

# The ONTABA Analyst



Oops!...We did it again

**SOLD OUT**

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Annual Conference  
Recap p. 4**

**Gerhardt was great!**  
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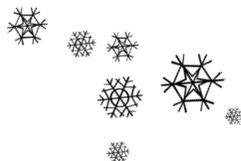
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# From the President's Desk

On the evocative effects of new beginnings...

**G**reetings Members! As we move into 2016, your Board of Directors has wasted little time in getting started on some ambitious goals for the New Year. As ONTABA's membership numbers continue to climb, we are provided with an opportunity to develop as an organization while meaningfully advancing the science of behaviour across the province. To achieve its mission and to manage this growth responsibly, we will require a durable structure, increased organizational safeguards and a well-informed strategic plan. To start this process, the Board of Directors engaged an external consultant with expertise in not-for-profit governance in the fall of 2015; an effort dubbed the ONTABA Governance Improvement Project. The project aims to assess and ultimately improve ONTABA's governance processes, its documentation practices, and its overall capacity to effectively meet the needs of its members.

Phase 1 of the project consists of four parts:

- Part 1: An assessment of board capacity and effectiveness in seven general areas: (1) mission achievement, (2) organizational performance, (3) financial management, (4) compliance with relevant legislation, (5) transparency, (6) risk management, and (7) not-for-profit governance.
- Part 2: A thorough review of the board's policies and processes.
- Part 3: Development of omitted or incomplete documents, policies and processes.
- Part 4: Delivery of customized governance training with curricula based on the knowledge gaps identified in the assessment.

As of January 23rd 2016, all four parts of the Governance Improvement Project were completed on schedule. Part 1 led to a comprehensive report on the organization's performance with more than 100 recommendations for further development. Part 2 identified a list of outstanding documents, policies and processes necessary for optimal organizational

performance and compliance with current and upcoming not-for-profit legislation while Part 3 saw the development of many of these policies and processes. Part 4 built the capacity of the Board of Directors to represent its membership and serve the mission of the organization.



The day before Christmas Eve, all board members received a comprehensive Board Toolkit complete with the organization's mission and vision statements; a history of the organization as provided by the advisory committee and a review of more than 20 years of ONTABA Analyst newsletters; a new board member orientation process; a board mandate; a description of board member roles and responsibilities, a diagram of the board structure, a board meeting protocol, a decision making guideline, a board schedule for the entire year, an outline of the organization's key issues, and several items on effective non-profit governance.

This is just the beginning. As we wrap up the assessment phase of the project and install the necessary prerequisites of effective organizational functioning, we prepare to move onto the second phase which will focus on implementation of the recommendations gleaned from the governance assessment and engagement in a collaborative strategic planning process that will provide us with short and long-term directions informed by the membership, its advisers and the organization's key partners and stakeholders. I am confident that this important work will strengthen our existing governance framework and improve operational efficiency so we are better equipped to serve the needs of our members.

If we are to accomplish all of the goals we have outlined, we will be relying on the efforts of dedicated volunteers. As you can imagine, I was heartened to see such a



massive response to our call for committee and working group volunteers. More than 40 individuals have expressed interest in becoming more involved with the organization, many of which will be working with ONTABA for the first time.

As we welcome new faces to the organization we also unfortunately say some difficult goodbyes. This month we lost one of our founding members, Dr. Anne Cummings. The inpouring of responses about Anne's life and works from our membership and from behaviour analysts abroad has been impressive and serves as a testament to how important she was to our membership and to the field. A tribute to Anne from those that knew her can be found within this issue.

It is an exciting time to be a behaviour analyst and a member of the Ontario Association for Behaviour Analysis. I am looking forward to the things that we will accomplish together within the next few years and to serving our mission of fostering a culture of excellence, integrity, and expertise for the advancement and promotion of the science of behaviour analysis.

Louis Busch  
President,  
ONTABA



# ONTABA Board Elections

The board election this year was only slightly overshadowed by the US presidential election campaign. A big thank you to all who ran and voted. Congratulations and a very warm welcome to the incoming new and familiar faces:



- Jennifer Cunningham (President-Elect - 2 years)
- Krystal Lowe (Undergraduate Student Rep - 1 year)
- Katie McHugh (Graduate Student Rep - 1 year)
- Jen Porter (Director at Large - 2 years)

## Announcements

Want to post an ad in an upcoming issue?

