A Nation Unfolding and Canadian History 1900-2000, go so far as talking about racism in Canada towards Natives. The use of the term race can be problematic, and cause unfortunate misunderstandings, as is shown by Ken Montgomery:

> The essential point is that the absence of any coherent engagement with the specificity and significance of “race” as a social construction permits this idea to flourish in much the same way as it did centuries ago, as a fact of Nature. This, in turn, contributes to the banal or commonsensical reproduction of racism in student learning resources that have, ironically, passed through numerous multicultural evaluative procedures to ensure that they are free of racism and other forms of discrimination.⁵⁰

The problem as Montgomery sees it, is that talk of groups as belonging to different races, without explaining the thought of races and the construction of such, sustains the thinking of We/Them among students according to racial beliefs. He therefore considers it essential that such a discussion follows when using the term race. Montgomery also points out that evaluative multicultural procedures of textbooks should stress this, but that they do not. This is very interesting since two of the textbooks analyzed here are on the Trillium list, which means that they have gone exactly such evaluation procedures. When dealing with aboriginal involvement in World War 1, under the title “A white man’s war: racism in the Canadian military”, the author writes: “Visible minorities, including Black, Asian and Aboriginal Canadians often found their efforts to enlist thwarted by racist attitudes”⁵¹. No real discussion about the social construction is given here or later in the text, although the author writes about “weak racist assumptions”. Later when dealing with the Second World War the author writes about how the conception of visible

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minorities has changed, “By 1939 it had become unacceptable to separate soldiers by race or ethnicity”52. The change in attitudes from 1920s is apparent, but it does not explain what has happened during these years, and if it only involves the military and Aboriginals. In *Canadian History 1900-2000*, the injustices towards Native peoples during the 20th century are explained as a result of ethnocentrism. “Much of life was governed by tradition and belief, such as the idea that women did not have equal status with men in politics, education, and employment, and that some ethnic or racial groups were superior to others”53. Even though the books do not give any explanation about the construction of race thinking, they definitely distance themselves from racism, as is pointed by Montgomery as well about the books on the Trillium list, “It is clear, in other words, that these state-of-the-art textbooks aim to be anti-racist or, at least, non-racist”54.

Only one of the books analyzed here deliberate over colonial conception of ethnicity, and the creation of identities due to races. In *Canada: A North American Nation*, one can read how the term métis was formed. “The term métis derived from the Spanish mestizo for “mixed blood”, first appears in French in a 1666 Jesuit Relation as an adjective […] In time these people developed a consciousness of being neither European nor Amerindian, but uniquely a new nation”55. The author continues writing about the Christian church’s disapproval of “mixing blood”, but how inter-racial unions kept occurring until they were more or less accepted. The mentioning of the métis, and the explanation of how he term occurred, gives room for discussing ethnicity and social creations of ethnic identities. It is a welcome topic specially from a postcolonial perspective, “the border trope of the mestiza does not mark the end of the colonial relationship; it represents its very condition”56.

None of the books analyzed view North American aboriginals as a homogenous group, but constantly refers to them as “Native peoples” and Aboriginal peoples” in plural. One of the main observations in Therese Karlsson’s study concerning the Saami peoples role in Swedish history textbooks, was that they solely gave a perception of the Saami as dependent on the reindeer industry. The consequence is that the reader is left

56 Kayne. p. 5.
with an image of all Saami as living in the mountains in the far north of Sweden dealing with reindeers, even though a substantial body of the Saami population lives off of other business.57 One could argue that the comparison between Canadian Natives and the Saami people of Sweden is a poor example. Since the Saami make up a much smaller minority than the Canadian Natives and that they live on a much more confined area, it is more likely that they are stigmatized and viewed as a homogenous group. Since the problem is brought up in both Swedish and Canadian studies, however, I see it fit to make this comparison. Another conclusion of Karlsson’s is that even though the Swedish textbooks point out the importance of the reindeer industry to the Saami, they leave out the overhanging threats that the industry is facing due to other industries such as hydroelectricity. They show how the Swedish colonization of the north affected the reindeer industry centuries ago, but fails to bring it up to date. Canadian History 1900-2000 covers the Native history in Canada during the past century, and the author makes sure to point out to the reader that the Aboriginal peoples of Canada consists of many different groups with different means to survive, depending on where they live and their experiences.

During the 1930s, Canada’s Aboriginal peoples were often treated badly too […] Relief authorities tended to assume that all Native peoples could live off the land. This may have been true for some groups and individuals, but others had long abandoned a hunting and gathering economy.58

The issue and diversity of problems involving industries of which different Native groups depend on, is a subject that returns in the book during each period in history. The same can be said about The Story of Canada and Canada: A Nation Unfolding.

