

TOLL-FREE INFOLINE Report, E-MAIL INQUIRIES & FACEBOOK INQUIRIES Report
to the Board of Directors Meeting of the B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation, Abbotsford
April 1, 2017. By Brian Elmer, volunteer receptionist

Background

The B.C. Square and Round Dance Federation's toll-free INFOLINE was established many years ago as an overall source of dance information via telephone for the dance community and the general public.

The number 1-800-335-9433 "forwards" to the home of volunteer receptionists Brian Elmer and his wife, Rosalyn Garnett, in West Kelowna. Contracted with Telus, charges incurred to the number are billed to the treasurer of the Federation. The number is only supposed to connect within B.C.

Inquiries also come via e-mail and those are documented below. Some of them are prompted by persons viewing the promotional "landing page" when they click on paid advertising (SquareDanceFun.info) or free publicity (such as on Twitter) done by SQUAREUPB.C.

Additional inquiries sometimes come to us through the B.C. Federation's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/BCSquareAndRoundDanceFederation>) and those are documented below.

Note that the Canadian Square and Round Dance Society also maintains a toll-free information line which is 1-866-206-6696. At this point, the number connects calls from the U.S. although that might be halted in the near future (see below). The volunteers on the end of that line are B.C. Federation members Ron and Jan Mills of West Kelowna.

INFOLINE Call-tracking – July 2, 2016 to March 27, 2017

As calls come in on the INFOLINE, an effort is made to document each, noting the nature of the inquiry, how the inquiry was satisfied and the name and contact information of the caller. For cost efficiency, most responses are sent by e-mail when queries cannot be answered immediately over the phone. The following list of calls received is chronological:

Sept/Oct., 2016 - Call from 604-941-6392 - Federation President Ken Crisp of Port Coquitlam inquired regarding avenues to seek publicity during Square & Round Dance Awareness Week. The query was prompted when CBC radio in the Lower Mainland interviewed an old-time square dance group while incorrectly assuming that they were associated with the Awareness Week Proclamation that the Federation secured.

Sun. Jan. 15, 2017 – 11:24 am - Call from: 250-760-0187 in Nanaimo. 46 yr. old woman wanted to learn more about the new square dancer sessions at Pleasant Valley Elementary. She picked up a pamphlet on square dancing and noted that information is available via our toll-free INFOLINE. As a single person she wondered if she'd be welcomed and what ages participate in our activity. Although the Wed. at 7 pm lessons had just started on Jan. 11, she was encouraged to inquire further using local contacts furnished to her and was told that in all probability she'd be welcomed on the second instruction night. Those lessons are co-sponsored by the Amalgam-Eighters and the Travelling Squares dance clubs of Nanaimo.

Thurs. Jan. 19, 2017 – 8:45 am – Cell call from: 778-353-1964. A woman named “Tess,” living on Saltspring Island, saw a local flyer and wanted to learn more about square dance lessons on the Island. For those seeking lesson details, the Federation's toll-free number was on the flyer with other numbers. She said that she played bass fiddle in a band for many years, so we joked that she shouldn't have any problem dancing to the beat. She doesn't have e-mail. There is a club on the Island known as the Salty Wheels and she's being directed to their caller-couple. Update: The caller for the Salty Wheels, Marilynne Cunningham, e-mailed to say that she'll contact Tess and welcome her to the group because they accept new dancers at any time.

Sun. Jan. 22, 2017 – 1:28 pm – Call from 604-945-4461. Heather McArthur of Port Coquitlam called to ask if any of our square dance organizations would be interested in badges, ribbons, photos and newspaper clippings that date back into the 1950's. She and her husband are disposing of the belongings of his deceased parents who were square & round dancers and lived at times in Victoria, Vancouver and Penticton. The memorabilia includes badges for the Rounders in Victoria, the Peach City Promenaders in Penticton, the Hayloft in Vancouver and at least a couple of caller “fan badges” for Dave Stevens and Dave Lightly. They were told that the Heritage committee of the Fraser Valley Square & Round Dance Assn. would be asked if they're interested. She can be contacted at: 604-945-4461, e-mail: heather.mcarthur@telus.net. Update: FVSRDA President, Betty Langtry, e-mailed to say that the Heritage Committee of the organization has disbanded and the memorabilia offered will probably have to be junked.

