

## Call for CATA to Honor Indigenous Knowledges and Accept Responsibility for CATA's role in Reconciliation: A Preliminary Review of CATA Standards of Practice and Educational Standards

Submitted by Dr. Fyre Jean Graveline, Jean Tait and Jennifer Vivian June 16, 2021

This letter is an expression of initial concerns identified within a preliminary review of existing CATA Standards of Practice and Education. We are calling for changes to the current standards to reflect an anticipated and welcomed shift, towards more decolonizing and Indigenizing perspectives in the practice and education of Art Therapy in Canada, that is both led by and in collaboration with *Indigenous Peoples* and *Communities*. Language in italics represent the current Indigenized language being used by the authors. Please see appendix A for the Indigenized terms.

Given no specific focus on Indigeneity in the past and current practice standards and educational guidelines for CATA, there are several immediate and critical needs to be addressed. First, we call for Indigenizing of educational opportunities for all Art Therapists in training, including courses designed and taught by Indigenous faculty specifically addressing historical and current Indigenous issues like the recent horrific news regarding the site of what was the Kamloops residential school, the Brandon residential school and likely more yet to be revealed. Other significant reports documenting intergenerational traumas needing to be understood are the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirited Peoples Inquiry and the Sixties Scoop Class Action suit.

We also recommend continuing education for practicing Art Therapists prior to, or for those currently working with, Indigenous Peoples and Communities be made mandatory. This includes and extends beyond private practice, and includes those providing Supervision (*EagleVision*), and/or undertaking research (*Re.Searching*) for and with Indigenous Peoples and Communities, and /or engaging in arts based social change, social justice and environmental initiatives as allies in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples.

These four areas of education have been identified as **crucial**.

1. **Embracing Cultural Knowledge:** We call on CATA to recognize that Art Therapists working for and with Indigenous Peoples and Communities must honor and work towards revitalization of cultural connections through embracing the power of *Indigenous Knowledges* and Knowledge Keepers. Indigenous Knowledges are available through Ancestral Stories and sharing of Lived Experience; Ceremonies; Indigenous Languages; Traditional and Contemporary Arts; and Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK) learned through land-based teachings to help us Reconnect, Respect and Protect Mother Earth. We call on CATA to recognize that the revitalization of Indigenous Knowledges and honoring our Gifts and our Resilience as First Peoples of this now shared Land is a primary healing modality.
2. **Recognizing Collective Trauma:** We call for Art Therapy training that acknowledges the Interconnectedness of Personal, Historical, Ancestral, Intergenerational, Collective and Ecological Trauma. This shift means honoring that each person's trauma, symptoms and/or diagnosis only makes sense when we locate each being within an intergenerational, full systems ecological approach. Art Therapists need to be able to recognize how this currently shows up for Indigenous Peoples through ongoing challenges of survival within current colonial conditions, including: poverty, lack of potable water and food security; underfunded and inaccessible education; overrepresentation within all violence and mortality statistics and as recipients within all service systems, including health, mental health, child welfare, and correctional systems; and underrepresentation as providers in all education and services systems. Acknowledging interconnectedness also means recognizing how we can support

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healing by engaging in systemic processes of decolonization, reconciliation and Indigenization; and more broadly by acknowledging and remedying a widespread systemic lack of honoring of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples within dominant and dominating Settler educational and service systems. We call on CATA to support Indigenous self-determination and healing through culturally infused, arts-based, trauma-informed, and strength-oriented perspectives that require practitioners to work and play towards enhancing personal and community wellbeing, addressing social inequities, inspiring social change and restoring interdependence with Mother Earth.

- 3. Indigenous Ethics:** We call on CATA to recognize that building ethical, trusting, and helpful relationships with Indigenous Peoples and Communities takes time, and requires practitioners to consistently model wellness, peace building and collaboration. Multiple and intersected forms of relationships coexist and are widely accepted within and across Communities. An understanding and honoring of Ancestral ethics of respect, accountability, reciprocity and self-determination are integral. Given the breadth and depth of trauma within our Communities, we call for all Art Therapists to receive specific training in how to continuously prioritize self-care, and community engagement, as both are central to sustainable long-term practice for and with Indigenous Communities.
- 4. Restoring Relationality:** We call for all Art Therapists to be encouraged and trained to expand beyond the individualistic models prioritized within Western clinical approaches. All forms of trauma happen in relationship, and opportunities to build our capacities to restore and rebuild respectful Family, Community, Tribal, and Societal Relations, and embrace harmony with Mother Earth and All Our Relations, must be acknowledged as the core of integration and healing. We call on CATA to acknowledge that arts-based community work be honored and respected as a valid form of healing practice.