The portrayal of Natives as exotic

In her essay about the Saami people in Swedish history textbooks, Ann-Louise Häggren looks for descriptions and portrayals of the Saami that are exotic. Häggren refers to

58 Canadian history 1900-2000, p. 156.
Edward Said’s definition of the term which states that: “Exotism means that one uses a stereotype image build on positive prejudices, of another culture to criticize the own culture”.59 This means that when writing about a foreign or a different culture there is a tendency to point out traditional ethnic markers of that culture which creates a dividing into We/Them dichotomies. In the case with the Saami, Häggren concludes that they are described markers such as the reindeer and kåtan (a building in which Saami people used to live and still occasionally do). As mentioned earlier all four books analyzed here deal with Native history to a great extent, much greater than Swedish textbooks deal with the Saami. Aboriginal peoples are clearly identified as minority groups or group within Canadian society, today and in history. Since this is true it is interesting to look at how the authors go about it to show on the differences between Natives and mainstream Canadian society. What ethnic markers are ascribed to the aboriginal peoples of Canada? To start with I must stress again that all the books treat the aboriginal peoples not as a homogenous group but as many groups with different prerequisites.

The most prominent marker for Native peoples in the books is not ethnical even though it derives from the issue of ethnics. The books keep coming back to the issue of discrimination, racism and injustices committed towards Natives through history. This may not be an ethnical marker by which one can point out an aboriginal, but it is striking how central the struggle of these peoples are, a struggle for their way of living. The way of living is a marker that is described and might be what Häggren refers to as ethnical. In Canada a Nation Unfolding, one can read about certain features of Native culture “or signs of tribal life” such as Traditional ceremonies like the sun dance of some prairie tribes and the potlatch of the Northwest peoples”.60 A much further description of the traditional way of life and the diversity between the various tribes is given in Canada: a North American Nation. Here the author divides Aboriginal peoples, languages and cultures into six areas according to different geographical belonging. Within the Canadian boundaries the six culture areas are: “Arctic, Subarctic, Northeast (or Eastern Woodlands), Great Plains, Interior Plateau and North West Coast”.61 He then goes through the specific features of the groups in each area, or the ethnic markers if you want.

For example, “The Micmac of the Nova Scotia peninsula, Cape Breton Island and Prince Edward Island were skilled sailors, fishermen, hunters and food gatherers […] Like other Algonkian peoples, they lived in bands that had defined territories”.62 This portrayal of aboriginal peoples cannot be said to be exotic. It merely describes the way of living and producing food in a factual, neutral way, and if one is of the opinion that the text perpetuates prejudices then it would be very difficult to write any history that is as close to the truth as possible. If one compared this text to a description of European peoples living on the countryside during the same period it would not be much different. The author does not only write about every day life, but also focuses on how the different ruling systems were organized and power was implemented. On one occasion he tends to make a comparison which might be a sign of his Eurocentric perspective, “In the hospitable environment of the Pacific Coast Amerindian societies arose that were relatively densely populated and quite sophisticated in their cultural development”63. That they were sophisticated is a sign of recognizing them as a civilized and developed society as supposed to savages, but the use of the word quite shows that they were not as sophisticated when compared to another culture. Which that other culture is, is not said, and it is not unproblematic to figure it out either. It could be that the author compares it to other aboriginal cultures, but most likely he compares it to a culture generally used as a norm when comparing, the European. On the next page however the ruling systems of The Iroquis Federation is suggested to be one of the precursors of American democracy. A very good exercise follows where the reader is presented with an excerpt from the Constitution of the Five Nation Indian Confederacy and one from the Declaration of Independence. The reader is then asked to read both texts and watch for similarities and differences, which practices critical thinking, and since the two texts are quite similar it enhances the conception of Native peoples as a highly civilized society. Therefore it is hard to ascribe an ethnic marker such as “monosyllabic and primitive” as mentioned by Jim Parsons.

Other features described as traditional lifestyles for many tribes, can be read in Canada: A Nation Unfolding. “The Inuit people had lived a nomadic lifestyle, moving

from place to place while hunting, fishing and trapping. Many Inuit gave up their traditional practices for a completely foreign way of life.64 “Their traditional practises” as it is called must be viewed as a marker for identity, the Inuit way of life. But is it an exotic description? That way of life may be exotic for someone growing up in the southern parts of Sweden in the 1980s or in Toronto, but since the intention here is to give a picture of Inuit life and the context is to show how government actions and decisions affected it, it has to be written. The way it is written is free from prejudice and merely contains the facts of Inuit life. Just as Häggren calls for the book does not say that one way of living is better than the other. If anything the text is critical towards the Canadian government and the decisions made. A clear dividing into a We/Them dichotomy is visible and here one can see a trace of ethnocentrism, “The result was a generation of partly educated young people who no longer easily fit into either Inuit or White culture”65. It is not easy to determine who is We and who is Them and from whose perspective the text should be viewed, hence the author manages to be objective which is the aim of every textbook. The only part that shows it is written from a White Canadian perspective is the formulation of “partly educated”. When the young Inuit people returned after attending Canadian school then they were educated. This shows a conception of what education means to the author, and it does not seem to include learning how to hunt and fish.

