Unveiling the Paradox: Reconciliation Paths in Sweden and Canada.

A Comparative Analysis of the Reconciliation Processes in Canada and Sweden

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Lovisa Andersson

Abstract

Sweden and Canada are internationally recognised for their contributions to defending human rights and managed to establish a reputation as humanitarian superpowers. However, both countries deal with the aftermath of a long violent past, concerning the dreadful treatment of their respective indigenous populations. In two separate contexts, the First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples in Canada and the Sámi population in Sweden have been subject to strict assimilation policies, violations and other expressions of oppression across decades, but now, things are about to change. The purpose of the thesis has been to examine the current processes of reconciliation in the two countries by analysing the presence of the indigenous minorities' narratives in the reconciling work. Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid has served as the theoretical framework for the analysis, consisting of seven stages working with reconciliation: acquaintance, acknowledgement, empathy, responsibility, restitution, apology and narrative incorporation. The findings of the comparative study are that narratives play an important role in reconciliation processes, as conflicts involving indigenous peoples have to concern both identity and territorial matters. The study indicates that Sweden has not integrated the narratives of its indigenous population to the same extent as Canada, which explains why the Swedish reconciliation process has not progressed further.

Keywords: Indigenous people, Sweden, Canada, reconciliation, identity, narrative, Auerbach
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1. Introduction

At first glance, Sweden and Canada appear to be two peaceful countries, having truly succeeded in establishing themselves as global models of good international citizenship through their significant contributions in support of developing countries and as defenders of human rights (Strang, 2018, 202; Henrikson, 2005: 68: Bergman, 2007: 73; TRC, 2015: 19). In a similar fashion, Sweden and Canada have succeeded in hiding the remarkably similar violent pasts of their *Indigenous populations*, that is, minority groups identified by having their own cultures, languages, customs and institutions and a strong historical link to their territories (Amnesty, n.d.). For centuries, First Nations, Métis and Inuits in Canada (henceforth referred to as First Nations) and the Sámi in Sweden have faced oppression, forced displacement and racism perpetrated by the states in partnership with the church (Lindmark & Sundström, 2016; TRC, 2015). Rarely discussed within the countries, the Swedish and Canadian governments practised settler colonialism, implying that settlers "came to stay" at Indigenous lands and established new political orders on the basis of race and nationalism, but without exploiting its inhabitants (Veracini, 2013: 314). Ultimately, it is the strict policy of assimilation that has shaped the states' actions towards their Indigenous peoples, which have resulted in severe physical and psychological harm that follows generations. Considering their reputations as moral compasses, one might assume that it is of uttermost interest to Sweden and Canada to take action to set things right. Yet, it is not until recently – as a result of international pressure – that official investigations and reconciliation processes have been initiated to deal with the misdeeds and injustices that hold their governments and churches accountable (Persson, Harnesk & Islar, 2017: 26; Bengtsson, 2015: 66). Equally unexpected is the fact that both Sweden and Canada participated in the development of the ILO Convention 169 (the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention), but to date, neither Sweden nor Canada has ratified the convention (Bustamante & Martin, 2014: 55). Canada established a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in 2015 to make sure that a path towards reconciliation and coexistence was put in place. Within its mandate was the task of gathering the First Nations' *narratives*, that is, their stories and experiences of what happened during the politics of assimilation (Auerbach, 2009: 294). In Sweden, on the

other hand, a similar Truth Commission was not created until 2022. To me, with all things considered, the striking similarities between Sweden and Canada in terms of history, socio-economic conditions, foreign policy, and self-image, as well as their different ways and pace of taking responsibility for past violations, introduce an interesting puzzle concerning reconciliation.

The thesis begins with an overview of the previous literature related to the field of reconciliation research, followed by a presentation of the theoretical framework, which will guide the course of the study. Thereafter, the analytical method is introduced along with a description of the relevance of the comparison of the two cases. Next, the thesis will present a background of the Swedish and Canadian contexts respectively before delving into the analysis. Finally, additional considerations and reflections are made in the discussion section followed by the conclusion, summarising the findings of the study.

1.1. Purpose and research question

The objective of this research is to examine which factors are essential for reconciliation processes between Indigenous peoples and mainstream societies in liberal democracies by comparing how the governments of Sweden and Canada respectively approach the question. The research question reads as follows:

- *How do the processes of reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples differ between Sweden and Canada?*

This comparative study is relevant to peace and conflict research as it increases the understanding of what is required for reconciliation processes involving indigenous peoples in liberal democracies and allows for new insights into narratives' role in the process. Finally, it highlights a global problem as Indigenous peoples are a particularly vulnerable group worldwide due to their minority status (UN). By applying a qualitative content analysis, the central narratives of reconciliation processes will be highlighted and thus serve as a tool for the comparison of the two countries.

1.2 Delimitations

Although the Church of Sweden and the churches in Canada (comprising the Presbyterian Church, the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church and the United Church of Canada) are co-responsible for the atrocities against the Sámi and the First Nations respectively, the governments will be the main actors in this study (IRSSA 2006). This is also the aim of the thesis, namely to examine how governments in liberal democracies cope with their duties to fulfil the rights of Indigenous people. In the definition of state actors, I include governments, government-appointed commissions, Prime Ministers and individual ministers of state. Furthermore, a limitation of the period of time will be put in place. The scope will be limited to the years between 1998, when the Swedish Minister of Sámi Affairs officially apologised on behalf of the Swedish government, and the present (May 2023) due to pending reconciliation processes in both countries.

2. Background

These historical overviews of Sweden and Canada start around the 16th century respectively with the governments and churches intruding on the lands of their Indigenous peoples in ways that can be defined as acts of settle-colonisation, that is, to "claim both a special sovereign charge and a regenerative capacity" (Wolfe, 2006: 3). What follows is a short outline of the suppression of the Indigenous peoples of Sweden and Canada and their respective roads towards reconciliation.

2.1 Sweden and the Sámi

The colonial history of Sweden goes back to the 1500s when the Swedish crown seized ownership over Sámi territories and initiated the consolidation of a nation-state (Ericsson, 2016: 66). The state perceived the nomadic mobility as a threat to the territorial claim (Walzer, 1998: 181). Therefore, agricultural settlers were encouraged and economically supported to move north to cultivate the "wasteland" (Persson, Harnesk & Islar, 2017: 22).

