



Canadian Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies
<http://caclals.ca/>

June 10, 2019

To the ACLALS Executive Committee:

I am writing in my capacity as the current President of CACLALS (2017-19). It has been a privilege to serve as the Canadian chair of this distinguished association. I write this letter with the utmost respect for and awareness of the deep memory and history of this organization, and what continues to be its imminent position in disseminating and cultivating ground-breaking scholarship in postcolonial studies.

The issue at hand – namely, that of a proposed name change to our association – is one that I would have raised on behalf of my caucus had I been able to attend this year's ACLALS conference in New Zealand. I have asked my colleagues on the CACLALS Executive (Henghameh Saroukhani and John C. Ball) to present this letter to you in my stead, because it has been a central issue during my tenure as CACLALS President. We also ask that you present this letter to the ACLALS AGM.

When I assumed my elected appointment as CACLALS chair, I was already under the impression that the CACLALS name was not resonating with a new generation of postcolonial scholars. Even to those directly engaged in postcolonial and related areas of study, it was clear that CACLALS' role, in Canada, as not only the leading postcolonial studies association in this country but, indeed, the only such association, was somewhat obscured by our name, which no longer appears to adequately register the range or currency of scholarship in the field. With the approval and shared sentiment of my Executive, I made this an item of discussion at the 2018 CACLALS AGM at the University of Regina, and then again at the 2019 AGM at the University of British Columbia.

At the first AGM (U Regina), the vote "for" a name change was unanimous, as our Minutes attest (see archive on CACLALS website), with the understanding that such a consensus be communicated to the ACLALS membership at the next ACLALS AGM. At the second AGM (U British Columbia), I raised this issue once again, since I wanted to provide as many members as possible an opportunity to contribute to this discussion. Again, the consensus was for a name change. In fact, a name change was emphatically endorsed at both meetings. I should add that many senior members were present for both meetings.

Over the last two years, I have had numerous conversations with CACLALS members and non-members alike on the subject of our name. One particular conversation stands out. An indigenous author informed me that had I not explained to her what CACLALS represented, she would not have accepted my invitation to serve as a guest speaker at our conference. She noted that the name conjured an "imperialist" and fundamentally "anti-indigenous" agenda given its unqualified emphasis on the "Commonwealth." While this is anecdotal, such an impression strikes me as a particularly urgent reason for considering a name that better reflects our diverse membership and our principles of inquiry, especially in Canada where postcolonial and indigenous scholarship intersect in such critical ways.

Some points raised in support of the name change over the course of our meetings are as follows:

- As we are no longer funded by the Commonwealth Organization, there are no fiscal reasons to be tied to the name, as it stands.
- The emphasis on “language” speaks to an earlier incarnation of postcolonial theory’s engagement with questions of translation or language debates.
- The term “commonwealth” is not an inclusive one; postcolonial nations can be variously excluded from the Commonwealth and may, indeed, reject participation in this organization.
- Our research is not restricted to the former colonies of the British Empire.
- Questions of migration, diaspora and indigeneity, as well as comparative connections (hemispheric, trans-American, trans-national, cross-cultural and -linguistic, etc.) extend further the scope of our research as post-colonial scholars.
- There is no mention of the “postcolonial” or language that might better reflect current nomenclature associated with our field.

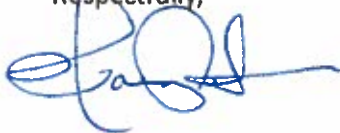
Proposed name changes which might provide a model for other branches:

- Canadian Association of Postcolonial Studies (CAPS) is the proposed name change for CACLALS.
- We might ideally strive for a new name that other branches can easily adopt, thus maintaining the spirit and history of affiliation with ACLALS.
- We might also identify ACLALS as our central branch: e.g., CAPS (Canadian Association of Postcolonial Studies), a branch of ACLALS (Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies).
- Our mission statements and perhaps even, for a number of years, our associations’ logos can retain our former names: e.g., Canadian Association of Postcolonial Studies (formerly known as CACLALS, 1973-20??).

It is in our shared interest to further advance the central aims of our scholarly community that I hope you might consider our proposal to collectively adopt a name change. We do not wish to approach this without the support and collaboration of our ACLALS branches, but I should also point out that the CACLALS’ membership is strongly united in moving forward with this rebranding—one we hope will only strengthen the reach and aims of our scholarly community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,



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