INTRODUCTION

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THE INAUGURATION OF THE MATHEMATICS COUNCIL OF ALBERTA TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION

The Mathematics Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (MCATA) has a strong history of responding to the needs of teachers and providing opportunities for professional development in mathematics education. As a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association, its inception was within the context of a dedicated leadership concerned with shaping the future and recognizing teaching as a profession. Formed in 1918, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance worked diligently to improve teaching conditions through salary schedules, teaching contracts, pensions, and the development of a professional code of ethics. In 1919, the Alberta Teachers' Alliance joined with teachers in other provinces to initiate the Canadian Teachers' Federation. In 1934, its name was changed to the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), and when the *Teaching Profession Act* was passed in 1935, it was recognized as a legal entity. Over the next ten years, the ATA worked to establish the university as the home of teacher education.

Within this context of leadership, the ATA established specialist councils to foster the professional development of teachers interested in common curriculum or specialty areas. The first meeting of the provisional executive of MCATA was held on October 29, 1960. The members were T. F. Reiger (chair), L. D. Nelson, S. E. L. Pollack, Max Wyman, Helen Morrison,

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and L. J. Scott (secretary). Over the next few months, this group met to write a constitution and plan the inaugural conference. The first conference of MCATA was held August 16–19, 1961 at the University of Alberta. Sixty teachers attended. The conference included a keynote address by J. H. Hlavaty, a member of the Board of Directors of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), and presentations by N. M. Purvis, R. C. Jacka, W. F. Coulson, S. A Lindstedt, and L. W. Kunelius, members representing the Department of Education, Department of Mathematics at the University of Alberta, and the Faculty of Education at the University of Alberta. The conference also featured a demonstration lesson in elementary mathematics, a computer demonstration, group discussions on the future of MCATA, and a panel to evaluate the conference. The constitution was approved, officers were elected, five directors were appointed, the membership fee of $5 was set, and plans to issue the first newsletter were made.

The first newsletter was published in January, 1962 (volume 1, issue 1). The announcement that appeared on the first page indicated that members would be kept aware of current developments through news bulletins published four times a year. These bulletins included current news items and theoretical articles. As the content evolved to include more articles, MCATA decided to publish the newsletter as a professional journal. The newsletter was renamed *delta-K* in May 1971 (volume 10, number 3) and was published two or three times a year. As the membership grew, the need for more frequent contact emerged. In January, 1983, the newsletter was reintroduced and published as volume 1, number 1. In June 2006, *delta-K* became a peer-reviewed journal. Today, both publications remain vibrant ways to connect with the MCATA membership.

MCATA's service to members and commitment to publishing information and articles has presented a unique opportunity to celebrate its 50 years. In particular, articles in *delta-K* provide a glimpse into the activities of the council. Presented here is a brief summary of these activities.

ACTIVITIES OF MCATA

Appearing on MCATA letterhead, newsletters, and journals is the council logo. Originally it consisted of a Venn diagram with three striped circles representing students, teachers, and the mathematics curriculum with MCATA at the intersection. The logo has evolved over the years with the MCATA letters being superimposed on the Venn diagram logo. Currently the letters-only version is used as the logo. The name, MCATA, has remained throughout the history of the council. However, in 1971, the newsletter was renamed *delta-K*, a name chosen from those submitted by the

membership. The meaning of the name was described in the first issue in May 1971 (volume 10, number 3):

> The chosen name represents *delta* (Δ), the fourth letter in the Greek alphabet used in mathematics to represent an increment or increase. *K* is for knowledge: knowledge of mathematics, knowledge of teaching mathematics and knowledge of new methods and developments in our discipline (p. 1).

The logos and names represent the focus of MCATA on the professional development of its members. Throughout the pages of the publications are examples of how the council organized annual conferences, offered regional workshops and seminars, produced publications, and maintained websites.

Annual conferences have remained the highlight of the council. Affiliations with other professional organizations such as the NCTM (from 1964) and Canadian Association of Mathematics Teachers (1967–1972) have added a national and international lens to such conferences, as evident in Table I.1.

In addition to annual conferences and in response to members' interest in curriculum changes, summer workshops were initiated in the mid-1960s; mini-conferences were prominent in the 19709s, 1980s and 1990s; and biannual symposiums were started in the 1990s and remain a part of MCATA activities offered today. Interests in providing service to local members resulted in the formation of regional councils in 1962. By 1993, these had disbanded as members became more involved in MCATA.