Reforms during the 18th and 19th centuries recognised the state as the primary owner of the Sápmi land and resources. This was the result of a gradual process where the growth of racism, discrimination and theories of cultural standings across Europe legitimised the increased territorial and social control. The perception of nomadic Sámi as a lower-standing, inferior group gained further ground as their nomadic way of life prohibited them to reach a cultural state with developed property rights (Persson, Harnesk & Islar, 2017: 22). This viewpoint became even more apparent in the state's "*Lapp-should-be-Lapp*"-ideology, based on the belief that the reindeer herding Sámi were weak by nature and therefore needed to be protected by the state (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008: 34). Thereby, the state claimed a certain paternalistic relationship with the Sámi, in which institutional Sámihood revolved around reindeer herding, which needed to be "protected from Swedish civilization" (Ibid). Gradually, due to these forms of misrecognition, the Sámi lost more of their customary rights to use land and resources (Persson, Harnesk & Islar, 2017: 22).

The system of Sámi rights emerged with the implementation of the *Reindeer Grazing Act of 1886.* This classification of rights has led to persistent divisions between Sámi individuals and between Sámi communities as the definition of the "real Sámi", according to the official view, only accounted for the nomadic Sámi (Lantto & Mörkenstam 2008: 29-30). In fact, however, the Sámi population is heterogeneous with highly differentiated lifestyles, social status and economic positions. Except that only a minority is active within the industry of reindeer herding today, the population is divided into four state formations, including distinct linguistic and cultural differences (Ericsson, 2016: 71; Lantto, 2000: 32).

Since the time of settler colonization, the Sámi have been targeted for assimilation policies by the Swedish state. The most notable one, except for taking the liberty to draw the lines of who is *a real* Sámi, was the government's introduction of the nomad school system in the early 20th century. As a joint venture with the Church of Sweden, the purpose was to ensure that Sámi children stayed within the industry of reindeer herding. Essentially, it can be perceived as an extension of the *Lapp-should-be-Lapp*"-policy, where the Swedish state encouraged and promoted ethnic segregation in the schooling environment (Ericsson, 2016: 72-73). The school reform meant that the children of nomadic Sámi parents were sent to particular nomad schools, while the children of settled Sámi parents were educated together with the rest of the Swedish population (Lindmark & Sundström, 2016: 49).

The "*Lapp-should-be-Lapp*"-ideology began to lose influence during the mid-1900s, and the Swedish authorities' view of the Sámi now changed (Ericsson, 2016: 76). Still, improvements of Sámi rights and conditions have not progressed. International organisations, such as the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, have criticised Sweden for not doing enough to improve the rights of the Sámi (Persson, Harnesk & Islar, 2017: 26). To this day, the Sámi have struggled to have their ownership and territorial rights recognised, even though they were recognised as an Indigenous population by the Swedish Parliament in 1977 (Ibid). Effectively, Sámi immemorial prescription (*urminnes hävd*) has not qualified for establishing rights to land and resources since they are not in accordance with the Swedish Constitution. Hence, they have been subjected to, and lost, numerous lawsuits regarding reindeer herding rights on private lands, where mining companies, wind parks and hydropower plants threaten the Sámi livelihoods and the reindeer migration routes (Allard, 2011:161, 166, 177).

The process of reconciliation has been equally slow. The first official apology from the Church of Sweden was made in 2021 (after its separation from the Swedish state in 2000) and then a second one the year after. The church is in the midst of establishing how to make up for its misdeeds towards the Sámi. The Swedish state apologised in 1998 but with no real actions to follow. Hence, the Sámi Parliament (their publically-elected parliament and state agency) has not fully accepted their apology (Sametinget, 2023a). Finally, in 2021, a Truth Commission was set up as a temporary fact-finding body with a mandate to collect testimonies and educate the majoritarian society about the Sámi history. Their mandate will close winter of 2025 (Dir. 2021:103).

2.2 Canada and the First Nations

Canada's colonial history begins in the 16th century with the arrival of numerous European settlers, eventually with the French and British settlers as the dominant powers (Government of Canada). The French colonial efforts were put to an end in 1763 when they ceded their control to the British administrators. Settlement and exploitation of First Nations' lands began.

From the early 1800s, a new perspective on the relation to the First Nations emerged throughout the British Empire. It was a belief that British society and culture were superior, implying a missionary duty to bring "civilisation", to the Empire's Indigenous people. Thereafter, under strict policies of assimilation, First Nations were encouraged to abandon their traditional lifestyles to embrace Christianity and agriculture.

For the next 150 years, the "civilisation" program remained one of the central elements of Indigenous policy and legislation. Even when Canada became a federal state in 1867, the centralised approach to Indigenous affairs remained. In 1876, the *Indian Act* was introduced by the government, comprising largely restrictive regulations and ever-greater controls on the lives of First Nations. Thus, the federal authorities received greater authority to intervene in a variety of issues, such as determining who was Indigenous, the management of Indigenous lands and resources, and promoting "civilisation" (Government of Canada, n.d.).

Among the assimilation strategies carried out by the Canadian state, the most renowned one was the Indian Residential School (IRS) system, "Canada's greatest national shame" (Stanton, 2011: 1). Funded by the Federal Government and run by churches (the Catholic, Anglican, Methodist, Presbyterian and the United churches) more than 150.000 Indigenous children attended these schools between the mid-1800s to the late 1900s (Park, 2015: 275; Stanton, 2011: 1). The schools operated with the objective of assimilating Indigenous children into the non-Indigenous culture, thus, to abandon their traditional religion, languages and spirituality, which later has been condemned as a form of cultural genocide (TRC, 2015: 19). Separated from their families and communities, these children were sent far away to the schools where they were forbidden to speak their mother tongue or exercise their culture. The conditions were poor with widespread malnutrition, preventable and pandemic disease and extensive physical and sexual abuse. These experiences have caused suffering, echoing down through generations, leaving impacts even for those who never attended an IRS, due to loss of language, traditions and culture, high rates of suicide and substance abuse and family breakdown (Stanton, 2011: 2; Park, 2015: 275).

The last residential school closed in 1996, followed by broad discussions on how to deal with the legacies of the IRS system. The same year, the *Royal Commission of Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) launched recommendations for a public inquiry into IRS, comprising testimonies recounting the abuses that survivors of the schools had given during hearings (Ibid). However, real actions did not take off until the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) in 2007, with the aim to address the legacy of the IRS. This resulted in the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (Settlement Agreement Park, 2015: 276).

The TRC was an official, government-sponsored, temporary fact-finding body, set up to investigate abuses of human rights committed during the years of the IRS and deal with over 4000 documentable deaths of children (Stanton 2011: 3-4; Park, 2015: 275). Within its mandate, the TRC focused specifically on acknowledging and witnessing the IRS experience, promoting awareness of its impact and creating a public record of the IRS legacy. With its closure in 2015, the TRC published "The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada", comprising six volumes and released 94 recommendations to respond to the legacy of the IRS and advance the reconciliation process, the "94 Calls to Action" (TRC, 2015: 223-241). One of the most prominent was the call for Canada to

implement the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP). In particular, the TRC urged for the adoption by both the federal and provincial governments as their "framework for reconciliation" (Boutilier, 2017: 1).

