

Hands Across the Borders

Keeping the POTD Connections Going

Linda Henry, CDSS Outreach Manager

After returning home, we dance organizers will continue to encounter challenges in our journeys. How can we keep supporting and inspiring each other after the conference? Let's explore ways to stay in touch within and between states, provinces, and countries!

NOTE: This session includes a variety of ideas brainstormed by the participants. As you read the following notes, feel free to keep paper and pen handy and participate in this process by...

- Making a list of specific challenges YOUR local dance is experiencing
- Jotting down notes about which resources and ideas might help your dance organizers address the challenges on your list (including other resources that might occur to you)
- Sharing this information with anyone who might be interested by forwarding this link to the [Hands Across the Borders](#) session

Common challenges ("waiting for us when we get home") were identified, including:

- Publicity and outreach
- Developing and working with callers and musicians
- Committee and board interaction issues
- Finding and managing volunteers
- Fundraising
- Community safety and dance etiquette

Other more specific challenges include:

- Due to the exchange rate, organizers in Canada have trouble getting bands from the U.S to play for their dances.
- Canadian bands need a work permit to play in the U.S.
- Some communities in outlying areas feel isolated.
- Publicity can be a problem in many places; getting the word out is tough.
- More communication is needed between communities in order for them to support each other's dances.

Resources:

- Although not very active at the moment, [Shared Weight](#) hosts a dance organizers' listserv. (If we use it, it will become active!) Shared Weight also offers a separate listserv for musicians and another for callers.
- There is a Facebook group called Organizers of Contra Dances (OCD). There are also Facebook groups for both the first POTD and POTD2, although activity for these tends to decrease over time.
- Websites that list different dances with the contact persons do exist, but they are not very well maintained. The CDSS [Centennial website](#) has an interactive [map](#) that people can add their dances to. Keeping such materials up to date is a resource challenge.
- [The Dance Gypsy](#) and [Dance Database](#) are existing databases of callers and bands.

- The [CDSS website](#) provides many resources for dance organizers:
 - Visit the [Conference](#) tab for descriptions of previous regional conferences co-sponsored by CDSS. Also included are links to archived session materials from [POTD1](#) and the Southwest Regional Organizers Conference ([SWROC](#)).
 - Refer to advice and [how-to](#) guides on a variety of topics including publicity, how to recruit young people, etc.
 - Check out the [Make It Happen Manual](#) for creating leadership training events.
 - Access application materials and guidelines for the CDSS [Grants](#) program, offering funding to help communities create more self-sustaining dances.

HIGHLIGHT that coalesced during this session!

We can encourage organizers of larger events (dance weekends, festivals, double-dances, etc.) to create “meet-up” opportunities for dance organizers who are attending these events. To help this happen, we can self-organize in these ways...

- Help event organizers understand the importance of giving dance organizers chances to gather and re-energize.
- Offer them simple suggestions about how to create such gatherings at their events (include it in their schedule, provide a meeting space, perhaps an area to share table topics over a meal, etc.)
- Identify a dance organizer who is willing to facilitate this gathering.
- Use Shared Weight to spread the word about meet-up opportunities at upcoming events.

More ideas generated by participants:

- Self-organized POTD regional reunions. Perhaps a day-long regional event ending with a dance -- or paired with a double dance, where organizers are invited to stay the next day for a meet-up.
- Locate groups that are close to you and start an exchange with them.
- Talk to callers and musicians who travel through your community. They are often organizers too and might have valuable perspectives to contribute.
- Organize webinars. While they lack some of the advantages of a face-to-face event, they could help us exchange ideas and energy. Perhaps CDSS could host leadership webinars on their website?
- Consider repeating events like POTD on a regular basis. Acknowledging the amount of effort and money involved, this group felt like repeating this event every five years or so might be possible.
- Use existing web resources, in particular the Shared Weight listserv:
 - People going to an event can post about it and see if they can organize together.
 - This is a venue to coordinate with organizers of various types of dance (contra, ECD, Scottish, Irish, Québécois, etc.), because organizing has common issues that cut across such genres.
 - Share questions on the listserv, but parcel them out to help keep the conversation active.

Conclusion:

Linda encouraged everyone to continue strengthening connections within our communities and with other dances throughout the region. She also reminded us that CDSS is an ongoing resource to support dance organizers in our valuable work of creating thriving dance communities. Feel free to contact her at linda@cdss.org with any questions about grants, conferences, etc. (See links above for more information.)