The religious beliefs of aboriginal peoples is returning subject in the books, and The Story of Canada is no exception. Janet Lynch, the author, tells stories of different myths, legends and spirits. “There were spirit heroes too. There were tricksters – Raven on the Pacific Coast, the old man Napi on the plains, and Nanabush in the spruce forest”66. Religious beliefs and culture are very closely connected, and by some they are even said to be the same. Therefore, the portrayal of a religion can be the portrayal of a culture and both can be argued to stand as ethnic markers. Again the stories of for example spirit heroes, might seem exotic to a person of a modern western secularized society, but it is the description of the religion that is analyzed for exotic images, the very words of the author. In her analysis of Swedish textbooks, Häggren came across

descriptions of Saami religions that are questionable and which she found to carry ethnocentrism and exotic values. In two books for instance, she found the exact same sentence “The Saami worshiped curiously shaped rocks”\(^{67}\). According to Häggren the use of the word curiously sustains negative stereotypes and gives an image of the Saami culture and religion as exotic. As she points out however the textbook authors try to identify the Saami as a distinct minority group, since it is a demand of the curriculum to lift up the minorities and enhance a mutual understanding. Häggren is not satisfied with the result though, and claims that the textbooks only creates a We/Them dichotomy.\(^{68}\)

Compared to Häggren’s conclusions it must be said that all four authors to the textbooks analyzed here, avoid vocabulary and use of words that might give impression of exotic. Occasionally the existence and belonging to a We/Them dichotomy is visible, but it is not always unproblematic to determine who belongs to what group, as an example from *The Story of Canada* shows. “There were giants like Glooscap on the Atlantic shore – when he lay down to sleep, Glooscap piled up Minagoo (we call it Prince Edward Island) for a pillow”\(^{69}\). “We” can be interpreted as either only white Canadians or as “we” Canadians of the 21\(^{st}\) century, including aboriginal peoples. The problem here I to identify Us and Them, but since the sentence is written in past tense, most likely the author thinks of Them as a long gone generation of Native people.

No such formulations as “curiously shaped rocks” occur, but in *Canada: A North American Nation* one can read, “Moreover the universe was animate so that not only animals and plants possessed souls, but also “objects” such as rocks, waterfalls and clouds”\(^{70}\). The mentioning of “rocks, waterfall and clouds” is not preceded by an adverb that might give a derogatory or exotic feeling. However the quotation marks surrounding “objects” are somewhat ambiguous, and the purpose of which are harder to interpret. Clearly rocks and waterfalls are objects and also clouds, even though a bit more abstract, so why put the quotation marks around “objects” as to give it a meaning that they are not really ordinary objects? It cannot be a quote because there are no references. The purpose seems to be to achieve an image or understanding for these objects as something spiritual.

or even mystic. The following sentences might give a clearer picture in interpreting the use of quotation marks. “To live in peace with all living creatures, therefore, required great respect for all of nature. Equality between human beings and other living “persons”, as all creation consisted of “relatives”, was deemed to continue beyond death”71. The embracing of “persons” and “relatives” by quotation marks helps in bringing understanding to the purpose of the quotation marks. The fact that Aboriginal peoples believed (and still do) that animals and objects in nature were equals like other living people, is pointed out with the use of quotation marks. It is obvious that the author finds it assumable that a person reading the book might have a hard time understanding how one can concept a rock or a plant as a living human being. Hence the quotation marks around “objects” must mean that for an aboriginal person they were not merely objects but also equal organisms.

Looking at Hällgren’s study she criticizes the Swedish textbooks for mainly displaying pictures that connects the Saami to reindeer industry. The same conclusions are made by Therese Karlsson, who notes that only one picture of all the pictures related to Saami in the books she analyzed, does not contain reindeers or reindeer industry.72 A result of this, as both Hällgren and Karlsson concludes, is that it might enhance and sustain negative stereotypical images of Saami peoples. It might be interesting to point out that the report from SiL (Statens Institut för läromedel), is a main source for both Hällgren and Karlsson. The report concludes that “the texts about the Saami sometimes balances on the verge of being exotic, which is particularly visible in the choice of pictures in some of the books […] Often the editors prefer the decorative, the beautiful, pictures that conserve the image of Saami culture”73. A look at the pictures related to Natives, in the Canadian history textbooks show a variation of portrayals and motives. The Story of Canada contains ten pictures related to Aboriginal history. The motives vary from “pre-historic” inscriptions on rocks, to a picture where a Canadian soldier and a Mohawk warrior are having a stand down in 1990. Two of the pictures are of women, describing female life, and telling a detailed story of Shawnandithit the last Beothuk. Five of the pictures

however are of Natives in Canoes meeting with European explorers and/or trading furs. Hence, by looking at the pictures the canoe stands out as a central object when identifying aboriginal peoples, but the question is if this sustains negative stereotypical images of aboriginal peoples.

*Canadian History 1900-2000,* shows a greater variety of motives then. This book also contains ten pictures related to Native history, including two maps showing Inuit and Native land use. Two of the pictures are of women engaged in Aboriginal women’s rights movements. One picture is of native children protesting for Native rights. Six of the pictures are of important Native male leaders who have been fighting for the rights of their peoples. In all of these pictures the men are dressed in traditional clothing or wearing some sort of traditional native piece of garment. Apart from that there is no general theme in the pictures, such as reindeers, that works as an ethnic marker. Interesting to point out is that his book also contains the same picture of the stand down between a Canadian soldier and a Mohawk warrior.