3. Previous research

This section will present previous research on reconciliation in contemporary settler societies, while also highlighting its connections to identity-based conflicts, in order to give a broad picture of the specific needs of Indigenous peoples in reconciliation processes.

The previous literature on *reconciliation* is extensive, and often defined as "restoring friendship and harmony between the rival sides after conflict resolution, or transforming relations of hostility and resentment to friendly and harmonious ones" (Bar-Siman-Tov, 2004). According to this approach, reconciliation efforts in identity conflicts are aimed at radically changing the hearts and minds of the communities involved, hence the non-material aspects of a conflict (Auerbach, 2009). Dialogue and storytelling are thus held as important tools for processing traumas and allow the antagonists to exchange perspectives (Lederach, 1997). This aspect is a central element in previous literature on the reconciliation of protracted identity conflicts, such as Israel-Palestine (Barak, 2005; Bar-Tal, 1998) and Northern Ireland (Kelman, 2004; Little, 2012), where the role of narratives is crucial in the evolvement and termination of the conflicts (Ibid). Although, as will be argued in this thesis, *material restitution* should not be underestimated in its importance for legitimising identities, overcoming power asymmetries and breaking with the status quo (Kriesberg, 2007).

Since this thesis concerns Indigenous peoples in Sweden and Canada, restitution becomes a central concern as it here relates to compensation in terms of land returns or granting territorial rights. In "*The Guilt of Nations: Restitution and Negotiating Historical Injustices*" Barkan holds that a dialogue on restitution between mainstream society and Indigenous minorities is essential for the redefinition of the nation during reconciliation processes (Barkan, 2000). Furthermore, in order for the reconciliation process to survive, Barkan (2000) argues that it must be durable in both practical and ethical terms, indicating that restitution fulfils this need. Adding to this reasoning, Sulyandziga & Sulyandziga (2020) declare that, for Indigenous communities, the identities and lands are inseparable as their ancestral roots are embedded in the lands more deeply than others. Simply, the land is the asset that upholds

their culture and, thereby, critical for its long-standing survival (Allard, 2011). Consequently, a loss of land (by occupying their lands or taking the land rights away from them), would threaten their entire identity (Ibid).

As the thesis aims to investigate reconciliation processes in the aftermath of settler colonialism in liberal democratic nations, it is relevant to consider the previous research on pervasive settler states such as Australia, South Africa and New Zealand. These countries have received significant attention for how they have addressed the historical wrongs through processes of transitional justice, truth commissions, reconciliation and official apologies to their Indigenous peoples (Dirk Moses, 2011). Although, as presented in the work of Edmonds (2016), the reason for this growing interest is the general resistance expressed by these countries to engage in formal processes of decolonisation and justice, despite issues of (cultural) genocide, displacements, "stolen" lands and "lost" generations that have called for reparation. The Canadian reconciliation process has been subject to such criticism for its insufficient efforts to dismantle post-colonial structures that continue to uphold injustices today (James 2010; Dominello, 2017). In Sweden, on the other hand, public and political discussions about settler colonisation in Sápmi are almost absent, despite official apologies from the Church of Sweden (Lindmark & Sundström, 2017) and extensive research on the topic (ex. Lundmark, 2006 & 1971; Fur & Hennessey, 2020).

Finally, my thesis intends to build on the findings of previous research and provide new insights into what is essential for reconciliation processes between Indigenous peoples and mainstream societies in liberal democracies.

4. Theoretical framework

This section will present a theoretical framework that can be helpful in explaining *how* the processes of reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples differ between Sweden and Canada. To do this, the states' narratives on their historical and current relationship with their Indigenous peoples will be analysed.

Yehudith Auerbach is widely recognised for her narrative-based theories of reconciliation. She defines *narrative* as a story that tells about what has happened or is happening to people and takes place in a certain period of time (Auerbach, 2009: 294-295). *National narratives* are concrete stories about iconic events in a nation's history, retold over generations, while *metanarratives* are abstract and not understood by ordinary people. Thereby, narratives constitute a means of identification and self-affirmation as they either unite people or separate groups (Auerbach, 2009: 293). In this thesis, metanarratives are represented by Indigenous people's stories, which need to be transmitted to mainstream society to take on concrete form and reality (Ibid).

According to Auerbach, previous studies on reconciliation were divided between two schools of thought, where one claimed reconciliation to be "a difficult and delicate process that is not simply a matter of the head, but more so of the heart" while the other argued that reconciliation would be better served if presented in a more political context (Fischer 2001a, 34 See Auerbach 2009, 292). Instead, Auerbach emphasises that reconciliation will not be achieved if not both the warm" elements such as empathy and forgiveness and the "cold" narratives are addressed (Auerbach, 2009: 293). This is important to consider, she argues when dealing with *identity conflicts*, which I will argue that both the Swedish and Canadian conflicts are cases of. Thus, *Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid* is an explanatory framework, which presumes that partners in identity conflicts cannot reach reconciliation unless they become acquainted with each other's narratives, acknowledge their legitimacy, and are prepared to incorporate them into their own (Auerbach, 2009: 298, 312). The pyramid

consists of seven stages, with each stage representing an aspect of reconciliation, combining the "warm" and "cold" elements mentioned above.

The first stage involves the parties becoming *acquainted* with the other party's contrasting narrative, that is, knowing the facts about the other (Auerbach, 2009: 305). Being familiar with the narratives allows for the second stage of full *acknowledgement* of them, which implies some understanding of the other party as well as recognition of them as authentic and legitimate. The third stage is a "warm" and demanding trait that involves expressing *empathy* toward the other's plight, in other words, the ability to identify with the other's painful situation and feelings. The fourth stage involves acknowledging *responsibility* for the plight of the "other", which is a critical "cold" moment for both parties since it may be tantamount to an admission of guilt (Auerbach, 2009: 307). The fifth stage is the willingness of one side to compensate for past wrongs by offering *material restitution* to the victims. This is an inherently "cold" political act performed by formal decision-makers, while the previous four movements were primarily "people-to-people" movements. Yet, restitution has to be accompanied by a full acknowledgement of past violations, otherwise, there are few prospects for genuine reconciliation (Auerbach, 2009: 308). The sixth stage is to publicly *apologise* and ask for forgiveness for past wrongs. This involves warm and cold elements; while the public declaration of an apology is a purely political and practical act and therefore a "cold" process, the request for forgiveness must be a genuine and "warm" expression of deep remorse and the assumption of full responsibility (Auerbach, 2009: 308-309). Finally, the last seventh stage is about *narrative incorporation*, which involves an effort to incorporate opposing narratives into accepted mutual accounts of the past and a shared vision for the future (Auerbach, 2009: 310).

It is important to note that the reconciliation pyramid is an ideal model. This means in practice that it is a tool for exploring reconciliation processes, but where the stages do not necessarily have to be fulfilled in chronological order for reconciliation to be possible (Auerbach, 2009: 312).

5. Method

The study aims to explain what role narratives have in the reconciliation processes in Sweden in comparison to Canada. Based on the research question, a comparative case study will be conducted between the two countries as the comparative elements will help explain how the states integrate and reproduce narratives. Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid will serve as the theoretical framework in combination with qualitative content analysis as the methodology. By applying Auerbach's reconciliation pyramid as a theoretical framework, it will be possible to determine *how* the presence of narratives impacts reconciliation.

5.1 Analytical method

The method used in this thesis is qualitative content analysis to study the selected material and identify patterns. In contrast to quantitative content analysis which puts emphasis on the manifest content of the text, qualitative content analysis is more interested in the latent content "between the lines" (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 365, 376; Braun & Clarke, 2006: 98). The qualitative content analysis, therefore, implies a more interpretative and context-sensitive method of analysis, assuming that it is possible to uncover the motives, purposes, and meanings embedded in the text. As a result, it can better tell us about norms, motives, values and purposes (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 376). This methodology is suitable when studying governments' ways of communicating with the public as well as it provides data on decision-making without interviewing the decision-makers (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 374; Bergström & Boréus, 2012: 24).

For the coding process, the seven different narratives from Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid have been operationalised to serve as the categories for conducting the content analysis. To avoid the risk of a validity problem with this approach, it is important to be well-informed on the contexts that are about to be analysed, since individual words cannot be

representable for the essence of the study (Boréus & Bergström, 2012: 60). Moreover, it is important to be concise and systematic when choosing the codes as well as when carrying out the coding procedure (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 380, 384).

5.2 Comparative case study

This research is based on a comparative case study methodology. Case studies are widely used in comparative politics because they can provide country-specific insights while also accounting for broader trends and patterns (do Amaral, 2022: 42). This feature of the comparative methodology thus serves the purpose of this research which is to find out *how* the processes of reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples differ between Sweden and Canada.

The form of comparison will be a small-N study, based on a strategic selection of cases appropriate to the interest in question. This research design brings several strengths, such as allowing for good internal validity and quite good external validity. In other words, they say something meaningful within the specific country and in general. Furthermore, small-N studies bring increased conceptual validity since they are based on a systematic analysis of several countries, which helps guard against false universalism and false uniqueness (Halperin & Heath, 2020: 232-235). On the other hand, small-N research does not compromise a lot of cases where the lack of variation can lead to probabilistic notions.

5.3 Case selection – Most Similar Systems Design (MSSD)

The case selection is based on the *Most Similar Systems Design* (MSSD), implying that the case selection is based on important similarities observed between the two cases, except with regard to the phenomenon of which we are interested in assessing (Halperin & Heath: 239; Ankar, 2008: 389). As previously mentioned in the introduction, Sweden and Canada share a significant number of characteristics: they have similar level of economic development, a similar foreign policy, similar self-perception as humanitarian superpowers, and are inhabited by Indigenous peoples that have received mistreatment by the their states for decades

(Wilton, 2004; TRC, 2015; Ericsson, 2016). Additionally, Canada and Sweden both have strong welfare states around which they have attempted to build their national identities rather than on the basis of ethnicity. Regarding the large number of new members these countries receive every year, the resulting diversity of each society makes them multicultural (Wilton, 2004: 3). However, where Sweden and Canada differ, is in their state culture and national identity. While Sweden has a long history of nation-building and (until quite recently) a relatively culturally and ethnically homogenous state, Canada is a fairly "new" country with a fragmented national identity, being an immigrant society with no dominant group (Walzer, 1998: 182). In contrast to Sweden, both regional and sub-national identities are present in Canada, such as Aboriginal nationalism, Québecois nationalism and Western regionalism (Ibid).

5.4 Operationalisation

Based on the concepts of my theoretical framework, the seven stages of the Reconciliation Pyramid will be operationalised according to the scheme below. These operative definitions have been adjusted to suit the purpose of the thesis, which is to analyse what parts of the reconciliation process the governments in Sweden and Canada have accomplished. The scheme is intended to facilitate the analysis of the material as the questions are posed in a way to examine what narratives are influencing the governments in their respective reconciliation process.

Table 1. Conceptualisation and operationalisation scheme

Concept	Acquaintance	Acknowledge-ment	Empathy	Responsibility	Restitution	Apology	Narrative incorporation
Concept-ualisation	Knowing facts about the indigenous people(s)'s version and scrutinizing their own narratives.	Recognition of the indigenous people(s) as legitimate and its versions as valid.	Ability to identify with the indigenous people(s)'s painful situations and feelings.	Admission of some kind of guilt for the plight of the indigenous people(s).	Material compensation to the indigenous peoples for past wrongs.	Apologise and ask for forgiveness for past wrongs.	Incorporate opposing narratives into accepted mutual accounts of the past and a shared vision for the future.
Operation-alisation	Has the state made any efforts to integrate its indigenous people(s) and/or spread knowledge about the different perspectives?	Has the state integrated the indigenous people(s) in truth commissions/ investigations work and made them feel that their narratives are recognised as legitimate?	Has the state expressed any identification of the indigenous people's feelings?	Has the state taken responsibility for its actions towards its indigenous people(s), i.e. apologised or in other ways assumed its guilt?	Has the state offered the indigenous peoples material (incl. territorial rights) or economic compensation for past wrongs?	Has the state genuinely apologised, i.e. asked for forgiveness, to its indigenous people(s) for past wrongs?	Has the state worked to incorporate the past narratives from both sides to achieve full integration and, eventually, a shared narrative?

Note: this is a self-made scheme, based on the seven narrative stages in Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid
(Auerbach, 2009).

