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## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: Introduction



*Originally published August 2, 2012*

Next year, on July 6, 2013, I am getting married. This will be the second time for the both of us. Having done this before, one would think we'd know what to expect, and for what to plan. However, this is not the case. Both my partner and I have been learning a number of things as we begin this next chapter in the journey that is our lives, and have begun planning our geeky-queer wedding.

As [I am transgender](#), there are a number of "traditional" wedding elements that need adjusting if I am going to be comfortable on the day we celebrate our love with close friends and family. Then, when you add the extra layer of wanting to include some geeky elements into the ceremony and reception, while balancing that with the want to keep some "traditional" elements, things become even more complicated, requiring extra thought and planning.

To add to this, I'm Canadian and my partner is American. Being Canadian, I had a number of assumptions about how weddings work, both from a legal standpoint and social convention standpoint. Being American, my partner had his own set of assumptions. Going through this process, we have both learned a number of intriguing differences between our two cultures and the legalities of marriage; things we both assumed were the same across the border as, despite the differences between our two countries, there are also a number of similarities. A basic example of this are the wedding vows, and what must be said during the ceremony for it to be legal, and the options available for same-sex marriages, which can also be applied to our situation. We will be getting married in Canada, and, once we are married, residing

in Canada, so it is important that he understands the legalities from a Canadian perspective. It is also important we make sure that any cultural expectations we both may have are met.

During this process, there have been a number of other things I've found fascinating. One of these things is when friends have asked, "So... how did he propose?" or, "Have you started to look at dresses?" I can understand strangers asking me those questions as, to a stranger, I present as female. It is fascinating when people who know I'm transgender ask those questions, forgetting that social norms do not apply in my relationship with Andrew. The other thing I've found fascinating is when I discuss the fact I have to legally change my name before we get married, many people have made the assumption that I'm talking about my last name.

There are so many more things that I have learned during this process. If you are a [heteronormative](#) couple, even if you are adding geeky twists to your wedding, you pretty much know what to expect. There are more wedding planning sites and magazines directed towards the "norm" than I can shake a stick at. Even when it comes to relationships and the roles within a relationship, straight couples have a pretty good idea of what to expect, based on their culture. However, if you are in a same-sex relationship, or present as an opposite-sex couple, but underneath the window dressing that is anatomy this is not the case, there are a number of things opposite-sex couple can sometimes take for granted that same-sex/non-heteronormative couples need to figure out on their own, and blindly fumble through.

Even before a non-heteronormative couple gets to the engagement stage of a relationship, there are a number of things that have to be negotiated, such as the roles within the relationship and home. In my situation, we also had to have many discussions about what would happen if one day I could no longer live with people making assumptions about my gender based on the way I present, and I decided I needed [gender reassignment surgery](#). Also, because I have two children, we had to discuss his role in their life.

Because of this, I thought it would be fun to write a series about how we are going about planning, and the things we are including in our geeky-queer wedding, plus include some of the negotiations that had to occur during the relationship contract phase. Also included will be some regrets about the first time we got married, and how we are trying to ensure that, this time around, the wedding will be exactly what we want, and not what is expected based on our respective cultures and upbringing. The series will include posts on the following:

- The proposal and the rings
- The outfits and wedding attire
- The wedding party, and how family members will be involved
- The guests
- The ceremony, including vows and legalities, and the process of going through a legal name change and the reasons behind that need
  - Last names and culture
  - The location
  - Gifts

There may be a number of aspects of the planning process that may interest you, but I have not included them above, because I have not thought of them. If that is the case, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will endeavor to do my best to include it in a post.

## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Proposal and the Rings



*Originally published September 2, 2012*

Deciding to get married is a big step. There are many things both individuals need to consider and discuss before agreeing to enter a marriage contract. Add extra “complications” such as children from previous relationships, lupus, and one individual being a gay trans man, there are many extra things that must be discussed long before any agreement can be reached.

In [my introduction to this series](#), I wrote that I found it fascinating when friends have asked, “So... how did he propose?” I can understand strangers asking this question, but only to a degree. I live in a society where more and more women are asking the man for his hand in marriage. However, the norm still seems to be the male asking the female. As I present as female, I don’t think too much of this question when strangers ask, even though I would have asked, “Who proposed to whom, and how?” I have a very different expectation from my friends, as they know I am a trans man. Right or wrong, I expect them to not assume it was my partner who did the proposing.

So, who did the proposing and how? The answer is no-one. In fact, had he proposed, automatically my answer would have been, “No.” You now may be wondering, “Wait, so how are you engaged?” You may also be curious as to why I would have said no, had he asked. The answer to these questions, and more, is very long and complicated.

The answer to the first question is our engagement was the result of many long discussions and negotiations.

The very first of these discussions and negotiations happened when I came to the realization that I cared deeply for Andrew, and I strongly suspected the feeling was mutual. At this point in our relationship, we were what I label “close pals.” Before I could consider him a friend and should we both agree to the terms of the new relationship label, I had to discuss with him what friendship meant to me, and what our mutual responsibilities are. Yes, I have relationship contracts. Yes, I make people sign them. In some situations, the contract comes into effect after many short conversations about expectations and responsibilities, or one long conversation. With Andrew, the friendship agreement was entered into after a very long conversation. The conversation was every bit as awkward as when [Sheldon asked Amy to be his girlfriend](#), followed by the discussion on roles and responsibilities, before he was allowed to give me an answer.

As an aside, that episode had not yet aired when we went through this phase in our relationship. When Andrew and I were watching it, we *howled* because it was pretty much exactly how it went down when I asked Andrew to be my friend, including word choice.

Part of this talk included talking, once again, about “romantic” relationships. The reason for this is that I first need to be friends with a person before I am able to enter into a “romantic” relationship. I am incapable of doing the, “Let’s go on social outings to get to know each other, and find out if we actually like each other” thing, also known as “dating.” Because friendships with me can be quite intimate — not in a sexual way, but mentally intimate — there was the chance, or risk, depending on one’s point of view, that the relationship could develop into more. I even used the words, “Even though I haven’t thought about it beyond this discussion, the idea of us being in a “romantic” relationship does not repulse me. Do with that information what you will before making your decision regarding whether or not you want to be my friend.” When I told him this, as we had already discussed “romantic” relationships, but only to a degree, he already had some idea of exactly what that meant to me.

The next discussion happened when we both realized that not only did we care deeply about each other, but we were in-love with each other. This was a difficult realization for us both. One of the reasons this was difficult for us is because we were done with “romantic” relationships. Not because we were jaded, but because we were both very happy with our lives as they were. Our mental and emotional needs were already being met with the relationships we had. Also, my idea of a “romantic” relationship just does not work for most people.

Until Andrew, people did not appreciate the very logical way I approach relationships. They found it difficult that no “romance” was inserted into the relationship with the inclusion of sex. Living with me is like living with a [Spock/ Data/ Dr Spencer Reid/ Dr Sheldon Cooper](#) hybrid. I do not come to emotion until I’ve had a considerable amount of time to “do the math” and figure out how something affects my life. While this can make for a wonderful friend, even if that relationship can be frustrating at times, it doesn’t satisfy most people’s romantic needs. On the opposite end, Andrew is driven by emotion first, even if he is a very logical person.