The subsequent issues for the ONTABA Analyst for 2016 will be released in the following months:

**April, July, October**

Interested? Contact us! [contact@ontaba.org](mailto:contact@ontaba.org)

### Website update

You asked for it, you got it! The website committee has recently created the opportunity for ONTABA members to automatically confirm membership status! Log in, click on 'My ONTABA', and click on 'Receipt and Letter', to download a PDF confirmation of membership.



Suggestions or feedback?

Could we really call ourselves behaviour analysts if we didn't want feedback?

[contact@ontaba.org](mailto:contact@ontaba.org) or [newsletter@ontaba.org](mailto:newsletter@ontaba.org)

### Corrections

Somewhere along the line, the volume assignment for the ONTABA Analyst got off track...how embarrassing!

Instead of hoping you wouldn't notice, we thought we'd just tell you.

Don't worry we're back on track now with this issue. So sorry!





# ONTABA Conference 2015

**O**NTABA held its annual conference on November 16th and 17th at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre.

The AGM breakfast kicked off the conference on the morning of the 16th.

The sold-out audience heard talks by invited speakers, Dr. John Rapp, Dr. Anthony Biglan, Dr. James MacKillop and Dr. Richard Malott. Concurrent sessions covered a wide variety of topics, highlighting the diverse applications of applied behaviour analysis.

Presenters have been invited to make their presentations available to ONTABA



Photo credits: Kelly James-Malkin

members via the ONTABA website. If there is a talk that you missed or would like to see the slides for, check the ONTABA website to see if it has been added under the "Conference 2015" tab.

The poster session included over 30 posters from students and professionals from all over Canada. Poster session attendees enjoyed scholarly conversation while enjoying food and drinks.

## The Social

This year's social was bumping! Jon Gillman sang songs to start the night off, then later in the evening the floor was cleared and the quiet pub was transformed into an ONTABA nightclub.



*Hold up, are you telling me that I wasn't left out in the cold? The ONTABA social is always open to everyone!? Even if you didn't register for the conference?*

Well it wasn't actually that cold, but yes, the ONTABA social event is open to all! Hope to see you next year!

## Awards

ONTABA would like to acknowledge the following award recipients from this year's conference:

- Innovation Award: Nancy Marchese
- Student Award: Katie McHugh

## ONTABA Conference 2016

Planning for next year's conference is well underway. The conference will be held on **Thursday November 10th and Friday November 11th** at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. Two invited speakers have already confirmed, Dr. Tricia Vause, and Dr. Dorothea Lerman.

Please stay tuned for this year's invited speakers survey to provide your input regarding who you'd like to see at this year's conference.

Thank you to those who filled out the conference feedback survey. Your feedback is greatly appreciated and will be incorporated in to planning for future conferences.

See you in November!

ONTABA Conference Committee



Photo credit: Kelly James-Malkin



Though growing rapidly these days, the ABA community in Ontario is quite small, and there are usually less than six degrees of separation between most of us. So writing this reflection on behalf of ONTABA to remember our dear friend and colleague, Anne Cummings, has been a rather daunting task.

Anne passed away on January 19th, 2016. Louis Busch reached out to the ONTABA Advisory Group to learn more about Anne, who had been a vital part of ONTABA's roots.

Anne had a long career in developmental disabilities and ABA. She had worked at the Bob Rumball Centre before coming to Surrey Place Centre in the 80s, where by all accounts she welcomed and mentored many of the behaviour analysts who are leading ABA programs in Ontario these days. At SPC, she worked in the family behaviour management program and with the BECS training and consultation service, and also in private practice with Larry Williams. She was committed to ABA, going to the US to get her Master's in ABA through UNR, then to Western Michigan to complete her Doctoral Studies in Jim Carr's lab. Jim shared that, "As a student, Anne excelled in clinical service delivery and research

## Remembering Dr. Anne Cummings

and inspired the students and faculty at Western by her work ethic and humanitarian values." She returned from Kalamazoo and was hired as the clinical director of the IBI program in Central East Region. Ann made major contributions to the IBI program at

