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Dear Professor Larry Gross,

This letter accompanies our submission of “Sweetgrass AR: Exploring Augmented Reality as a Resource for Indigenous-Settler Relations” to the *International Journal of Communication*. This paper was co-written with Amanda Almond, Greg Whistance-Smith, and Dr. Diane P. Janes from the University of Alberta, and Dr. Diana Steinhauer and Stewart Steinhauer from Saddle Lake Cree Nation.

Our manuscript seeks to make a contribution to literature on Indigenous digital media, with a specific focus on the development of Augmented Reality (AR) design processes to support Indigenous-settler relations. At a time of rapid adoption of AR technologies, including by post-secondary institutions, we wanted to document and reflect on a series of iterative design steps that teams can use to work through the ethical, narrative, and technical choices made in the creation of culturally-appropriate AR content. We do this to draw attention to both the potential and the limitations of this emerging medium – with reference to the long history of Indigenous media (with a focus on Canada). We stress the importance of situating such work in broad currents of settler colonialism and Indigenous self-determination – in our opinion, an understudied yet important topic in communication research and practice.

As presented in our manuscript abstract, AR is increasingly used as a digital storytelling medium to reveal place-based content, including in efforts to reveal hidden histories and alternative narratives. In the context of Indigenous-settler relations, AR holds potential to expose and challenge representations of settler-colonialism while invoking relational ethics and Indigenous ways of knowing. However, it also threatens to disseminate misinformation and commodify Indigenous Knowledge. While appropriate AR content is an important goal of this work, here we focus on collaborative AR design practices that support critical, reflective and reciprocal relationship-building by teams comprised of members from Indigenous and settler communities. After providing a short history of Indigenous media development in Canada, we describe how we operationalized a participatory AR design process to build and strengthen Indigenous-settler relations. We argue that the process documented in this article’s case study may support future efforts undertaken by teams of Indigenous and university-based researchers.

Thank you for your consideration of this manuscript. We look forward to your response to our submission.

Sincerely,



Rob McMahon
Associate Professor, Faculty of Extension