

# Unveiling Representation: A Discourse and Visual Analysis of Indigenous Narratives in Canada's Citizenship Guide

Narjes Hashemi, McGill University / Yorkville University, Canada

*Résumé: Cette étude examine de manière critique « Découvrir le Canada : Les droits et responsabilités liés à la citoyenneté », le guide officiel pour les futurs citoyens canadiens, en tant que site de reproduction idéologique et de formation identitaire. En utilisant l'analyse critique du discours (ACD) et la sémiotique visuelle, encadrées par les théories postcoloniales et de colonisation de peuplement, l'article explore la représentation des peuples autochtones et des relations entre Autochtones et colons à travers le langage et l'imagerie. L'analyse démontre que le guide construit un récit national aseptisé qui marginalise la souveraineté autochtone, minimise la violence coloniale historique et actuelle, et normalise l'autorité coloniale de peuplement par un langage euphémique et un cadrage visuel contraint. Une attention particulière est accordée aux choix lexicaux du guide, à son traitement atténué des violations de traités et des pensionnats, ainsi qu'au positionnement visuel limité de la présence autochtone dans l'histoire et la citoyenneté canadiennes. Les résultats démontrent que « Découvrir le Canada » fonctionne non seulement comme une ressource d'étude, mais aussi comme un texte pédagogique produit par l'État qui façonne la compréhension qu'ont les nouveaux arrivants de l'identité nationale, de l'appartenance et de la mémoire historique.*

*Mots-clés : éducation à la citoyenneté; découvrir le Canada; représentation autochtone; colonialisme de peuplement; analyse critique du discours; sémiotique visuelle*

*Abstract: In this study I critically examine "Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship," the official guide for prospective Canadian citizens, as a site of ideological reproduction and identity formation. Using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and visual semiotics, framed by postcolonial and settler-colonial theory, I explore how Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-settler relations are represented through language and imagery. The analysis shows that the guide constructs a sanitized national narrative that marginalizes Indigenous sovereignty, minimizes historical and ongoing colonial violence, and normalizes settler-colonial authority through euphemistic language, selective representation, and constrained visual framing. Attention is given to the guide's lexical choices, its softened treatment of treaty violations and residential schools, and its limited visual positioning of Indigenous presence within Canadian history and citizenship. The findings demonstrate that "Discover Canada" functions not only as a study resource for the citizenship test, but also as a state-produced pedagogical text that shapes how newcomers understand national identity, belonging, and historical memory. In this article, I argue that citizenship education must move beyond symbolic inclusion and instead foreground Indigenous histories, sovereignties, and political realities to support more truthful, pluralistic, and ethically responsible understandings of Canadian citizenship.*

*Keywords: Citizenship Education; Discover Canada; Indigenous Representation; Settler-Colonialism; Critical Discourse Analysis; Visual Semiotics*

## Introduction

**D**iscover Canada: The rights and responsibilities of citizenship is the official study guide for the Canadian citizenship test and a central text in the naturalization process for prospective citizens in Canada. Published by the Government of Canada through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the 2021 version analyzed in this study is publicly accessible through the Government of Canada website in downloadable formats. Because it is the official guide used by citizenship applicants preparing for the test, Discover Canada plays a significant role in shaping dominant understandings of Canadian national identity, history, and belonging. As Pashby, Ingram, and Joshee (2014) argue, citizenship education materials and citizenship guides function not only as informational resources, but also as ideological and pedagogical tools through which states socialize newcomers into narratives of nationhood, belonging, and citizenship. Rather than serving as neutral administrative resources, citizenship guides communicate the histories, values, and symbols the state deems essential to membership in the national community (Chapnick, 2011; Nagendran, 2017; Tonon & Raney, 2013). This makes Discover Canada an especially important site for critical analysis.