The other thing that was difficult for me was acknowledging this idea of being in-love; a state of being that I don’t necessary agree is actually a thing. With the exception of one other person, the degree to which I loved someone with whom I was romantically involved was no different than how I love my friends.

So, the first thing we needed to discuss was whether or not we wanted to again change the relationship label and enter into a new contract, or leave things as they were, while acknowledging that we were in-love with each other.

This conversation took place over the course of many days, for hours each day. Because we were finished with “romantic” relationships, we both were in agreement that *if* we were going to do this, we were going to plan for a lifetime; it wasn’t going to be, “Let’s see how it goes.”

Another thing we had to discuss was the fact that if I was going to agree to this, I needed a guarantee that he would first be my best-friend, before he was anything else. I needed to know that I could still talk with him about anything and everything, and he'd be able to not allow his emotions to interfere with any conversation we were having. I also needed to know that when the situations arise when he does become butt-hurt by something I've said, that he approaches that conversation in the same way he approached it when the relationship label was friend. The reason for this is because, in my mind, nothing has changed between us outside of the inclusion of sex, and sex doesn't complicate things for me. If he can't be my friend first, before anything else, then I can't enter into a "romantic" relationship. This point was one of many contributing factors to my past failed relationships. They were "in-love" with the idea of me, but not actually me. I was a great best-friend, but suddenly, who I am was no longer enough when the label changed.

Next on the list of thing to discuss: his role in the lives of my children; how is he going to be able to cope with the unexpected things [lupus](#) throws at me, like a hysterectomy at 29 and a [stroke](#) at 30, plus multiple hospital stays; and the fact that [I am transgender](#), and what would happen should I change my mind and decide I needed [sex reassignment surgery](#), even though I've already stated I'm pretty sure I will not do the surgery. But this does not mean I do not consider reassignment surgery. It enters my brain about once or twice a month. So, even if the chances are low, they are still there. Each of these things have also been contributing factors to past failed relationships.

The talk about my boys was relatively easy. My youngest is now 13-years-old. My oldest will be 17-years-old at the beginning of September. They already have a dad. They do not need another one. What they need is someone who will be their friend and someone with whom to talk. Oddly enough, it is because I didn't want past partners to take on a parental role that caused issues. Andrew is very happy to not have that responsibility, and instead be a friend.

The talk about my lupus was mildly difficult. Having [read both my books](#) on my experiences with lupus, Andrew already knew what he was getting himself into. But knowing, and actually having to endure it, are different. Judging by how people have reacted to this in the past, it is also different when you are a friend supporting someone who has lupus than if you are romantically involved with someone who has lupus. I had to discuss things that are a little uncomfortable for me, like preparing him for the periods where one day I'll be fine, and the next day I'm literally fighting for my life. I had to make sure he fully realized the implications of this choice. Because I've had many people leave my life as a result of my lupus, it felt like I was risking another person leaving simply by having this conversation. Even though Andrew didn't like having this conversation, because he doesn't like to have to think about me dying, he still managed to put aside his feeling and discomfort, and honestly discuss it. He received bonus points for my relationship equation during this conversation.

This brought us to the fact that I'm a gay trans man. I had to discuss how this has been an issue in past relationships. I also had to tell him that he needs to be 100% sure that he is okay with my mental penis. Without going into more detail than I already wrote in my ["coming out" to the world post](#) — which I would have never written without Andrew's support — this aspect of my personality can be quite difficult for many. Because we were discussing a lifetime commitment, and not "we'll see how it goes," we also had to discuss what would happen should I change my mind, and decide I need to go through sex reassignment surgery. If one day I decided that I must have a penis, would we still be in a sexual relationship? We also discussed the situation in reverse, even though it doesn't apply with him. We also had to discuss what our roles, as two men, would be within the relationship.



The discussions about my gender identity, how it would affect a sexual relationship, our roles within that relationship, how it reflects on his sexual orientation, and what would happen if I needed the surgery were made easier by two *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episodes: [The Host](#) and [The Outcast](#).

Without getting too personal or too explicit, Andrew's sexual preference is female. However, there are some who would put him in the category of [pansexual](#) as, even though he is sexually attracted to the female form, the fact mentally I'm androgynous-to-masculine doesn't matter. In fact, when it comes to gender, his preference is people who fall in the androgynous area to somewhat masculine. Andrew would argue that he is only pansexual under the right circumstances, because he isn't automatically attracted to the male form, even if he is attracted to masculine qualities.

However, had we met post-sex reassignment surgery, it is unlikely we would be in a relationship. But now that we are, he'd like to think that if I changed my mind about reassignment surgery, he'd still be sexually attracted to me, as it is mostly my brain he loves. My genitals are just a fun bonus as, from a sexual standpoint, they are his preferences. That is more than I can say. I don't think I would still be able to have a sexual relationship with him if he decided he needed to be female. I'm just not sexually attracted to the female body. Even though he is unable to guarantee that we'd still have a sexual relationship if I were to do the surgery, the fact he would like to think it doesn't matter is good enough for me. His openness to the idea is all I need, especially as I don't think I'd be as open in return.

As for our roles within the relationship, Andrew is very happy to have me take the lead. I am very exact on how things need to go and need to be done. Andrew is pretty laid back in that area. The biggest adjustment for Andrew is fully realizing that a lot of things that are expected within romantic relationships, I neither expect, nor appreciate. Even though he doesn't do "romance" either, his past relationships, regardless of the fact they were tomboys, still expected some degree of "typical" romantic gestures. It is also a bit of an adjustment to be in a relationship with someone who, like him, is a cave dweller and isn't one to talk about emotions unless the "fix" cannot be found, and help is needed to find a solution. At times, he still feels he needs to ask me, "What's wrong?" and to continue asking until I actually talk about it, instead of trusting that I actually mean it when I say, "Nothing that I want to discuss. When I'm ready and have had time to think, I'll let you know." Another thing he finds difficult at times is the odd time I do have emotion regarding something, because he is accustomed to me being overly logical. The only thing that helps in those situations is the fact that I can tell him how I reached that state of emotions; there is an equation and process behind it.

Andrew also had to be reassured that I'd be okay with his quirks; the biggest being his panic and anxiety issues, plus being prone to depression. As I'm no stranger to any of these things, even if the source is different, in my mind, they were non-issues. Another thing we had to discuss was Andrew's inability to properly express certain things, especially when he is being emotional, which is often. Unlike me, he doesn't know how he got to that state, he's just in it. At times, this is difficult for me to cope with because I would be able to articulate cause and effect. Often, I have to say, "I don't get it. I accept that you feel this way, but I just don't get it."

Now that the difficult conversations were over, we discussed the normal things, such as finances.

After the many days of discussions, we did the math and decided that we were both in agreement on the many different points, and we both felt the benefits of changing the relationship label outweighed the risk. How could we possibly say no to a lifetime of sex with our best-friend who, for the first time in our lives, completely accepted exactly who the other person is as an individual?

