

No silence in the face of inequality and injustice

Wed, Jun 3,
4:45 PM



CAOT - ACE

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

Recent events and the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis have generated powerful emotions including grief, sorrow and anger. This does, and should, cause us to take stock of our current behaviours and attitudes and ask ourselves what more we can do to bring about a fair society free of racism, oppression and hatred. As a professional association, we recognize that there is much more work to do to uphold our core value of Diversity, to take further steps along the path toward Truth and Reconciliation, to live up to the inclusive and compassionate tenets of occupational therapy, to educate ourselves and others about the history of oppression that prevents many people from accessing basic human rights. CAOT must, and will, show leadership and determination to enact positive change by eradicating historic inequities ingrained in our society and institutions. Through our occupational therapy work, our attitudes and our approaches, we are privileged to actively demonstrate that everyone deserves to feel safe and respected for who they are, free from acts of aggression.

Our [Code of Ethics](#) articulates the expectation that occupational therapists in Canada will uphold clients' rights to be treated with respect and dignity within a safe and non-judgmental environment. It also values peoples' right to self-determination and occupational therapists' responsibility to acknowledge diversity and uphold the principle of equity.

Today is a critical moment to remind ourselves of who we are and what we stand for, and, importantly, to change something in our organizational and personal practice to listen, learn, examine, and act to reduce the impact of white supremacy in our structures and our systems that perpetuates injustice. As health professionals we have seen first hand how inequities result in poorer health, occupational deprivation, and lack of opportunity or access to basic needs.

We need to listen to first person accounts from those who have been oppressed and marginalized, whether black, Indigenous, persons of colour, persons with disabilities, or members of our LGBTQ+

communities. We need to learn about their histories, their world views, their lived experience. We need to seek knowledge and share truths. We need to take stock of our individual values and behaviours and be authentic in aligning human rights with our everyday actions, in pursuit of a world that is fair, just, caring and compassionate.

What has CAOT done, what will we do, what can you do?

CAOT has, over many years, developed forums, resources, task forces, advocacy and priority projects that directly or indirectly promote occupational justice and equality. With our partners, we are learning more about truth and reconciliation and critically examining ways to reduce barriers to inclusion and justice. As a strategic priority, the Truth & Reconciliation Task Force was established last year to further identify and guide our actions. These consultations will not stop; we will call on other partners as well to, for example, update our joint position statement on diversity (2014) to incorporate what we have learned in the intervening years and to envision a better future. With other national occupational therapy organizations we are focused on co-construction and collective decisions to advance occupational therapy, so that we enable all Canadians to engage in the occupations to which they aspire and deserve. CAOT will not be silent.

Drawing on our resources, here are five actions you might take right now:

1. Watch and learn from key influencers:

Indigenous health in the time of COVID: Implications for occupational therapy, 2020. Colonial policies and systemic racism have produced many inequities, including but not limited to communities with lower access to resources (e.g., clean water and housing) and populations with poorer health outcomes (e.g., higher rates of chronic disease and disability). These factors make Indigenous communities especially vulnerable to the spread and mortality of COVID-19. Join us for a nationwide discussion about health equity, Indigenous health and the role of occupational therapy through this pandemic. This will be a forum to share your thoughts about how occupational therapists can act in solidarity with Indigenous communities, both in terms of responding to the ongoing crisis, as well as what must be done going forward in support of Indigenous self-determination and rights.

[The workshop recording](#)

Questioning white supremacy in occupational therapy practice and education, 2020. CAOT Virtual 2020 presenters Marie-Lyne Grenier and Hiba Zafran used critical race theory as an analytic tool to examine how anti-Blackness, anti-Indigenous colonial relations, and orientalism have influenced and continue to influence occupational therapy practice and education in Canada. The presenters demonstrate how cultural competency paradigms are logical products of (not responses to)

institutionalized racism that function as tools in the reproduction of white supremacy and racism in the occupational therapy profession. The presenters challenge the ongoing use of cultural competency paradigms and propose a radical shift toward critical and structural frameworks.

[The workshop recording](#) – complimentary access, thank you Marie-Lyne and Hiba.

Building globally relevant occupational therapy from the strength of our diversity. This keynote address was delivered by Karen Whalley Hammell at the first WFOT Congress held in Africa, 2018, themed Connected in Diversity, Positioned for Impact.

[The keynote recording](#) (scroll to bottom of page)

CAOT Virtual 2020 hosted over a dozen relevant sessions and posters on inclusion, integration, justice and related topics. Those who have purchased the conference package might focus on T6, T22, T23, T44, T70, T81, T92

F15, F51, F53, F57, F62, F66

S1, S28 (complimentary access above), S46, S63.

[Purchase from the CAOT Store](#)

2. Read, reflect, and act on our 2018 position statement [Occupational Therapy and Indigenous peoples](#). It points out that “colonization brought injustice, ill health and disruption to Indigenous people’s tradition occupations and way of being, knowing, and connecting.” It also proposes several actions such as “learn and apply specific legislation of key relevance to Indigenous peoples, such as Jordan’s Principle, and recognize and attend to the historical and current structural influences on Indigenous people’s health and work to reduce barriers.” This is an active strategic priority for CAOT and our TRC task force.

Your input requested: Please review an older 2014 position statement where CAOT took a stand with our occupational therapy partners on [diversity](#) and tell us where it falls short today so we do better tomorrow. Input welcomed at board@caot.ca

3. Develop your practice with two relevant webinars. Complimentary access is being provided to CAOT members until the end of June:

Breaking the Silence: Integrating Trauma-Informed Care into Occupational Therapy Practice, 2016. This webinar provides a big-picture overview of trauma and interventions, including developmental and intergenerational trauma, and gives viewers a foundation for how to approach trauma.

Recording: <http://caot.adobeconnect.com/p89ghba8o5y/>

How Trauma Impacts Daily Life, 2014. This webinar is focused on how trauma manifests in daily life and provides specific and concrete ideas for therapists of what to do in their next practice session and in their next client interaction.

Recording: <http://caot.adobeconnect.com/p5d8g5gox4y/>

4. Read select past [Professional Issue Forum](#) reports such as 2018 Occupational Therapy Paths to TRC with Indigenous Peoples, 2016 Poverty and Homelessness, and 2015 Diversifying the Occupational Therapy Profession.

5. Join a [CAOT practice network](#) to lend your voice, build capacity and make recommendations through practice network involvement. Here are two to consider:

Occupational Justice for Newcomers Network. Following the arrival of over 40,000 Syrian refugees in 2016/2017, greater public attention to the wellbeing of the newcomer population in Canada has further highlighted the need for meaningful occupational opportunities for newcomers. The existing research on this topic demonstrates the strong contributions OT can make toward the successful re-settlement and integration of refugees, as well as the need for greater OT involvement with newcomers living with disabilities. The launch of this network was motivated by the desire to build OT capacity in Canada to address these opportunities and needs.

Occupational Therapy and Indigenous Health

Network. Occupational therapists can partner with Inuit, Metis and First Nations peoples to influence the health, well-being and self-determination efforts of First Nations, Métis and Inuit people. Occupational therapists recognize that Indigenous people have specific health and life challenges. Occupational therapists can engage in ongoing partnerships, education and research to provide accessible, meaningful and culturally safe occupational therapy services with Indigenous peoples.

Catherine Backman

CAOT President

Hélène Sabourin

CAOT Chief Executive Officer

Veillez noter qu'une version française sera disponible dans les plus brefs délais

Sent by the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
100-34 Colonnade Road Ottawa, ON K2E 7J6 Canada

www.caot.ca 1-800-434-CAOT (2268)

Membership: ext. 246 Conference: ext. 232 Publications: ext. 221

Professional Development & Education: ext. 222

[Change your email subscription preferences or unsubscribe](#)