Sun. Jan. 22, 2017 – 4:13 pm – Call from 250-765-5490. Ev & Hans Freitag of Kelowna said that they are already registered for the Festival but, since registering, have acquired a motor home. Now they wish to secure a dry camping spot for the event. If a fee is required, they'll forward such upon request. They can be contacted directly at that phone number or e-mail: evjszaroz@shaw.ca. A response involving contact with the Festival organizers was sent.

Fri. Jan. 27, 2017 – 2:24 pm – Call from 250-245-4667. Allan Sheen in Ladysmith inquired about RV camping during Festival 2017 in Surrey. He was told that you can reserve a spot for \$20/night when you register and that all the spaces are dry camping except all have hydro service. He was also told there will be showers and washrooms available close to the RV

area. Furthermore, he was told that the distance between the RV area and the dance halls would be about a 10-minute walk. His e-mail is: allansheen57@gmail.com

Sat. Jan. 28, 2017 – 9:57 am

Allan Sheen called a second time from Ladysmith to re-state his question about the distance between the RV parking and the dance venues during Festival 2017 in Surrey. He was directed to his e-mail which had a full reply awaiting him.

Thurs. Feb. 23/17 - 3:58 pm – Call from 604-657-6612 (cell) - RitaChohan@hotmail.com
Rita Chohan in Vancouver is looking for a caller-teacher to conduct a one-time square dance party for children aged 5 to 16 and their families. The event is a birthday party in a western theme for 5 year old Armann. The day will feature other western-style activities such as pony rides but the dancing will be the prime event. Location: UBC Farm in Vancouver. Date & time of event: 2 pm Sat. March 11.

Action: Rita was given contact information for callers heading up Lower Mainland youth clubs: Ray Brendzy of the Wesburn Wranglers and Danielle Garbe of the Delta Sundancers. She reported back that Ray Brendzy expressed interest in fulfilling her request for a caller at the event. In additional followup, it was suggested to Rita that she inquire about having some of the club's youth dancers attend in their dance attire to assist at the event. Also, some background material was sent by e-mail to inform her further about youth involvement in square and round dancing, including details on the Pacific Northwest Teen Square Dance Festival.

Tues. Feb. 28/17 – Call from 604-524-1296. Dancer Mimi Lui of New Westminster stated that she forgot to order the program book when she registered for Festival 2017 in Surrey. It was resolved when the Festival secretary, Christine Dahl, replied by e-mail on March 6 that there will be extra program books available for purchase during the Festival. Mimi was informed of the solution by e-mail (mimilui@shaw.ca).

E-mail inquiry tracking – July 21, 2016 to March 27, 2017

Sat. March 11/17 – 2:56 pm - Email from Katyuska Ward (riosagrado08@hotmail.com) wondering if there is a club or studio near Coquitlam to take classes. She said that she and her 15 year old daughter are “very interested.” She left the phone number: 778-788-0712. A response was sent later in that day at 11 pm to clarify in just what form of dance they are interested. The dates and lesson locations for square and round dance sessions were furnished and she was informed that, while there are no lessons at Coquitlam, there are in nearby Maple Ridge, New Westminster and Aldergrove. On this date, those are the only clubs still accepting newcomers. She was directed to more extensive online information about our clubs, including those with Fall start-ups, at SquareDanceFun.info. No further communication was received.

Facebook inquiry tracking – July 2, 2016 to March 27, 2017

Oct. 7, 2016 – 8:23 am – Post made on the Federation’s Facebook page from Simone Rochelle Waisboim inquiring if there are any square dance groups in Nelson, Trail or Castlegar.

In the reply, she was told that we have no knowledge of clubs operating any longer in the cities mentioned but, at one time, various clubs were going strong. She was informed that a clog dance club operates in Cranbrook and can be explored on the web site:

www.rockymountaincloggers.ca.