Despite us agreeing to pursue a lifetime partnership with each other, we decided that we did not want to get married. We had both been there, and it just wasn't for us. For me, especially, marriage was just not something I wanted to do as, in Canada, there is no benefit to marriage. The exception being, in most

provinces, the division of assets upon dissolution of the relationship. Last year, in British Columbia, our common-law relationship laws changed to include the division of property and assets. Because of this, a marriage-type relationship was all we needed. The only logical reason for us to get married is because we wanted to immediately enjoy the benefits of marriage, instead of benefits relying on varying periods of cohabitation in a marriage-like relationship. At this point, Andrew started to wear a wedding band on his left ring-finger. We also decided that, at some point, we would purchase a ring for me to wear.

Then, sometime during December of 2011, during a discussion about our relationship and checking in with each other to make sure our needs and expectations were being met, we discovered that both our views on getting married had changed. We were independently thinking about having a wedding.

We had a few long discussions on why it matters to us that we have a wedding, especially as neither of us are fond of them, and a marriage wouldn't change our relationship or our legal obligations to each other. For the both of us, a wedding is just another social convention, and we do not do social conventions. We came to the conclusion that not only are we in-love with each other, but we are in-love with our relationship. We are very proud of each other and the relationship we have created. Every day, we privately celebrate our relationship and the things we have to navigate around that most people never have to think about. We decided that we want to celebrate this with our close friends and his family, because we think it is worth celebrating. We also really like the idea of being spouses, and not only partners, even though partnership is the best way to describe our relationship.

With a level of enthusiasm that we both found surprising, we decided that we were going to get married. But only under the condition that it be a small, private affair, and that it be exactly the wedding that we both want, as the first time around, neither one of us was happy with the wedding part of it. The wedding was a necessary evil in order to get to the important part: marriage.

This brings us to our engagement rings. We decided that as he still has his wedding band, and neither one of us attaches any sort of significance to the fact it is from his previous marriage, he would wear that during this phase of our relationship. My ring required much more thought.





Our engagement rings. Photo: Jules Sherred

Because of my frame and the fact I have miniscule hands, a female engagement ring is the only thing I'd feel comfortable wearing. Men's rings are just too clunky for my small hands. But I find most female engagement rings to be too feminine, and I wouldn't be comfortable wearing them. I also do not like what is fashionable these days in regards to engagement ring settings.

Another reason I wanted a female engagement is so that I can pass it on to one of my, hopefully, future male grandchildren for when they become engaged. Despite the fact I am a trans man, that is a tradition that is very important to me.

After nearly five months of searching, we found the ring. The setting is non-traditional and looks very antique. Often, I say that I was born in the wrong period; that I should have been born in the 1700s when men dressed just as flamboyantly and lavishly as women. The ring has a period design. The only thing I wish was different is the stone. I would have preferred a garnet. Diamonds are just not my thing. However, as soon as I saw the ring, despite it having diamonds, I knew I would be happy with it and wouldn't be uncomfortable wearing it.

The TL;DR version of this story: our engagement is the result of a many long, and necessary, conversations. Had he gone the traditional proposal route, I would have said, "No," because there are just way too many things that need to be discussed long before marriage can be thought about. Also, if he had to ask, then obviously he doesn't know me well enough; if I wanted to marry him, he'd already know without asking. When I've discussed this with Andrew, he was a bit surprised. According to him, the social

convention is that a traditional proposal still needs to be done, even if both parties are aware that marriage is something wanted from the relationship. Though this romantic gesture is appreciated by many, if it was done to me, it would turn me off, for many reasons.

My personal opinion is that these conversations need to happen in all relationships, long before it gets to the engagement stage. I am often surprised when I hear of friends who are engaged, and they have yet to discuss even the simplest things like finances and household responsibilities. When you are in a relationship where both partners are female, or male, or with a transgender individual, these conversations are even more important.

For those of us who are not [heteronormative](#), we do not have movies, parents, television shows, books, etc., to guide us — even if some of these guides are, at times, sexist and dated. We have to make up the rules as we go along. Relationships do not happen in a vacuum. If you want them to last, they need to have a solid foundation, built on communication, trust, and respect. Talk with your partner. Talk with them often. Be sure to celebrate the difficult conversations, and celebrate them often. Managing to get through those is what will get you through the rest of your relationship, not the easy and fun times.

Still to come in my geeky-queer wedding planning series:

- The outfits and wedding attire
- The wedding party, and how family members will be involved
- The guests
- The ceremony and reception, including vows and legalities, and the process of going through a legal name change and the reasons behind that need
  - Last names and culture
  - The location
  - Gifts

Once again, there may be a number of aspects of the planning process that may interest you, but I have not included them above, because I have not thought of them. Or, this post has created a lot of questions in your mind. If that is the case, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will endeavor to do my best to include it in a post.

## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Outfits and Wedding Attire



*Originally published October 15, 2012*

The most difficult decision Andrew and I faced when planning our wedding was answering the question, “What are we going to wear?” After months of discussions, many of which were filled with me asking, “Why don’t we just elope?” we finally came to a decision.

It is our hope that this decision will not only make us comfortable, and fill our day with an added element of fun, but will also be fun, and comfortable, for our guests. The journey reaching this decision needs to be told, before I can share this decision.

The journey was an extremely stressful and emotional one. It was also a frustrating one. As I wrote in my [introduction to this series](#), one of the frustrations came as a result of friends asking, “So... have you started to look at dresses?”

There have been a number of people who honestly do not understand why I would find that question so frustrating. I expect strangers to ask that question. To them, I look like any other female, even if I am not overtly feminine. They have no idea that [I’m a trans man](#). However, my friends are fully aware of this fact. So, in my mind, for them to ask me this question would be like if they asked that question of two gay men who are planning to get married, or if they were to ask an expectant [cisgender](#) groom if he had started to look for his wedding dress. Just like — right or wrong — [I expect them to ask, “Who proposed to whom?”](#) I expect my friends to ask, “Have you started to think about what you are going to wear?”

The stress and emotion came from a completely different source. I honestly do not understand how people enjoy this aspect of planning a wedding.

For our first weddings, the ceremony part of it wasn't really what we wanted. Had we had more say, our wedding ceremonies would have been different. It is because of our dissatisfaction with our first ceremonies, that we spent a lot of time discussing the pros and cons of having a ceremony, instead of just eloping — which, originally, was what I wanted to do — during the [negotiation process of that phase in our relationship](#). At one point, discussing the attire put me in tears, causing me to plea, once more, in favor of eloping. When I wasn't stating that we should elope, I was suggesting, in all seriousness, that we should have a [Betazoid wedding](#), completely getting rid of any need to decide on something to wear. Yes, a Betazoid wedding would probably cull the wedding guests but, in my mind, that would have solved all sorts of problems.

Why was this part of the discussions so stressful and emotional for me?

Because, for me, it is imperative that this day be something we are equally comfortable with. This day *must* be filled with decisions made without resignation. Every time it appeared as if Andrew was agreeing to a suggestion only to make me happy, the horrible feelings I felt about having no power, or say, during my first trip down the aisle would resurface. I would become overwhelmed, worried that he, too, would end up having those feelings on a day that is supposed to be a celebration. I just couldn't live with myself if I, and our wedding, was the source of those feelings. So, I'd panic. This would often lead to me declaring, "We are going to elope! It is just that simple!" Once, this discussion left me in tears because I was so worried that he was not going to be 100% content with the decisions we were attempting to make.