In *Canada: A North American Nation,* there are five pictures related to Native history. All of these portray Aboriginal life before and around the arrival of the Europeans. Hence, the motives are of traditional life, when it comes to hunting and clothing. One map shows the migration theories into the North American continent and one the culture areas before the arrival of European explorers. One of the pictures is of certain interest from a postcolonial perspective, since it shows a puritan missionary preaching Christian salvation surrounded by Native peoples. The picture can work as an introduction to discussion and studies of colonialism.

Together with *Canadian History 1900-2000,* *A Nation Unfolding,* shows the greatest variety of motives in its pictures of Native peoples. The book contains 8 pictures related to Native history, and as the other books it goes through the history chronologically. Hence the first pictures involving Native peoples show a more traditional image. However quite rapidly the book jumps into the 20th century, and then gives a less traditional image. There are for example two pictures of Natives in Canadian uniforms during the First World War and the Second World War. Common motives when dealing with Canadian politics and Aboriginal issues are certain strong and famous aboriginal leaders such as Elijah Harper, Phil Fontaine and James Gladstone, but as in
Canadian History 1900-2000, aboriginal women share a place in the spotlight. The conclusion of the analysis of the pictures, is that the two most recent books show a greater variety of pictures that portray aboriginal peoples. In most pictures however Native people wear some piece of clothing or garment that is traditional or typical for aboriginal peoples. Most of the pictures though, show either traditional native life before or at the time of the arrival of Europeans or in contexts where Native leaders fight for aboriginal rights in the 20th century, situations where their distinctive characters are stressed. The choice of pictures could be argued to follow the pattern that Hällgren sees in her analysis, “in the texts and in the pictures, traditional romantic Saami markers are in focus”74. If anything one could demand more pictures of everyday native life in the late 20th century, but it must be said that the pictures in the books are of relevance to the texts. The dilemma of pointing out a distinctive character and the risk of sustaining negative stereotypes and prejudices by doing so is visible in Hällgren’s text. The same problem is discussed by the editors of Globaliseringens Kulturer, under the title of “an introduction to postcolonial theory”. As they point out a number of marginalized groups are stepping forward today, demanding that their history should be told, and be told as they know it. The problem as the editors put it is “the dilemma between on one hand wanting to be recognized for ones identity for instance as a black woman, and on the other hand the risk of being fixed into a category”75.

This sense of a catch 22 stands out as Hällgren criticizes Swedish history textbooks for not writing enough about the Saami, at the same as she criticizes the authors for having an ethnocentric perspective. Her point is that they don’t reach enough understanding for the Saami and that they fail in portraying the Saami as minority group in Sweden. This is when it becomes complicated, on the one hand she demands that the Saami are identified and recognized as a distinctive minority with a distinctive culture, on the other hand she does not want the dividing into We/Them dichotomies. At first this might seem as an impossible task, but even though contradictory, Hällgren’s point becomes clearer towards the end of her essay. It is important that school textbooks explain about our minorities to create understanding, even if by doing so, risking the

dividing into We/Them dichotomies. The books should however, according to Hällgren, point out that no lifestyle is better that another, and if the authors need to use ethnical markers to identify a group then they should also deliberate over the consequences of doing so.\(^76\)

The description of Natives as mystic

In her study about Saami peoples in Swedish history textbooks, Therese Karlsson writes,

> the authors of textbooks often stresses the differences in the parts about Saami and Saami culture. It appears to be romantic to be a nomad, to move around with ones family from place to place. Particularly the pre-Christian Saami religion, which is often treated in the history books, is given a mystic and exotic character.\(^77\)

The same tendency can be seen in the Canadian textbooks, and according to this quote I have focused on the portrayals of Native religions when analyzing the Canadian textbooks for tendencies of mystic descriptions.

All four books bring up Native religion and religious beliefs as an important part of Native life and culture. The two books that deal most with the subject are *Canada: A North American Nation* and *The Story of Canada*. The reason for this might be that both *Canada: A Nation Unfolding* and *Canadian history 1900-2000* mostly deal with historical events during the 20\(^{th}\) century, where religion seems to fall behind the history of politics. In *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, when talking of aboriginal peoples in the early 20\(^{th}\) century, focuses on the injustices committed by Canadian government towards these peoples. One of these injustices mentioned is the banning of aboriginal religious rituals. On the picture next to the text are several Natives dressed in traditional clothing performing some sort of a religious act. The picture is black and white and appears to be from the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century. The books refers to Native beliefs as “complex religions and a sophisticated world view.”\(^78\) Other traditional “ceremonies mentioned are

\(^76\) Hällgren, 2003. p. 188.


\(^78\) *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, 2000. p. 42.
the Sundance and the Potlatch, none of which are given further explanation of what they mean. The same ceremonies are mentioned in *Canadian History 1900-2000*, which also brings up injustices committed towards Native peoples in early 20th century, pretty much in the same way as *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*. None of the books give any detailed information of the meaning of the Sundance or the Potlatch, but they also give an image of them as mystic.