She was assured that we would be first to encourage a square dance caller and/or round dance cuer to establish a club in one of those cities. Callers and cuers in other B.C. cities would rally to give support and possibly some training. As an alternative to having callers and cuers, she was told of our community dance program on a series of audio cds called "Moving & Grooving" and about how it comes with a comprehensive binder of support information. It was related that, although it's popular for use in teaching children, it's also useful to instruct community groups. She was directed to see the web page for all the

details: www.movingandgrooving.squaredance.bc.ca.

Subsequently, the Federation’s 2nd Vice-President, Bill Morey, contacted her to confirm that he’d do whatever he could to get square dancing rolling again in the area if she wants to proceed.

Jan. 20, 2017 – 9:23 am – Trudi Parr-Pearson of Kelowna posted a question about starting clogging lessons a week late in Kelowna. Her actual query read:

“Yes I am interested in this class, but unfortunately I cannot attend today (I have another commitment), is it possible to start next week?” In a Jan. 21 response, she was assured that it should be fine to miss the first class and the information was passed along to the instructor, Barb Bizovie of West Kelowna. This inquiry was prompted by our paid advertising on Facebook in promotion of the Okanagan Cloggin’ clog dance club’s new dancer sessions; just one of about 13 clubs that had active advertising.

Also:

Note that several other dialogues were entered into via Facebook during the Fall and Winter paid Facebook advertising campaigns. They mostly involved questions such as “are singles welcome” and were relative to specific ads for specific clubs. Most exchanges were documented and can be made available but were too numerous to display in this report.

Special Addendum:

Consideration of expansion of the service area for the Federation's toll-free INFOLINE

Our INFOLINE service was originally set up through Telus to only be active in the province of British Columbia. There are occasions, though, when it would serve us well to be active across Canada and into the U.S.

One of those occasions would be to communicate with prospective registrants to our provincial Festivals who live outside of British Columbia.

A case in point arose recently when a Washington State dancer tried to get information via our INFOLINE relative to Festival 2017 in Surrey. The American citizen's phone service told them that the number is not applicable in the U.S.

The INFOLINE number was displayed on Festival literature in that dancer's possession but no alternate phone numbers were shown. This prospective Festival registrant was left without a resolution to reach a "real person" with their query.

The option exists to utilize the Canadian Society's toll-free line (1-866-206-6696) which does serve Canada and the U.S. The volunteer receptionists are Ron and Jan Mills of West Kelowna, B.C.

There is a new challenge regarding that, though, because the Mills have the line redirected to their cell phone for which considerable usage fees apply for calls originating in the U.S. They don't welcome U.S. calls.

They also identify that they get the occasional "nuisance call" from the U.S. that might range from a political solicitation to dance information not particularly relevant to the Canadian dance community.

One answer would be for the Society to cease toll-free service from the U.S. But, there are promotional considerations such as with regard to our provincial and national Festivals. If U.S. dancers want information about coming to our events, surely we want to furnish such and get them to register.

Another opinion about the toll-free line is that people should learn to use the internet instead. That's all very well but we are a "people-oriented" recreation. We're not selling inanimate objects. We need to be able to present a real person when dancers want information and a warm response from a human voice over the telephone can help. It can "close the deal" when it comes to getting people to register or attend our events.

In some cases with regard to some of our older dancers, they are not internet-savvy and might not even own a computer.

Furthermore, potential attendees to our events often have questions that are not addressed in the online (or print) information. In example, a recent call to the B.C. INFOLINE asked how far it will be to walk from the RV parking area at Festival 2017 to the dance venues?

Another answer with regard to soliciting the participation of U.S. dancers in B.C. events, such as our Festivals, is for our INFOLINE service to be expanded in range to accept callers from across Canada and the U.S.

When Festival 2019 takes place in Salmon Arm it would be helpful to be able to take inquiries from Alberta and the States of Idaho and Washington. Of course, we'd have to publicize the "international" availability of the INFOLINE in literature and online.

Our toll-free service needs to be able to serve the various needs of the dancers, wherever they live, and to serve as a “sales tool” in attracting them to our events. We can't have dysfunctional communications in place. The ability for people to talk to people is important in advancing our recreation.

- Brian Elmer

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