

4-8-2019 Contra Dance Members Meeting regarding Calling Terminology

Facilitator's Note: At this member meeting, many of the speakers shared very personal feelings and thoughts around the idea of gender-free language and related issues. In order to assure that we had captured each speaker's meaning correctly and completely, after the meeting we invited them to provide the notes they prepared for their comments. We've incorporated those notes into the Minutes to present the speakers' contributions. We have not changed the formatting or otherwise edited the speakers' notes, except for correcting 2 egregious misspellings.

The Board agreed, however, to identify the speakers by number instead of by name. This is intended to preserve their privacy, since they might not want their heartfelt shares to be personally identifiable for the whole wide world.

Several people offered additional written comments after the meeting. As those added comments would not properly belong in the actual Minutes of the meeting, the Board is reviewing them to decide how to share them separately.

Also note: A couple dancers referred by number or by letter to the Proposals posted on the wall during the meeting. These proposals are also posted online as a link from the April 8 meeting entry on our website.

Meeting opened at 6:03pm by Debbie Barrett

- Debbie asked us all to come closer to front and center as a community in the room and introduced the postings
- She clarified that for this meeting, we are all voting members and not divided into board and members. All care about each other, take care of each other and it's a good thing. Lots of different opinions to be listened to.
- She read the meeting rules. Each person has 90 seconds to speak.
- Debbie told us that new proposals were posted online and invited everyone to refer to posted proposals on the wall.
- We want to wrap up by 7:50 pm. Gather chairs at end of meeting and go dance.
- Susan Vogt gave a sample of the 15-second warning and the gong for times up.
 - When gong sounds, you may finish sentence.
- Debbie stated that this meeting is to find out how fellow dancers feel about the topic. We hope to get to a point of voting on which process to use to get to the final outcome.

Individual members' comments:

Dancer 1 notes: Here is what I wrote last Monday April 8:

About three years ago, I suffered several strokes that particularly affected my speech—as well as other issues. But, one persistent effect of those strokes is that I still occasionally incorrectly identify a person's gender; I oftentimes refer to a man as “her”, for example. But, I also do recognize that I am at fault when mixing up gender like that, most usually after it is pointed out to me by someone else. But now, I might be told—a least when dancing—that my desire to properly recognize speech with regard to gender may, in fact be offensive—or at least unwelcoming.

Perhaps because of my health issues, I am particularly cognizant of trying to speak accurately—and truly. Red is red. Green is green. Neither are gray. A man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Rarely if ever, have I been not able to correctly identify the difference between the two—even when I use the wrong word.

I started dancing in 1997, and have enjoyed it immensely since then. I guess I always knew that there would be a time when I wouldn't be able to dance—moved too far away from a dance, too old, etc. But, I never dreamed the reason would be that I wouldn't want to dance because of confusion promoted in the name of

inclusiveness. I hope that doesn't happen.

Dancer 2 notes: In the 29 years I've been here, our group has always been welcoming and open to everyone who comes to dance with us and I want that to continue. I hope our community will embrace gender-free calling in order to grow with the more peaceful, accepting environment that's evolving around us.

My hope is, we embrace gender-free calling with flexibility. I suggest we allow callers to use terms they are most comfortable with, including gendered and gender-free calling. A comfortable caller will lead a more engaging and comprehensive evening of dance. We could build guidelines for callers to follow before and during the dance, such as:

- 1) Let the board know ahead of time calling terminology preference
- 2) Explain the calling during the lesson and regularly throughout the evening
- 3) Observe comprehension of the group and adjust calling or re-explain if necessary

Knowing ahead of time the caller's preference gives us time to post it on the website so people can get used to it and know what to expect.

If we decide, as a group, to go with gender-free calling, and we decide, as a group, to set a rule on terms to use, my preference is "Left and Right" because it seems more intuitive and is self-explanatory. The less confusion on the dance floor, the better.

We're here to dance and have fun. We're here to welcome all and help get the community moving to music. It brings health and happiness to most folks who give it a try. It's not an elite group, it's an all-encompassing group.

It's the same old dance, no matter what terms we use, but if it helps build acceptance and embrace all in our community, it's worth our efforts to grow and change with those around us.

