

**Report to the April 28, 2024 B.C. Square & Round Dance Federation
Annual General Meeting via the Zoom Videoconferencing Platform
By Brian Elmer, Director-at-Large for Region 3, Okanagan Valley
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Summary of Activity in Region 3

Okanagan Square & Round Dance Association

A total of five (5) dance clubs comprise the activity in Region 3 under the Okanagan Square & Round Dance Association, involving 3 different dance forms:

1. Star Country Squares, Vernon
2. Rhythm Rounds, Vernon
3. Okanagan Cloggin', Central Okanagan
4. Westsyde Squares, Central Okanagan
5. Westside Youth Square Dance Club, Central Okanagan

Most all of the member clubs have resumed regular dancing and have welcomed beginners. Some have only undertaken select events.

At this point, the Association's Executive is working behind-the-scenes until formal meetings can be launched soon, probably via Zoom videoconferencing. An important task has been to keep the member clubs informed relative to B.C. Federation activity and their memberships in the B.C. Federation and Canadian Society, including the need for third party liability insurance coverage.

The Association is contemplating the launch of a substantial promotion, publicity and paid advertising campaign for its member clubs in support of lesson startups in the Fall of 2024.

One such promotional initiative is to support the annual 3-day Clogover Vine clog dance workshop June 7, 8 & 9 at West Kelowna. First incorporated successful last year, the workshop will again include an open invitation to the public to discover clog dancing in a special one hour session added to the event's agenda. Via media press releases, community event calendar postings in the press and some paid advertising, the Association's Communication & Marketing Committee will extend a broad invitation to the public to attend.

Like last year (2023), it's planned that, during the "Introduction to Clogging," participants will be welcomed to give their contact information (name, phone & e-mail) such that they can be contacted when the full lesson period approaches. It's ideal to get those contacts when they're excited about learning to clog. Some brand new cloggers were attracted to regular lessons.

This concept wherein the public is welcomed to try one of our dance forms in a special session at one of our larger events is perhaps one that our Association and Club event organizers should incorporate into their planning. Furthermore, the interested new dancer prospects can be welcomed to stay to see what fun the accomplished dancers experience.

Specific Club Reports

Star Country Squares, Vernon

President & Chairperson, Joe Marcotte

The club has 37 paid members at this time but not all of them are active. Caller-teacher Allan Peterson of Salmon Arm attends weekly to call and Nelson Reeme assists in some aspects of calling. The weekly Thursday night dance venue is the Halina Activity Room at the Vernon Recreation Centre.

Specific to the actual number of new dancers welcomed during the dance season; in September there were 6 new dancers with 7 more in January.

The club has changed the program a little, presently revising the 6 pm practice session on regular class nights to focus upon the Mainstream program.

Over the past year the club surveyed its dancers to determine what they like about square dancing. The key element identified was to have fun, so that is the foundation of the club's activities.

Assistant caller-teacher, Nelson Reeme of Vernon, commented that, as a square dance club, you are supposed to be friendly. He suggested that, if you see someone new coming into the hall and you know they are a newcomer, go and introduce yourself. As a member of the club you automatically become a greeter.

In maintaining a fun atmosphere, the club presents many themed dances such as Hawaiian, St. Patrick's and Spring or Easter dances.

Round dancing is included in party nights with cuer-teachers Peter and Stella Tennant of Vernon.

A practice afternoon for dancers first took place at the Polson Place Mall in Vernon and has now moved to the Halina Activity Room at the Vernon Recreation Centre.

Now, "Try it Tuesdays!" is an initiative that the club is presenting through April and May for 1 hour every Tuesday afternoon at 4:00. It's a free Introduction to Square Dancing for absolute newcomers and an opportunity for newer dancers to practice dancing. The venue is the Halina Activity Room at the Vernon Recreation Centre.

Club leaders hope that might evolve into building an ongoing "nest" of new dancers, who can eventually participate with accomplished dancers at regular Thursday club nights.

The club is fortunate to have backup callers in the name of largely retired Rene Bourget of Vernon along with up-and-coming callers Joe Marcotte and John Fawcett.

Relative to promoting square dance lessons, the club has tried some demonstration squares over this dance season and intends to continue that approach to raise square dancing's visibility in the region's communities.

The club has found that paid newspaper advertising seems to be the most effective and intends to advertise through that medium again prior to next Fall's 2024 newcomer intake. Moving forward, the plan is to monopolize on free advertising and club members will be engaged to spread the word.

The club has adopted a standing agenda item to go through bylaws and see if any corrections/changes need to be made. In November 2024 a special meeting will take place to rewrite any amendments to bylaws. The amendments will be presented at the next club AGM in March 2025.