Citizenship education in Canada is not politically neutral. It communicates expectations for newcomers while subtly instructing them on their place within existing power structures (Pashby, Ingram, & Joshee, 2014). In Discover Canada, language, imagery, and historical narrative converge to teach moral, civic, and cultural norms, presenting a particular vision of Canada and of what it means to become Canadian. Produced and distributed by the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the guide therefore

operates not only as an educational tool but also as an ideological instrument that frames Indigenous-settler relations within a settler-colonial worldview (Chapnick, 2011; Nagendran, 2017). This framing reflects longstanding political efforts to construct a national story that often marginalizes Indigenous sovereignties, erases ongoing colonial violence, and obscures the complexities of Indigenous-settler relations (Simpson, 2017; Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020).

Embedded within the guide are discourses that frame acceptable forms of cultural belonging, encourage loyalty to Canadian civic values and institutions, and position newcomers as responsible for integrating into dominant national norms. These narratives promote an image of Canada as multicultural and inclusive while simultaneously encouraging conformity to state-defined understandings of citizenship, history, and national identity (Nagendran, 2017; Schaepli, Godlewska, & Lamb, 2019). In this way, the celebration of diversity becomes conditional, as forms of difference that challenge dominant settler-colonial narratives or national myths remain marginalized or excluded.

As Tonon and Raney (2013) argue, citizenship guides help legitimize official state-sanctioned narratives of what it means to belong to the national community. In this context, Discover Canada operates as both an educational text and a mechanism of ideological socialization, shaping how new citizens perceive the nation, its history, and their role within it. Critical discourse and visual analyses reveal how such materials, even when framed as neutral or multicultural, reproduce settler-colonial assumptions that normalize colonial power structures and marginalize Indigenous voices (Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021; Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022).

The guide's representation of Indigenous peoples frequently sidelines their deep-rooted relationships to land, ongoing struggles for self-determination, and contemporary sociopolitical realities, reflecting broader settler-colonial property regimes that continue to challenge Indigenous resurgence (Atleo & Boron, 2022; Ramirez, 2007). By foregrounding selective narratives, Discover Canada perpetuates colonial silences and limits newcomers' exposure to Indigenous perspectives, thereby reinforcing dominant state narratives and reproducing historical inequities through civic education (Simpson, 2017; Tonon & Raney, 2013). Produced and distributed by the federal government through Citizenship and Immigration Canada (now Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada), the guide serves as the official study resource for applicants preparing for the Canadian citizenship test. As a state-authorized educational text embedded within the naturalization process, its omissions, emphases, and narrative choices carry institutional authority and shape how newcomers encounter Canada's past and present, including its relationship to Indigenous peoples. This grounding responds directly to the need to examine the guide not only as discourse, but as an influential state text with material and pedagogical consequences.

In this study, I interrogate both the textual and visual dimensions of Discover Canada to examine how language, imagery, and narrative sequencing collectively construct a state-curated version of Canadian history. This analysis is further situated within the broader context of reconciliation in Canada, particularly the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's (2015) Call to Action 93, which calls upon the federal government to revise citizenship materials and newcomer guides to include more comprehensive histories of Indigenous peoples, Treaties, and residential schools. In this sense, the article not only critiques the representations within Discover Canada, but also situates the guide within ongoing national efforts toward truth, accountability, and reconciliation. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and visual semiotics, framed by postcolonial and settler-colonial theory, in this article I examine how the guide constructs and constrains Indigenous histories and identities. In doing so, it contributes to broader conversations about how citizenship education mediates collective memory, shapes political consciousness, and legitimizes state power within a context of unresolved colonial relations (Fairclough, 2023; Tuck & Yang, 2012). While previous scholarship has examined citizenship education and nationalism in Canada, fewer studies have integrated critical discourse analysis and visual semiotics to examine how Indigenous representation is constructed simultaneously through language and imagery within *Discover Canada*.

## Theoretical Framework

Discourse functions as a technology of governance, shaping collective identities, regulating knowledge, and legitimizing state authority (Fairclough, 2023). In the context of citizenship education, discourse does not

merely communicate civic expectations; it also reproduces dominant narratives about nationhood, belonging, and historical memory. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) therefore provides a useful framework for examining how Discover Canada embeds settler-colonial narratives within a state educational text. CDA is particularly well suited to analyzing the relationship between language, power, and ideology, drawing attention not only to explicit statements but also to omissions, silences, and euphemisms that can reveal underlying sociopolitical agendas and structural asymmetries of power (Van Dijk, 2015; Fairclough, 2023).

Complementing textual analysis, visual semiotics examines how images construct meaning in relation to text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In citizenship education, images are not neutral illustrations; they communicate values, shape emotional responses, and subtly reinforce social hierarchies. Through attention to composition, gaze, symbolism, spatial placement, and framing, visual semiotics enables a critical examination of how Indigenous peoples are represented, marginalized, or tokenized within Discover Canada (Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021; Schaeffli, Godlewska, & Lamb, 2019). This framework is especially important in the analysis of citizenship materials, where visual representations can naturalize understandings of belonging, history, and state legitimacy.

This study is further grounded in postcolonial and settler-colonial theory, which situate Canadian state narratives within historical and ongoing structures of colonial power. Postcolonial frameworks emphasize the importance of challenging dominant narratives and recovering silenced histories, while settler-colonial studies focus more specifically on the enduring structures of dispossession, treaty violations, and governance systems that sustain Indigenous marginalization (Simpson, 2017; Atleo & Boron, 2022; Ramirez, 2007). For example, Simpson (2017) critiques how Canadian state narratives continue to normalize settler sovereignty, while Atleo and Boron (2022) examine how colonial property regimes continue to shape Indigenous relationships to land and governance. Together, these approaches enable an integrated reading of both textual and visual content as ideological tools through which citizenship is narrated, normalized, and legitimized.

Contemporary Indigenous scholarship further emphasizes that decolonization and indigenization are not symbolic gestures but active, ongoing processes that center Indigenous epistemologies and challenge colonial structures (Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021; Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2012). From this perspective, Discover Canada can be understood as an ideological apparatus that constructs newcomer identities while simultaneously marginalizing Indigenous sovereignties, knowledge systems, and political presence. Recognizing these dynamics underscores the need for citizenship education that encourages newcomers to critically reflect on Canada's colonial histories and ongoing Indigenous-settler relations, while foregrounding Indigenous histories, perspectives, and epistemologies (Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022; Shin, 2022).

By integrating CDA, visual semiotics, settler-colonial critique, and Indigenous scholarship, this study situates Discover Canada as both a discursive site, where language and narrative construct meanings about citizenship and belonging, and a visual site, where images and symbolic representation reinforce understandings of nationhood and identity. This multi-layered framework enables a nuanced analysis of how citizenship education shapes newcomer perceptions, legitimizes state power, and reproduces settler-colonial hierarchies, while also making visible possibilities for more just and inclusive representations.

## **Positionality Statement**

As a Canadian scholar who arrived as an Afghan refugee, I bring a layered perspective shaped by experiences of forced displacement, migration, and resettlement. These lived experiences inform my understanding of citizenship not simply as a legal status, but as an ideological project embedded in power relations. At the same time, as someone living—uninvited—on the unceded territories of the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *səlilwətał* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations, I must also confront my own implication within ongoing settler-colonial structures.

Guided by Tuck and Yang's (2012) call for "refusal" and "productive discomfort," I approach this work with a dual awareness: of my marginalization as a racialized immigrant, and of my participation in a colonial social order. This positionality shapes my methodological choices, including a commitment to centering Indigenous scholarship as integral rather than supplementary to the analysis. Drawing on the work of Simpson

(2017) and Lowan-Trudeau and Fowler (2021), I foreground Indigenous epistemologies and value relational, place-based, and decolonial approaches to knowledge production.