Kinark, and being back at home, was able to once again welcome, mentor, and nurture new behaviour analysts in Ontario. Anne was passionate about ABA, about clinical excellence, and most importantly about

making people's lives better. She built a strong leadership team at Kinark, and created a legacy of well-trained and dedicated professionals to continue her work. Gerry Bernicky, who has been a close friend of Anne's for over 25 years, shared this, "Anne respected ABA and promoted ABA and was a true caring professional. Many of us owe some level of gratitude to our interest in this science, which has provided us the unique opportunity to have met each other and to have met, known, and been able to have spent time with someone like Anne. Thanks BF."

Accolades about Anne's work abound, but if there was anything that Anne was more passionate about than her work, it was her friends and her family. Her cottage was the epicenter of so many gatherings and so much of what she loved best. Many of us recall her open invitations to pop up for the

# A Tribute

weekend, for boating, fishing, and her fabulous cooking! Her generosity of spirit is really what her friends and colleagues remember most. Anne was innately kind and welcoming, and as Scott Bark said so eloquently, "She had an infectious way of making you

*"Ever selfless, Anne made the world a better place for others. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing her will miss her deeply!"*

feel like she had known you forever." Anne had a reputation for her overflowing generosity when any of her friends had children, and though she didn't have kids of her own, she actively participated in the lives of many of our children. Larry

Williams, noted that, "Anne personified kindness and this contributed to her incredible one-on-one teaching ability and her wide spread friendships both nationally and internationally. If you knew Anne Cummings the odds are that you will not know anyone close to who and what she was in your lifetime."

So as the days, weeks, and months pass, we will tell more stories, remember Anne's mischievous smile, and feel the pang of sadness for her absence in our lives. When that happens, try to remember Anne with a good laugh, a good meal, or some good deed. In the meantime, these words from Jim Carr seem apropos to close with, "ever selfless, Anne made the world a better place for others. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing her will miss her deeply."

ONTABA Advisory Group



# Satellite Conference Committee



Our latest sponsorship!

Dr. Peter Gerhardt hosted by Shining Through

On October 22 and 23rd Shining Through Centre in collaboration with ONTABA hosted Dr. Peter Gerhardt for two information packed days. Dr. Gerhardt presented his workshop titled **Adolescents and Adults with ASD: Programming and Supports Leading to Improvements in Quality of Life.**

The event saw approximately 200 attendees from a variety of backgrounds including front line staff, educators, parents and supervisors. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. The topic is relevant to the current landscape of autism services and as a result provided the audience with important training and education from an engaging and talented researcher and clinician in our field. 12 CEUs were handed out for those collecting.

Submitted by: Shiri Bartman

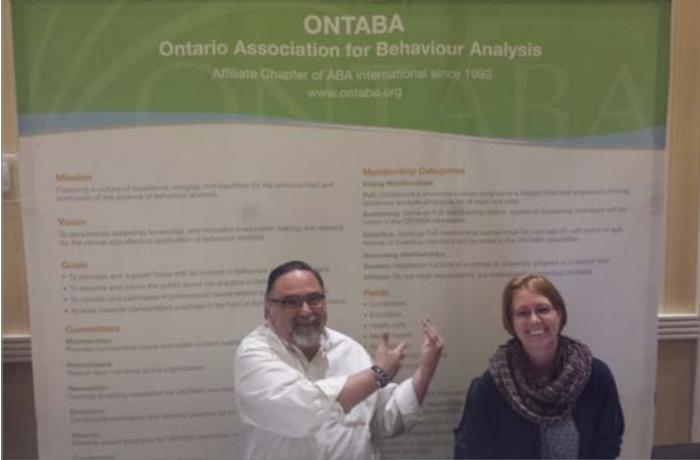


Photo credits: Shiri Bartman





**Behavioural cusp** · n. 1 | be.hav.iour cusp | /bi'hei·vjər kʌsp/

“any behaviour change that brings the organism’s behaviour into contact with new contingencies that have even more far-reaching consequences...a cusp is a special instance of behaviour change, a change crucial to what can come next.” (Rosales-Ruiz & Baer, 1997, p.533)

# The Cusp

## Behaviour Analysis in Ontario: The people behind the work

**Editor’s note:** Happy New Year! With a year in review, I’ve got so many things to be thankful for and honestly one of those things is the honour and pleasure of doing these interviews. With each interview, I learn more about our amazing field and the people in it and I sit here and type in genuine admiration of our fellow colleagues—proud to be a behaviour analyst in Ontario. *Lesley*

### Jordan Belisle, M.Sc.

Jordan is currently a Doctoral student at Southern Illinois University in the Behavior Analysis and Therapy program, and a graduate of the Behavioural



Psychology undergraduate degree program at St. Lawrence College. His research interests span from invertebrate organisms to individuals with disabilities and disordered gamblers. Jordan’s work can be seen in several behavioural as well as non-behavioural peer-reviewed journals, and he has collaborated on book chapters relating to language and its effects on human behaviour.

### You’ve been a very busy graduate student! Tell us about your program and current research interests. I

graduated last year with my Masters of Science degree in Behavior Analysis and Therapy at Southern Illinois University, and right now I am completing the first year of my PhD under Dr. Mark Dixon. Since starting grad school, I have been trying to get involved in as much research as possible! Right now, the main focus of my research is in human language, that whole verbal behaviour thing, how it develops, and how it can lead to a gambit of complex behaviours. I have also been trying to publish as much as possible, where most of my publications so far have been related

to language training with children with autism or some aspects of language on gambling behaviour.

In addition to research, I have also been “getting my feet wet” clinically. For the past 2-and-a-half years, I have been working at a school for individuals with autism ages 5 to 22, where I consult on behavioural programming, as well as oversee the ABA curriculum for all of the students. As well, I have been helping run a free language and cognitive development clinic in Illinois, which provides therapy for children with- and without- disabilities. Also, last year, I managed our crustacean lab on campus, where we did research with lobsters.

### Really? What did you do with them?

**The crustaceans that is.** Lots! We had those things pulling levers, running through mazes... the student who manages the lab now just created a sensor that tracks the swimming pattern of a lobster and opens a gateway to shelter. Although invertebrate research is not my area of interest per se, managing the lab and seeing what these animals can do was fascinating. Now, whenever someone says, “so and so cannot learn,” I can point out that even lobsters learn, and they don’t have a brain! That point also helps out in arguments with people in the neuroscience departments!

**From what I understand you went straight into the Masters program at Southern Illinois University from the Bachelor of Applied Arts Degree in Behavioural Psychology at St. Lawrence College in Kingston. How in the world did you know you wanted to get into behaviour analysis straight from high school?** Well in high school the only subjects that I was really drawn to were things like psychology, anthropology, and sociology; the softer sciences I guess you could say. Psychology seemed liked the most scientific of the three so I applied to the Psychology program at Queen’s and I also applied to the Behavioural Psychology program at St. Lawrence College. I got into both programs but what tipped the scales for me was an information session by Dr. Gary Bernfeld at St. Lawrence, who really sold behavioural psychology as an approach to understanding psychology in a very much scientific way. So, I did a bit of research into the whole behaviourism thing, and I was sold!

**It is so awesome that you, a homegrown Kingston kid and graduate of St. Lawrence College, is making a name for yourself and having an impact so early in your career. How did you make it happen?**

Thank you! Drs. Gary Bernfeld and Drew McNamara were two of my profs in the St. Lawrence program that were really my go to people! Gary made a pretty great argument for the

behavioural position, and Drew was just a fantastic mentor who showed me that behaviour analysis was much much more than stickers and tickles for kids with disabilities. Both Gary and Drew really inspired and encouraged me to pursue graduate studies. In my final year at St. Lawrence, my current advisor Dr. Mark Dixon was one of the invited speakers at the ONTABA conference. I was awed by his presentation and we talked after the conference, and the rest is history. Mark has had a huge influence on my early successes in graduate school. He has pushed me to accomplish things that I never would have thought possible. I think he and I have a very similar approach and philosophy of science, and so it has been a natural fit from day 1!