Star Country website: <https://starcountrysquares.wixsite.com/star-country-squares>

Star Country Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/p/Star-Country-Squares-100057717487549/>

Rhythm Rounds, Vernon

Cuer-teachers Peter & Stella Tennant of Vernon

Dancing daytime every Sunday in the Halina Activity Room at the Vernon Recreation Centre, the club started with 20 dancers in September, 2023.

Various elements reduced that number to 8 to 10 dancers per week, including Snowbirds heading south, special vacations, a broken ankle and other commitments.

Sunday April 28/24 will be the Windup dance of the season.

Peter relates: "It would be nice to build attendance in the next dance season but we will have to wait and see what happens in September."

Okanagan Cloggin', Central Okanagan

Clog dance teacher & club leader: Barb Bizovie, West Kelowna

Okanagan Cloggin' participants enjoy contemporary precision clog dancing.

During this 2023/2024 season, the club has been operating September with classes at 3 different venues on different times and days:

- Monday nights at the Westside Senior Centre, West Kelowna
- Wednesday nights at the Village Dance Studio in Kelowna
- Friday afternoons at the Village Dance Studio in Kelowna

The club is looking for a more reasonably priced option in Kelowna as the dance studio currently utilized is small and expensive.

Classes for adults have been going well all Winter although some illness and vacation absences reduced participation at times. January and February attendance was low but has picked up again.

The club is planning its annual Clogover Vine workshop weekend to take place this year on June 7, 8 and 9 at the Westbank Lions Community Hall, operated by the City of West Kelowna. The 2023 event last year saw the best attendance ever for the clogging weekend which attracts participants from around B.C. and points across Canada and the U.S.

The popular professional level clogging instructor, Darolyn Pchajek of Winnipeg, will return once again as the featured instructor. Barb Guenette of Nanaimo will also be a clogging presenter along with a few other instructors.

Although Clogover Vine is an event for accomplished cloggers, last year members of the public were invited to stop in on the Saturday afternoon to see the cloggers and learn some steps at a free lesson conducted in an adjacent hall. Promoted as a free, all ages, 1 hour "Introduction to Clogging," 10 non-cloggers attended the session and one woman was heard to say "I've come to see what clog dancing is all about!" When regular lessons started in the Fall, two of those persons signed up. They've become very dedicated dancers and that can be considered "a win."

All avenues of publicity and promotion were engaged to tell the public about the clog dance weekend and the free clogging lesson in particular. Posters, public service announcements, social media and even the local coffee news magazine served to raise awareness of the clog dance activity in the region.

Greatly appreciated in attracting the public to clogging in the Central Okanagan region was B.C. Federation funding for lesson advertising. Last year's grant was utilized to advertise both the Intro. To Clogging and the September lesson startup and the club wishes to apply for such funding once again.

The Communications & Marketing branch of the Okanagan Square & Round Dance Association is once again supporting the upcoming Clogover Vine event through media releases, community event calendar and social media postings and some paid advertising.

Although some of the links shown within are no longer active, an extensive Facebook post of June 24, 2018, detailed that year's Clogover Vine event held June 15 to 17. Many photos show the fun to be had on the clog dance floor. See it at:

<https://www.facebook.com/BCSquareAndRoundDanceFederation/posts/1892806450764703>

Westsyde Squares, Central Okanagan
By Brian Elmer, Club President, West Kelowna

A “Reunion Dance” is in the planning for The Westsyde Squares square & round dance club. While it might take place in the late Spring or early Summer, it will probably be set for the Fall. The club is currently without a caller-teacher. The Reunion event will engage an out-of-area caller.

The dancers will consider a regular or semi-regular dance schedule utilizing recorded calling. Some dancers in Penticton and Summerland have expressed interest in such sessions, having lost their local Penticton Squares dance club years ago.

Furthermore, consideration is being given to presenting new square dancer sessions to the public wherein some of the Okanagan Valley’s callers-in-training would teach the newcomers. A comprehensive effort toward publicity, promotion and paid advertising for those lessons is planned.

A full executive is in place to guide the club’s revitalization.

Westside Youth Square Dance Club, Central Okanagan
By Brian Elmer, West Kelowna

Over 2023, the club took advantage of new opportunities to teach children, adults and families through “pop-up” dance events. Being introductions to square dancing, names and contacts are collected from those interested in learning more.

Such special one-time dance occasions introduce square dancing to the community in new ways like through birthday, anniversary and family reunion events.

Four such occasions took place:

- A 60th birthday family event
- An early summer family reunion
- A special lakeside square dance for visiting bachelorettes and the bride-to-be
- A convention of organic growers

It’s planned that this concept be publicized, promoted and advertised broadly to build interest in our great dance form.

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