

President Report 2015

I have to start out by saying something from the heart it is fun to be part of this club. Fun to be part of an organization that is engaged, busy, and doing things in the community. The idea of this club started about 25 years ago on a drive to a dance workshop in Calgary with some friends. If you had told me then that we would still be here, and this is what it would look like today I would not have believed you. To say that I am proud is an understatement. The dedication of many people over that time period is why we are here today.

You may not realize it, but you are involved with something very special that you will look back on with fond memories. (I have). It is only dance..... but.... It is community, it is friendships, it is learning, growing, values, and more. The experiences you have had, or will have with this club is what the community is about. That is what is really important. You have heard me say it is just dance, or it is only dance but... it is everything else that surrounds it that matters the most. It is the friend you made here that you can call when you have a flat tire, the friendly face at the bar, or at the dance so you feel part of something, and not feel alone. Being part of something, part of a community, that supports you is everything.

It is an amazing time to be involved with the Club, & 2014 was stellar year. I know I have said that before, but we keep doing more things I never thought we would do, and my vision expands. The club has become active partners with the Red Deer Arts Council, Red Deer Culture & Heritage Society, and the City and this has opened a lot of doors. I have been working to have dance better represented better with these organizations. We can influence the community, make a difference, and be something more for the community of Red Deer. By getting involved with the other groups, I see the importance of dance how special we are. We have something they don't. It is the glue, it is the relationships, and the social connection to each other that does not exist without the club. When I talk to our members, students, dance team, and friends we are all proud to be associated with the Club, and that means something.

I think we all want to make a difference in this world, and what a great way to do it by impacting others thru dance & friendship. I see Country Pride becoming a leader in the community in the Arts & Culture. We are an important contribution to the fabric that makes up this community.

Review of 2014

Last year I said we could do some big things and we did.

1) Made the front page of the Advocate at the Barn Dance, have been in the paper more, and covered by the media. Just recently Shaw TV covered our family dance, and that will be available on Youtube. Because of our longevity, and consistency the community recognizes us as part of the culture of Red Deer.

2) Dropped the weekly rental expense for hall rental by approx \$2,000/yr by becoming members of the Red Deer Heritage and Culture Society. We now have a voice with the hall, with our involvement. A new room with the dance floor, and storage also dropped expenses. Storage at Festival Hall & not pay a storage unit, or stuff in peoples homes.

3) Programs with the City, increasing the profile of dance in the arts community. More shows with the dance team creates a greater public awareness. Family dances are a new co-operative initiative.

4) Submitted 3 grants to expand our funding and explore new programs. Likely to submit more to explore other ways to finance club activities & expenses. Not to rely completely on Bingo and Casino funds.

5) We hosted 2 workshops to bring outside talent to Red Deer, instead of people having to go outside of Red Deer to learn, and see the bigger vision & possibilities dance. We brought some most influential teachers to dance in North America - Dave Getty, and Mario and Stephanie Rabio. We did not make money on these events, because attendance was not what we hoped for. Part of that was the timing of the workshops, but also the lack of attendance from people from our area. We are revising the purpose of these going forward. One is booked for Oct, looking at other options for another to lower expenses and attract local people.

6) Money towards promotions, such as video for youtube, produced a 30sec video currently running on Youtube. Paying for team jackets, 1/2 price for members, full price for anyone else. Has been a great promotion. Shows in 2014 - total approx 20 almost doubling the shows in the community over 2013. We are becoming more recognized and asked to perform at events, and corporate gigs. New ideas to work with tourism. Made approx \$1,000 in shows in honorariums.

7) Financially we are strong. Most reserves ever! Strong bingo revenue (approx \$1,800/mnth), had our Casino, and well attended lessons and membership. In 2014 we increased our budget again over 2013 to do more, to almost \$38,000/yr. We still had more reserves left then we budgeted. Last 4 years we have operated under budget. We also increased the amount members could receive for reimbursement for attending festivals to \$250/person - Budgeted \$5,500 spent \$5,471. With these initiatives I believe there is more excitement with the club then ever before. Money well spent, because it gives people means to see the big picture for dancing in the area, and influence the community in Alberta.