Dancer 3 notes:

As a 20+ year contra dancer I **prefer** Ladies & Gents because it's **Easier**:

1. Familiar
2. (As a cis-gender person) I can more quickly know my place without having to concentrate
3. Traditional
4. **Easier for new people to pick up**

However,

I am not opposed to Larks & Ravens because:

1. I dance both roles and am willing to stretch my mind beyond the familiar
2. I want to honor those who might feel uncomfortable being called a Lady or Gent
3. **I want harmony in the contra community**

Therefore, I propose some 3rd Options – a Compromise - A Combination of both positions

1. Alternating Mondays
2. First half of dance Ladies/Gents – Second half Larks/Ravens
3. Mondays be Ladies/Gents – Saturdays be Larks/Ravens
4. Let it be the caller's choice – everybody graciously accepts that choice
5. Some other creative solution or terminology.

Dancer 4 notes:

Yes I said Larks and Ravens makes no sense to me. I have no objection to gender free names, but a name beginning with L for ladies as a reminder and M for men would help me, personally to remember the transition. Such as Larks for ladies and a word beginning with M for men is my suggestion. Also I favor leaving it up to the caller. Thanks!

Dancer 5 notes: My pronouns are She, Her, and Hers

I believe that non-gendered terms encourage role swapping.

I think this is about role swapping—not terminology.
Do we want to encourage role swapping, or not?

As for larks and ravens—there’s a clear role reversal there.
Larks are small birds with a high pitched call;
Ravens are larger birds with a deep voice.
I am not a raven, but as a lady, I dance on the right.
I find this absolutely confusing and insulting.

My suggestion for alternate terms is spoons and ladles.

I do not want to encourage gender-free dancing.

I often dance with beginners. It’s truly embarrassing when I’m dancing with a new guy, and as we progress we encounter a role-swapped couple.

In some cultures people only dance with the same gender. But here I think the majority of us prefer to dance with the opposite sex.

When two people decide to swap roles, everyone they encounter has to swap roles, too. Instead of being free to choose a role, a role is forced on me in the progression of the line. This is not welcoming.

I have noticed, that if there are too many women at a dance, women tend to sit out or dance with another woman. If there are too many men, men leave. I’d say the men who leave don’t feel welcome.

Since this topic came up, nearly a year ago, our attendance has dropped significantly. I think many of our dancers have already abandoned us.

My process recommendation is Point E, with Spoons and Ladles instead of Larks and Ravens. I can provide suggestions on a decision matrix, if asked. I’d also like to implement point 7.

Dancer 6 notes Four quick things.

One: We must treat each other with respect and dignity. Disagreements are inevitable but there has been a serious lack of respect lately that needs to be addressed. There have been interruptions during announcements, boos, angry comments, and more. Yes, we have freedom of speech, but we are a community. We can take an approach that is more collaborative and less divisive.

Two: I think we should merge the Gender-Free dance I've been running with the official group, having a GF dance once every 3 or 4 months. I can help organize that, but I need more support to keep it going. Perhaps adding this dance will alleviate some tension.

Three: Over-gendered language is harmful and sends an inaccurate message. I would prefer caller's choice for regular dances, but if you all choose to ban GF terminology, then Men & Women should be banned too. Plus callers should try their hardest to use gender neutral pronouns for dancers ("swing them" instead of "swing her").

Four: Contra dancing at large is attracting younger dancers. People my age are asking for more inclusive and safe spaces, dance and otherwise. Culture is shifting, and if we shift away from inclusivity, we'll alienate dancers and talent from all over the country.

I have solid reasons for all of my opinions and if you're interested in a more thorough explanation, I have a document with me that you can read on your own time.

Dancer 7 notes: I love that Contra dance is a living tradition. New dances and new music being written. Live music. The figures that we do now have changed over the years. The recommended etiquette has changed. It's a living tradition which grows as we grow.

Thus, I would like us to continue using a range of caller language, utilizing the various skills that various callers bring. Some callers will help us try different language options. The language is likely to change over time to suit the people who are participating, just like the flourishes we use locally are changing in recent years.

Because I value you all and because stable, resilient community is my goal, I'm willing to be uncomfortable a bit at times, to push my learning curve in ways that benefit us.

Since we are a community that dances together but do not have a practice of talking about highly charged issues, and since we do not have a practice of making huge social decisions during meetings like this one, I suggest we limit our expectations of the outcome of this meeting. It would be premature to make long-term decisions this evening.

