

SQUAREUPB.C. Report

to the Annual General Meeting

of the B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation, Penticton -- August 9, 2013

For those who are unaware, SQUAREUPB.C. is a marketing initiative of the Federation chaired by Brian Elmer of West Kelowna, who serves in an appointed position. A marketing approach requires that attention be given to creating an attractive product or service, presenting it at a desirable place or location for a representative value-based price before launching the promotion or advertising.

Since the object of this report is to explain the various tasks performed by SQUAREUPB.C. since August of 2012 it will include a review of some of the information presented at the Board of Directors Meeting at Abbotsford on April 6.

The report presented at the April B.O.D. meeting can be found at the following link:

<http://squaredance.bc.ca/articals/bod2013/squareupbc.pdf>

In brief, that report reflected upon the challenge presented to us that the next generation, the Baby Boomer, is a very different “customer” who wants to learn to dance sooner than our traditional Mainstream entry program will allow. This customer does not have the time or patience for 28 to 30 lessons to become a square dancer. Promoting or advertising dance programs that don’t satisfy their needs and wants will not be fruitful, no matter how hard we try.

Concern was expressed for the steady decline of square/round dancers in B.C. at “8 per cent per year,” an attrition rate identified by the B.C. Federation’s Treasurer at last year’s A.G.M. in Penticton.

The B.O.D. report stated that all the research has been done and that it’s time for action. The research mentioned is that conducted many years ago by the Callerlab Foundation, resulting in specific recommendations and guidelines.

During the past year, a SQUAREUPB.C. task has been to maintain the Facebook and Twitter social media pages to reflect dance activity, especially marketing strategies, around the province and our blog page.

See those web pages at:

www.Facebook.com/BCSquareandRoundDanceFederation

and

www.Twitter.com/BCFedDanceNews and www.Twitter.com/BCFedLive

and

www.Blog.squaredance.bc.ca

The largest marketing effort in the Summer/Fall of 2012, leading into and during the first part of the dance season, was the paid advertising campaign on social media, where \$2826 was spent of a budgeted \$3200.

The advertising of new square dancer sessions took place on Facebook, YouTube and on search and display pages for Google, called Google AdWords. The first ads appeared in mid-July and the last ran in mid-October.

The general strategy was to tell of the benefits of square dancing through a targeted approach directed at three demographic groups:

Baby Boomers, young adults, preteens and teens.

The advertisements would “tease” or, hopefully, motivate the viewer to “click” on the ad for more information and be transferred to what are called “landing pages.” We paid for each click received.

The landing pages created for the social media campaign and to be used with revision in the 2013 campaign are:

Baby Boomers – www.TakeMeDancing.squaredance.bc.ca

Young adults aged 30, 40 – www.Dancing30Somethings.squaredance.bc.ca

Pre-teens and teens – www.KidsLoveToDance.squaredance.bc.ca

A very impressive element about the different social media platforms on which we advertised is that they offer reports, called “analytics,” regarding the use of each given strategy or campaign. Overall, our campaigns appeared on computer and mobile device screens before over 7.8 million (7,865,281) pairs of eyes—a statistic called “impressions.”

A total of 2,670 persons were motivated enough by our various ads to click on them for more information.

While on the subject of social media advertising, a sum of \$3500 was earmarked in April by your Federation’s Board of Directors for a second campaign to start in middle to late July. It is planned to have a strategy similar to last year’s campaign but will probably concentrate more upon sending interested persons to our landing pages.

Delegates and Alternates to the B.C. Federation were to direct the clubs in their regions to send their new square dancer session information by July 1st for use in the campaign. Many clubs have done so but many have not. They can still submit the information if they wish to be included in the campaign. Submit to: brian@squaredance.bc.ca

Some educational upgrading was acquired last Fall through a couple of seminar-type events. A session over the internet, called a “webinar,” detailed “content marketing” and taught how

we can attract newcomers through stories and compositions that tell of our activity without directly pitching the benefits.

In November, a seminar was attended to learn about the virtual revolution toward the use of mobile devices over desktop computers. We have a problem with regard to how our square dance web pages display on the screens of various mobile devices. Most of them are not “mobile-friendly” which can result in visitors to our pages losing patience with the process of scrolling, particularly horizontally, through our information.