8) Continue the video lesson reviews, an established big on-line library. Website traffic approx 2,500 visits/mnth. Great visibility for the club, and a real resource of information for members. A presence on facebook to keep everyone informed of what's happening. New section on the website shows community involvement, such as shows at senior centres, donated shows, & sponsorship ie. the Celebrity Dance Off.

We are doing something right. We are unique in what we do, and how we are doing it. There is no other dance club to my knowledge that does all we do. Any non-profit would love to be in our position. Lots of good people involved, and funds to do what we want. We continue to look for fresh ideas to promote ourselves, and what to offer members.

From my perspective we are building a great group of people. Our executive is strong, and we look to expand that, and add more new leadership. People on the exec are passionate about the club, and love what we do. Getting involved in the community increases our awareness, and being true to our purpose of promoting dance and fun experiences is vital. Lesson attendance continues to grow, and we have more people stay, and become involved at different levels. Become part of the dance team (bigger then ever). As we have natural attrition due to personal circumstances, or other commitments the number of people on the team has continued to grow as well. We have also started a competition team (last time we competed was about 14 years ago). First competition is Calgary in April/2015. The performance team is very active, & maturing. Added a new routine to the show 2014 (2-step) to make it almost 15mins long (which a lot of the promoters like). Currently working on 2 more new routines for 2015.

I would like 2015 to be our year to re-invent ourselves, by staying clear on our purpose as a club. Become a leader in the performing arts for Red Deer, can influence the Province. The challenge is that we do not have a role model, we are unique in our structure and success. There is no other organization to my knowledge like ours that does what we do. We need to be true to what we believe in and make a difference to the people we touch.

Why are the arts, ie dance important... defines our purpose.

We create memories, experiences, and build relationship in the community that last a lifetime. If it is a community dances, lessons, workshops, performances, or going to festival they involve people at different levels.... The beautiful thing about the club is that you can be as involved as you want, and get those experiences from it. You are welcome and we want you to be part of it whatever the level. We preserve an art form of dance and have fun doing it.

Focus for 2015... a personal perspective

First off I have to say how proud I am to be part of, and represent the club in the Community. I am so proud of our board of executive, our dance team, and all our members, and anyone who wants to learn to dance. I want to paint a picture that this is something we can all be excited to be a part of.... something that the newest member feels part of to the most seasoned member can be excited to be involved in.

The arts is not the driving force it could be in this area. However Alberta is know as a hotbed of Country Music and Dance. Country Pride has the chance to build a legacy, to impact not just Country Dance, but dance in general, and not just in Red Deer, but for the whole Province....

I do remember what it was like, how scary it was learning to dance, but also how fantastic it was when I didn't let those fears beat me. I remember going to my first dance festival, competing at my first dance contest, teaching my first class, and hosting our first festival. But then I also remember how rewarding it all was. We all help create the environment for that newest person, to the people on the dance team. Lets focus on being a fun and friendly place to be... How?

By making people realize it's importance..... why is dance important to you? It is not just about dance, it is the self confidence, the self esteem, and the sense of pride you get from doing something you didn't think you could do..... or were scared to do. Breaking thru self imposed boundaries, doing something that you were afraid to do. We want to empower people through dance. How you describe to someone what it feels like to have that passion, and do it... to pass that on to others, and see the impact it has on others is fantastic!. It becomes part of your purpose. It is for me. To grow this club we want to empower people, and give them a chance to experience things they couldn't do on their own.

Our Mission statement:

To " Promote and preserve Country Western Dance, through lessons, demonstrations, workshops and competition. To support a dance team, that promotes the club in the community, and beyond by being an ambassador of the spirit of the organization."

Focus - on the " Why " we do what we do. Offer people a chance to be involved in something they can't experience by themselves. Coming to a dance, a class, a workshop, to perform, & be part of the dance community that supports you learning and growing in dance.

To accomplish this we will make people feel welcome and offer:

- 1) Social Dances, in co-operation with our partners & work with local artists, and performers.
- 2) Lessons, & workshops with local and outside instructors to continue to learn more about dance.
- 3) Support a performance & competition team to give unique experiences to those dancers, and challenge them.
- 4) Look for, and be open to fresh ideas to be involved with the community, work with other organizations to build the community. ie demos, floats, fundraisers, etc. We want to hear your voice and suggestions.