

Position statement: Research and reconciliation with Indigenous People in rural health journals

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It is time to plant a flag in the White soil of academic journal publishing and declare, “This discourse includes the cultural voices of Indigenous People”. We acknowledge the importance of the individual language and naming conventions of different Indigenous Nations. This statement has used the term Indigenous People as defined by the United Nations. However, we respect the right of nations to determine, define and name their cultural identity as and when they choose. Indigenous People are almost invisible as academic authors in rural health journals. Occasionally, that indigeneity may be deduced through the institutional or organisational affiliation statements, or in the acknowledgements or in the text of articles. Too frequently, it is not discernable in any way. In essence, indigenous cultural identity is suppressed by the conventions of academic publishing. This sees author and subject credibility resting on Western views of provenance, including institutional affiliation, college membership, educational qualifications and disciplinary

background. This research colonialism reflects a power imbalance that must end.

We, as a consortium of three rural health journals (*Canadian Journal of Rural Medicine* [CJRM], *Australian Journal of Rural Health* (AJRH) and *Rural and Remote Health* (RRH)), believe that cultural heritage and cultural provenance are as important, if not more important, than Western views of provenance, regarding any research involving Indigenous People. We commit to developing a textual flag to signal to readers that the author is Indigenous, as denoted in our author list for this statement. Furthermore, our companion policy paper (to be published in the winter edition of the *CJRM* simultaneously with the *AJRH* and *RRH*) lists additional considerations that, if implemented, would mean truly inclusive authorship, i.e., by, for and with Indigenous People. This signals that we are beginning a journey of truth-telling and reconciliation with Indigenous People, a journey that does not merely begin with respecting Indigenous cultural identity. It also flags a movement

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towards an academic treaty where our wonderful kaleidoscope of knowledge radiates through all aspects of academic publishing.

We have come together to declare our intention to publish ‘nothing about Indigenous People, without Indigenous People’. How this is specifically articulated in practice will vary by journal and Nation; however, in essence, we will reject submitted papers that concern Indigenous communities but do not acknowledge an Indigenous author or provide evidence of a participatory process of Indigenous community engagement.

While there may be a risk that this will reduce the already small volume of research

about Indigenous communities, it will increase the quantity and quality of research done with Indigenous communities and the relevance of those research contributions. Papers that do not meet our central criteria can be published elsewhere, or, frankly, not at all. We believe that this approach is morally, ethically, culturally and scientifically correct, and we will promote and support Indigenous authors and promote rural research units to work respectfully with Indigenous communities. As a consortium, we choose to make our publications flagships for Indigenous cultural voices in rural health, and we look forward to increasing the range, variety and volume of the voices of Indigenous People in our field.