A technical advancement in web page production called “responsive design” can fix that but, for us, there are many challenges in adopting it, including cost. At this point, the best we can do to accommodate the ever-increasing use of mobile devices is to center everything on our web pages.

A desire to truly give the Baby Boomer generation a dance instruction service that fits their needs is gaining momentum in our province. The West Coast Square Dancing program, spearheaded by caller Gord Ruedig of Powell River, is going inland this Fall as caller Merv Meyer introduces it to the new dancers at the Kamloops Square Dancers club.

Indeed, several clubs are trying shorter programs where full Mainstream isn't the immediate destination. That's putting the customer first and we'll see if we can spread the word that square dancing can be enjoyed without a long period of instruction.

It is also very encouraging to see that some dance regions in our province are energized about perpetuating and promoting our fabulous dance form.

Notable success, particularly with free online publicity, has been enjoyed over the year in Williams Lake. In some instances, the caller/cuer and dancers at the Stampede Whirlaways club conducted events to create press opportunities. One of those was to square dance in snowshoes and another was to square dance only to Christmas songs to create something they called “Squaroling.” Cuer Mary Anne Turner deserves credit for her efforts that include keeping up a square and round dance promotion presence on her Twitter page.

See these examples of some Williams Lake area free media publicity successes:

- The “Snowshoe Shuffle” -- square dancing in snowshoes:
<http://www.welcometowilliamslake.ca/index.php/human-interest/76-human-interest/6735-square-dance-in-snow-shoes.html>
- A dance and pie auction that raised \$750 for a local Child Development Centre:
<http://welcometowilliamslake.ca/index.php/human-interest/76-human-interest/6794-stampede-whirlaways-square-dance-club.html>

In the last few months, the Kamloops Square Dancers club has also had success gaining free online publicity. The effort of cuer Sandy Gregson-Meyer in that city has resulted in several press releases being published along with photos that she has taken or acquired. Of particular note is that the releases tell of Kamloops area dancers going to dance in other cities.

Basically, the angle is to tell of the experiences of the Kamloops dancers at the out-of-town events.

At the time of this report-writing, three releases can be found on the community internet portal “Kamloops City dot com” and more are to be issued. Below are links to all three:

- Weekend dance event in Williams Lake: <http://kamloopscity.com/2013/06/01/kamloops-square-dancers-voyage-to-paradise/>
- Weekend dance event in Chilliwack: <http://kamloopscity.com/2013/06/10/kamloops-square-dancers-step-out-for-a-carnival/>
- Weekend dance event at 108 Mile House: <http://kamloopscity.com/2013/07/05/kamloops-area-dancers-party-hard-with-others-from-around-bc/>

Lots of free publicity, both online and in community newspapers has been enjoyed over the last year by the Westsyde Squares club of West Kelowna and the Westside Youth Team Dance Club. Here are some examples:

- Club Dancers recognize Square & Round Dance Awareness Week: http://www.welcometokelowna.com/columns/photos/news/Photos/12/09/15/Local_Clubs_Whole_Province_Celebrate_Square_Dance_Fun
- New dancers celebrate Square & Round Dance Awareness Week: http://www.welcometokelowna.com/columns/press_release/news/Press_Release/12/09/18/New_Square_Dancer_Class
- Startup of new youth dance club: http://www.welcometokelowna.com/columns/press_release/news/Press_Release/12/09/25/Westside_Youth_Team_Dance
- Graduation of new adult dancers: <http://www.castanet.net/edition/news-story-85166-101-.htm#85166> AND http://www.welcometokelowna.com/columns/press_release/news/Press_Release/13/01/02/Square_Dancing_Grads_Look_Forward_To_New_Hobby_in_2013

The Westsyde Squares also tried something inspired by Arizona square dance resort caller Tom Roper and that was to videotape new dancers on their first dance nights for posting on YouTube. It was considered a good way to heighten the excitement at new dancer sessions and give the newcomers some video they can direct their friends and relatives to watch. See these examples:

- First new square dancer session: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpPBiKYWAAc>
- Second new square dancer session: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7adk0qDvvBc&feature=plcp>

New promotion volunteers for the Star Country Squares in Vernon and the Penticton Squares are making inroads toward vastly improving square and round dance awareness in their communities and more.

In the Lower Mainland and Fraser Valley, the efforts of John Connolly in posting photos and videos in the promotion of our activity are to be applauded.

