In response to the calls to action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC; 2015) we embarked on a path to identify and address racism and colonialism in our curriculum through consultation with students, Indigenous knowledge keepers, and stakeholders. Call to Action 18 challenged us to design learning opportunities making direct links between historically abusive, traumatizing practices and current health conditions. Calls to Action 19 through 22 identified essential areas in which students can be guided to assume advocacy roles. Call 23 highlighted the urgency of increasing the number of Indigenous professionals in occupational therapy, and Call 24 identified the need for overtly incorporating learning about how racism, colonialism, power relationships, and historical practices directly perpetuate inequity, poor health, and a lack of safety for Indigenous persons.

Conservatively, five percent of people living in Canada are First Nations, Métis, or Inuit, and the percentage is increasing (Statistics Canada, 2017). The number of occupational therapists in Canada has increased, by 9.2% between 2011 to 2016, and the number of occupational therapists with Indigenous heritage has also grown, from 150 to 230 in that same period (Statistics Canada 2018a; Statistics Canada 2018b). However, this increased number still accounts for less than one percent of the total number of occupational therapists in Canada, a significant shortfall from the goal of five percent representation, which would more closely reflect the Indigenous population living in Canada.

Collectively, we make a concerted effort to foster genuine and respectful relationships that contribute to our students, faculty, and program moving forward on a path to reconciliation and culturally relevant occupational therapy. Our article title reflects the reality of working in the higher education system with its pervasive and, at times, oppressive, culture of metrification, measurement, and expectation of quantifiable evidence of outputs. In outcome-driven systems, providing metrics allows work to go forward, and so we compiled the following list to capture the “numbers.” Our hope is that those whose perspective privileges quantifiable measures will understand the serious determination and willingness to put in the necessary hard work that faculty members, students, and other stakeholders bring to this journey within our department.

### Undertaking (September 2017 to December 2018)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undertaking</th>
<th>Numbers, measures, and metrics</th>
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| Indigenous Focus | 10 participating students – 2017  
12 participating students – 2018 |
| Hand Therapy | 360+ Elders  
40+ student occupational therapists  
10+ faculty/staff members |
| Wellness mini-workshops and volunteer activities | 45+ student occupational therapists and 7+ faculty/staff members working with physical therapy and speech-language pathology counterparts  
100s of dancers, drummers, fiddlers, hand game competitors, and others |
| Guest Speakers | 9 Knowledge Keepers, cultural navigators, researchers, and community leaders |
| Bannock baking activity | 4 dozen biscuits and 1 jar of homemade jam! |
The above is a partial list of undertakings; there are many other activities in development. But a list is just a list—opportunities for critical self-reflection and genuine engagement are not captured in a list regardless of the numbers it includes. No list can capture the outward rippling impact created when students share mature, humble, and insightful reflections on racism in health care and in their own lives and talk about how they will take action. This gives us much hope for the future. Equally, no list captures the uncounted, but essential, hours of time and heartfelt goodwill from all stakeholders that go into building respectful relationships that allow for the co-creation of opportunities and experiential learning. As a faculty of predominantly white Canadians of European ancestry, we recognize we will continue to make unintentional racist and uninformed comments when we reach out to Indigenous community members. We try to overtly “own” that and leave our need to feel in control and secure behind. Instead, we strive to put on the table a genuine invitation to have our ignorance corrected.

The process of decolonizing our curriculum can best be measured in the true metrics of relationship building: warm beverages enjoyed, laughter shared, and hearts opened.

(Image 1: Bear Witness Day/ Jordan’s Principle Awareness Event, 2018)
Numbers can tell us where we are and how many people we have built reciprocal relationships with along the journey. These numbers also catalogue samples of our initiatives that can provide an example to others. But at the end of the day, numbers are not relationships, and the outcomes of journeys are not proportionate to the number of activities engaged in along the way. It is the genuine connection and “ah-ha!” moments shared among respectful collaborators that are the true measures of a meaningful shift in our profession.

References:


CAOT Workshops

**Back by popular demand! Chronic pain assessment and management: Best practice for occupational therapists**

Dartmouth, NS – October 31 & November 1, 2019
Mississauga, ON – November 4 & 5, 2019
Winnipeg, MB – November 8 & 9, 2019

This two-day interactive workshop presented by Linda Cundiff, Clare Lakes and Susan Schellinck provides you with the skills to assess chronic pain, to teach pain neuroscience to clients, to use this education to frame intervention strategies and to highlight the unique role of occupational therapists.

**Back by popular demand! Cognitive Stimulation Therapy: Making a difference for people with dementia**

Winnipeg, MB – November 1, 2019
Port Coquitlam, BC – November 29, 2019
Ottawa, ON – March 6, 2020

This one-day practical workshop presented by Gina Zoratti and Michelle Bickell equips you with the knowledge and skills to start using Cognitive Stimulation Therapy, a group intervention approach for people with mild to moderate dementia, in your practice.

Register for these workshops online at [www.caot.ca/workshop](http://www.caot.ca/workshop) today!

For more information contact education@caot.ca
Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists