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Education Notes bring mathematical and educational ideas forth to the CMS readership in a manner that promotes discussion of relevant topics including research, activities, issues, and noteworthy news items. Comments, suggestions, and submissions are welcome.

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I have been attending conferences in my field of research, mathematics education, since 2006. The past nearly twenty years has resulted in many trips to many conferences in many amazing locations around the world (I am privileged that way, yes). Also resulting from the past few decades of conference travel, my very own conference attendance checklist. To be clear, I am not referring to a 'seize the day' checklist which helps me make the absolute most out of each and every day of attendance while at a particular conference. Rather, I am referring to the checklist (which, at times, borders on a flowchart) that I use to help me determine whether or not I will attend a particular conference.

As you might expect, my checklist does change with the times (e.g., to attend hybrid events or not is a relatively new item on my list), but I have found that the main items are still the main items. For example, the field of mathematics education is replete with conferences all over the world on an annual basis, which means one main item on my list is the conference itself. Closely related is the scope of the research findings that I have to present, and whether or not they align with the particular conference I have under consideration. At one extreme, certain conferences require just a short abstract, which results in a conference presentation, but no conference publication. At the other extreme, certain conferences require an eight-page research report, which, if accepted (after going through the double-anonymous peer-review process), results in a forty-five-minute conference presentation and publication in the subsequent conference proceedings. With the conference and my potential role(s) at each potential conference established, there are a few more items to check on/off my list.

Finance, of course, is a main item on my checklist. Whether derived from the procurement of internal (to the university) or external research grants, professional expense funds or otherwise, funding begets those closely related, other main items on the list. The ability or inability to support graduate students and postdoctoral researchers attending the conferences, the location of the conference and the time of the year in which the conference is held, for example, are the other main items on the checklist. As I mentioned earlier, the main items have remained the main items over the years.

I should point out, here, that the main items of my checklist, that is, *Conference*, *Research Findings*, *Research Funding*, *Graduate Student Support*, *Where* and *When* are not necessarily considered in the linear fashion in which they have been presented, and the list items presented are not exhaustive. For example, I have had research findings that were better aligned with a conference being held on the other side of the world; however, I submitted the findings to a different conference, one held much closer to home, which afforded me the opportunity to bring a graduate student to the conference, as well, and introduce them to all my wonderful colleagues early in their graduate student journey. In terms of a less noble example, I must admit that I have, first, considered where a conference was being held, then if I had enough money to attend, and all before ever considering when it was taking place, whether my findings best aligned with the conference, and only after all that, did I remember that I had graduate students who probably also wanted to attend. For shame, Egan. For shame.

The other day, one of my current graduate students inquired about attending the annual conference of the North American Chapter of the International Group for the Psychology of Mathematics Education, which is known acronymically as PME-NA. In the past, I would have immediately entered checklist mode. Knowing PME-NA (read: Conference) well and having attended many times, I would have, in the past, asked whether we would be submitting an 8-page Research Report or 4-page Brief Research Report (read: Research Findings). In the past, while discussing the length of our proposal, I would double-check the balance of my funding (read: Research Funding), and then do a cursory search of airline ticket and hotel accommodation costs (read: Where and When) to make sure I had enough money for both of us to attend (read: Graduate Student Support) the conference. Like I said, however, that's all in the past. I have, just recently, made a major tweak to my conference attendance checklist and, now, I have one checklist item that trumps all others: Is it in the states?!

The new administration in the USA has been causing Canadians consternation. Repeated references to Canada becoming the '51st state' are not going unheard north of the border. (A nonstarter, for the record.) The repeated annexation ramblings, 25% tariff threats, retaliatory tariffs and actual tariffs on steel and aluminum have Canadians now conducting small acts of resistance. Whether it's booing the American anthem before a hockey (or basketball) game, boycotting US products or otherwise, these acts of resistance are becoming common place here in Canada.

Speaking of boycotting US products, walk around the grocery store or the liquor store and you'll see signs of economic nationalism taking hold. My wife and I, we're trying to do our part. Sure, it takes a bit more time to check all the labels on our groceries, but not that much time. And, sure, there are a few things that are very, very hard to go without, for example, California Zinfandel. However, when you see Canadian professional hockey players, ones that live their lives playing for teams in the United States, near tears during the singing and booing of the U.S. National Anthem, followed by the singing of the Canadian anthem, followed by three fights in the first nine seconds of the game, it's clear that the relationship between Canada and the United States is strained. It's because of this strained relationship, one that we did not start, that it's not just my grocery list that has been updated, my conference attendance checklist, too.

I'll say it, the new administration in the USA is causing me conference attendance consternation. To deal with this consternation, I have decided to try and exercise a bit of academic nationalism (for lack of a better term), and will only be attending mathematics education related conferences held here in Canada for the foreseeable future. This means that I will, likely, have to miss the 2026 International Congress of Mathematicians to be held in Philadelphia, USA from July 23 to July 30, 2026, which is a shame because I was so looking forward to

Section 19, Mathematical Education and Popularization of Mathematics section. If I am going to make sure that the carrots that I buy are from Canada then it just wouldn't make sense to head to ICM 2026. I just don't see a way around this for me at the time of this writing.

Fortunately, here in Canada, there are many ways for me to scratch my conference itch. I look forward to us perhaps crossing paths at the 2025 Statistical Society of Canada Annual Meeting in Saskatoon (May 25-28) or the 2025 Annual Meeting of the Canadian Mathematics Education Study Group in Lethbridge (Jun 13-17) or one of the MathEd Forums held by Fields (The Fields Institute for Research in Mathematical Sciences). I also look forward to us definitely crossing paths at the 2025 CMS Summer Meeting in Quebec City (June 6-9) and the 2025 CMS Winter Meeting in Toronto (December 5-8). By the way, if you do see me at ICM 2026 then something major has happened, either with the current strained relations between Canada and the USA or I have found some spectacular alternative to reducing the carrot/conference cognitive dissonance I am currently experiencing.

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