**Although you have “left us” for the States for graduate school, you have made an obvious attempt to stay connected to the behaviour analytic field in Ontario. How come?** Free health care! I am 50% joking. I really believe that Ontario is becoming a hotbed for behaviour analysis, with the well established ABA programs in the area! I think that in the US especially, the breadth of practice is relatively limited for behaviour analysts in terms of who we can work with, and this has influences not only clinically but in research as well. We are devising solutions to problems in a relatively limited scope of all the problems facing the world. In Ontario, it seems as though those same limitations are less intense. This year at the conference I spoke with behaviour analysts who treat so many different behavioural phenomena, and this is a far cry from the conversations that I have with clinicians in the US... or at least in Illinois. At the same time, there seems to be a greater push in the US for high quality and quantity research. This is why I make a point to present

my research regularly in Ontario, in hopes that maybe some of the stuff that I figure out here is translatable there. Also, most of my family and loved ones live in Ontario, where the social policies resulting from research hopefully may have the greatest impact in their lives. As a field, we can choose to continue doing what we are doing, which is good don't get me wrong, or we can expand our repertoire and address more complex human behaviour problems. It is these problems that I want to address and Ontario is a place where such a movement has already been taking place for years!

**Is there anything you'd do different so far?** Yes, I wish that I had paid more attention in my high school math class (laughs). I'm serious though! As I become better versed in the scientific method and in post-Skinnerian theory, I realize that science is logic, and the apex of logic is actually mathematics. It's inescapable and I'll need to understand it if I want to do more theoretical research. Advances in things like behavioural momentum and behavioural economics are based in math, and if we are going to be a natural science like biology and chemistry, we are going to have to figure out that whole math thing... myself included! So I find myself struggling to understand the theoretical foundations to incorporate into my own research and I am trying to catch up. I am working through old math textbooks and online to relearn what I should have attended to in high school!

And I have another regret: As an eager behaviourist, in my youth, I used to think that people don't think. I would fervently get into heated debates with cognitive-behavioural types and claim that there is no evidence that people

actually think. I realize now that nowhere in Skinnerian or post-Skinnerian theories was it suggested that people don't think, in fact, thinking might just be the greatest aspect of human evolution! Ms. Marie-Line Jobin ... you win that debate for now.

**Any advice for someone thinking of elevating their ABA game through more schooling or by getting involved in research?** Definitely consider your own values; what do you want to get from it? Do you want to have a job and help people? Do you want to change someone's life? or do you want to change the world? All of these things are fine but what you want will radically affect what you do to get there. Whatever you choose, to achieve your goals, you need to dismiss the illusion of a 40 hour work week... pursuing your values doesn't end at 5pm.

**Interesting manifesto, admittedly I do like it (laughs). But what does this mean for the good old “work-life balance”?** If your work isn't moving you towards your values, then there is no point... there is no purpose. Living a balanced life is meaningless if values aren't considered. Even if you value money, or fame, or whatever, the only way to achieve these things is to work hard for it, harder than those who want to stop you from moving towards your values. If you want to change the world, you need to work harder than those who want to keep it the same. They don't strive for balance; they strive for success. I would like to further point out that balance and success may not be always exclusive, but they are also not necessarily inclusive.

**Well put!**



**Shayna Gaunt, M.A., BCBA**

Shayna has 15+ years of experience implementing ABA/IBI. She is the founder and director of Kid Mechanix, Inc. She also has international experience providing clinical expertise and training workshops to clients in the US, Costa Rica, England, Egypt, and Qatar. Shayna consults to schools, parents, and home-based ABA/IBI programs via direct and on-line supervision. She conducts individualized training workshops for schools and other professionals. Shayna achieved an MA in ABA from the University of Nevada, Reno and has been a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst since 2005.



best part is that we have the luxury of having peer models on hand; the children attending the preschool. Not only is this a novel arrangement for IBI service provision, we are seeing that the kids are doing better data-wise. That is, the students are being met with more success at school which is really exciting. Looking ahead, we want to try to get children into this track even earlier.

Since we have access to the facility, we also run social skills groups and an afterschool tutoring program. Our tutoring curriculum is based on Direct Instruction and we see students (with and without developmental delays) ages 5-12 years. Some of the students are graduates from our IBI program and some are graduates from the preschool.