Andrew will tell you that his first time around wasn't as bad as it was for me. For him, his biggest sources of being uncomfortable came from the number of guests, and the attire. For him, there were too many people, and the wedding attire was too formal.

For me, it was my worst nightmare come true.

When I was in high school, my best friend and I spent a lot of time planning my future wedding. He was going to be my best man. I was going to wear a tuxedo with a waist coat and tails, ascot with pin, top hat, and walk with a gentleman's cane. He was going to wear ankle-length rainbow gaucho pants, and a white crepe cotton shirt. We were going to be fabulous!

I had no idea who else would be in my wedding party. As for attire, I hadn't thought about it beyond the following: if they were female and wanted to wear a dress, it would have to be full-length, and either burgundy or royal blue.

My best friend was also supposed to give me away.

What ended up happening was a completely different story. The above was my fairy tale wedding. What I got was the traditional fairy tale wedding.



Me, 18 years and a lifetime ago.

My mother was paying for the wedding, as tradition dictates the bride's side of the family pays for the wedding, and the groom's side of the family pays for the reception. And being that my mother adheres to her strict upper-class British upbringing, it also meant that I would not be wearing pants. I would wear the perfect dress, of her choosing, with a long train and full skirt, adorned with lace, pearls and other detailing, long veil, and ridiculous hat, full make-up, and heirloom jewelry.

It also meant that my wedding party would consist of young ladies, none of which were of my choosing. After all, we had appearances to uphold. I had thought that at a minimum, I would get to pick their dresses. I was told the colors I wanted were not suitable for young ladies, neither was the length of the dresses I wanted. So instead of long, period piece, burgundy dresses for the ladies, I got just above the knee, pastel peach, lace-detailed silk dresses.

The roughly 200 guests for my side were not even of my choosing. Instead, the guests were chosen solely for appearances, such as my grandmother's friends, the entire church, my mother's friends, the mayor, and town council. My stepdad walked me down the aisle, and gave me away, not my best friend. My best friend wasn't even in attendance.

The only thing I did have any input on during this process was the attire of the groom and groomsmen.

Because of both of our experiences during our first weddings, the most important thing to me was that we have equal power and say during the process. If either one of us didn't fully like an idea, the rule

was we were to immediately say so, without fear or reservation. After all, this day belongs to us both. And, if we were going to have a ceremony, something neither of us initially wanted, more so me than Andrew, it really needed to be *our* “fairy tale” wedding, or I would insist on eloping.

Neither one of us had any real ideas about what we wanted, as neither one of us ever thought we would again want to have an actual ceremony. But we did know what we didn’t want. We didn’t want something traditionally fancy, but instead something relaxed, without being casual. We didn’t want a large number of guests, instead we wanted something small, intimate, and, most importantly, fun.

Accomplishing relaxed, without being casual, was tricky. Andrew’s idea of getting dressed up — slacks and a nice shirt — is my casual attire, so that was out of the equation. As much as I would love to wear what I wanted to wear the first time, that would have been too formal for Andrew, so that was out of the equation. Andrew would have been happy with jeans and a t-shirt, but I don’t even own a pair of jeans, and I knew that I wouldn’t be happy with anything “normal” and “every day.” Also, I wasn’t too keen on “traditional,” unless it was over-the-top and fabulous. And, of course, a dress was completely out of the question, so “traditional” meant traditionally masculine.

Naturally, this led to the discussion of having a theme wedding. My first thought was to dress in traditional oriental dress— any region and any period— as the clothing choices for men and women are equally luxurious, and that left us both with many gender-neutral to masculine choices. Plus, the attire suits all body types, and it would allow guests a wide range of styles and fabrics from which to choose. Low cost was also a bonus, even if cost wasn’t an issue. I’m just very frugal.

Andrew didn’t immediately love the idea. Because of this, I wanted to take it off the table. But he assured me that he didn’t hate the idea, just that he had to sit with it for a bit. It was so foreign to him, and he had never worn anything remotely similar, whereas I had. He needed time to decide if that idea — one he liked in theory — would be an idea he was comfortable with in practice.

A couple months had passed, and Andrew had yet to make a decision, nor had he offered any other ideas. Once again, I was making declarations about eloping, or, alternatively, having a Betazoid wedding.

Then, it hit me! The *perfect* idea. I do not know why it took me so long to come to it.

We are having a [United Federation of Planets](#) wedding.

Though, very fittingly, it is *Star Trek* based, as [Star Trek is largely responsible for helping our relationship to develop](#), it isn’t exactly a *Star Trek* themed wedding. There is a slight different to our United Federation of Planets theme that makes it not the *Star Trek* United Federation of Planets.

The reason this theme is so perfect is because our wedding will be consisting of two cultures, plus it will be a celebration of gender diversity.

Both Canada and the United States of America are countries filled with a variety of cultures and ethnic groups, even if we approach them differently.

So, our United Federation of Planets wedding will be different from the *Star Trek* United Federation of Planets in that people will dress in tradition attire from their favorite culture, real or fictional, from any genre. Yes, even the guests have to come in costume. The reason for this will be explained further in a future post.

So, we may have Romulans and Cardassians — not part of the United Federation of Planets, but you never know, one day they could very well be — with Storm Troopers, vampires, wizards, etc., and people from Earth cultures, spanning decades. The culture must be different than the guest’s own culture. Just like the United Federation of Planets embraces diversity and respects individual cultures, with the inclusion of the Prime Directive, our wedding will be a celebration of diversity in all its forms.



Andrew and I think this is something everyone will be comfortable with, instead of pigeonholing them into one culture, or “theme” like *Star Trek*, and making them wear something they really are not comfortable wearing, like we were the first time we got married.

In case you are curious as to what cultures Andrew and I have decided to celebrate, originally, we came up with three ideas. The first idea was that we were both going to be Vulcans. Then, Andrew pointed out that he was too emotional to be a Vulcan. So I suggested that he be a Romulan and I will be the Vulcan. The idea amused him, but he didn’t think it was the perfect fit for him. Then, we came up with the perfect idea.

I am going to be [Mister Spock](#). Andrew is going to be [James T. Kirk](#).

This is perfect for so many reasons, the least of which is because, in a lot of ways, I’m like Spock. But, who doesn’t think a [slashfic](#) wedding is fun? Also, Kirk and Spock are one of the most powerful couples in science-fiction, regardless from which lens you wish to view their relationship. But most importantly, for Andrew and I, this idea is simply perfect and it will be a day neither of us will end up regretting, or wishing was different in some way, even if slight. Now, we only need to figure out which era of Kirk and Spock.

Still to come in my geeky-queer wedding planning series:

- The wedding party, and how family members will be involved
- The guests
- The ceremony and reception, including vows and legalities, and the process of going through a legal name change and the reasons behind that need
- Last names and culture
- The location
- Gifts

Once again, there may be a number of aspects of the planning process that may interest you, but I have not included them above, because I have not thought of them. Or, this post has created a lot of questions in your mind. If that is the case, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will endeavor to do my best to include it in a post.

Also, if you were to re-marry, or renew your vows, how would you tackle the dreaded question of what to wear?



## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Wedding Party, Family, and Guests



*Originally published November 26, 2012*

When you are planning a wedding, tradition and etiquette will tell you there are many things you must do. You must select a wedding party. Traditionally, there are also rules about whom you should choose. Traditionally, the parents of the individuals getting married must assume certain responsibilities. The guests are also seen to have specific roles within the whole affair. But, what if both parties have already been once married and divorced? What if one of those individuals is a trans man? What if the people getting married have different cultural backgrounds? What if a geeky element is being added? These questions are only a small fraction of things Andrew and I had to sort out as we began to plan our geeky-queer wedding.

The short answer to how Andrew and I sorted these issues was the result of knowing what we didn't want to have happen when we get married. As I [said in a previous post, neither one of us thought we'd ever remarry](#). Because of this, there wasn't much in the way of things we wanted to do, as we've never spent time mentally preparing for any sort of wedding. But, we definitely knew what we didn't want to do; either because we didn't enjoy it the first time we respectively got married, or because of some other personal reason.

Some of the things that fall into the, "We really do not want to go through this hassle," category include the wedding party, family involvement, and the guest involvement.

## The Wedding Party

We have decided that we are not going to have best men, ushers, maids, a ring bearer, or a flower girl. The biggest reason for this is because we do not have a hierarchy within our friends. Any one of our friends could fill any of those roles.

So how do you choose? What if just the thought of one friend feeling left out is enough to cause an anxiety attack? It doesn't matter that our friends would never feel that way. Sometimes, even the best logic isn't enough to stop the irrationality of panic and anxiety attacks. Also, most of the guests are from out of town, with the majority flying in. They are coming from great distances. Because of this, Andrew and I want to ensure that they receive equal recognition for their importance in our lives.

Tradition would dictate that if you can't choose among your friends, then your family members would serve in these roles. Well, aside from my two children, my family will not be invited. For Andrew's wedding party, there is the possibility that some of his family will not be able to make the trip up to Canada.

Then there are smaller reasons, such as I'm not walking down the aisle. After all, I'm not a bride. So some of the traditional roles associated with the bridal party are simply not a factor. Also, some of the duties associated with both the bridal party and the groomsmen — which, yes, I realize I can go that route — are also not a factor. We are not having any sort of pre-wedding celebrations, such as engagement parties, stags, showers, and rehearsal dinners. We are not having toasts during the reception — more on that in a future post.

There is one traditional role that we cannot simply say, "We really do not want to go through this hassle." We still need to decide which two people will act as witnesses and sign the registry. Because I don't want to make this decision, and neither does Andrew, there is a part of me that wants to have willing guests participate in a double-bracket tournament-style [kal-if-fee](#).

There are two issues with that. One, I'm not sure many people will be willing to fight to the death, with the only reward being to serve as a witness. Two, if by chance people would be willing to fight to the death, I don't want my guests to die. Especially if they've flown in from all corners of North America. Another thought I had was to have willing guests play [rock-paper-scissors-lizard-Spock](#). But, that may take some time. We may end up pulling names from a hat. Thankfully, we still have just over seven months to sort this out.

## Family

Traditionally, the parents of the bride and groom have specific roles during a wedding. A lot of these responsibilities fall to the parents of the bride. Well, I'm not a bride. I'm not walking down the aisle. No-one is giving me away. In fact, our wedding invitations say, "The United Federation of Planets celebrates the union of [...]" to coincide with [the wedding theme and dress code](#). Also, as I already said, aside from my children, my family will not be there.

Andrew's parents will be attending. Even though the family of the groom doesn't play as big of a role in the pre-wedding planning, I'm racking my brain trying to figure out how to highlight their importance.

Meeting Andrew's parents made me very nervous. One, they are American and I'm a transgender Canadian. In an attempt to state this diplomatically, the rights of LGBTQ individuals in Canada are quite different than they are in America. The way individuals and politicians in our respective cultures view these issues are different, with even the largest Protestant church in Canada performing same-sex marriages. Then, when you add that my future father in law is a former Congressman and a Methodist

minister, and until the 2012 election, speaking about LGBTQ rights was considered political suicide, it added more misgivings.

Andrew did his best to reassure me that they would lovingly accept and welcome me into their family. But, right or wrong, Canadians and Americans have some pretty strong opinions about our neighboring countries. And, even though I had seen a few politicians speak out in favor of equal rights of LGBTQ individuals, I had not seen reports of major churches, or the heads of church governing bodies — Andrew's dad was also the head of the National Council of Churches — speak in favor of even something as simple as same-sex marriage.

Of course, Andrew was correct. I had nothing to worry about. His parents are beyond amazing. I adore them. They more than welcomed me with open arms and open hearts. Andrew's mom is also full of many wonderful questions about what it is like to grow up as a transgender individual.

It is because of this that Andrew and I want to add something special into our ceremony, especially as all the other traditional family things will not be happening during our ceremony and reception. This something special will be sorted out once we begin meeting with the [United Church of Canada](#) minister who will be performing the ceremony. However, suggestions are also welcomed.

We also need to discuss with the minister how to write my children into the ceremony.

### **The Guests**

For Andrew and I, the guests are the most important part of our wedding. They are the major reason we are having a ceremony to begin with. Our friends and close pals have been extremely wonderful and supportive throughout our relationship. Andrew and I do not care about most people's opinions. However, it does matter to us what our friends and close pals think, even if what they have to say would never change the parameters of our relationship. I suppose it is nice to have a supportive group of people surrounding you, even if having a lot of people in your life isn't important to you.

We have decided that our wedding will be a very small and private affair. There are many people in our lives who would love to attend, many of whom support my career. There is a tiny part of me that wants to invite the entire world. That part is actually quite minuscule. Both Andrew and I are very private and very introverted. When we think about the fact we will be the center of attention on our wedding day, it sends us into panic attacks.

As a result, we've decided that we will not be the center of attention. Yes, we still have to stand in front of a group for the ceremony part of it. However, we will not stand out from the crowd, so to speak. Everyone will be in costume. There will be no seating according to "bride's side" or "groom's side." And there are many elements of a traditional reception that we have decided to cut — more on that in a future post.

Also, the guest list is quite select. We've only invited people who have signed a friendship agreement, or who we consider to be close pals. A close pal is very close to being what I define as a friend, but I have some weird quirks that hold me back from taking the relationship to the next level. Everyone who is attending is someone with whom Andrew and I feel comfortable sharing the really personal things. Not a single guest is invited simply because of social convention or tradition. And because it is important that every person we're inviting celebrates this day with us, we are having a private live stream for those who are unable to make the trip.

—

Is this the type of thing you would want when getting married? It doesn't have to be. For some people, they *love* the traditional parts that Andrew and I strongly dislike. We are having to create our own rules,

as we muddle through planning something that doesn't have centuries of tradition to act as a guide. But even though planning a geeky-queer wedding doesn't have centuries of protocol to help guide the planning process, there are still traditional elements for you to include, or not.