5.5 Material

The selection of the empirical material is based on the purpose of the study, which is to reflect the Swedish and Canadian states' approaches and attitudes towards their Indigenous peoples and to reconcile with them. Therefore, the material will consist of foremost primary sources in the form of government statements and documents. Moreover, the scope of data will be limited to the years 1998-2023 (as discussed in section 1.2), to get a qualitative perspective on the contemporary situation. This relatively long time span is necessary when studying reconciliation processes as they are complex and time-consuming. I am aware of the changes in government power structures during this lengthy period, but as the purpose of this study is to analyse the government' general – rather than the individual political parties' – approach to reconciliation, this aspect will not be taken into consideration for the analysis. Finally, the variables in the operationalisation scheme will serve as the guiding principles for material selection. Based on these criteria, the following sources could be concerned as most suitable as empirical evidence:

Sweden:

- Statement of Apology. "No way to move forward without an apology to the Sámi for the oppression" (*Ingen möjlighet att komma vidare utan en ursäkt till samerna för förtrycket*). Annika Åhnberg, Minister of Sámi Affairs, 1998.
- Dir. 2021:103 – Terms of Reference. "Mapping and reviewing the policy towards the Sámi and its impact on the Sámi people" (*Kartläggning och granskning av den politik som förts gentemot samerna och dess konsekvenser för det samiska folket*). Ministry of Culture, 2021.
- Dir. 2021:35 – Terms of Reference. *"A new reindeer husbandry law - the Sami people's right to reindeer husbandry, hunting and fishing"* (*En ny renskötsellagstiftning – det samiska folkets rätt till renskötsel, jakt och fiske*). Ministry of Rural Affairs and Infrastructure, 2021.

Canada:

- Statement of Apology. "Statement of Apology – to former students of Indian Residential Schools." Stephen Harper, Prime Minister, 2008.
- Final Report. "The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Vol. 6.".The TRC, 2015.

Additional secondary sources such as official apologies in news articles, the Swedish curriculum for the elementary school in political science (Lgr 22), and analyses published by scholars and journalists will also be used in order to access accurate and relevant background information (Halperin & Smith, 2020: 275-276). In particular, secondary sources are essential for the Swedish context, since the material is very limited as the process of establishing a truth commission has only just begun (Sanningskommissionen (a), n.d.). To avoid the risk of bias in the selection of sources, the above-mentioned sources for the Swedish context have been selected on the basis of their direct link to the official reconciliation process.

Source criticism can also be applied. The material presented will not represent each and every year from 1998 until 2023, due to the uneven distribution of material between the cases. For instance, there is a wide range of reports and official documents related to the Canadian case, but no definite or determined reports regarding the truth or reconciliation process in Sweden

yet. Although, it has to be acknowledged that Sweden and Canada are at different stages in their reconciliation processes. While Canada established its Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 2008, followed by their comprehensive final report published in 2015, the Swedish government did not launch its decision to install a truth commission until 2021 (Sanningskommissionen (a), n.d.). Despite this disparity in the amount of material, the study remains relevant as this lack of material is just one aspect of many pointing to Canada's leadership in the reconciliation process.

6. Analysis

This section will analyse the material from the Swedish and Canadian governments according to the seven stages of Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid for the purpose to find out how well the states comply with the thesis' framework of reconciliation.

6.1 Acquaintance

The first stage to be analysed is the *acquaintance* of the different narratives about the state's treatment of the Indigenous peoples, involving the notion of spreading knowledge of different perspectives and scrutinising their narratives.

In 2021, the Swedish government launched the Terms of Reference titled "Mapping and reviewing anti-Sámi policies and their impact on the Sámi people", stating that the upcoming Truth Commission will be established to "highlight and spread knowledge about the experiences of the Sámi people" (Terms of Reference, henceforth referred to as ToR (a)). Sámi representatives from different Sámi groups are involved both in this preparatory work and in the establishment of the Commission with the aim to spread knowledge about their different narratives. Thereby, this initiative demonstrates the government's commitment to engage with narratives other than the grand mainstream one. In addition, on the Commission's website, they invite Sámi and non-Sámi persons to engage in dialogues on their legacy, which thus can be in line with the stage, *acquaintance*, albeit rather unknown (Sanningskommissionen (b), n.d.). It is also evident from the speech by the Minister of Sámi Affairs from 1998 that there is a *desire* for the mainstream population to become acquainted with the language as well as to increase the knowledge about the Sámi population in general (Sametinget, 1998: 15). Yet, this is not a lot in comparison to the efforts made in Canada.

Clearly, the Canadian government complies with the first stage, *acquaintance,* due to its large number of initiatives to bring people together and to encourage dialogue and encounters of different narratives. These initiatives target different groups and ages of the population, with a particularly strong focus on the younger generations. Forums and workshops such as "Education Day" in British Colombia and the International Center for Transitional Justice's (ICTJ's) Children and Youth Program provide platforms for the younger and older generations to come together to engage in dialogues about the residential schools (TRC, 2015: 129). Moreover, the federal state of Canada has initiated various residential school commemoration projects, with the purpose of inviting citizens to be acquainted with the Indigenous people's narratives about the past and why, to this day, these stories matter (TRC, 2015: 182). Likewise, TRC events across Canada, for survivors from the IRS and for the population in general, have taken place to share the wisdom of survivors and elders. In addition, the Commission stresses the importance of creating venues for reconciliation at the community level to build relationships, involving non-governmental sectors of society such as media, sports organisations and the business sector (Ibid: 193-208).

6.2 Acknowledgement

The second stage to be analysed is the notion of *acknowledging*, aiming to discover whether there has been any active work from the governments' sides to integrate their Indigenous people's narratives and ensure that these are recognised as legitimate in investigations.

The Swedish government admits that it shares the Sámi Parliament's view on the need for a thorough investigation of the assimilation policy and its consequences for the Sámi (ToR, 2021a: 2). Therefore, the very creation of the Truth Commission can be seen as an incentive to reveal the truth and recognise the narratives as true, as it will bring forward "the Sámi's own experience of their history" through interviews and dialogues in order to "spread knowledge about and increase the general understanding of their history". Thus, this is consistent with the second stage of *acknowledging* (Ibid: 3, 5). In addition, the Commission expresses that it is "essential" that the material collected is "preserved for future generations", and thereby recognises the legitimacy of these narratives in the investigations and for a long time ahead (Ibid).

Like its Swedish counterpart, the TRC was created with the mandate to inform all Canadians about the IRS and "what happened and why, concerning human rights violations committed against them in the residential schools" (Ibid: 236). Besides providing a part of the groundwork for this thesis, the TRC's *Final Report* is the result of all the hearings conducted during its mandate, thus representing their aim of nationally *acknowledging* the narratives of their Indigenous peoples. Until its closure in 2015, the investigations involved former residential school students, their families, communities, churches, former school employees, government officials and other relevant stakeholders before transferring the records to the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR) for safekeeping (Ibid: 7). In addition, as a part of its mandate of conveying the truth, they established the National Residential School Student Death Register, representing an effort to record the names of the students who died at school along with the Missing Children Project that makes available the records of the death (Ibid: 145). Hence, by recognising the legitimacy of these records, the government fulfils the requirements for *acknowledgement* (Ibid: 147).

6.3 Empathy

The third stage to be analysed is the governments' expressions of *empathy* for the Indigenous peoples' plight. The aim is thus to discover whether the governments genuinely have expressed any identification with the Indigenous people's suffering.