Since there is controversy involved, rather than pushing for specific outcomes, listening to each other is a key phase that probably needs to happen for a while, over time, before any specific change is made.

The language we use IS a big deal, so we could give ourselves the gift of relaxed, thoughtful consideration.

Darlene's facilitated small group think and listen format was excellent at Winter Warm Up. It was an effective and fun way for about twelve of us to approach this difficult topic, actually be heard as well as have space to hear each other.

Dancer 8 notes: comments at the Larks and Ravens meeting

I began contra dancing in 1970. I was drawn to it because everyone was profoundly welcoming, and I so desperately needed a place to fit in.

Since then contra dancing has continued to be a refuge, and our Cincinnati dance group has a reputation throughout contra-land of being among the most friendly. It is a matter of great pride to me that our veteran dancers take such care to dance with new dancers, that for all these years we've never had a "cool" set, that most everyone in the group volunteers to do the things that keep the dance going.

However, some things I have witnessed here lately suggest to me that we need to become a kinder dance. In the past, when callers out of their own personal conviction have discarded language that was inherited from times less sensitive, it was not met with opposition.

When I hear a caller avoid insensitive language, I assume they have a good reason, even if it's mostly theoretical. But I also consider that it might be personal, that they or some family member or close friend might actually be a victim of violence or discrimination or prejudice.

It might be very real and very personal.

The idea of having a rule that disallows callers from avoiding language they consider insensitive is antithetical to the very goodness of contra dancing. And the fact that we are heckling callers who do this is horrendous. It simply has to stop.

That previous insensitivities were eliminated so easily makes it all the more curious that gender is so problematic. Those who self-identify as nontraditional put their lives at risk. They are fired from jobs, evicted from apartments. If they are teens, they can be estranged from their families. My daughter, who became a software developer, wrote a smartphone app for the Homeless Coalition that helps nonbinary teens find emergency housing.

Eliminating gendered language, even only occasionally, would be a signal that our dance is safe. Nontraditional-gendered dancers would find the same refuge I did, now almost fifty years ago. It wouldn't need to be a policy, it wouldn't need to happen every week. All it should take is a gesture of respect for our callers' personal convictions.

The terms "larks and ravens" seems awkward and may be confusing. But I have heard the arguments for these and they aren't extreme or unreasonable. Maybe not all callers would use them. Callers want their dances to work well. So my position is to allow callers the freedoms they have always had, to try something new and see how it works.

Dancer 9 notes: Some folks want all gender free calling. Some folks want things to stay just like they are. There is a lot of ground in the middle in which compromise can be achieved. I believe we all want what is best for this dance community. The vast majority of dancers identify with their birth gender and are comfortable with gender specific terms. I feel that if we become an exclusively non-binary dance community at this point we could alienate more people than we will attract. This community has a very good reputation for being inclusive and welcoming. People often switch traditional roles without mishap. That being said, on a trial basis, I support an occasional lark/raven dance. I don't feel that callers should be made to call non-binary and I don't think Saturday dances should be lark/raven at least for now. After a few dances we could ask for feedback from the dancers and decide from there.

Dancer 10 notes— Says he is a simple dancer who gets confused. Likes to help new dancers who are overwhelmed with calling. To welcome, make simple on Mondays. Maybe Saturday or PTF, gender-free. Lady and gent is simple. When he tells them they might need to swing a man, lots of his buddies won't come.

Dancer 11 notes: We have always been the most welcoming contradance community I know of.

We have always said that anyone can ask anyone, of any gender, race, age, orientation, to dance. I am an out gay man and I have been dancing over 25 years here and around the country. Only twice have I encountered remarks or hostility. Both times NOT in Cincinnati, and many years ago.

I have seen men in skirts and dresses since the first dance I went to. We have always welcomed dancers to switch roles if they wish. Many dancers wear buttons asking which role a partner would prefer, and have done so for years.

Shortly after I started dancing, gender-free dances became of interest with "leads and follows" as the terms. As happened here recently, attendance fell off and they eventually stopped. One reason may have been that they were not very interesting dance events. Another that the lesson "dance with anyone" was learned. Mostly, though, they seemed unnecessary. We were already gender-free in practice.

Pigtown Fling last month was by far the most "diversified" ever in terms of gender roles, without enforcing terms, either way.

We remain the most welcoming contradance community I know of.

