

# DIFFERENT MINDS

CENTRE FOR AUTISM RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGY, AND EDUCATION

◆ 2013 WINTER NEWSLETTER ◆

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Welcome to the second edition of "Different Minds" Newsletter published by the Centre for Autism Research, Technology and Education (CARTE).

Wow! It has been an amazing first year. The Autism Walk at the University of Victoria, Saturday Face Labs, Summer Face Camps, media coverage by CNN, the Globe and Mail, CBC and CTV were just a few of the Centre's highlights. As you will discover in this edition, CARTE is just getting started. The Authors with Autism group is putting together a first-of-its-kind electronic journal, completely written and edited by persons on the autism spectrum. The Education Team is taking our outreach program on the road and has begun working with special needs students in local Victoria schools. You will also read about the Technology Team developing iScrapbook as a revolutionary software that allows users to create games with faces and objects from their own lives. This is just a snippet of what we have planned. In the following pages, you will learn more about other exciting events and activities that are on CARTE's horizon. As always, we appreciate your support and encouragement. If you have suggestions or comments for us, please send us an email at (carte@uvic.ca).

Thanks again for being part of our journey.

Jim Tanaka  
CARTE Director  
Professor of Psychology  
University of Victoria  
Victoria, British Columbia



## WHAT IS CARTE?

CARTE stands for the Centre for Autism Research, Technology and Education (CARTE). CARTE is dedicated to the research and development of new and innovative technologies that enhance the social

communication skills of persons on the autism spectrum. The Centre is composed of faculty and students from the University of Victoria (British Columbia, Canada), individuals with autism, and their families. The Centre develops cutting-edge technology based on the latest research in cognitive and brain sciences. Our vision is to develop face training software at no-cost to the general public. The Centre's guiding maxim is New Tools for Different Minds because we believe that working as a team, we can design and deliver engaging, creative and inexpensive technologies that are in tune with the unique abilities of people with autism.



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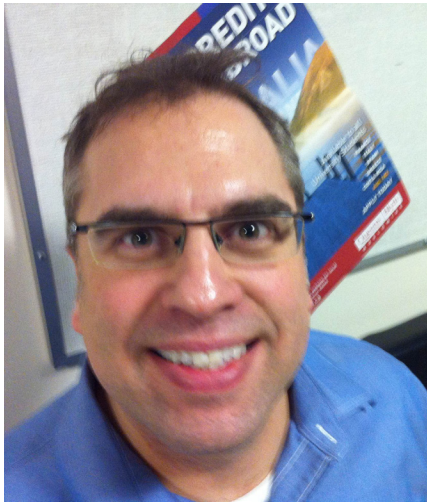
# ♦ AUTHORS WITH AUTISM ♦

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Authors with Autism (AwA) is a campus based peer-support group for lifelong learners with autism. We are a thriving, learning community founded in 2011 that fosters an affirming autism culture. We support each other's capacity to author each person's own life and connect through the power of writing. Our meetings feature a presentation related to autism and writing followed by a "Share & Write" session where each member is given an optional 3-minute turn to share her or his personal insights, alternating between 4-minute segments where the group writes together silently.

Joseph Sheppard, an author with autism and the Co-Director of CARTE, facilitates the group.

**Please join us for Authors with Autism in Hickman Building, Room A116**



**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sunday, January 20, 2013**

**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sunday, February 10, 2013**

**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sunday, March 17, 2013**

**6:00 pm - 8:00 pm, Sunday, April 21, 2013**

We are pleased to announce a new UVic publication, a peer-reviewed journal on autism culture called "Autism's Own" featuring all content by persons with autism.

Autism's Own can be visited at <http://journals.uvic.ca/>.

We are pleased to host "**Autism's Own Conference**" **6:30 PM - 9:00 PM** on **April 2nd, 2013** at UVic to Celebrate World Autism Awareness Day with talks and entertainment by persons with autism. Please come and experience autism culture with us during this important event.

## CUP OF JOE

*Sensitivities should not be underestimated. Humans are sensitive creatures, although guarded. Learners are sensitive to being personally the object of debate rather than the ideas and models they are presenting. Humans are emotional beings with emotional lives. Care must be taken when we speak. And speech is not the only way we generate meaningful signs. We have facial expressions and nonverbal behaviors. Although many strive to be hospitable, we can be dismissive or hurtful, even with a glance or gesture. We often celebrate our judgments and inferences and call this being gloriously reasonable or rational. However, judgments and inferences can be as automatic and limbic as stress responses—too often they become avoidance strategies. There are facts we know and opinions we hold, and these are ours to share or not share. A healthful relationship between learners is a respectful, friendly, and sharing relationship. Learners require an openness to each other's intelligences without discrediting the value of those intelligences.*

*To be a trusted co-learner requires returning verbalizations with the mature response, letting mistaken words go—meaningfully encountering another while being thoughtfully present,*

*careful with time, performing kindnesses always. This is how I talk when I broach the topic of autism and my professional efforts to welcome persons with autism onto a path of lifelong learning, as I invite them into our academic shared learning conversation, yet it is a two-way proposition. There is no place for hostile hearts in this dance. Persons with autism, or any person with differences or a disability, as well as typically developing persons all require mutual support to grow together. We, as co-learners, need to be safe with each other within a safe learning environment.*