This positional lens informs my reading of Discover Canada, particularly in interpreting textual silences, euphemistic language, and visual representations of Indigenous peoples. Omissions of Indigenous governance, simplifications of historical injustice, and tokenized portrayals are understood not merely as gaps in information, but as ideological acts that sustain settler-colonial narratives. My perspective allows me to attend critically to these subtleties, especially the ways newcomer education can normalize settler frameworks, while remaining accountable to Indigenous knowledge systems. By situating my analysis alongside Indigenous frameworks, this study seeks not only to interrogate state-produced knowledge, but also to affirm the centrality of Indigenous voices and epistemologies in imagining a more just and inclusive approach to citizenship education.

## Research Questions

1. How does Discover Canada construct the historical narrative of Indigenous-settler relations?
2. How are Indigenous peoples represented within the guide's depiction of contemporary Canada?
3. What do these representations reveal about the Canadian state's vision of citizenship and belonging?

## Methodology

This study employs an integrated qualitative approach to examine textual and visual representations in Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship (Government of Canada, 2021), the official study guide used by prospective citizens preparing for the Canadian citizenship test. The analysis focuses on the 2021 version of the guide and draws on Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and visual semiotics to investigate how the text and images construct Indigenous histories, identities, and presences. Combining these approaches allows for a close examination of how narrative framing, omissions, euphemistic language, and visual representation work together to shape understandings of citizenship, belonging, and nationhood.

## Textual Analysis

The textual component of the study focuses on lexical choices, narrative framing, sequencing, and rhetorical strategies within the guide (Utt & Short, 2018; Van Dijk, 2015). Attention is given to modality, tone, and authority to examine how certainty, legitimacy, and moral responsibility are communicated. The analysis also attends to omissions, silences, and euphemistic language that obscure historical and ongoing colonial violence (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Schaeffli, Godlewska, & Lamb, 2019). Following Indigenous scholarship, the study recognizes the limits of state-produced narratives, including their tendency to privilege settler perspectives, minimize colonial violence, and marginalize Indigenous sovereignties and epistemologies, and considers how these silences can reproduce settler-colonial frameworks (Simpson, 2017; Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021).

Passages were selected through close reading of the guide, with particular attention to sections addressing history, citizenship, diversity, and Indigenous peoples. Excerpts were then coded for recurring themes such as marginalization, tokenism, erasure, minimization, and the normalization of settler authority. This approach supports a focused reading of how the guide narrates Indigenous-settler relations and positions newcomers in relation to the Canadian state.

## Visual Semiotic Analysis

The visual component of the study examines how images in the guide generate meaning in relation to surrounding text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Attention is given to composition, gaze, colour, spatial arrangement, framing, and viewer positioning to assess how visual elements reinforce, supplement, or complicate textual narratives. Drawing on Indigenous and decolonial perspectives, this analysis considers whether visual representations of Indigenous peoples reinforce marginalization, tokenization, or misrepresentation, and whether any images offer more complex or politically meaningful representations of Indigenous presence (Blackburn, 2009; Ramirez, 2007; Atleo & Boron, 2022).

Rather than treating images as isolated illustrations, the analysis examines them in relation to their captions, adjacent passages, and placement within the guide. Images were reviewed across the guide as a

whole and analyzed according to recurring themes of inclusion, exclusion, historical representation, and ideological framing. This allows the study to consider not only whether Indigenous peoples are represented, but also how they are visually positioned within the broader narrative of Canadian identity and citizenship.

### **Integrative Analysis**

The final stage of the methodology brings the textual and visual analyses together to examine how language and imagery co-construct meaning within *Discover Canada* (Nagendran, 2017; Fairclough, 2023). Rather than treating text and image as separate modes, this integrative approach considers how they interact to produce narratives of citizenship, belonging, and settler legitimacy. By centering Indigenous epistemologies and postcolonial critique, the analysis identifies how the guide normalizes state narratives while marginalizing Indigenous sovereignties, perspectives, and histories (Cote-Meek & Moeke-Pickering, 2020; Webb & Mashford-Pringle, 2022).