**How did you become interested in ABA?** When I finished my undergrad I went into sales and marketing and I hated it! One weekend I went to my friend's Aunt's cottage and I was chatting with Aunt Wendy about my career path. She asked me if I knew about autism. I replied, "You mean like Rainman?" (Laughs). So she told me all about Autism and I was intrigued. She referred me to an ABA consultant and that was my start in the field. At the interview with the consultant, I was under the assumption that it was a part-time volunteer position that I was applying for. However, it turned out that I was offered \$5/hour to start! I was ecstatic! I quit my sales job soon after and started ABA full-time. My career just evolved from there. It turns out that "Aunt Wendy" is actually Dr. Wendy Roberts, a world renowned Developmental Paediatrician and expert in children with autism (I did not know that at the time!).

**Stop it! That is the best story! So tell us about your early days, what happened after this.** On my very first day of work, I shadowed a therapist who was desensitizing a child to the florescent lights in the grocery store. I just couldn't believe that I had a job that involved going shopping of all things! I continued as a home-based ABA therapist for about three years. It was a great start for me, but this was before the days of provincial funding and centre-based programs so the diversity in clinical experience was relatively limited. I decided to branch out and I applied for an internship with Dr. Bridget Taylor in New Jersey at the Alpine Learning Group. The work at the Alpine Learning Centre was largely centre-based and they provided more broad-based ABA services to children and young adults up to age 21. I had never worked with children older than 10 years at that time so it was a real eye-opening experience. I had the opportunity to do research and get published in JABA. I learned so much there; Dr. Taylor is one of my heroes and I feel so fortunate to call her one of my mentors.

**How has the world of IBI in Ontario changed over the past 15 years?** 15 years ago, ABA was only for those who could afford it. Some people even took second mortgages out on their homes; people were desperate for help. Back then it wasn't uncommon for families to fly up consultants from New Jersey or California to provide program oversight but these consultations were not that frequent; usually every three months or so. Nowadays with provincial funding, services are so much more accessible and local consultants will come in weekly, biweekly, or monthly. The frontline therapists (who are usually trained in ABA from a local school) get more

**You are a behaviour analyst and you're also a business owner, tell us about Kid Mechanix, Inc.** At Kid Mechanix (<http://kidmechanix.com/>) we specialize in delivering ABA-based services to children with ASD, ADHD, LD's, and other developmental disabilities. Kid Mechanix was established in 2010 and, historically, we provided services in-home, but as of this September, we launched a centre-based program. So, essentially, we have two tracks of service. In the home-based service, the programming is highly individualized and delivered 1:1. We work with children as young as 14 months all the way up to young adults. For the centre-based service, we are affiliated with First Foundations which is an amazing preschool in Thornhill Woods/Vaughan area. The focus in this track is about school readiness and integration. As you know, there can be a pretty big gap when you're moving a child from 1:1 instruction to a classroom which is more like 30:1. Our goal here is to address this gap. We integrate the kids and pull them out if necessary but the

access to the consultants, learn faster and run better programming. In turn, clients get better service. The field has grown exponentially especially with post-secondary schools in Canada stepping up and establishing more behaviour analytic degree programs. Back when I first started in the field, my mom thought that I was a babysitter for kids with autism; things have changed a lot.

**What is the most powerful, inspirational or relevant talk/workshop that you have been to lately?** Probably Dr. Peter Gerhardt's talk in October hosted by Shining Through. I've known Peter for years and his talk really drove home the need to create a more meaningful community-based curriculum for adolescent and adult clients. A lot of us tend to be comfortable with doing flash cards at a table with a client, but that doesn't make a successful adult in the community. As a future project, I am definitely interested in developing a curriculum for adolescents and young adults.

**Tell us something that your fellow behaviour analytic colleagues likely don't know about you.** Well, I believe in work hard and play hard; I'm a competitive skier. I actually made the Canadian Masters ski team last year. I also compete in mountain bike racing and road cycling in the summer.

**Any advice for budding behaviour analysts?** The sky is the limit. Find a good mentor and keep an open mind; don't say no to a new possibility if you think that you could learn something from it. Gain as much experience as possible with a variety of clients. Even if you mostly work with kids, consider working with an adult client (if you have the mentorship to do so) in order to expand your horizons.