I can't see how changing the two words in question will make it more so.

Dancer 12 notes: stated the situation has moved beyond simple discussion. He pointed out that in 2017, the board debated to whether instruct callers to use traditional terminology. The next year it debated to instruct callers to use newer language in leading dancers. He asked why not inform the callers that there is division in the club and to be sensitive to it? He asked if our club was an enclave or a community. He also asked if you don't trust the callers, why invite them in the first place. He also addressed a prior reflection that, by not adapting the new terminology the club may be losing its social inclusion. He replied that there has always been acceptance and inclusion from people, on both sides of this issue. He knew many, over the years. Involved in social service often at risk to their lives. And, in some cases, a few died because of it.

Dancer 13 notes: Gender free contra would be confusing and thus not fair to 1) newcomers, 2) people who come in from out of town, 3) people who go away and then come back to contra in Cincy, 4) and those who want to enjoy dancing without having to think about it in a different language.

I think our community is already accepting of anyone dancing any role. So, I don't think that we need to change. We are genderless enough. I have danced in communities that are not so accepting of genderless dancing as evidenced to their response to me dancing a man's role. They may need to change their attitudes, but in Cincy, we do it all the time - for a variety of reasons. I assume a man's role so that people are not left out of the dance. That is one reason why the proposal to have a traditional line would not work. If I am dancing with another woman because there are more women in the room, that would put us in the non-traditional line. If the other woman is a newby, a non-traditional line would be totally confusing for her, yet we would not be allowed to join the established traditional line.

Dancer 14 notes: [hold up printouts] Full thoughts available by request.

With the time that I have, I'm going to focus on the biggest reason we should make word choice the responsibility of the caller.

We need a new sound system.

The board is a group of volunteers that does all of the important, practical work that needs to be done so the rest of us can just show up and have a good time. We should not be adding to their workload.

If we tell callers what words to use, it won't settle the issue, but will only invite further debate. Once we start telling callers what words they can use, what's next? I'd start with how many squares or mixers they can call and how many walkthroughs. Once that's done, I'd move on to the bands - how fast do they play, how many tunes per set, how many newer tunes, older tunes, pop-music, singing?

And all this while our sound system gets older and older. If the board wasn't caught up in whether callers can say gypsy or whether callers can say larks/ravens/jets/rubies/whatever we would have that sound system. Dancers are smart enough to individually show up to the callers & bands they like and to stay home for the ones they don't. What the dancers can't do is get us a new sound system. Only the board can do that and we should let them do that important work, while the rest of us just show up and dance.

Thank you

Dancer 15 notes: I'm concerned at how quickly this became a question of which words to ban, and who should be segregated into which line. It changed almost instantly into a question of "what" words to dictate rather than a question of whether we should be doing anything of the kind. That's never been the board's role. The board has never before been a gatekeeper of what callers can and can't say, or who can and can't dance in this line or that line, and I don't think we should start now.

Sadly, the truth is that most of the people who would be most hurt by the decision to start dictating to callers, and to dancers, have already left this dance community. And they probably aren't coming back. But we do have the choice to send a message: that we are a community, not a judge and jury.

Dancer 16 notes: "It has been our previous experience that we have had success with changing things by leaving the task up to the callers. The callers get feedback quickly from enough dancers to know whether something is working or not. So, I would recommend that the board refrain from establishing a policy on this. As for this particular gendered language issue, I currently find it makes teaching dances to new folks easier by using the traditional gendered terms. Perhaps someday our general society will change enough to remove that difference, but I don't think we are there at the moment. On a related note, another thing that makes contradancing so accessible to folks that haven't danced before is that the really is not a leader and a follower. Both roles follow the prompts of the caller. So, there's that much less to learn before one starts having fun. This is an important feature of contradance, and whatever terms are used it would be best if they were not lead and follow or the like."

Dancer 17 notes: CONTRA MEETING COMMENTS SUMMARY

Cinti has always been the best in the region due to its dancers, callers, bands and leadership. Other dance groups have had major problems with issue or personality conflicts. We have done well and can figure this out without pushing people away.

It is a lot of work for Liz to run a second dance group and it may split the attendance numbers. Cleveland has had a tradition of multiple callers each running their own dances. I don't think this approach is best for Cincinnati.