When writing about the fight for aboriginal rights and Canadian politics in the 1990s in *Canada: A Nation Unfolding*, a picture is added of Aboriginal leader Elijah Harper. The picture is taken during the voting for the Meech Lake Accord, and it shows Elijah Harper holding a feather “for spiritual strength”79. No further explanation of the meaning of the feather and its connection to spirits is given. It would be interesting and appropriate to insert Harper’s own thoughts and explanation. Of course it is possible to argue that a high school history textbook cannot bring up every detail for explanation, due to for example lack of space. But looking at Karlsson’s and Hällgren’s studies and the report from SiL, where it is concluded that many of the descriptions and pictures carry ethnical markers without being relevant, this picture can be argued to fall under the same category. When you as a reader don’t know anything about Elijah Harper’s conception and purpose of feathers and spirits the picture gives a somewhat mystic and exotic impression. As a contrast the account for the same episode in *Canadian History 1900-2000* is portrayed with a picture of Harper after the voting holding up his hands in victory, without the mentioning of feathers and spirits. A book should not be accused of mystical history writing because it shows a person from a culture where feathers have certain symbolical meanings, on the contrary it is very interesting. But when leaving out essential facts the purpose might be misinterpreted.

The writing in *The Story of Canada* is a bit different from the two books dealt with above. Even though the author keeps an objective position, there is a clear attempt of writing emancipatory history. The most obvious attempt to reproduce the history from Native perspective is when telling the story of Jacques Cartier’s arrival to the North American continent and Canada. “They came from the sea. Did they come from the underwater world, where the spirits of the dead dwelt? […] If they were angered, they

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pointed magic sticks that roared and flamed, and death flew where they pointed”.\textsuperscript{80} This way of telling the story shows an old conception of the world from a Native perspective, which appears as mystic today. From one point of view the consequences of this writing technique could be that it sustains prejudices and negative stereotypes of aboriginal peoples as primitive and mystic. From another perspective, it might fulfill the purpose of hermeneutic and emancipatory history writing, in that it creates better understanding of how Native peoples saw the arrival Europeans. Again we see the dilemma between illuminating a distinctive character with good intentions and the risk of working against its own means by doing so. As mentioned earlier there have been many postcolonial critics toward the reconstruction of authentic cultures, that is, cultures free from the contamination of colonialism. “The problem with these attempts is partially that they that a history free from colonialism can be reproduced and also that they remain within – and thereby confirm – the colonial logic”\textsuperscript{81}.

Other formulations that occur in \textit{The Story of Canada} show a similar tendency of Natives as mystic, “they learned the best places to hunt and found the best places to shelter. They discovered where the power of the spirits was strongest”\textsuperscript{82}. This quote might seem as a description of Native peoples as mystic, as supposed to the description of how European newcomers only choose grounds according to where it was easiest to get food, shelter and become rich. But from an aboriginal point of view animals were spirits, and when they came to a place where there were a lot of animals to hunt then it was an area where the spirits were strong. An interesting detail is that none of the books ever mention the fact that they display a mystic, exotic or romantic picture or portrayal of Native peoples. On page 81 in \textit{Canada: A North American Nation} however, there is a picture of European newcomers arriving at the new continent. The text underneath reads, “A romanticized portrayal of the English landing at Jamestown”\textsuperscript{83}. Hence the author is aware of the fact that a picture can portray a romantic image, and clearly she must be aware of that some pictures of Native peoples might convey the same image. Maybe it is

\textsuperscript{80} \textit{The Story of Canada}, 1992. p. 34.
\textsuperscript{81} \textit{Globaliseringsens Kulturer}, 2002. p. 25.
because of fear of being pointed out as prejudice that the authors avoid illuminating romantic, exotic and mystic images of Native peoples.

Even though *Canada: A North American Nation* can be criticized for its ambiguous use of quotation marks when talking of objects in Native religious beliefs, it is also the one book which most detailed describe the different beliefs and customs. Like the other books this one does not refer consistently to Native religions as religions, but it talks of Native “legends” and “myths”, which gives a less sophisticated and more mystic feeling. One scholar who has analyzed American history textbooks is James Parsons, who states that many textbooks carry an Eurocentric perspective since “Indian religious practices are called myths, and the Indians were ‘discovered’ or ‘found’ by Europeans”\(^8^4\). Christian belief among European newcomers is mostly referred to as “Christian beliefs”. In *Canada: A North American Nation*, draws a comparison between Amerindian myths of creation and the Biblical version in the Book of Genesis.\(^8^5\) The text shows two excerpts of the Zumi and the Blackfoot creation myths. This exercise is a good comparison between Native and Christian beliefs and forces the reader to critical thinking. The intention cannot be mistaken for anything but to create better understanding of Native culture and religion and to downsize the tendency of it as mystic. Hällgren points out the importance of textbooks to highlight that there are different groups and cultures and none can be said to be better than another. With the comparison of Native and Christian Creation myths, the author achieves this. One reason why Native culture and religion may come across as mystic or exotic in the books can be the reader’s insufficient knowledge in these subjects. By comparing Native stories to ones that the reader relates to easier, such as Biblical ones if the reader is of Christian background, the Native stories will seem no more mystic than the ones from the bible. One risk of always comparing one culture to another, as Jim Parsons point out, is that pupils might get the image of one of the cultures as more valuable than others.\(^8^6\)