**Michelle Turan, PhD**  
Michelle is a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst and has been working in the field of behaviour analysis for 20 years teaching and consulting internationally, particularly in the field of education and autism. Michelle has travelled to India with the Global Autism Project to collaborate with a school for children with special needs and to supervise Canadian students in their teaching of evidence-based practices to teachers. Michelle became so passionate about this initiative that she began her studies in International Development in 2015 through UBC. In addition, Michelle has been awarded a Mohawk College ARIE grant to evaluate the intercultural and citizenship skills of faculty and students who will travel with her to Guatemala and India in the spring of 2016. Michelle is a published researcher but prefers to spend most of her professional time training others. Michelle can be found on Facebook/Twitter/Pinterest under AutismProf as well as LinkedIn, as she values the opportunity to connect with others to learn or to provide useful information relevant to the field of autism and/or behaviour analysis.



**You're on faculty at Mohawk College in Hamilton Ontario, tell us about the program.** The Autism and Behavioural Sciences program is a one year graduate certificate (<http://www.mohawkcollege.ca/community-urban-studies-programs/autism-behavioural-science-graduate-certificate.html>). We usually have about 50 full-time students every year. The program is also offered online for part-time students. The program itself has been running for 10 years now and we have graduated over 400 full-

time students, which is so exciting for us and for the field. The program has evolved over the years; three years ago we developed a course sequence in partnership with McMaster University (<https://socialsciences.mcmaster.ca/departments-schools-programs/mohawk-mcmaster-affiliated-certificates/ABA-Certificate>). This grew out of an interest expressed by the McMaster student population; they were looking for more applied areas of study particularly in the social sciences, and they were very interested in autism. The course sequence includes: Single Subject Research Design, Principles of ABA 1 and 2, Ethical Practice in the Field of ABA, Professional Relationships with Families and Teams, and Introduction to Autism Spectrum Disorder. So basically students at McMaster can opt to take one or all of the courses offered, and after completing all six, they earn a local college certificate in ABA. There isn't a field placement component, so for the students who really want to pursue a career in ABA or work with individuals with autism, they would then move into a relevant program like our graduate certificate. This course sequence serves as a springboard into a college or MA program.

Our newest program will be starting in September 2016, and this time we have partnered with McMaster's Department of Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour to offer an honours undergraduate degree in Human Behaviour ([http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/preview\\_program.php?catoid=13&pooid=10870&returnto=2212](http://academiccalendars.romcmaster.ca/preview_program.php?catoid=13&pooid=10870&returnto=2212)). Students in their second year will have the option to move into the Autism and Behavioural Science stream. On completion of the

program, the students will earn a Bachelor of Science Honours degree and a certificate in ABA. We envision that these students will then move onto graduate school or work directly in the field, as they do have two placements within the program.

**Many clinicians in our field seem to like to dip their toes into college or university level course instruction now and again. You have devoted much of your career to education, what is the draw for you?**

Initially, I just really liked telling people about ABA but then I got the job at Mohawk and I fell in love with the classroom interaction. The best part about teaching is seeing how a behaviour analytic perspective can change how the students view the world and themselves. The philosophy and the science of behaviour provide language to explain phenomena that is of great interest to them. Understanding and embracing ABA not only provides a new perspective on the world, it provokes curiosity. This can cause a little discomfort as you question your own beliefs but that is where real learning happens. After teaching in many programs, 10 years in, I have to tell you that I'm not bored! (Laughs).

**Do you use behaviour analytic teaching strategies like interteaching, PSI, or programmed learning in your courses? And if so, how is it received by the students?**

Yes! Some students can be hesitant or even resistant as these methods require the student to be very active in their learning and mastery of the material. The majority of students coming in have not had prior experience with some of these methods and they are expecting a classroom where they can passively listen to a lecture for a few hours. So it can be unsettling for some

students at first but I find that when I explain the rationale behind the method, most students end up embracing it. I use interteaching in most of my courses, along with other active learning strategies. In terms of student feedback, they often report that it made them be better prepared for class and they enjoy getting immediate feedback on their mastery with the material. In terms of the payoff for me as an instructor, I too get immediate feedback and I make necessary changes week by week based on student responses.

