

Occupational Therapy Canada reflection day 2017

Janet Craik, Havelin Anand, Louise Burridge, Sharon Eadie, Angie Phenix, Gayle Restall, Andrea Santos, Anick Sauvageau, Cori Schmitz and Kaarina Valavaara

Occupational Therapy Canada (OTC) convened a meeting on Wednesday, June 21, 2017, on the unceded land of the Abegweit Mi'kmaq First Nation to bring together representatives from our national organizations, including the Alliance of Canadian Occupational Therapy Professional Associations (ACOTPA), the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO), the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP), the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) and the Canadian Occupational Therapy Foundation (COTF). The focus for this year's OTC Reflection Day was on the work of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada* (TRC), including its calls to action. Members of the planning committee recognized a need and an opportunity for leaders of occupational therapy organizations to convene and take part in collective learning to enable us, as leaders, to do a better job of responding to the TRC's calls to action and gain greater understanding of related issues. June 21, 2017, was also National Indigenous Peoples Day—timely for this important learning and reflection.

The day was constructed to help participants appreciate the historical and ongoing impacts of colonialism on the health and well-being of Indigenous people, as well as acknowledge that current health disparities are a direct result of colonial legislation and policies. Additionally, we wished to explore how we as occupational therapists participate in health care and educational systems that continue to reproduce these disparities. Methods of encouraging introspection and fostering individual learning and self-discovery were used to support each leader and each of the respective local/national organizations/entities to make decisions informed by the TRC's findings, and position ourselves as occupational therapists to better understand how we can become true allies to the Indigenous community and work together to build reconciliation.



Facilitators Angie Phenix, Kaarina Valavaara and Gayle Restall with CAOT President Nicola MacNaughton

Participants were grateful to be guided through the day by Angie Phenix and Kaarina Valavaara, two Métis occupational therapists, as well as Mi'kmaq elder Barbara Bernard and educators Gayle Restall and Cori Schmitz. The planning committee requested that participants review several resources in advance to maximize their awareness of Canadian history and its impact on the health and well-being of Indigenous Canadians, as well as to prepare for active participation in the workshop. We would encourage our fellow occupational therapists to review these resources as well (see below). The occupational therapy leadership who took the exciting step to engage in this day know that it was necessary to support our profession in taking ongoing action.

OTC Reflection Day preparatory resources:

- Allan, B., & Smylie, A. (2015). *First Peoples, second class treatment: The role of racism in the health and well-being of Indigenous peoples in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Summary-First-Peoples-Second-Class-Treatment-Final.pdf>
- Crichton, K. (Producer). (2011). *8th fire* [Television series]. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/8thfire/2011/11/tv-series-8th-fire.html>
- Phenix, A., & Valavaara, K. (2016). Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Calls to action in occupational therapy. *Occupational Therapy Now*, 18(6), 17-18.
- Restall, G., Gerlach, A., Valavaara, K., & Phenix, A. (2016). The Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action: How will occupational therapists respond? [Guest editorial], *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 83, 264-268.