James Axtell is another North American scholar who has analyzed how Native peoples are portrayed during the age of discovery in American textbooks. His verdict is quite harsh as he concludes, “the textbooks characterize native religion as some of

\(^8^4\) Parsons, 1982. p. 62.
\(^8^6\) Parsons, 1982. p.76.
‘primitive’ or ‘pagan pantheism’ because Indian allegedly believed that everything in nature – the land, trees, rocks and animals contained living spirits or souls. If we return to example in *Canada: A North American Nation*, where it says that: “moreover the universe was animate so that not only animals and plants possessed souls, but also “objects” such as rocks, waterfalls and clouds”, one understands the sense of Axtell’s thoughts. Axtell points out that scholars today believe that Natives respected the souls and spirits only of living creatures, and that they normally saw plants and animals as part of and representing a world of spirituality, rather than they worshiped a specific plant or animal. According to this information, the text in *Canada: A North American Nation*, seems to be incorrect, since it gives a image of Natives seeing individual objects as possessing souls. However the author does not refer to the Native beliefs as “pagan pantheism” or primitive”.

Overall it must be said that neither of the textbooks portray Native religion or culture as mystic, even though the author’s attempt in *The History of Canada*, to write history from the perspective of aboriginal people may come across as such. Also the description of Native beliefs of spirits in objects in *Canada: A North American Nation*, can be said to give a mystic image.

**The telling of Native history**

Another observation by James Axtell, is that the disposition in the history textbooks are strikingly alike, in that they all write chronologically. “How refreshing it would be to find a textbook that began on the west coast before treating the traditional eastern colonies and then worked in opposite directions”. The interesting point of Axtell’s conclusion is that the writing of history follows the expansion and development of white European settlers and pioneers, which means that the history of Native peoples is dependant on the history of European newcomers. Looking in the tables of contents in the Canadian textbooks all of them write history chronologically which is the most common for history books, but they also show different ways of disposing historical events during the periods of time.

There is a clear difference between the two more recent books that mostly deals with

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Canadian history during the 20th century and *Canada: A North American Nation* and *The Story of Canada*. The newer books tend to deal with history according to historical events and periods rather than by geographical factors. For example, when they talk of “A changing economy” or “From boom to bust: Canada in the 1920s and 1930s”, they deal with the whole of Canada below the same title. One obvious reason for this might be the fact that in the period of time they deal with, Canada was already an explored country. The continent had already been discovered by European pioneers and settlers. Looking at it from this point of view, the disposition of textbooks as Axtell points out really do come across as ethnocentric history writing.

The two older books *Canada: A North American Nation* and *The Story of Canada*, follows a more traditional way of writing history, if we view Axtell’s example of taking it from the east to the west as traditional. Specially *The Story of Canada* tells the history from east to west, starting with aboriginal peoples on the east coast before European arrival. Then follows the arrival of the first colonists, continued by the “discovery of the Great North West” and “Mountains and Oceans”, meaning the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific Ocean on the west coast. *Canada: A North American Nation* pretty much follows the same pattern. Chapter 2 treats “The first North Americans”, chapter 3 “The meeting of two worlds”, chapter 5 “visions of new societies”, chapter 6 “colonial realities” and chapter 9 “Frontier experiences of settlement”90. “The meeting of two worlds” is the meeting between Native peoples and European newcomers which first took place on the east coast of North America, and “colonial realities” and ”frontier experiences” deal with the colonization of Canada and the big move west. To some extent these observations match Ken Osborne’s statement that, “Textbooks dwelt on those figures who were seen as responsible for the geographic and political shape of Canada – missionaries, explorers, pioneers, railway builders, political leaders – and organized their narrative around four axes: the European settlement of Canada, the pre-confederation political and constitutional development of the country, the Quebec act and national sovereignty”91.

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An interesting detail is the disposition of older Canadian history textbooks. Additional to the four Canadian textbooks on which this analysis is based, I have looked at three other history schoolbooks from 1875, 1879 and 1922. These three books follow the same disposition as each other and that of *The Story of Canada* and *Canada: A North American Nation*. The titles of the first five chapters in *Ontario High School History of Canada* (1897), are “The country, The Aboriginies, Discoverers, Exploration and Missionaries and Indians”. *The History of Canada* from 1897, is very similar in that it starts with a description of “The Indian tribes” and then continues with “Christian missionaries”. The conclusion one can make is that history textbooks still tell history chronologically, and the chronology still follows the expansion of European colonization. However, as expected, there are vast differences between the use of words and terms of identification of Native peoples in the books of this analysis and those from the 19th and early 20th century. It has to be said though, that the three books from the turn of the century, contain substantial information about Native people, culture and history, considering the reports in Sweden from late 20th century which conclude that the Saami do not enjoy enough space in Swedish history textbooks.