The speech by Annika Åhnberg, the Minister of Sámi Affairs, showed little empathy, although the occasion of her visit was during Indigenous People's Day in 1998. Nevertheless, by the end of her speech, she declared that "we cannot in any way accept the oppression, such as the denial of the Sámi language, the forced displacement and the other expressions of oppression that we have been responsible for over the years" (Sametinget, 1998: 17). This suggests some degree of empathy, but it is still not consistent with an identification of the feelings of the Sámi. Neither does the Terms of Reference, published by the Swedish government, indicate any evident sentiments of empathy.

In stark contrast with Sweden, the TRC's Final Report recognises repeatedly how the memories of the school experiences may haunt these individuals, and why truth and reconciliation processes, therefore, can be painful events, as they often require "reliving horrific memories of abuse, hunger and neglect" (TRC, 2015: 157). In addition, the Commission calls on all Canadian citizens, as a part of the reconciliation process, to "mourn and commemorate a terrible loss of people, cultures and languages", being an expression of deep empathy for the Indigenous peoples' grief (Ibid: 178). Thus, throughout the Final Report, *empathy* is expressed for the Indigenous peoples for all they have gone through. Prime Minister Harper himself also expressed empathy for what he called "a sad chapter in our history" (Harper, 2008). He acknowledged the generational "suffering" caused by the IRS as well as the "tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities" and thereby shows intentions to identify with the Indigenous peoples' feelings (Ibid).

6.4 Responsibility

The fourth stage to be analysed is *responsibility*, that is, whether the governments are taking responsibility for the plight that they have inflicted on their Indigenous peoples over the decades.

When Annika Åhnberg gave her speech in 1998, she acknowledged the "oppression that the Swedish state has inflicted on the Sámi people" before declaring the impossibility of accepting the oppression "for which we have been responsible over the years" (Sametinget, 1998: 17). This is thus in line with the fourth stage of the Reconciliation Pyramid, as she, on behalf of the Swedish government, assumes *responsibility* for the plight of the Sámi people. On the other hand, it is debatable whether her apology is legitimate (as discussed in section 2.1). Furthermore, the Swedish government expressed in 2021 that it "has a responsibility to increase the knowledge about the abuses and harassments as well as the racism that the Sámi people have been and are exposed to", referring to the policy of assimilation which has contributed to "the deprivation of Sámi language, culture and identity in many cases" (ToR, 2021: 2). Even though this could be interpreted as some kind of admission for the plight of

the Sámi, an explicit admission of guilt and full responsibility is still absent from the government.

Undoubtedly, Prime Minister Harper assumed the government's responsibility for the IRS student's suffering as he held his official apology in 2008. In his speech, he acknowledged that "it was wrong to separate the children" and isolate them from their families and culture in order to "assimilate them into the dominant culture" (Harper, 2008). Furthermore, Harper repeats three times "and we apologise for having done this", aiming at the policies of assimilation (Ibid). Summarising the content of this statement of apology, it clearly aligns with the prerequisites of the fourth stage of *responsibility*, regarding its message of wrongdoing and guilt for the atrocities that were carried out. Moreover, the Commission's launching of "The 94 Calls to Action" (CTAs) indicates the aim of taking full responsibility. These are actionable policy recommendations – speaking to all sectors of Canadian society – that serve a dual purpose in the healing process: recognising the complete, terrifying history of the IRS, and putting in place mechanisms to ensure that these abuses are never repeated. In this way, the Canadian government ensures that the apology held in 2008 is not just empty words, but actually guarantees changes to correct its "dismal failures" (TRC, 2015: 81). Additionally, an important difference to Sweden is that the state of Canada has implemented the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) as a central framework to support and improve access to justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada (TRC, 2015: 49), while Sweden has adopted it but not yet implemented it completely (Sametinget, 2023b).

6.5 Restitution

The fifth stage to be analysed is the notion of *restitution*, in other words, whether the states have offered material or financial compensation to the Indigenous populations for past wrongs. As previously discussed, compensations and reparations are central themes of this thesis as they are crucial for advancing the reconciliation process in cases where land and identity are closely intertwined.

Despite the historical awareness of the importance of land rights for the Sámi, the notion of restitution continues to be rather vague in the Swedish context. In the government's Terms of Reference, *restitution* is not mentioned in any broader sense more than that "the Commission will not comment on the liability of individuals or other issues that may be subject to judicial reviews, such as compensation." (ToR, 2021a: 4). Instead, it refers to the newly established Committee on Reindeer Lands (referred to as ToR, 2021b), appointed by the Swedish government in 2021. The judicial mandate of this separate commission is to analyse the Sámi people's right to hunting, fishing and reindeer herding, to assess their past and current exclusive rights related to these lands due to immemorial prescription, and finally to propose amendments to other legislation (ToR, 2021b: 3-4). The Committee announces that it "might be important" to ensure that Indigenous groups have access to land that they have traditionally used if it is "essential for the maintenance of their culture." (Ibid: 1). Furthermore, it is declared that if the Sámi are covered by particular rights, the conditions under which these lands can be "appropriately returned to the Sámi communities" will be examined (Ibid: 6). Hence, the eventual return of land can be interpreted as the fifth stage of *restitution*, even though not as a clearly defined objective of the work towards reconciliation. Likewise, restitution in the form of compensation for other damages suffered by the Sámi is left out of the overall discussion. Still, somewhat paradoxically, is the declared overarching goal of the Truth Commission to "propose measures that contribute to reparation and reconciliation", (Ibid: 1-6) but without taking restitution and land rights into account properly.

In stark contrast to its Swedish counterpart, the Canadian TRC has issued and carried out numerous proposals which comply with the fifth stage of reparation and *restitution*. First and foremost, as declared in the 2007 Settlement Agreement, actions are already taken to address the legacy of the Indian schools. The agreement included a Common Experience Payment (CEP) for all eligible former students from Indian boarding schools to compensate individual survivors, an Independent Assessment Process (IAP) for claims of sexual or physical abuse, along with other activities for commemoration and healing projects in Indigenous communities, the latter ones funded by $20 million set aside by the Canadian state (TRC, 2015: 182; Park, 2015: 276). Lastly, the TRC refers to the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (RCAP) – the very first commission to examine the relation between the state of Canada and its Indigenous peoples – which stated back in 1996 that "there must be a fundamental reallocation of lands and resources" (Ibid: 22). Thereby, the overall approach

and initiatives taken by the TRC, on behalf of the Canadian state, are consistent with the fifth stage of the Reconciliation Pyramid.

6.6 Apology

The sixth stage of the analysis is whether the governments have carried out an official *apology* to ask their Indigenous peoples for forgiveness for past wrongs. The aim is thus to discover if such an apology involves a genuine expression of deep regret and an assumption of full responsibility for past wrongs.