I will dance the "woman's part" when there are "extra" men so I can dance and one other man also gets in. Then I have to concentrate on cueing on the word "women". If I need to concentrate on the word "lark" to do a dance, I can do that if it is good for the group.

I am one of the original Cinti dancers and a "traditionalist". I think language used is important and support **gender-free language** in general. I am not comfortable with labeling Cinti as a **gender-free dance** at this point since I am not sure of all its implications. I think it would limit the number of callers available. If gender-free calling is done, I think the first few dances should be "man/woman" since most newcomers are probably dancing those roles.

I think we should keep the "rules" simple and not have too many formulas for when gender-free is allowed. I suggest leaving it up to the caller with notice as Liz proposed. (see below for thoughts on which gender-free terminology*).

Dancer 18 notes: I like to lead part of the time and I'm not the only woman who does. I don't enjoy being called a man when I'm leading. So, as a personal preference, I would appreciate gender neutral terms.

On a broader perspective, I received a personal complaint a couple months ago where I was leading and it confused a newcomer. And, I thought, that's a perfect example of the disadvantage we have with lady and gent. When the language we use sets up expectations, it creates an aberration for both new and experienced dancers, when faced with a woman who is leading.

Using new terminology would take time to get familiar with but overall, it would foster a less confusing and less offensive experience, when roles are clear and roles are not identified by gender.

I want to clarify that I think gender neutral language has important merits. I also want us to not be exclusive either way and be open to accommodating the caller's choice.

Dancer 19 notes – I've been playing music for the contra dance for close to 10 years now, and it's been wonderfully rewarding. I would like to note that during that time I have stayed away from calling. I've observed from a distance the work that callers put into their craft, both as individuals and as a community. The in-depth, intense discussions - held both online and in person - about how best to exercise this art clearly illustrate how seriously callers are about calling. I've never much wanted to engage in this complex, multi-faceted conversation, and as a result, I've stayed with music.

I trust the callers to work through the issues, both with each other and with the contra community. As a Cincinnati Contra Board Member, and as a dancer, I am opposed to burdening current callers, calling-curious dancers, and future callers with stage requirements for language. The investments made by callers of their time and efforts, their emotions and presence, is poorly rewarded and already enough. I give my gratitude to anyone brave enough to stand at the mic. I don't want to erect more barriers.

Dancer 20 notes – Yes. Another suggestion I made as an alternative was Belles and beaux.

One very important point that I wanted to make and I don't think it was understood is: we are talking about dance roles and gender identity does not need to figure into that. I believe transgender people tend to project their confusion. And also gender is not equated with sex. Many people seem to be confused about this. All we

must do as a community is to honor and respect people. And I believe we do. Dance with whoever's coming at you. My preference is to keep things the same. Ladies and gents is just fine.

I strongly oppose Larks and Ravens.

Also, I mentioned that I think Cincinnati is not a very Progressive City. I think David and David both mentioned that also

In other words, we are slow to change. And I think that needs to be taken into consideration.

I resent that we are spending so much time and energy on this issue as to me it is a non-issue. We have a history of accepting LGB TQ people and I don't think it has been a problem. We have bigger fish to fry. With the exception of people politicizing this and wanting to project their language and their control upon our community. We have a great community and many of us have worked very hard to build that and maintain it.

I would like to see us focus upon a sound system. I would like to see us focus on our problem at retaining newcomers and particularly males 18 to 35. We get newcomers every week but we do not retain them. I see that Baltimore, Louisville and Indy are very similar cities to Cincinnati but their dance communities are retaining young people.

Dancer 21 – talked to a lot of people, including how millennials feel about it. Get some pretty weird looks, at PTF. They said man, woman, with role-switch, it was confusing. Gender-free may make people run the other way.

Dancer 22 notes: Hi Christie,

We did not prepare written notes because we wanted to listen first then pick what to say. We both made points about our respective views of the words "ladies" & "gents" and how they are important to us as persons who wish to be the best we can be, and to us, they represent high goals of how humans should act toward their fellow humans. We do wish to be welcoming to others not like ourselves and treat them with respect but hope this can happen without sacrificing these words that are so very important to us. I related that I do have trans friends and my own sister was gay, so I do have experience of how to respect others. It hurts me to be accused of not understanding in my conversations in person and online and even called nasty names and treated with much less than the respect that is being asked of me.