Since its formation, MCATA has provided innovative materials and resources to its members. Between 1964 and 1972, film circuits were popular. In 1963, a mathematics course at the University of Calgary developed by Sid Linstedt was reformatted as 16-mm films and a series of 50 films were distributed to 14 centres around the province for secondary mathematics

TABLE I.1 Conference Dates and Location

Conference Location	Year(s)
Edmonton	1961, 1962, 1969, 1973*, 1982, 1986*, 1988, 1991, 1994*, 1997, 2001, 2003*, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2013
Calgary	1963, 1966*, 1970, 1971, 1975, 1979*, 1983, 1987, 1990*, 1993, 1998*, 2004, 2010
Red Deer	1964, 1967, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1984, 1996, 2000
Vancouver	1965
Jasper	1974, 1999, 2006, 2008, 2012
Lethbridge	1981, 1985, 1989, 1995
Medicine Hat	1992
Canmore	2002

* NCTM meeting.

teachers who met once a week to study two or three of the films. In 1966, MCATA purchased ten films from the NCTM Elementary Film series, and these were distributed to centres throughout the province until 1974. Another film series from NCTM, *Mathematics for Tomorrow,* was purchased in 1966 and distributed to superintendents. In the 1970s, film circuits were replaced with materials circuits. Math Kits containing materials and teacher information were developed by Stu McCormick and were circulated throughout the province. In 1974, a Metric Kit was developed and MCATA arranged teams of teachers into the "Metric Missionaries" who toured Alberta to provide four-hour Saturday workshops. Eventually these were replaced by the mini-conferences, allowing more members to interact with one another at the local level.

Throughout its history, MCATA has worked closely with university departments of mathematics by supporting mathematics contests. Since the 1970s, MCATA has contributed to the Alberta High School Mathematics Prize Examination, the Calgary Mathematics Association Junior High Examination, and the Edmonton Junior High Mathematics Contest. Results are published each year in the MCATA newsletter, and examination questions and answers are published annually in *delta-K.* These contests honour mathematics students who excel.

Other ways of honouring excellence are evident in the awards initiated by MCATA. Currently, MCATA recognizes significant contributions of its members to mathematics education through the Mathematics Educator of the Year Award (Table I.2).

TABLE I.2 Recipient by Year of the Mathematics Educator of the Year Award

Year	Recipient	Year	Recipient	Year	Recipient
1984	Marshall Bye	1997	Donna Chanasyk	2004	Percy Zalasky
1985	Joan Worth	1997	Lynwen Hart	2005	Not awarded
1986	John Percevault	1997	Klaus Puhlmann	2006	Gerald Krabbe
1987	Bill Bober	1998	Not awarded	2007	Sandra Unrau
1988	Art Jorgensen	1999	Betty Morris	2008	Lori Ball
1989	Lois Marchand	1999	Gail Poshtar	2008	Kamie Klevgaard
1990	Joan Crawford	2000	Len Bonifacio	2009	Linda Arndt
1991	Cynthia Ballheim	2000	Shauna Boyce	2009	Brenda MacDonald
1992	Louise Frame	2000	Evan Fleetwood	2010	Ed Tobin
1993	Mary Anne Nissen	2000	Kathy McCabe	2011	Not awarded
1994	Bob Michie	2001	Roxanne Trouth	2012	Benita Greenwood
1995	Florence Glanfield	2002	Not awarded		
1996	Evelyn Sawicki	2003	Sharon Barry		

The Friends of MCATA Award is presented at the annual conference in recognition of service to MCATA. In 2002, MCATA created the Dr. Arthur Jorgensen Chair Award to encourage students enrolled in education programs in post-secondary institutions throughout Alberta to pursue and commit to mathematics education. The award consists of a one-year term on the MCATA Executive, with expenses paid to attend Executive meetings; a one-year membership in MCATA and NCTM; and an invitation to attend one MCATA conference with appropriate expenses paid.

MCATA also offers a $500 professional development grant for mathematics education initiatives that support current learning and teaching practices or current priorities as outlined by or through Alberta Education, local school districts, MCATA, NCTM, ATA, or other reputable education associations.