Language plays a vital role in self-determination and reclamation of Indigeneity. Appendix A contains the Indigenized terms currently in use by the authors. Appendix B examines some specific areas of concern that are challenging, in that the use of unexamined colonial language is not inclusive of an Indigenous approach to Art Therapy. Appendix C gives one example of how the language could be changed to move towards embracing and honoring Indigenous Knowledges. We offer these calls as the beginning of an evolving process of mutual respect and reciprocity in assisting CATA to move forward in responding to the injustices, traumas and inequities that Indigenous Peoples have survived and those that are ongoing. Our next steps are to circulate this document to other Indigenous Art Therapists for feedback. We look forward to engaging in an open, relational and respectful dialogue.

All Our Relations,

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**Appendix A: Indigenized Terms**

**Indigenous Peoples:** We are choosing the language of Indigenous Peoples to both be inclusive of all Indigenous Peoples, whether identified or self-identified as First Nations, Métis, and/or Inuit and to simultaneously recognize the tribal and geographic diversity in Canada and worldwide.

**Communities:** The term refers to Indigenous Communities in all forms created both historically and in modern contexts. These include geographic (land based and urban), social, historical and modern spaces and places currently inhabited by Indigenous Peoples.

**Indigenous Knowledges:** These Ancestral understandings of right relations are communicated in current contexts by Elders and Knowledge Keepers. Lived Experiences, Stories, Ceremonies, Dreams, Visions, Indigenous Languages, Traditional and Contemporary Arts as Teachers; and Traditional Ecological Knowledges (TEK) learned through land-based teachings and embodied connection to Earth Mother and All Our Relations are some forms of Indigenous Knowledges.

**EagleVision:** Refers to mentorship, the process and content of taking time and space to seek guidance either through meditation or prayer, or through relationship, with a peer, Elder, mentor, or "supervisor" to discuss and process our responses, reactions, feelings, thoughts, and next steps (Graveline, 2021). The EagleVisor holds the bigger more holistic picture, the picture of the Art Therapist in training and in practice, and of relationality and interconnectedness of all beings. The EagleVisor would have an RCAT, be Indigenous, and have significant experience in building relationships for and with Indigenous Peoples and Communities.

**Re.Searching:** is a reframing of the language of research, which has had a well-documented intrusive and problematizing colonial history with Indigenous Peoples and Communities. Through re.Searching, we are looking again. It is an emerging process or deeper dive into an evolving passion or curiosity that will be understood through a Collaborative Indigenous Relational way of re.Storying (or restoring) our Knowledges.

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## Appendix B: Exploration of Themes and Standards

### Theme 1. The Nature of Relationships:

A.1 Concept of "Dual Relationships" is defined as inherently problematic

- Indigenous relationships require reciprocity and relationship-building. The very idea of connecting with community requires engaging in dual and often, multiple relationships. These may be familial, friendship, ceremonial, community and "professional". Relationships evolve and change over time, and are need and context dependent. In order to conduct ourselves as Indigenous practitioners and community members, within the scope of the Indigenous ethic of relationality, requires holding space for multiple roles.
- Boundaries differ in all cultures, including Indigenous cultures, where the expectations include consideration of the whole of the community, not only that of the individual. Communities may determine what is beneficial and what contributes towards wellness. Holding space in this way, having multiple forms of relationship interwoven within the overall fabric of the community, is not automatically considered to hold the risk of "exploitation". Rather, it is viewed as favorably holding more opportunities for reciprocity and service, and to ensure multiple forms of accountability, including advice actively sought through *EagleVision*.

A.5 "Art Therapists shall continue a therapeutic relationship with a client as long as it is reasonably clear that the client is benefiting from the relationship."

- This is an area where there is a question of who decides that it is "reasonably clear that the client is benefiting"? Given the lack of Indigenous education within various training programs, there has been an unrealistic and insensitive expectation that Indigenous Peoples receiving services are expected and required to educate therapists on an ongoing basis. There needs to be an expectation and obligation of the profession to have those working with Indigenous Peoples inform themselves in preparation for this work. It is crucial to have an awareness that those who have been, or are currently being traumatized by colonial authorities and systems, will struggle to voice wishes or concerns.

C.10 "Art Therapists do not condone or engage in sexual harassment which is defined as deliberate or repeated comments, gestures, or physical contacts of a sexual nature."

- Definitely Indigenous Peoples, and Indigenous Women in particular, have been and continue to be sexually exploited. Words, facial or body gestures communicate power and language beyond that of a sexual nature. We would like to expand this section to include other forms of domination and control, including abuses, racist language, authoritative gesturing, and what is now named microaggressions. Generally, all standards need to be updated for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion of Indigenous, BIPOC, and Gender Fluidity.

