



CAOT - ACE

Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists
Association canadienne des ergothérapeutes

No silence in the face of inequality and injustice

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.