This methodology proceeds from the understanding that *Discover Canada* is not a neutral text, but an ideological instrument embedded in the citizenship process. By integrating textual, visual, and Indigenous-informed approaches, the study develops a critical reading of how state-produced educational materials shape political memory, national belonging, and understandings of Indigenous presence in Canada.

### **Findings**

#### **1. Discursive Construction of Settler-Colonial Narratives**

*Discover Canada* promotes Canadian exceptionalism and the legitimacy of settler governance through subtle yet powerful lexical strategies. On page 10, the guide establishes a foundational national narrative: “Canada is known around the world as a strong and free country. Canadians are proud of their unique identity” (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 10). This framing evokes national pride while simultaneously obscuring the exclusions embedded within that identity. This language reflects a broader discourse of Canadian exceptionalism in which Canada is constructed as uniquely tolerant, democratic, multicultural, and morally progressive in contrast to other nations (Thobani, 2007; Razack, 2002). Because the guide is directed toward newcomers seeking citizenship, such framing does more than communicate information; it implicitly encourages readers to identify with and affirm this national narrative. In this sense, belonging becomes tied not only to legal citizenship, but also to emotional alignment with state-sanctioned understandings of Canadian identity and history. The guide leaves limited space for newcomers to critically engage with ongoing colonial violence, systemic inequities, or contested national narratives, as expressions of critique may appear incompatible with the idealized vision of Canada presented throughout the text. By describing Canada as having “inherited the oldest continuous constitutional tradition in the world” (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 10), the text implies a seamless and legitimate transition of authority, thereby subordinating longstanding Indigenous governance and sovereignty to a state-centered narrative of constitutional continuity.

The guide further normalizes settler-colonial authority through phrases such as “ordered liberty” and “peace, order and good government,” the latter being foundational language from the Constitution Act, 1867, which formalized the foundations of the Canadian state (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 14). These lexical choices guide readers toward a narrative of continuity, stability, and moral legitimacy that frames settler governance as the natural and unquestioned foundation of political order in Canada. This framing obscures the colonial processes through which the Canadian state asserted authority over Indigenous lands and peoples, including treaty violations, land dispossession, and the suppression of Indigenous governance systems through policies such as the Indian Act of 1876 and the residential school system, which operated from the late nineteenth century until the closing of the last federally run residential school in 1996. By emphasizing national unity and constitutional continuity, the guide minimizes the contested and ongoing nature of Indigenous-settler relations and sidelines the longstanding political and legal authority of Indigenous nations. Although Indigenous peoples are acknowledged within the national narrative, they are often positioned as part of Canada’s multicultural diversity rather than as sovereign nations with distinct political rights grounded in treaties, nation-to-nation relationships, and inherent Indigenous sovereignty (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

#### **2. Visual Representation and Symbolic Marginalization**

The visual semiotics of the guide reinforce these textual patterns. Indigenous presence appears limited across the guide's visual landscape, and when Indigenous peoples are represented, they are often shown in historical, cultural, or symbolic contexts, such as images of traditional regalia, Indigenous artwork, military alliances, or historical figures like Chief Tecumseh and Haida artist Bill Reid, rather than as contemporary political actors. Although visual counts require interpretive caution, the overall pattern remains one of underrepresentation and constrained visibility.