If you still want to have wedding parties — all male, all female, co-ed — you can do that. If you want to have both families fulfill the roles traditional to the bride's family, you can do that. If you both want to walk down the aisle, you can do that. If you want to stick completely to the traditional of your culture, you can do that. If you want to make your own rules, you can do that, too. Do whatever makes you happy.

Your wedding is supposed to be your day. Don't be afraid to throw out the pieces that don't make you happy.

If you haven't already, I invite you to read the first three parts of this series: [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: Introduction](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Proposal and the Rings](#); and [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Outfits and Wedding Attire](#).

Still to come in my geeky-queer wedding planning series:

- The ceremony, including vows and legalities, and the process of going through a legal name change and the reasons behind that need
- The reception
- Last names and culture
- The location
- Gifts

If you would like to see a post about something not already mention, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will try my best to include it in a post.

## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Ceremony



*Originally published December 29, 2012*

Marriage is a time of celebrating the love and commitment of two individuals; a promise made in front of friends and family to spend a lifetime together. For some, it is also a matter of religion. If you strip all the window dressing away, at its very base, marriage is a civil legal contract between two individuals.

Because, in both Canada and the USA, marriage is, at its roots, a legal contract, I've come across a lot of people who just assume that the *hows* involved in marriage would be similar. The reality is that the legal and religious systems regarding marriage are vastly different between Canada and the United States, in some very important ways.

In this latest geeky-queer wedding post, we will explore the ceremony, including vows and legalities; the type of ceremony we will be having; and the process of going through a legal name change, and the reasons behind that need.

In Canada, it really doesn't matter in what province, or territory, two individuals are wanting to marry, the laws are pretty much identical. This could probably be attributed to the fact that, in Canada, marriage is defined on a federal level.

In the United States, marriage is defined by the state. Because of this, and the fact there are 50 states, it is very difficult to use generalizations when talking about exactly what is required to make a marriage legal, and who is legally allowed to perform a marriage ceremony. I believe one of the few exceptions to this rule is when it comes to the rights of religious officials and their capacity to perform wedding

ceremonies. It is also in the area of religion that there is a major difference between Canada and the United States.

In an attempt to keep things simple, with the exception of talking about the legal definition of marriage, I will talk about the regulations in British Columbia — where we are getting married — with a few broad generalizations about Canada, compared to the regulations in Virginia — the state in which Andrew grew up. Despite attempting to keep things simple, it will still require a bit of time to explain them.

### **The Definition of Marriage and Who Can Marry**

In Canada, [under the Constitution Act, 1867](#), the federal government shall define marriage and divorce, while it is up to the provincial and territorial governments to implement the solemnization of marriage. So, the federal government says who can get married, and provinces and territories make the rules regarding the hows.

In 2005, the [Civil Marriage Act](#) redefined marriage to include same-sex marriage, while also protecting religious freedom by specifying that religious officials were under no legal obligation to perform same-sex marriages if it goes against their religious beliefs. However, all civil officials who have been given the power to perform marriages in their respective provinces or territories must perform same-sex marriages.

Because of how our marriage laws work, it doesn't matter where you live in Canada, your marriage is valid.

That is, of course, if both people were of legal age at the time of marriage. In British Columbia, if you are between the ages of 16 and 19, you must have the consent of both parents, or legal guardian, to marry. In other provinces and territories, parental / legal guardian consent is needed if either party is between the ages of 16 and 18. If you are under the age of 16, you must get court approval to marry.

Also, neither partner can be legally married to someone else at the time. If the parties have been recently divorced, they must be divorced for at least 31 days before they are free to remarry. Unlike other provinces that require proof of divorce no matter how long it has been since the divorce took place, in British Columbia, it is only required if it was recent.

Compared to the United States, marriage is both defined by each state and implemented by each state. Additionally, states are under no legal obligation to recognize same-sex marriages that are legal in other states.

In Virginia, marriage is only legal if it is between a man and a woman. Virginia [marriage law also states:](#)

A marriage between persons of the same sex is prohibited. Any marriage entered into by persons of the same sex in another state or jurisdiction shall be void in all respects in Virginia and any contractual rights created by such marriage shall be void and unenforceable.

This is just one of many reasons why we are choosing to not only marry in Canada, but why Andrew is moving to Canada. If, for some reason, I do decide to undergo sex-reassignment surgery, our marriage would no longer be valid. Even if I never have the surgery, on principle alone, because I am a gay man trapped in a female body, I could never get married in a state that would not recognize my marriage had I been born in the "correct" body.

The age requirement for marriage in Virginia is a 16 years of both parties. If either party is under the age of 18, then parental consent by only one parent or legal guardian is required. If the bride is pregnant and under the age of 16, or has been pregnant within the preceding nine months, then a marriage license can be issued with the consent of one parent or legal guardian.



Also, neither party can be legally married to someone else at the time. However, unlike British Columbia, there is no waiting period between being granted a divorce and the ability to remarry. If you have been divorced, you must bring proof of divorce before a marriage license can be issued.

### **Who Can Officiate a Wedding**

In British Columbia, there are only [two types of people who can legally officiate a wedding](#).

Civil ceremonies are performed by a marriage commissioner. Marriage commissioners are private citizens who have been appointed by the Chief Executive of the Vital Statistics Agency of British Columbia. This is true in most provinces and territories. There are only a couple of provinces that make use of a justice of the peace, or notary public.

Religious ceremonies can only be performed by a religious official who is registered with the Vital Statistics Agency. Under the [Marriage Act of British Columbia, they must be registered](#) in order to have the legal authority to perform marriages.

But even before you can be registered as a religious official, you must be authorized to solemnize marriage according to the rites and usages of the respective religion.

The Marriage Act further states the religious body of which you represent must be sufficiently well established; which is a whole other thing entirely.

To be considered an established religious body in British Columbia, the following criteria must be met:

1. The denomination must be functioning within the province for at least five years.
2. Alternatively, it must demonstrate that it has been functioning within Canada for at least five years, and have already been granted the right to solemnize marriage in another province.
3. The denomination must show its societies act certificate — religious establishments must follow the same rules as all non-profits, including have a board of directors, yearly income tax returns, audits, and more.
4. The denomination must submit five years' worth of board minutes. These minutes can either be provincial or from the parent body.
5. The denomination must submit its constitution and bylaws.
6. The denomination must submit a sample of the marriage ceremony to ensure that it includes the legally required vows.
7. It must submit a list of all the names of those it recognizes as religious representatives.
8. The ordination or appointment of each of the religious representatives.

These rules are basically the same in each province and territory.

The exception to the above rules for religions in British Columbia are [Doukhobors](#). The Marriage Act of British Columbia has specifically recognized them, and has created guidelines specific to their needs and way of life.

The reason for this is that even though everyone is free to practice whatever religion they choose, marriage is a matter of legal contracts, not religion. It does not matter that, for many people, religion does play some part.

If you were hoping to become a religious officiant over the Internet, and then perform marriages in Canada, you cannot do this. This does not mean you cannot have a non-recognized religious ceremony. You can. It just wouldn't be legal, but you can have it after getting married through a Marriage Commissioner.