Dancer 10 related how he loves to treat ladies he meets in the dance line with respect as a gentleman" should and he does his best to give the males he meets a few seconds of fun and joy, though he'd really rather not dance with men.

We are both very pleased with the respect shown to everyone at the meeting and the many good points discussed. I do think this will help us come together and be a better group no matter what the outcome of the issue at hand.

Dancer 23 notes: I read the letter that was posted in CDSS 2018 newsletter. I do not feel these are good reasons to change our language in Cincinnati to an over a century old traditional dance.

-I am not aware of any "Shaming when gender presentation doesn't match the role term chosen."

-We have been safely asking the same gendered folks to dance for years.

-We have been doing the gender swapping for many years, just recently seeing it more often. Once it took hold, folks who come upon the switch has not been taken off guard.

-Families that have come often dance with each other.

-Uneven gender in any dance that I have been attended has not been a problem. I have been asked to dance with women, and I have often asked women to dance with me. I also see men dancing with each other often.

-Finally, people of all walks of life have come to Cincinnati to dance and we have never made them feel unwelcomed.

I do not understand why we would want to change the language to accommodate a small percentage of people who might be offended, I could be offended as I do not want to be called a Lark or a Raven.

Feedback from dancers at gendered dances indicates a pattern of gender-norming pressure (or “gender-policing”) the organizers are hoping to alleviate. This pressure occurs across the sexual-preference and gender-identity spectrums. Examples from dancers include, but are not limited to:

— dance role choice shaming when gender- presentation doesn’t “match” the role term chosen

— neighbors attempting to ‘fix’ same gender- presentation dancers when they choose to dance together by attempting to match the partners with differently gendered people

— gender power dynamics that affect who can safely ask or say no to dances. • Organizers have noticed that that uncoupling gender from the dance roles can allow more freedom for everyone to dance with whomever they wish in any role. Feedback indicates that freedom of role choice positively impacts many groups, including, but not limited to:

— people who wish to dance with a person of the same gender-identity— people who need to dance a certain role due to a physical requirement (injury, disability, strength, etc.)

— families who wish to dance with one another, and most specifically children — people whose gender identity does not fit the gender-binary

— people who dance in communities with more people in attendance of one gender or another, and thus are not “gender-balanced.”

Dancer 24 notes, dancing 16 years. Cincinnati Contra Dance Community has been her family, it rose to the occasion when she needed one; were her family – during surgery and took care of her. Issue has been so divisive that it hurts her heart. It will be hard for new people, if we don’t have a set terminology, no one will understand and no one can grow.

Dancer 25 notes: I have been hearing that the terminology needs to be changed to make a more welcoming dance community. From reading FB posts, it seems no matter what words are chosen (ladies/gent, left/right, larks/ravens to name a few), someone is going to be offended. Personally, I do not want to be a raven. I feel strongly that actions/behavior of those in the community are what makes a welcoming atmosphere. My only requirements are that one is wearing clothes, has taken a shower recently, doesn’t rip my arm out of my socket, and only is in my personal body space if I allow them. I don’t care what one wear, which role is danced, or who is dancing together.

Dancer 22 Lady is extremely important to her – part of her identity – has strived for most of her life – if you take that away from her will take away part of her identity, lady and gent is part of their identity. Willing to

welcome other people, has friends that are trans-gender – please think whatever terms we decide on – be welcoming to everyone – even those who like ladies and gents.

Dancer 26 notes: teacher, taught students who are transgender – terminology does matter to them – validates who they are. Encourages caller's choice. Has students who would not come because of gendered calling.

Dancer 31 – represented by Dancer 17”do whatever Liz wants, whatever makes minority people feel more comfortable. They didn't come because it upsets her too much.

Dancer 4 – community means everything to her since 1994. All about resolving conflict. The person who made her change her mind – respects him, he socialized her. I changed as a result of this community. Shenanigans, if you're doing them, please be on time. Want to organize a group, have a lateral ad-hoc group?

Dancer 6 – True declining # of dancers, no matter what you think about gender calling, do need to attract. Things we can do in the future, let's try to keep our eye on now and future, to stay unified, does care about all of you. Don't see a problem with White and sys-gender – heard tons of stories from people asked not to call Larks and Ravens.

Dancer 27 notes–

My exact words are lost.

The paraphrase is this:

Larks and ravens might get offended by us using their names.