On a related note, in terms of behaviour analytic strategies and classroom management, students have constant access to smart phones and computers. As an instructor, you can view it as competition and implement punitive strategies like "turn it off or else" or you can figure out a way to embrace it and work with it. We use PSI modules in some classes—technology is a huge part of making learning happen.

**How did you become interested in ABA?** As an undergraduate student, I was really interested in becoming a Speech & Language Pathologist. I lived in a rural community and I saw a posting for a part time job to work with a child with Pervasive Developmental Disorder, I didn't really know what that was at the time, but the posting described working on language development so I thought it

would be a good experience for an aspiring SLP. Although I didn't have the qualifications that the posting indicated, the job was close to my house and I figured I would just call and see if I could at least volunteer my time. I spoke with his mother and expressed my interest and she hired me! This was prior to the age of provincial training and the family had arranged for consultants from the States to come in and provide training. This was my first exposure to ABA programming. In the early days, I just felt so deflated; I was trying to work with this child and as soon as I would arrive he would cry! It was so depressing, I just thought this kid doesn't like me but we persisted and things got a lot better. He had only a few words but one day when I arrived he ran into my arms and exclaimed "Bichelle!" We definitely made a connection and I fell in love with ABA as it took us from a child running away from me crying to successfully getting this child to complete difficult work and use functional language for the first time. It was so powerful; we have a technology that can help you make a connection with another human being who is struggling. Sometimes I would attend his baseball games and when he would see me, he would run in from the outfield, just to come and sit with me in the stands. There is no better feeling...

**What other projects do you have on the go?** Probably the most exciting one is with the Global Autism Project. Back in 2013 we took a group of students to Northern India to establish ABA programming in a school (SOREM) for children with developmental disabilities. We are very fortunate to have the opportunity again and we will be going this winter for four weeks. I was fortunate to obtain a research grant for this trip



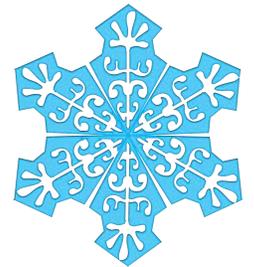
(and an additional trip to Guatemala in May) to study intercultural competence of both students and faculty. We will be looking at pre and post trip data on things like social-cultural behaviour, global awareness, as well as changing personal perspectives.

We have five students from Mohawk and five students from Fanshawe College going. Each student had to raise \$2500 US and cover the cost of the flight. We had a huge response for interest so this year we actually had a pretty rigorous application process to rate and choose the successful candidates. This field placement isn't a one-way learning process and it is not about showing the school in India what we know about autism and ABA, it's also about the students and faculty getting the chance to learn about education, culture, and a world that is so different from their own. You learn a lot about yourself and your view on the world with these international service trips.

**In addition to teaching, you have a great interest in the experience of parents of children with ASD. Tell us about that.** Yes, this grew out of my experiences in completing research for my PhD. In our field, in terms of research methods, we are defined largely by experimental methodology. My PhD is actually in Education and in that field, qualitative methodology is valued alongside quantitative methods, so different from the field of ABA. For my dissertation, my research was a mixed methods design and I completed surveys and focus groups with parents of children with ASD and I heard firsthand about their struggles and successes. Their stories really impacted me; it changed how I work in the field. I absolutely consider myself to be a radical behaviourist

and maybe someone is going to throw a brick at me for saying this (laughs) but I think we are missing something in our science if we overlook the “human” piece, the “soft data”, (as it is often referred); the qualitative components. Chances are if you're in ABA, you chose this field because you want to make a difference in someone's life. Although our work with a child or family is often narrowly focused, there is value in recognizing the broader context of our work—parents can teach us a lot about ABA service delivery.

**Any advice for someone interested in teaching ABA coursework at the college or university level?** There seems to be a high interest among new grads to get straight into teaching at a college or university, but to be effective and to illustrate concepts, you definitely need a lot of hands on clinical experience. When you're ready to give it a try, do your research on the programs that are out there and contact the program coordinator to see if you can have the opportunity to do a guest lecture in one class and see where that takes you. And as always, network and stay connected to get yourself known out there so that opportunities can find you too.



## Have someone in mind for the Cusp?

Let us know, we love suggestions!  
newsletter@ontaba.org

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