In August 1998, on Indigenous Peoples' Day, the Swedish Minister of Sámi Affairs, Annika Åhnberg, apologised to the Sámi people on behalf of the Swedish government (Sametinget, 1998: 17; Sameradion, 2008). In her speech, Åhnberg recognised the "oppression that Swedish society has exerted on the Sámi people throughout history" and then announced: "On behalf of the government, I would like to apologise for this." (Sametinget, 1998: 17). Furthermore, she stressed the impossibility of "accepting the oppression, such as the denial of the Sámi language, the forced displacement and the many other expressions of oppression that we have been guilty of over the years" (Ibid). Finally, she declared that the only way the Swedish society can move forward is "to apologise for these abuses." (Ibid). Although, the apology does not seem to be the core of the speech, which lacks further elements that are indicated in the operationalisation scheme, such as deep regret or request for forgiveness. Rather than a request for forgiveness, Åhnberg's speech emphasises the *responsibilities* from both governmental and Sámi actors to ensure deeper integration and the necessity of coexistence and reciprocal respect (Ibid: 14-17).

In Canada, the 11th of June 2008 has come to be known as the "Day of the Apology", being the day when Prime Minister Harper and the leaders of all other federal political parties formally apologised for the harm caused by the IRS (TRC, 2015, 84). In his speech, Harper expressed deep remorse as he described the atrocities that the children at the residential schools had to experience (Harper, 2008). There are various indications that he is consistent with Auerbach's definition of *apologising*. In particular, the frequent use of "we apologise" and "we recognise", can be interpreted as an indication that he genuinely seeks forgiveness

for past and lasting wounds caused by the government and the churches (Ibid). More importantly, Harper indicated that responsibility and concrete actions follow with this apology, insisting that the "burden is properly ours as a Government, and as a country" (Ibid). Although, the strongest indicator of a genuine apology was his declaration that "the Government of Canada sincerely apologises and asks the forgiveness of the Aboriginal peoples of this country for failing them so profoundly." (Harper, 2008). Hence, the notion of "forgiveness" is thus utterly present, being an important element for the sixth stage, *apologising*. Moreover, the TRC reports how the Prime Minister's speech was received by many of the survivors, and confirms that the apology evoked intense emotions for many of them when finally hearing the words "we are sorry" (TRC, 2015: 84).

6.7 Narrative incorporation

The seventh and final stage to be analysed is the notion of *narrative incorporation* with the purpose to investigate whether the governments have worked towards incorporating the narratives of their Indigenous peoples to achieve full integration.

In Sweden, improving knowledge of the Sámi language, culture and their contributions to society seems to be a long-standing government goal, dating back to Annika Åhnberg's speech in 1998 when she talked about "co-existence" (Sametinget 1998: 14-17). Likewise, the purpose of the Truth Commission is to "highlight and spread the knowledge of the past and present experiences of the Sámi" (Ibid). The intention is thus to raise awareness of the Sámi rights as an Indigenous people on one hand, and the duties of the public towards the Sámi on the other (ToR, 2021a: 4). Currently, the lack of knowledge of the past is outlined as one of the main obstacles to the "relations between the mainstream society and the Sámi, between the state and the Sámi, and between different Sámi groups", why the Truth Commission has been given an educating mandate to come up with suggestions to improve the relations (ToR, 2021a: 5). Taken together, the governmental actions (through the Truth Commission) indicate an ambition to incorporate the Sámi's narrative of the past with the aim of creating a more inclusive society as a whole, thereby consistent with the seventh stage, namely *narrative incorporation*. Although, examining the 2022 elementary school curriculum, only "stories in ancient and Nordic mythology and in Sami religion" are required

as knowledge requirements for each and every subject of history, religion, geography and political science. Beyond that, the Sámi Parliament and the Sámi as the Indigenous population of Sweden as mentioned as educational requirements (Lgr 22, 2022: 175, 182, 189, 196).

In comparison to the Swedish context, Canada seems to have a broader goal regarding the integration of diverse narratives. The TRC's Final Report is imbued with a drive to unite the Canadian population, and above all, to create a shared collective national memory of the country's history. Therefore, one of the main goals for the government is clearly *narrative incorporation*, considering the strive for a national reconciliation that "involves respecting differences and finding common ground to build a better future together" (TRC, 2015: 17, 93). Moreover, there is a clear vision of transforming Canadian society "so that our children and grandchildren can live together in dignity, peace, and prosperity on these lands we now share." (TRC, 2015: 4). Like in Sweden, a lack of knowledge of the past is detected as the main problem, followed by directives and plans in the final report on how to incorporate different narratives. Education about the history and legacy of the IRS is framed as a key tool to address this national problem, with concrete plans to introduce a curriculum about the residential schools that integrates the voices of the Indigenous peoples (Ibid: 122). Thus, youth and children are brought to the forefront as they "bring unique perspectives to what is needed to address intergenerational harms and to promote reconciliation" as well as "ensure that it never happens again" (TRC, 2015: 128, 165). Simply, in order to create a united identity, the Commission is determined that Canadian national history "must be based on the truth about what happened in the residential schools", why the curriculum has to be mandatory for all high school students (TRC, 2015: 11, 120). Moreover, while the educational goal is a one-way goal in Sweden – aiming to increase the mainstream society's knowledge about their Indigenous peoples – it is a two-way objective in Canada. In other words, the TRC declares that the non-Indigenous peoples also need to understand Canada's history as a settler society and learn how notions of "European superiority" have tainted the mainstream society and shaped their attitudes towards Indigenous peoples in a damaging way (TRC, 2015: 21). In all, it is evident that the Canadian state strives for full integration of the different narratives based on mutual respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians.

7. Discussion

Based on this study's analytical method and selected material, this analysis demonstrates that the processes of reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples in Canada and Sweden differ in the sense that the Canadian government fulfils almost all seven stages, while the Swedish government lags behind on most. In the following sections, the findings will be discussed along with further interpretations.

Beginning with the first stage of Auerbach's Reconciliation Pyramid, one can conclude that with the numerous dialogue-promoting projects issued by the Canadian government and the TRC, survivors of the IRS and non-Indigenous individuals have been given opportunities to become *acquainted* with each other's narratives. Projects of that character or scale have not yet been carried out in Sweden, even though there is a stated desire. Rather, the Swedish government seems to be stuck at the second stage of the Reconciliation Pyramid, namely *acknowledgement*. Here, the creation of the Truth Commission and the Committee on Reindeer Lands can be interpreted as instances to acknowledge – once and for all – the truth and the impacts of the state's harmful assimilation policies. Their findings will hopefully serve as incitements for the government to proceed with a constructive process of reconciliation and settle on land rights that have tainted the Sámi-State relations for too long. In Canada, except for the testimonies, the TRC has issued various commemoration projects that can be seen as ways to acknowledge IRS narratives and honour former IRS students.