Settler figures are more often foregrounded in contemporary, action-oriented, or authoritative contexts, including political, military, and professional roles. A close reading of the guide's images makes this pattern more explicit by categorizing figures according to role, such as political authority, military leadership, professional achievement, cultural symbolism, or historical representation. This pattern suggests that settler figures are repeatedly associated with governance, exploration, institutional leadership, and nation-building. By contrast, Indigenous figures are frequently represented through historical photographs or cultural imagery, such as the portrait of Haida artist Bill Reid (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 10). This visual pattern can position Indigenous presence as historical or symbolic rather than contemporary and politically active. In other words, Indigenous peoples are included within the visual narrative, but often in ways that emphasize cultural contribution or historical presence rather than sovereignty, governance, treaty relationships, or ongoing political authority. Likewise, images of alliance, such as that between Major-General Sir Isaac Brock and Chief Tecumseh (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 16), highlight cooperation within a nationalist military narrative while leaving unaddressed the broader contexts of British and American colonial expansion across Upper Canada and the Great Lakes region during the early nineteenth century, Indigenous resistance to American territorial encroachment during the War of 1812 (1812–1815), and the longer histories of land dispossession that followed. This is especially significant in the guide's treatment of the War of 1812, where Tecumseh's role is incorporated into a story of British-Canadian military defense. While this framing acknowledges Indigenous participation, it gives limited attention to the fact that many Indigenous nations across the Great Lakes region and Upper Canada during the War of 1812 (1812–1815), including the Shawnee Confederacy led by Chief Tecumseh, allied with the British strategically to resist American expansionism and protect their lands, autonomy, and political futures (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, 2016). The guide includes visual reminders of this alliance, such as the presentation of a Blood (Kainai) First Nation headdress to a Governor General (p. 11), yet these depictions are consistently placed within an overarching 'Unity in Diversity' narrative that subordinates sovereign alliance to Canadian multicultural heritage. The image therefore presents Indigenous participation as part of Canada's national military history but does not fully foreground Indigenous nations as independent political actors pursuing their own sovereign objectives.

### **3. Language of Minimization and Euphemism**

Throughout *Discover Canada*, euphemistic and minimizing language softens historical violence and obscures state responsibility. The guide's "Message to Our Readers" states that it is intended to help newcomers "fully participate" in Canadian society (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 3). Yet the historical narrative that follows frequently minimizes the colonial structures that have shaped power, belonging, and exclusion in Canada.

For example, the guide states that treaty rights were "not always fully respected" (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 11) and that "some" children in residential schools were "physically abused" (Government of Canada, 2021, p. 18). These phrases significantly understate the systematic nature and scale of colonial violence. This includes the long history of treaty violations across Canada, particularly in relation to the Numbered Treaties signed between 1871 and 1921 across the Prairies, northern Ontario, and parts of British Columbia, where Indigenous nations frequently experienced broken promises regarding land, resources, education, and self-governance (Miller, 2009). Residential schools operated in Canada for over 150 years, and more than 150,000 Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families and communities and sent to these institutions (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada identified 139 federally supported residential schools and documented thousands of deaths, while the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation continues to record and memorialize children who never returned home (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015; National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, n.d.). Against this historical record, the guide's use of terms such as "not always fully respected," "some," and "placed" minimizes the coercive and structural character of the residential school system. The word "placed," in particular, frames forced removal through

administrative language, muting the violence of family separation and assimilationist policy. This language of minimization reduces systemic colonial violence to partial or isolated harm, thereby preserving the image of the Canadian state as fundamentally lawful, generous, and benevolent.

#### **4. Integrative Analysis: Discursive and Visual Intersections**

Taken together, the textual and visual dimensions of Discover Canada reveal how the guide operates as a cohesive ideological instrument. Lexical framing, euphemism, selective inclusion, and visual representation interact to produce a national narrative that encourages newcomers to align themselves with state-defined values and institutions. Indigenous peoples are not wholly absent from this narrative, but they are frequently positioned in ways that limit the visibility of sovereignty, political agency, and the ongoing realities of colonialism.

By centering Indigenous epistemologies, this analysis underscores the divergence between state-produced narratives and lived realities. This divergence is visible in the guide's use of constitutional language such as "peace, order and good government" to legitimize settler authority, its minimization of treaty violations and the systemic violence of residential schools, and its framing of Indigenous leaders such as Tecumseh as military allies rather than sovereign political actors. Together, these examples show how the guide's current structure reproduces a settler-colonial worldview that marginalizes Indigenous sovereignties and sanitizes Canadian history. They also suggest an urgent need for citizenship materials that move beyond token inclusion and instead foreground more accurate, relational, and politically meaningful representations of Indigenous histories, sovereignties, and presences (Simpson, 2017; Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021).

### **Discussion**

As a qualitative interpretive analysis, this study does not claim to capture all possible readings of the guide but rather examines dominant discursive and visual patterns within its representation of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous-settler relations. Discover Canada functions as a mechanism of ideological interpellation, actively shaping newcomer political consciousness to align with settler-colonial narratives (Althusser, 1971; Fairclough, 2023). Through euphemistic language, selective imagery, and strategic structural organization, the guide produces a depoliticized vision of Canadian identity that normalizes colonial authority while marginalizing Indigenous histories and ongoing struggles. This is evident in the guide's use of constitutional language such as "peace, order and good government" to frame settler institutions as the natural and legitimate basis of political order, thereby obscuring the colonial violence and dispossession through which that order was established. As demonstrated in the findings, Indigenous peoples are presented either as historical actors disconnected from contemporary realities, as reflected in the visual positioning of figures such as Bill Reid within a cultural and historical past, or as tokenized contributors whose agency is circumscribed by settler frameworks. Collectively, these discursive and visual strategies reinforce a homogenized national narrative that privileges settler legitimacy and obscures the systemic violence inherent in the nation-building project (Tuck & Yang, 2012; Van Dijk, 2015).

The interplay between textual and visual elements is central to this ideological framing. As the findings demonstrate, lexical choices, euphemism, and selective visual representation work together to position the Canadian state as the primary and legitimate centre of belonging. The systematic use of euphemistic language, such as the claim that children were merely "placed" in residential schools or that treaty rights were "not always fully respected," serves to minimize the coercive and structural nature of colonial violence. Likewise, by placing Indigenous peoples and their histories within peripheral, celebratory, or historically bounded contexts, such as the framing of Chief Tecumseh as a loyal military ally rather than a sovereign political leader, the guide subtly shapes newcomer perceptions of legitimacy, history, and belonging without confronting the ongoing realities of colonialism.

### **Conclusion**

More broadly, this analysis shows how citizenship education can operate as a form of state pedagogy, shaping not only what newcomers learn about Canada, but also how they are invited to understand belonging, history, and political responsibility. Discover Canada perpetuates a settler-colonial framework that helps distance the Canadian state from fuller accountability for Indigenous dispossession and historical violence. As currently constructed, the citizenship guide reproduces historical erasure, normalizes systemic inequities, and tokenizes

Indigenous contributions through its use of constitutional language such as “peace, order and good government” to legitimize settler authority, its minimization of treaty violations and the residential school system, and its framing of sovereign leaders such as Tecumseh within nationalist military narratives. The result is a sanitized vision of Canadian identity that is ideologically coherent but historically incomplete and ethically fraught.

To foster genuine reconciliation, citizenship education must move beyond symbolic inclusion and centre Indigenous voices, histories, and sovereignties. Such a shift directly responds to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada’s Call to Action 93, which calls upon the federal government to revise citizenship materials and the information guide for newcomers to include more comprehensive histories of Indigenous peoples, Treaties, and the legacy of residential schools. Critical discourse and visual analysis reveal that decolonizing educational materials is essential to ensuring that both newcomers and established Canadians encounter accurate, contextualized representations of Indigenous realities (Simpson, 2017; Lowan-Trudeau & Fowler, 2021).

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Narjes Hashemi: PhD candidate in Educational Studies at McGill University and an Instructor at Yorkville University. Her research examines citizenship education, migration, refugee experiences, identity, and the representation of Indigenous and marginalized communities within educational and civic discourses