In Virginia, [marriage officiants are authorized by the circuit court](#).

Civil ceremonies are performed by marriage commissioners, justices of the peace, and judges.



Becoming a religious officiant is much simpler in Virginia. All an ordained minister has to do is show proof of ordination. It is [a very simple form that has to be notarized](#). Because there doesn't seem to be any type of regulations in regards to what has to be done in order to establish a religion, and some of the differences between Canada and the United States regarding how separations of church and state work, I can only assume that anyone can establish a religion and get tax-exempt status, without meeting the same guidelines that other non-profits would have to meet.

It is as a result of these lack of guidelines, and that it appears anyone can call themselves a religious body, and therefor perform marriages, that it is difficult for me to see marriage as a civil legal contract in the United States, even though all marriages must be registered with the state. Maybe the rules governing religious ceremonies and what is required from an ordained individual before they can perform a legal ceremony are different in states that require specific things to be said during the wedding ceremony, and other stronger legal requirements.

Regardless, I find these differences fascinating. I had thought that there would be some sort of basic guidelines that must be met in order to have to ability to bind two people to a legal contract. I also think it is safe to bet that many Americans have assumed that any religious official can perform marriages in Canada.

### **The Vows**

For a marriage to be legal in British Columbia, the following two things must be said during the ceremony:

To the officiant and minimum two witnesses, both parties, in turn, declare, "I solemnly declare that I do not know of any lawful impediment why I, [insert full legal name], may not be joined in matrimony to [insert full legal name]."

To each other, both parties, in turn, declare, "I call on those present to witness that I, [insert full legal name], take [insert full legal name] to be my lawful wedded wife (or husband) (or spouse)."

Aside from the recognized marriage officiant and two witness, the marriage must be contracted in a public manner. Outside of these things, a religious ceremony can be whatever you and your religion official want it to be. A civil ceremony performed by a marriage commissioner uses a [government approved wedding ceremony](#).

In Virginia, there are no such legal requirements. In fact, you don't even need witnesses. The marriage is legal when whatever rites have been celebrated and the officiant has filled out the correct paperwork.

### **Miscellaneous Differences**

The remainder of the differences are somewhat superficial. These include where and how to obtain a marriage license, and for how long the licenses are valid. One of the few similarities is that there is no waiting period after obtaining a marriage license.

Something of somewhat interest are the laws about blood tests.

In Canada, blood tests are not required before getting married. And while there are currently only eight states that require them, and Virginia is not one of them, you will be advised to get them, regardless. I also found it interesting that some of the Virginia guidelines may vary by county.

Another thing of interest, that isn't really superficial, is that in British Columbia, we have common-law relationship laws.

As I wrote in [my post about the proposal and the rings, there really isn't a need to get married](#). Once you live with someone in a marriage-like relationship for one year, or have had a child together, whatever comes first, federal income tax laws require you file taxes as a common-law couple, which entitles you to the same tax benefits as married couples. In British Columbia, after living together for two years in a marriage-like relationship, or immediately upon having a child together, whichever comes first, you are [considered to be spouses and are entitled to the same benefits of legally married couples](#), including spousal support, the division of assets upon dissolution of the relationship, and equal debt liability. These recent changes have received a mixed reception.

Even under Canadian Immigration laws, you [do not need to be legally married in order to sponsor a spouse](#).

However, in [Virginia, there are no common-law relationships laws](#). In order to be considered a spouse, and to enjoy the benefits of marriage, you must be legally married.

## **Our Ceremony**

As I wrote in my [post about the wedding attire and the guests](#), we will be having a religious ceremony. Not only does the [United Church of Canada \(UCC\)](#) — it is the church in which I grew up — perform same-sex marriages, but they also [testified in favor of same-sex marriage when the federal government held public hearings on the topic](#).

Long before same-sex marriage was legal in Canada, the UCC decided to ordain openly gay ministers. They began this process of ordaining gay ministers in 1980, when the UCC first decided to [explore sex and sexuality, plus how it relates to marriage](#). Then, in 1988, the [UCC declared that all people, regardless of sexual orientation](#), can become members of the church and can become ordained ministers. The current [moderator of the UCC, Gary Paterson is openly gay](#).

Basically, for my entire life, I was taught by the largest Protestant church in Canada that being gay is not only okay, but it is part of the Divine's plan. Not only that, but being transgender was also something to be embraced, with the addition of being taught that the Divine is both male and female, and masculine and feminine; without sex and gender, all at the same time.

It would take a few years for the government of Canada to catch up to the UCC.

Compare this to Andrew's upbringing. He is an atheist. However, he grew up in the United Methodist Church (UMC). Their [official policy regarding homosexuals and same-sex marriage](#) is the opposite of how I was raised. They have even defrocked a minister for going against official policy and performing a same-sex union.

Even though there are UMC ministers who are personally okay with same-sex marriage — Andrew's dad being one of them — because of the official policy, I could never get married by one of their ministers, or worship in one of their churches.

Compare this with the UCC, the minister who will be performing our ceremony is well aware that I am a trans man. As a result, he will be performing the ceremony the same as he would any other two men, but include a talk on transgender issues and celebrating it as a reflection of the duality of the Divine. For the legal vows part of the ceremony, we will be using the "spouse" option.

For a little bit of clarification, there have been a number of Americans who, when I talk about the UCC, think it is like the [Unitarian Universalism \(UU\) religion](#). The only real similarity between the two is in regards to inclusiveness.

Sure, the UCC will ordain not only homosexuals, but also atheists, but they have to teach in accordance to specific guidelines. UCC ministers have to teach that, even though the UCC views all religions as equal, that for member of the UCC, they find the Divine through the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Compare to the UU, which doesn't have any official doctrine or creed. Also, they aren't exactly a Christian church, as their approach to religion is a quite pluralistic.

### **Legal Name Change Prior to the Ceremony**

It is in this area that I wish British Columbia marriage laws were somewhat different. Because legal names must be used during the ceremony in order for the marriage to be legal, I need to legally change my first name to Jules before we get married. I will not be able to go through the ceremony if I have to be called Julia. That person does not exist.

For an adult, getting a [legal name change is relatively easy in British Columbia](#). It only takes a couple of weeks for the paperwork to go through, once the criminal record check and finger printing is complete. I also have to surrender my original birth certificate, as those birth records will be destroyed and Julia Christine Sherrred will no longer legally exist. Then, I will get a new birth certificate with my new name. I do not have to put a notification in the newspaper before doing it.

The problem, while I know what my first name will be changed to, I have no idea what I am going to do with my second name. A second name is not legally required, but because of personal beliefs around these things, I feel one is required.

I don't hate my middle name. It rarely is used, except for when having to fill out government forms. I had thought about changing it to Christian, as I want to keep the same initials and want to keep my name gender-neutral. But, for a number of reasons, I'm really not sure that Christian is the proper fit.

People have suggested naming myself after a hero or favorite television character, but I have personal issues with names that I don't consider to be real ones. And because this is my identity and it will be permanent, it has to be a real name. Plus, it has to sound nice when placed between "Jules" and "Sherrred."

Ignoring the letter C requirement, what are some of your favorite gender-neutral names?