From the third stage and onwards (*empathy, responsibility, restitution, apology* and *narrative incorporation*), it can be concluded that Sweden does not fully comply with the requirements of the Reconciliation Pyramid. Despite the fact that the Truth Commission has only recently been established, initiatives to increase Sámi influence – which does not require directives from the Commission to be realised – seem to have stalled with the Minister of Sámi Affairs' announced ambitions 23 years earlier. Most of the proposals she gave back then are still on the table of the current government to implement. On the other hand, it must be considered that the mandate of the Swedish Truth Commission goes beyond the experiences of the

residential school, while this has been the primary focus of the Canadian TRC. Lastly, despite the Swedish Truth Commission's promising prospects, it cannot be ignored that crucial informative platforms that focus on communicating the history of the Indigenous peoples, such as the museums and schools in Canada, are still lacking in Sweden.

Another way to interpret the findings of the analysis is to consider how state culture and national identity may affect the incorporation of different narratives into reconciliation processes. As previously explained (see section 4.3), it is possible that Sweden's relative cultural and ethnical homogeneity have implications on what narratives are taken into consideration when evaluating concessions connected to the reconciliation process. A clear instance of such divergence may be the Swedish state's incompatibility to take into account Sámi perspectives in questions that regard land rights. In line with Barkan (2000), one possible explanation might be the different perceptions of land by mainstream society and by minority groups. Thus, while the government perceives the territories of Sápmi as economic resources only, these lands are intrinsically linked to Sámi culture and religion. Consequently, as the Swedish mainstream society has little wisdom or contact with Sámi cultures and traditions, these narratives are not taken into consideration on a general basis. Thus, unawareness of the Sámi narratives and identities might well serve as an explanation to why Sweden's difficulties to express *empathy*, *responsibility*, *apologies* and, the most crucial question to the Sámi communities, addressing the sensitive issue of *restitution* related to land.

Using the same explanatory concepts, it is clear why Canada has better climbed the stages towards reconciliation than Sweden. Applying the divergent variables of state culture and national identity brings to light the pluralism and multiculturalism that characterises Canadian society. It could be presumed that a country like Canada, used to the arrival of immigrants, has better-established mechanisms to ensure effective integration into society. This can be juxtaposed with Swedish society, where segregation has constituted a major societal and social problem for a long time. When considering a society such as Canada, built on immigration and the presence of both regional and sub-national identities, the domination of one group's narrative evidently becomes impossible. Rather, as suggested by this study and discussed by Barkan (2000: 323), pluralism and multiculturalism enable the national state to provide for different minorities and Indigenous groups. Similarly, these factors may also explain why the Canadian government has shown such willingness to assume their guilt in the IRS system; neglecting the Indigenous peoples' narratives of the IRS would simply be

inconsistent with their national identity of multiculturalism. In turn, this admission of guilt is what allows for the rebuilding of a new integrative narrative, built on mutual respect and understanding of each other's narrative (Barkan, 2000: 323).

Finally, related to these findings, a distinct pattern can be observed in Sweden and Canada in terms of what the governments regard as the main obstacles to reconciliation. It is possible to perceive a shared view that, to quote Annika Åhnberg in 1998, the Indigenous peoples' "primary enemy" is the "lack of knowledge" about themselves in present and past history (Sametinget, 1998: 14; TRC, 2015: 4). Even though Canada's process of reconciliation is not without critique, they have still managed to take far more initiatives to change this status quo in relation to Sweden. Part of the CTAs (see section 6.2) is a call for all federal, regional and territorial governments to incorporate a mandatory curriculum on residential schools and Indigenous people's past and present contributions to Canada (TRC, 2015: 235) which has started to be implemented. Meanwhile, in Sweden, the unexpectedly poor improvement of knowledge could be partly explained by the fact that the 2022 curriculum expresses little intention to report on the historical abuses and violations of the Sámi. Hence, this can be seen as a contradiction, as a paradox to Sweden's declared ambitions, especially with regard to the fact that it was only the year before that the government took the decision to set up the Truth Commission. Unless more is done to raise the awareness of the *shared* past, this can be expected to contribute to a status quo of oppression, land disputes and other conflicts between the Sámi and the state and between Sámi villages as well as a continued ignorance to ratify ILO169. Ultimately, if the government does not take responsibility for full recognition of the Sámi and their rights, then who will recognise their identity?

8. Conclusion

This thesis aims to analyse processes of reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and governments in Sweden and Canada after the historical violence of identity conflicts and to find out what role narratives can play in their progress. The central question for this thesis was as follows:

- *How do the processes of reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples differ between Sweden and Canada?*

Based on the findings of this thesis, it can be concluded that Canada's process of reconciliation is more successful than that of Sweden in the sense that the narratives (stories of the past) of the indigenous peoples have been incorporated to a larger extent. In other words, this thesis has demonstrated how the presence of conflicting narratives can support a society to move away from historical violence and towards reconciliation. Effectively, the Sámi are still treated as "others" in the Swedish context, where the main reason seems to be a lack of initiatives to inform the mainstream society about the Sámi experiences − narratives − of the Swedish government's assimilation policies. Whereas in Canada, there is a stronger emphasis on incorporating the Indigenous peoples along with individuals with other cultural, ethnic or religious backgrounds. Practically, this comes to light in terms of expressing empathy, assuming responsibility and ensuring restitution for the past misdeeds inflicted on the Indigenous peoples.

The findings of this thesis confirmed the assumptions of earlier research, namely, the importance of material restitution in reconciliation processes involving Indigenous peoples as land is inseparable from their culture and identity (Barkan, 2000; Auerbach, 2009). In other words, preventing them from rights to these lands also means preventing them from exercising their identities, and thus, denying their validity to claim existence (Lantto & Mörkenstam, 2008). Furthermore, the study also confirms that the occurrence of pluralism and multiculturalism in society enables the integration of narratives of Indigenous peoples (Barkan 2000). In relation to this, the main findings of this thesis turn out to be how the divergent variables of state culture and national identity either facilitate (as in Canada) or

hamper (as in Sweden) reconciliation efforts including Indigenous peoples. At the same time, one can conclude that, at present, there are many indications of an ambition to change the status quo in Sweden, in favour of integration of the Sámi.

To better understand the implications of this research, future research could address the question of *why* the processes of reconciliation differ to the extent they do in Sweden and Canada, despite their common profiles as humanitarian and moral superpowers that stand up for human rights in other contexts around the world.

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