This might bring the society for the prevention of cruelty to animals on our case.

Dancer 5 – gents and ladies is very civilized way to call. Historic and respectable. Will live up to the name and be respectful.

Dancer 10 – heterosexual – love women and loves making them feel like a lady – loves to be a man on the dance floor – really feels joy when a lady says Thank you – you were really gentle. Very important to any man who dances.

Dancer 28 stated they are on both sides as a caller and a dancer. Tradition in her blood. 60 white, female... splits in the middle. Think about one thing. Community made the decision. Not individuals, kvetching complaining wanting their way. Evolved very slowly from community up. Issue has come from certain people, ladies and men, men and women. Happen over time – has to work that way. (needs clarification)

Dancer 25 – Liz hit a button – white, female, look like innocent old lady – knows what discrimination is like. It's the community

Dancer 7 what a treasure to get to hear from everyone. She repeated...what a treasure to get to hear from everyone.

Discussion:

Debbie Barrett facilitator: Can we vote about processes? Have had a wonderful array of sharing and of feelings and perspectives. We had a number of proposals come in after they were posted online. Darlene reading through.

This list is suggestions from members – ideas for ways we might move forward. Hope to work this up and get it posted online.

Could we pick out a few processes to consider.

Separated them into outcomes and processes.

Dancer 12 – some of proposals are outcomes, not process. There should be another process proposal to have another meeting to discuss again after we all have time to consider tonight's comments and discuss amongst ourselves and others.

VOTE: How many think we can choose a process right now? 21 say it's too soon to even decide a process tonight. 9 say we could decide a process tonight.

Dancer 29 suggests taking a survey among whole community.

Dancer 4 says it's painful but worth it to let community come together – give it time to come together and process what's been said tonight.

Dancer 3 – terminology concern – equating gender-free with larks and ravens. Part of the exploration is other terminology.

Dancer 28 – larks and ravens is being used all over the contradance community. It is now the tradition.

Dancer 2 suggested we do more research – how many communities are actually using larks and ravens – doesn't have to be the end-all just because many are using it.

Dancer 12 – what is the point of the survey – be clear. For membership only

Debbie Barrett – 2/3 of those who have taken time to speak hearts and listen to each other say it's too soon to choose a process, want to move forward before too long. Suggested taking a survey at regular dance – letter "I". Ask all dancers to recommend between one and three of those processes to choose best process to move forward – put name on back of note so only one vote per person.

Dancer 14 could agree to do all of the recommended info gathering in parallel with conversation moving forward.

Letters a and b are purely research – CDSS. Could proceed with either of those in next month or two.

Darlene Underwood stated she is on CDSS board and has been invited to be on the "Safety" committee. She will be attending a 3-day annual meeting as new members of the board. She could gather information that may help us dealing with this issue of larks and ravens and safety within the dance. To put out information about this topic.

VOTE: Whether to authorize Darlene to do that. 34 have approved the proposal for Darlene, while meeting with the CDSS to gather information as to possible recommendations on how to go about the process for our community.

Liz Burkhart will bring recommendations on Larks and Ravens

Dancer 12 – wants to know where Larks and Ravens calling didn't work and why. Did the regional differences have any effect on that?

Dancer 17 – It's a community decision – we may be one of the first to solve.

For the next 2 months, leave things as they are in regard to calling. Ask Darlene to report back and we've all had a chance to talk with our fellow dancers. Get votes on a survey from the community (voting members).

VOTE: Until that point (the time of the next meeting), will we allow callers to call as they are most comfortable? 15 think we are dragging it out, that 2 months is too long. 17 saying 2 months is ok.

Terri Spiegel stated that she books Saturday dances, doesn't recall ever being asked by a caller if they could use terms larks and ravens – occasionally asked do you like circles or squares.

Dancer 30 asks how far in advance callers are booked (6 months)

SaraLynne Thoresen invites whomever would like to collaborate – go talk with folks to find ways to help nudge that along, please find Sarah Lynn.

Debbie Barrett: We have used gents and ladies in the past – let the caller decide on the night that they are the caller? Deb wants to reserve this one for the board. Or, leave it to the caller to decide until the next meeting and have caller identify which they will call?

VOTE for period until next meeting: Tradition (Gents and Ladies) – 18. Caller decides – 15.

Respectfully submitted by: Christie Armstrong 4-18-2019