I still haven't covered what happens with people's last names in Canada after they are married. That will be covered in a future post.

If you haven't already, I invite you to read the first four parts of this series: [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: Introduction](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Proposal and the Rings](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Outfits and Wedding Attire](#); and [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Wedding Party, Family, and Guests](#).

Still to come in my geeky-queer wedding planning series:

- The reception
- Last names and culture
- The location
- Gifts

If you would like to see a post about something not already mention, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will try my best to include it in a post.

Finally, what sort of wedding ceremony did you have? What are the legalities where you live?

## Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Reception



*Originally published January 29, 2013*

When planning our geeky-queer wedding, Andrew and I had to make up a lot of things along the way, while balancing some of the traditional aspects that we find appealing. Sometimes, creating a new guide for our circumstances has been a little difficult. Other times, it was as easy as figuring out what aspects we really do not like in traditional weddings, and simply eliminating them; sometimes replacing them with our own special touches. The reception is another one of those situations where the end result is due to a process of elimination and supplementation, balanced with a couple traditional elements.

Andrew and I are two extremely introverted individuals. As a result, there are many things in a traditional wedding reception that cause us to become extremely uncomfortable. Also, we are two individuals who don't appreciate a lot of the social conventions found within traditional wedding receptions. Then, add that [I'm a trans man](#) and Andrew could be described as a [pansexual](#) yet [cis male](#), for some, that in and of itself is enough reason to throw all tradition out the window, and build something unique.

Just like when [we decided we were going to get married](#), were deciding on [what to wear](#), were deciding on the [roles of family and guests](#), and were deciding on what [type of ceremony we were going to have](#), our reception is going to be very much a reflection of the type of people we are, and the importance of the people who will be in attendance.

Here is a list of things we have decided that we'd rather have a case of [Terellian Death Syndrome](#) than have to endure during our reception. While we understand that many people find the following things to be enjoyable, for us, they are rather painful:



Girton College wedding reception, near Cambridge. Image by Wedding Photography by Jon Day. Some rights reserved.

We will not be having an MC.

- We will not be having any special toasts or speeches. Even if we had decided to have wedding parties, we would have eliminated toasts.
- We will not be having any ceremonial dances — such as the “first dance,” and dancing with parents and different members of the wedding parties — and we will not be having a reception DJ.
- There will be no kissing with the clanging of wine glasses.
- Andrew and I will not be sitting at a head table. In fact, there will be no assigned seating arrangement.
- We will not be posing for photographs.
- As there is no bride, there will be no tossing of a bridal bouquet or tossing of any garters. We are not supplementing this tradition with anything else.

- We will not be having traditional wedding favors or fancy decorations, outside of the fancy table settings provided by the location.
- There will be no cutting of a wedding cake.

When Andrew and I told his parents all of the things we are not going to be doing, once we got to the wedding cake, his mother said, “No wedding cake! Why have a wedding reception at all if you aren’t going to cut any wedding cake?!” We found this rather amusing. A few other friends had similar reactions. This is one social convention, to which people appear to be so attached, that we simply do not understand.

The majority of these things, Andrew and I found quite embarrassing during our respective previous wedding receptions.

I do not think I can properly relate how horrified I was when the MC during my previous ceremony told the room to return my house keys, only for a large number of people to come forward and remove their house keys from their key chains and place them in front of me. I wanted to die. It was highly embarrassing. It became even more so when the MC said something to the effect of, “I can’t return my key. You stole the key to my heart many years ago.”

Andrew and I felt the same way, to varying degrees, about all of the things that forced us to be in the spotlight. What, for many, is something that is supposed to be fun, for us these things are filled with moments of wanting to crawl into some dark corner and disappear. That does not make for a fun day or a fun evening. Isn’t the point of a wedding reception to have fun?

Not only do we want to throw a party that celebrates our love for each other, but Andrew and I want to throw a party that celebrates the love we have for the friends and family who will be attending, and their importance in our lives.

In the end, we decided that our reception is going to be a mix of a formal dinner and house concert.





Dress code wedding card for our wedding. Image commissioned from Matt Schutte.

The guests will be treated to a four course meal, complete with a very elegant dessert in lieu of wedding cake, and a couple of bottles of wine per table. If guests want other alcoholic beverages, the venue has a full bar from which they can purchase drinks.

- Following the dinner, we have hired one of our favorite independent musicians to perform a house concert. This is not to be confused with hiring a wedding singer. The musician will not be performing in a way that is traditionally done during receptions. Instead, the musician will be performing their original music like they would at any other house concert.
- During the house concert part of the evening, guests are more than welcome to get up and dance if they so choose, but there will be no formal, “This is where we get up and dance,” part to the evening.
- After the house concert, I will break out my laptop and play some music — a lot of it will be geek music, filled with some of our favorite *Star Trek* inspired songs — while guests mingle and dance if they so choose.

Despite not having any formal dancing, there is a part of me that wants to get everyone dancing to *Gangnam Style*.

Even though we have eliminated toasts and speeches, kissing, photographs, and fancy decorations, we are allowing for the following:



- At any time, people can stand up and say a few words if they so choose. I will be saying a little bit of something to the guests, as well as introducing the musician we've hired.



"Vulcan kiss." Image from Star Trek: The Original Series episode, Journey to Babel © 1967 Paramount Pictures

- If people do decide to clang their glasses, then everyone will have to give a Vulcan kiss to their nearest neighbor, while telling them to, "Live long and prosper."
- We will be taking video of the wedding and reception. During the reception, we will pass around the camera so that we will get to witness the event through different eyes, so to speak. People can also record personal messages, if they so choose.
- While we won't be standing or posing for any pictures, I'm sure a few candid snapshots will be taken, as most guests have smartphones. Whether or not we decide to share these photos with the public, even if only a couple, is yet to be decided. We may also take a few stills from the video and share them at a later date.
- We may purchase some *Star Trek* and other science-fiction odds and ends that correspond with the overall [theme of the wedding](#) to put on tables. We are also considering designing an [LCARS](#) interface, similar to the LCARS design I created for my [Geeky Pleasures website](#), for use as a guest book in conjunction with our tablets.

So, there you have it. Our reception, just like the rest of the event, will be a mix of traditional elements and things to make this day unique to our personal needs and likes.

At the end of the day, we want our wedding to be a party. What better excuse is there for people to fly in from across North America than throwing a party that celebrates love, diversity, family and friendships, with good food and excellent music? The best thing about it? We don't have to do any cleaning up once the party is over.

If you haven't already, I invite you to read the first four parts of this series: [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: Introduction](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Proposal and the Rings](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Outfits and Wedding Attire](#); [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Wedding Party, Family, and Guests](#), and [Planning My Geeky-Queer Wedding: The Ceremony](#).

Still to come in my geeky-queer wedding planning series:

- Last names and culture
- The location

- Gifts
- Things we've learned, and other miscellaneous things we did or are doing.

If you would like to see a post about something not already mentioned, I want to know. Tell me, what has you curious? About what would you like to see me write? If you let me know, I will try my best to include it in a post.

Finally, did you do anything unique or out of the ordinary for your reception?