Publications have expanded from the newsletters and journal to include monographs and special issues. A series of monographs was published in the 1970s and 1980s that addressed issues and interests:

- *Manipulative Materials for Teaching and Learning Mathematics* (July 1973), edited by W. George Cathcart
- *Mathematics Teaching: The State of the Art: Proceedings of the Edmonton Meeting of the NCTM* (October 1973), edited by W. George Cathcart
- *Metrication: Activities, Relationships, and Humor* (June 1975), edited by K. Allen Neufeld
- *Timeless Activities for Mathematics K–12* (June 1976), edited by Bruce D. Harrison and Ed Carriger
- *Calculators in the Classroom* (November 1977), edited by K. Allen Neufeld
- *Reading in Mathematics* (December 1980), edited by John Percevault
- *Problem Solving in the Mathematics Classroom* (April 1982), edited by Side Rachlin and Judy McDonald
- *Microcomputer Development* (September 1982), edited by Ron Cammaert
- *56 Ideas: Make It, Take it* (December 1987), edited by William Bober and John Percevault
- *Communication in the Mathematics Classroom* (October 1992), edited by Daiyo Sawada

Special issues of *delta-K* include:

- *Teaching Mathematics in the Early childhood Classroom* (1987, volume 26, issue 3), a joint publication of MCATA and the Early Childhood Education Council, co-edited by John Percevault and Gordon Orlick

- *Technology and Mathematics* (1988, volume 27, number 1), edited by John Percevault
- *Mathematics for Gifted Students* (1989, volume 27, number 3), another joint publication with the Gifted and Talented Education Council and edited by Andy Liu
- *Early Childhood Mathematics* (2011, volume 48, number 2), co-edited by Lynn McGarvey and Gladys Sterenberg
- *Celebrating 50 years of delta-K* (2013, volume 50, number 2), edited by Gladys Sterenberg

Since its formation, MCATA has been involved in political action. Thinkers' Conferences were held to establish position statements, policies, and direction for MCATA. MCATA has initiated surveys on the needs and concerns of its membership to inform its action. These include the 1968 research report by Marshall P. Bye on the Project Calculator program; the 1984 report by Tom Schroeder and Louise Frame that examined the preparation and continuing education of mathematics teachers in Alberta; and the 2012 scholarly activities report of Alberta mathematics teachers by Erasmia Eliopoulos, Julie Long, Richelle Marynowski, Lynn McGarvey, and Gladys Sterenberg. A Blue Ribbon Panel was created in response to concerns about the mathematics 30 diploma exams and made 53 recommendations to Alberta Education and other stakeholders based on surveys of secondary students, teachers, and postsecondary institutions. In addition, countless letters and petitions have been distributed on behalf of the membership in response to changes in assessment, achievement testing, and new curriculum initiatives. The activities of MCATA have been rich and varied because of the commitment of its volunteers.

MCATA VOLUNTEERS

MCATA is directed by volunteer teachers and educators who contribute their time, talents, and enthusiasm to plan and implement programs and activities for the council. Significantly, this is a story about people who have a strong commitment to being great mathematics teachers and educators and to serving their professional community.

The inaugural provincial executive members of 1961–1962 were John Cherniwchan (president), T. F. Reiger (past president), Eugene Wasylyk (vice president), and Olive Jagoe (secretary-treasurer). MCATA presidents throughout the past 50 years are listed in Table I.3.

Because of strong leadership throughout its history, MCATA has remained dynamic. Membership fees began at $5 in 1961 and are currently set at $30 (the rate established in 1993). The number of members has ranged from

TABLE I.3 MCATA Presidents

Fred Tarlton (1962–1963)	K. Allen Neufeld (1975–1977)	George Ditto (1995–1996)
Tom Atkinson (1963–1964)	Robert Hold (1977–1979)	Florence Glanfield (1997–1998)
Len Pallesen (1964–1965)	Lyle Pagnucco (1979–1981)	Cynthia Ballheim (1998–2000)
Ted Rempel (1965–1966)	Gary Hill (1981–1983)	Sandra Unrau (2000–2002)
Marshall Bye (1966–1967)	Ron Cammaert (1983–1985)	Cynthia Ballheim (2003–2004)
Gus Bruns (1967–1968)	Robert Michie (1985–1987)	Len Bonifacio (2004–2005)
Murray Falk (1968–1969)	Louise Frame (1987–1989)	Janis Kristjansson (2005–2007)
Jim Kean (1969–1971)	Marie Hauk (1989–1991)	Sharon Gach (2007–2009)
Richard Daly (1971–1973)	Bob Hart (1991–1993)	Marj Ferris (2009–
W. George Cathcart (1973–1975)	Wendy Richards (1993–1995)	

fewer than 100 in the inaugural year to highs of almost 1100 in the 1960s and 1980s. The average of 500 is lower than the current enrolment of 640.