A.18 "reasonable grounds for discontinuation of Art Therapy services are: an inability for the Art Therapist to continue due to personal or external circumstances; lack of any further benefit to the client; evidence of a conflict of interest between therapist and client or evidence of a situation jeopardizing the therapeutic relationship;"

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- “Conflict of interest” through the dominant and dominating cultural lens may differ from that of an Indigenous lens. Again, multiple roles being held does not automatically mean that a healing alliance is not in effect.

### **Theme 2: Power**

A.17 “Art Therapists shall acknowledge the inherent power differential in therapy and shall model effective use of personal power.”

- This Western therapeutic model assumes hierarchical “power over” or “domination” over those we work with. While acknowledging this is potentially the case, given the power we wield in social service settings, like child welfare, it would be of great benefit in working with Indigenous Peoples, to also address methods for equalizing and sharing power and influence, like Circle and group work, open studio, etc. A respect for the self-determination of all beings is foundational to an Indigenous Worldview and both supports personal power while mitigating against abuses of power.

D.5 “As employees or employers, Art Therapists do not engage in or condone practices that are inhumane or that result in illegal or unjustifiable actions.”

- A deep exploration of the language of “unjustifiable actions” is crucial when it comes to participation in oppressive systemic policy that benefits those already privileged in colonial Canada. More education is required so that Art Therapists can become more conscious of the potential for their “well-intentioned” actions to be exploitive, particularly while providing service within oppressive and “broken” systems. Questioning what is contributing to “inhumane practices” must also be examined in the light of impoverished Indigenous Communities, and recent mounting evidence of ongoing genocide.
- Where in the curriculum are Art Therapists taught to examine the power structures in our shared Canadian context, our workplaces or our practices? This is a social change agenda that needs examination and action.

E.1 “Art Therapists are aware of their influential position with respect to students, supervisees, and research participants, and they avoid exploiting the trust and dependency of such persons. Therapists, therefore, make every effort to avoid dual relationships that could impair professional judgment or increase the risk of exploitation.”

- Refer again to A.1 and to the language of “dual relationships”. What are the implications of the language of “professional judgment” – in whose judgment? The colonial lens of rational “detachment”, which is assumed necessary in “professional judgement “could actually be considered an “impairment” through an Indigenous lens of relationality.

L1. “When apprised of an ethical violation or an act derogatory to the profession, Art Therapists shall informally attempt to resolve the issue by bringing it first to the attention of the Art Therapist or member in question; failing this or when inappropriate, this complaint can be brought to the attention of the Ethics Chair and/or to the Canadian Art Therapy Association Executive. Acts derogatory to the profession include:

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failure to maintain professional objectivity with a client, i.e., seeking social and/or sexual contact with the client; seeking to fulfill emotional needs within the therapeutic relationship;”

- We would like to raise a question around “disciplinary action” and who determines “professional objectivity”, particularly in a social Indigenous cultural context where “subjectivity”, relationality and reciprocity are what are understood to be needed to create trusting and helpful healing relationships.

### **Theme 3: Research**

D.2 Research: “Art Therapists assign credit to those who have contributed to any research publication in proportion to their contribution to said publication. Art Therapists must honor the intellectual property of others;”

- We are working, with others, to define what constitutes “intellectual property” within Indigenous cultural contexts of shared Knowledges.

D.3 “Art Therapists, as researchers, must be adequately informed of and abide by relevant laws and regulations regarding the conduct of research with human participants.”

- How are we relating to those we are in relationships with, when we are conducting Re.Searching for and with Indigenous Peoples and Communities? Where is the collaboration, credit, and permissions? Who needs to be spoken with to clearly lay out what expectations are on both sides; how the re.searching process will roll out; what responsibilities are there to report during Re.Searching Journey and before making this Re.Search public domain? Honoring Indigenous Knowledges, and respecting values within Indigenous Communities often means that collaborative relationality and reciprocity are central to the processes of gathering and sharing Knowledges, and in harmony with those who are offering these Knowledges.

### **Appendix C: Section A--an Example of Potential Wording Changes.**

#### **Current CATA Standard:**

- A. RESPONSIBILITY TO CLIENTS. Art Therapists are dedicated to advancing the welfare of their clients, as well as maintaining objectivity, integrity, and upholding high standards of professional competence and service.

#### **Potential INDIGENIZED changes:**

- A. RESPONSIBILITY TO CLIENTS. Art Therapists are dedicated to building healthy reciprocal relationships with the people with whom they work. They honor self-determination of clients and Communities and uphold high standards of competence and service through learning and collaborating within the Communities in which they work.