

AHA 2.0 Evaluation Case Study

Mentorship for JIHR Authors

Submitted by San Patten and Associates, Inc.

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Background

Academic writing and publishing among Indigenous communities presents unique tensions due to differing worldviews between academic and Indigenous researchers. The Journal of Indigenous HIV Research (JIHR) is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal published by the AHA Centre (a project of Communities, Alliances & Networks), which works with researchers on best publishing practices to demonstrate Indigenous leadership, and strengths-based approaches to research. JIHR is the only Indigenous HIV journal and is an important method of research dissemination, and in 12 volumes (since 2010), the journal has only rejected two submitted papers. The editorial team, led by Marni Amirault and Jennifer Mavritsakis, feels a strong sense of accountability and responsibility for the journal content and gives extensive effort to mentoring authors to ensure that Indigenous HIV-related research is published, often by Indigenous researchers and/or new investigators.

This evaluation case study profiles one such mentorship relationship, between Marni Amirault and Jennifer Mavritsakis (from the JIHR editorial team) and the principal investigators of the Two-Spirit HIV/AIDS Wellness and Longevity Study (2SHAWLS), Drs. Randy Jackson and David Brennan of McMaster University. It should be noted that Drs. Randy Jackson and David Brennan are well-established and highly accomplished academic researchers with extensive experience in academic publication. The JIHR editors and authors collaborated over many months with the aim to develop a Supplemental issue of the JIHR to showcase three peer-reviewed articles reporting on Two-Spirited men's experiences of resilience living long-term with HIV. Drs. Jackson and Brennan approached the AHA Centre to propose a special issue in order to publish together three papers that were conceptually connected. Both teams include Indigenous, allied, academic and community researchers. The goal of the supplemental volume was to demonstrate how Two-Eyed Seeing (TES)¹ results in ebb and flow of reciprocal learning that strengthens one's work for the common good. Ultimately, Volume 12 of the JIHR, published on December 1st 2021 to mark World AIDS Day and the beginning of Indigenous AIDS Awareness Week, includes two articles from the 2SHAWLS project.

Methods

The independent program evaluation consultant, San Patten and Associates, conducted interviews with Marni Amirault, Randy Jackson and David Brennan in early 2021. The purpose of the interviews was to hear different perspectives on the mentorship process and to identify lessons learned for future JIHR mentorships.

¹ Two-Eyed Seeing (TES) *"is the gift of multiple perspective[s] ... it is the requisite guiding principle for the new consciousness needed to enable integrative science work, as well as other integrative or transcultural, transdisciplinary, or collaborative work"* (<http://www.integrativescience.ca/Principles/TwoEyedSeeing/>).

Lessons Learned about Mentorship

The interviews brought to light the following as key lessons learned:

- Authentic TES creates a space where it is safe for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to participate in a process meaningfully, without ego or pride. Honest, constructive feedback is an important component to providing support and mentorship.
- It is important to present information and experiences from a strengths-based perspective in order to showcase the strengths of Indigenous people in research.
- Articles (or any written material) should be easy to read and accessible to a wide range of audiences.
- Mentorship takes a lot of time and does not always result in the immediate desired results (such as publication). Perhaps the benefits of mentorship are less immediately evident and only come to light over time. Patience is important not only during the mentorship process, but as well in the editorial process.
- The process of preparing an article for publication is very time consuming. Sometimes energy for the project ebbed and flowed and it had to be balanced with everything else the authors/researchers were involved in.
- The editorial process can be quite cooperative between the editor and the authors if both are open to genuinely listening to each other. Cooperation and a willingness to problem solve can lead to excellent results.
- A participatory enthusiastic editor can provide valuable insight and feedback as well as context.
- Representations of what (Indigenous) people say should be done in context; taking ideas out of context can change the message that is perceived, however unintended.
- It is the editor's job to be sure that the papers are consistent with a journal's values. Therefore, the work between authors and editors should be a collegial dialogue.
- The mentorship relationship only works when authors perceive the feedback as ultimately strengthening the publication.



"The review process shifted our work such that it required the authors as a team to come back together and engage in dialogue to process the feedback, which ultimately strengthened our scholarship and helped us to avoid pathologizing language and ultimately decolonized our approach."

Feedback on the Editorial Review Process

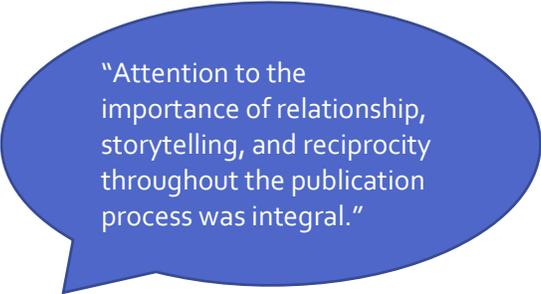
The following are feedback comments on the specific review process:

- The editors were extremely patient.
- Reviewers are very engaged and think carefully about each article.
- As a writer, you make assumptions about the knowledge that people hold, and language can be jargony. The authors found it helpful to have feedback on language, organization of ideas, and references to further articles that could be drawn on.



"The spirit of the feedback is to build authors up, not tear them down."

- The review was very in-depth. Reviewers went over and above normal expectations of an editorial review process.
- The reviewers were reliable with their own internal timelines.
- TES “is not meant to question the integrity of an action or the integrity of a word” (Marshall) but rather open one’s eyes to opportunities when multiple perspectives are employed.



“Attention to the importance of relationship, storytelling, and reciprocity throughout the publication process was integral.”

Recommendations

The following were some recommendations for future consideration in the editorial mentorship process:

- The review was exceptional and there was a lot of flexibility but the editors could set more stringent boundaries and be firmer in terms of deadlines to ‘light the fire under’ authors.
- Providing a student special edition would be a really helpful opportunity for young research careers.
- Having guest editors and rotating reviewers offers good opportunities for students to gain some experience in translating Indigenous worldviews into academic publications.
- Special issues could be published on the following topics: allyship, racism and health care.