CELEBRATING 50 YEARS

The task of working on this project that celebrates 50 years of *delta-K* has been fascinating and enjoyable. For this book, Egan Chernoff and I have assembled a collection of articles that have appeared in *delta*-K throughout its history. We used the following criteria in choosing the articles. First, we collected and examined the tables of contents for all issues. We read each issue (yes, that was a lot of reading!) and looked for repeated themes. We noted curricular changes and related teaching and research ideas. Second, we looked for articles that represented a range of grades. Third, we focused on authors who were primarily from Alberta.

After short-listing all articles, we selected ten from each decade and invited prominent teachers and mathematics educators to provide introductions and commentaries. We are deeply appreciative of these authors for their investment in this project. Through their writings, we hope you will gain perspectives of the context of teaching and learning mathematics in Alberta. Each of these authors provides an in-depth investigation of emerging themes across the selected articles.

The articles have been left in their original format with the following exceptions. We have changed footnotes to endnotes to provide consistency, we have included the editorial notes and author descriptions from the original publications, and we have used gender inclusive language in most places. The formatting of earlier articles has been changed to align it with current protocols. Karen Virag, Supervising Editor of Publications at The Alberta Teachers' Association has been an integral part of the process of publishing this book. Together with Penny Harter, Kristina Lundberg, and Judith Plumb, she edited the commentaries and introductions and provided archival material and references. Permission is granted by The Alberta Teachers' Association to reprint all articles previously published in *delta-K*. Credit is also given to Joan Worth and Art Jorgensen (1995) who edited a special historical journal, *Thirty-Four Years and Counting*, that contributed greatly to the preparation of this introduction.

Throughout our study of the articles published in the past 50 years, we have been impressed with the dedication of teachers, mathematics educators, and mathematicians involved in MCATA. Articles written for *delta-K* have reflected the viewpoints of various people interested in mathematics education in Alberta.

As we celebrate 50 years of *delta-K*, we wish to convey our deep gratitude to previous editors who made strong contributions to our history (Table I.4).

TABLE I.4 Previous Editors

John M. Cherniwchan (1962)	Mary Beaton (1967–1970)	John Percevault (1986–1988)
W. F. Coulson (1963)	Murray Falk (1970–1973)	Linda I. Brandau (1988–1990)
J. E. Holditch (1963–1964)	Murray R. Falk (1970–1973)	A. Craig Loewen & John B. Percevault (1990–1992)
W. F. Coulson, J. E. Holditch, & Tom Atkinson (1965)	Ed Carriger (1973–1980)	A. Craig Loewen (1992–1994)
W. F. Coulson & Tom Atkinson (1965)	George Cathcart (1981–1982)	Arthur Jorgensen (1994–1996)
Tom Atkinson (1966)	Gordon Nicol (1983–1984)	Klaus Puhlmann (1997–2004)
Tom Atkinson & Sol Sigurdson (1966–1967)	Art Jorgensen & John Percevault (1985)	A. Craig Loewen (2004)

In his editorial of *Thirty-Four Years and Counting*, the late Art Jorgensen (1995) writes:

> As we look forward to the next 30 years, what will MCATA's future be? Will it grow and prosper and continue to be a voice to be heard, or will it wither and die? It is really up to the members. Today's executive members, like those of the past years, will do their best. Then they will move on and pass the torch to you. Personally, I have a great deal of confidence in our members, and believe that MCATA has a bright future. Let's make it so." (p. 4)

We believe he would be proud of the vibrancy of our community.

REFERENCE

Worth, J., & Jorgensen, A. (1995). *Thirty-four years and counting: The history of the Mathematics Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association.* Edmonton, AB: The Alberta Teachers' Association.