One major difference between the three old books and the four modern ones is that the modern ones do not give the impression of Native peoples as “discovered” or “found” by Europeans, which is an observation by James Parsons in American history textbooks.92 The same conclusion is made in the report from SiL, which shows that the Saami are not introduced in the books until they come into contact with Swedish pioneers in the 18th century. After that none of the Swedish books mentions the Saami again, they seem to simple come and disappear in history. These tendencies do certainly not occur in the Canadian textbooks analyzed here. All four of them deal with the history of Native peoples from the first chapter to the last. Either they treat it as specifically Native history, as in *The Story of Canada* and *Canada: A North American Nation*, where Native history before the arrival of colonizers is dealt with, or they treat it as part of Canadian history. It is an important aspect according to the report from SiL and Karlsson, that the history of minority groups studied are studied independently from that of the colonizers, so that it does not get the image of being constantly dependent of the other. Of course in the case

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of Canadian Native history, the history of Native peoples has to be intervened with the history of the rest of Canadian society, since they have affected each other so much. None of the books deal with Native history after the arrival of the discoverers, without mentioning it in comparison to or as a part of Canadian history. The problem however, again, is identity. If Native peoples are Canadians, then their history is part of Canadian history, and if they are to be viewed as a distinct society within Canadian society, then their history is still part of Canadian history. The consequent of pointing it out as a special history within a bigger, is the risk of sustaining identities based on prejudice, and the distinct society as inferior. This is a problem which is very present in postcolonial theory and there are several thoughts that illustrates the dilemma. One is Gunlög Fur, who writes that, “the construction of identities is created in an excluding process against those who are not involved by the own identity. Therefore is the other is always present in the own history […] The marginalization of the Indian histories serves to confirm the meta story of white and progress that has colored American history writing to a high extent, and the same can be said about our Nordic countries if you change Indians for Saami”93. Looking at the Canadian textbooks from this perspective, one sees that they follow this pattern. All four of them do a good job in illuminating Native history, since it is a demand in the curriculum, but it is interesting to see how the authors introduce Native history. Clearly they also are confused with how to treat the identity of Natives as Canadians or a distinct society within Canada, or maybe they are not?

Native history in the textbooks is clearly introduced, and most often treated under its own titles or subtitles, as for example in The Story of Canada: “Three native heroes”, “First Nations and Distinct Societies”, in Canada: A Nation Unfolding: “The Aboriginal Peoples in 1900”, “Aboriginal involvement in World War 1”, “Aboriginal Contributions to the War Effort”. Even if the authors on several occasions refer to Native peoples as “Canadian Natives”94, “Canada’s Aboriginal peoples”95 or just simply as “Canadians”96, it is hard to determine what role Native peoples have in Canadian society. The fact that they are referred to in one subtitle as “distinct society”, might show why Native history is

consistently introduced under its own subtitles. Since the curriculum demands the teachers and textbooks to deal with minority groups in Canadian history and aboriginal history specifically, the authors might feel an urge to highlight aboriginal history in their books. Surely Native history receives plenty of attention this way, but it also appears to stand to the side of mainstream Canadian history. Cecilia Trenter expresses it from a postcolonial perspective, “already in the message a paradox jump can occur when individualization of a destiny becomes universalization, a stereotype for a people”\(^97\). It is probably not the intention of the authors to achieve this image of Native history, but it happens any way, which is exactly the message of postcolonial theory. The fact that we live in a world where colonial values and identities affect the perception of our surroundings without us knowing it or accepting it.

Another consequence of treating Native history under its own subtitles as a distinct minority group is observed in the report from SiL, and tendencies of which can be seen in *Canadian History 1900 – 2000*. The subtitles presenting Native history in this book follow convey a certain image, “Native peoples: Struggling for a better life”, “Native rights”, “New directions: Native rights in the 1970s”, “Canada’s Aboriginal peoples: Frustration and Protest”\(^98\). Just looking at the titles of theses chapters gives an impression of Native history as a history of struggle and hardship. The same conclusion is made in the report from SiL about Saami history in Swedish textbooks, “the possibilities of knowing two languages are never associated with growing up with dual cultures. In one textbook they even go so far as writing the title “Minority problem”. The perspective thereby is already made clear in the title: minority = problem”\(^99\). Even though Native history is not directly spelled out as a problem, the conception of aboriginal life as problematic and struggle is apparent, not only in *Canadian History 1900-2000* but in the other books as well. It would be interesting to see just one subchapter in one textbook, that tried to tell recent Native history totally on its own. The every day life for children on a Native reserve for example.

The question whether Native history is considered mainly as “pre-history”, derives from Karlsson’s observations of the Saami peoples disappearance from history in