*Therefore, there are times when we need to be silent with our inferences, leaving judgment outside the door, accepting other's own idiosyncratic expressions without an immediate urge to correct or change them. It is a great wisdom to not allowing stress responses to dictate one's speech and gesturing. When we commit to such calls of character we enter into a sophisticated reverence for each other's contributions, an inclusive world of togetherness, within a location I term the house of learning—a place where whatever is possible is indeed possible. And there is much yet that is indeed possible.*

Joseph Z. Sheppard, 2013

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# NEWS FROM THE TECH TEAM

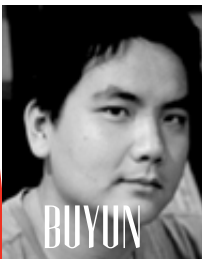
CARTE was honoured to present at TEDxVictoria for the second consecutive year. TEDx is a yearly community event, sharing innovative new ideas in technology, entertainment and design. This year we were invited to set up a dynamic display showcasing our latest intervention tools. Audience members experienced a fun new set of interactive face games. Coupled with the Computerized Expression Recognition Toolbox developed at the University of California, San Diego, our games combine state-of-the-art technology to form powerful, flexible and exciting face training for children and adults with autism. At TEDx we received great enthusiastic response and valuable audience feedback; it was a fantastic way to conclude 2012!



**TEDx**  
Victoria



## ◆ RESEARCH ◆



### JOINT ATTENTION

We are currently studying joint attention in children with autism. Joint attention is shared attention and at home, mothers and fathers commonly move their eyes, turn their heads, and point their fingers to invite children's attention. Our results show that children with autism can follow head turns as good as typically developing children. In our next study, we will use eye tracking technology to further explore these findings.



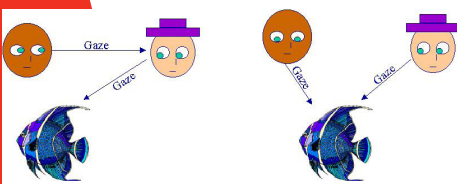
### DRAWING REALISM

Some researchers have suggested that children with autism spectrum disorder are superior at drawing realistic objects. We put this idea to the test and found drawings produced by children with autism were as realistic as those drawings produced by children without autism. While realism was related to memory in children with autism, this was not the case in children without autism. This tells us that children with autism might think in a different way.



### FACEMAZE

We have designed and tested a new intervention tool called "FaceMaze." FaceMaze is a dynamic, interactive computer game that improves skills in the recognition and production of facial expressions. With children with autism, findings from a recent study conducted at CARTE have shown that FacMaze improves the quality of children's facial expressions after gameplay.



# EVENTS

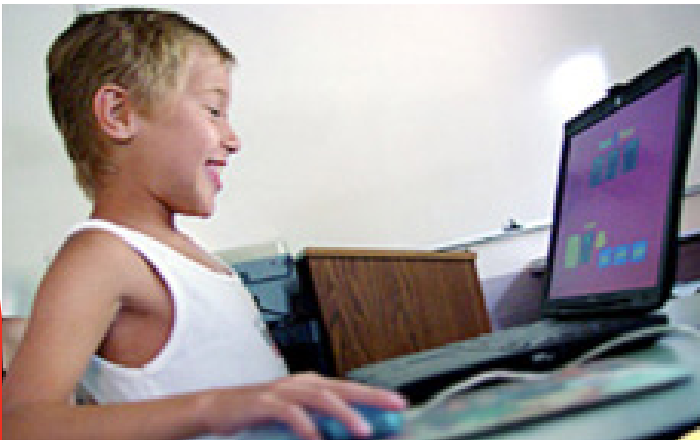
## AUTISM AWARENESS WALK 2012

This year's Autism Awareness Walk was a huge success! Over 800 people participated in this family fun event and showed their support by walking or running for the cause. We are pleased to share that over \$20,000 was raised for local autism services. Highlights from the event included information booths, bouncy castles, Daisy the cow, double-decker bus tours around ring road, and a special performance of "Born this Way". This was our first year at the University of Victoria and it will not be our last.

Be sure to mark the Autism Awareness Walk in your calendars for **April 14th, 2013!**



## NEWS FROM THE EDUCATION TEAM



The education team drives community outreach at CARTE. Through school partnerships we reach out to students and educators. This past October we shared the Let's Face It! program with local special educators at Victoria School District's Pro-D day! Let's Face It! is an exciting social skills curriculum designed for children with autism. Training children in face understanding, the program explores the role of faces in daily social communication through state-of-the-art technology and engaging hands-on activities. In a randomized, clinical trial, Let's Face It! has been shown to be successful for improving the face recognition skills of children on the autism spectrum. We left educators impressed at Pro-Day and continue to explore new educational partnerships.

## CARTE IN THE MEDIA

### FaceMaze on CTV News

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player\\_embedded&v=1-8lsDH3O5Y](http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=1-8lsDH3O5Y)



### TEDxVictoria Presentation, Facing up to Autism: New Tools for Different Minds

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_QfKAMJfae4](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_QfKAMJfae4)



### Globe and Mail Article

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/training-tool-helps-autistic-people-become-face-aces/article2275593/>

THE GLOBE AND MAIL\*

### CBC Radio Interview with Joseph Sheppard

[http://web.uvic.ca/~carte/Sounds/CBC\\_APW\\_JoeSheppard.mp3](http://web.uvic.ca/~carte/Sounds/CBC_APW_JoeSheppard.mp3)



Editors: Keilly Flesch & Andy Sung  
Graphic Design: Emma Tanaka