The Thompson-Shuswap region has raised their internet profile to reflect a vibrant local square and round dance community.

They've established new Facebook and Twitter pages for the region, reaching out to users of those social media platforms. See:

- <https://www.facebook.com/TSS.RDA>
- <https://twitter.com/Region9TSSRDA>

The Salmon Arm Squares is updating the homepage of their web site and they have both a Facebook and Twitter page. See:

- <http://salmonarmsquares.squaredance.bc.ca/>
- <https://www.facebook.com/SalmonArmSquares>
- <https://twitter.com/SalmonArmSquare>

It's also great to see "tweets" coming out of the Blind Bay area of the Shuswap because the Ta'Lana Twirlers Square and Round Dance Club now has a Twitter page at:

<https://twitter.com/TalanaTwirlers>

The club started back in 1979 and has a web page as well at:

<http://talanatwirlers.squaredance.bc.ca/>

The Kamloops Square Dancers Club has a web site at:

<http://www.kamloopssquaredancers.squaredance.bc.ca/>

Click on the "New Dancers Corner" tab at the top to see a well-done section for new dancers, including upcoming lesson information.

Clubs in the region are creating newsworthy moments, such as entries into Canada Day parades, that make for fun photos and interesting reading on the internet.

Kudos to Jean Wood of Salmon Arm for her fabulous effort toward these improvements in her region. Jean is the Webmaster for Region 9 (region9webmaster@gmail.com).

“Square Dance Awareness Week” will be observed this year from September 15th to 21st. As in past years, it is planned that we acquire, through the dedicated effort of Federation Secretary Ken Crisp, a Proclamation from the B.C. Government. Regional associations and their member clubs should be planning now what you'll be doing to make our activity stand out at that time and the Proclamation will be available as a publicity element.

Do remember that a couple of our most basic communications and marketing tools are the toll-free INFOLINE at 1-800-335-9433 and e-mail through info@squaredance.bc.ca Roy and Janet Ballam, our volunteers at the INFOLINE, can be e-mailed information at: contrakids@shaw.ca

In your promotions, remember to tell of the 10-minute promotional video, aimed at Baby Boomers, called “Dancing Keeps You Young.” Send people to it online at:

www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca

A printable version of the tri-fold “Prescription for Better Health” brochure, developed by your Federation, is still available online at: www.BetterHealth.squaredance.bc.ca
It’s not a poster but a double-sided document intended to be folded vertically into three equal-sized sections. The research told us that a “hot button” in seeking the attention of Baby Boomers is activity benefitting their fitness and health.

Also consider showing in your advertising/promotion/publicity our promotional “landing pages,” specifically telling the benefits of square dancing to select groups by demographic. Those were described here earlier.

It is regrettable that a group formed under the B.C. Federation to study the research relative to the decline of our activity and develop guidelines for revitalization has dissolved. The “Makeover Team” was struck at the 2012 B.O.D. in Victoria.

SQUAREUPB.C. is available to assist regional promotion committees or club promotion persons. Contact Brian Elmer by phone at 250-768-2694 or e-mail brian@squaredance.bc.ca

Over the year, marketing assistance has been furnished to clubs in Penticton, West Kelowna, Vernon, Kamloops, Williams Lake and North Vancouver, to name a few. Also, our efforts in B.C. are not going unnoticed outside the province. A representative from the newly-formed Promotion Committee of the Calgary and District Square and Round Dancers Association has placed inquiries before us.

More recently, an inquiry has come from the Glenview Square Dance Club near Chicago in Illinois. A club promotion volunteer indicates that the B.C. Federation is years ahead of them in their efforts to advance our recreation. He is impressed with what we have accomplished as witnessed by our internet presence.

They have requested authorization to use our 10-minute promotional video, “Dancing Keeps You Young,” with revised closing contact information relevant to their region. This will have to be contemplated at our A.G.M. and such authorization should probably be furnished with a request for a suggested donation to the Federation in compensation for the multi-thousand dollar investment in the video production. By the way, at the moment that promotional video, as posted on YouTube (www.DancingKeepsYouYoung.ca), has had 4,468 views.

This concludes the SQUAREUPB.C. report to the 2013 A.G.M. in Penticton.

Respectfully submitted,
Brian Elmer, West Kelowna

SQUAREUPB.C. Chairperson