\(^{97}\) Trenter, 2000. p. 29.
\(^{98}\) *Canadian History 1900-2000*, 2000.
Swedish textbooks.\textsuperscript{100} The meaning of “pre-history” is that for example a group, such as Saami or Canadian Natives, only are dealt with in history on one occasion, and after that they are forgotten. The consequence is that the history of those peoples tend not to be important as we move into more modern times. Ken Osborne expresses how the history of Canadian Natives was treated up until the 1960s, “The First Nations were assigned the textbook equivalent of a reserve: a segregated first chapter of quasi-ethnographical nature in which they appeared to live in a timeless present and which, more often than not, contained misleading and sometimes racist commentary”\textsuperscript{101}. One of the textbooks, \textit{Canada: A North American Nation}, uses the term “pre-history” when describing life of the first inhabitants on the North American continent. It is obvious that the author refers to the stone age as “pre-historic” when he writes, “The earliest inhabitants of North America lived in the Paleolithic Age when stone was widely used for tools, utensils and weapons”\textsuperscript{102}. It is not however obvious when this period of “pre-history” ends. One thing is for certain, and that is that the period of “pre-history” ended long before European discoverers arrived. The author writes about the various Native languages before European arrival and mentions that “in prehistoric times many more languages were spoken”\textsuperscript{103}. It would have been interesting to see if the author refers to the stone age as prehistory on other continents too. As already has been shown here the four textbooks analyzed, deal with Native history not only in an old past, but brings it up to date and treat various aspects of history. Therefore they cannot be argued to treat Native history as “pre-historic”.

\textbf{Conclusion}

Considering the reports of the scholars mentioned in this essay, who in their analyses of school textbooks observes prejudice and derogatory terms when identifying minority groups, I can conclude that none of the books analyzed here contain any such tendencies. Instead they describe what terms are accepted today and which ones are not. One of the books, \textit{Canada: A North American Nation}, also brings up how some terms formed during

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\textsuperscript{100} Karlsson, 2004. p. 5.
\textsuperscript{101} Osborne, 2000. p. 6.
\end{flushleft}
colonization derive from an ethnocentric perspective. One area where the textbooks tend
to fail is the discussion of identities according to race and ethnicity. Since Native peoples
clearly stand out as a minority group within Canadian society it would be appropriate
with a further discussion about identities in general and Native specifically. As
Montgomery points claims the writing of people belonging to different races and
ethnicities, without deliberating over where these conceptions derive from, can sustain
colonial bias. From this postcolonial point of view, the textbooks certainly fail in
breaking the old perceptions of colonialism, since they on several occasions describe
Native peoples without any further debate over the terms. One book however, *Canada: A
North American Nation*, writes about the creation of métis as an identity due to the
mixture of races.

On the subject of treating native peoples as a homogenous group, all four books
consistently stress the variety of Native peoples, cultures and ways of living.

The problem of concluding whether the portrayals of Native peoples are exotic,
mainly concerns whether the textbooks ascribe them certain ethnical markers. Hällgren
shows in her essay how Swedish textbooks writers tend to identify the Saami peoples
with markers such as the reindeer and kåtan. Certain features in the textbooks are
observed as typical for aboriginal peoples, for example traditions as the sundance and the
potlatch. Also the nomadic lifestyle and the grouping into tribes stand out as a mean of
identifying aboriginal peoples. As the authors consistently point out that different native
groups and cultures lived differently, there is no ethnic marker that generalizes Native
identity. Therefore from this perspective the textbooks portrayal of Native peoples cannot
be said to be exotic. That does not leave out that authors on certain occasions formulate
themselves in ways that are somewhat ambiguous. One example is the mentioning of
Native beliefs that “objects” contain spirits the fact that the author finds it necessary to
put quotation marks around objects is not unproblematic to determine, but it gives a
feeling that we are dealing with something exotic.

Many of the pictures in the textbooks show aboriginal peoples in some sort of
traditional clothing, garment or object, which can be argued as ethnical markers. I do not
however find that the pictures portray Native peoples from an ethnocentric perspective
because of this, as Hällgren does. I find that all the pictures are relevant to the text, even
though I ask for one or more pictures of Native every-day life in modern times. The problem as I see it, is that Hällgren finds herself in the dilemma where she wants to point out the distinctive character of a minority group, at the same time as she does not want to identify them by doing so. In this essay I also call it a catch 22, and it is a dilemma pointed out by many post-colonial theorists.

The problem of Natives as mystic focuses on the descriptions of Native religious beliefs. Again, the textbooks do not point out a general Native religion, but stress that there is a variety of beliefs and cultures. On several occasions the Native beliefs of spirits tend to receive a mystic image. The common referral to Native religious beliefs as myths or legends adheres to this conception. Also, the fact that the authors often compare Native religions to Christianity, even though there is a pedagogical intention behind it, can give students a feeling of one culture as more important than the other.

I do not find that either of the textbooks treat Native history as “pre-history”, since they all deal with Natives in history from the chapters to the last. Compared to the three books from the turn of the 19th century, the contemporary books do not treat Natives as discovered by European colonizers. Whether the books deal with Native history only in comparison to “white man’s” history, again reveals the dilemma of distinguishing distinctive cultures and sustaining bias. The two books that treat Canadian history before the arrival of European colonizers, deal with Native history individually, during the period before European arrival. The two newer books treat Native history as part of Canadian and consistently intervene Native history with the rest of Canadian society. A tendency that is visible in *Canadian History 1900-2000*, and the others books too for that matter, is that the history of Native peoples often seems to be synonymies with struggle and conflict.

My conclusion, is that Canadian history textbooks are less prejudice and bias than they were about twenty years ago, and also compared to Swedish history textbooks’ treatment of Native minorities. However, from a postcolonial perspective, they still contain elements of colonial ethnocentrism.
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