

MINUTES

Fight Directors Canada Annual General Meeting
Sunday October 1, 2023 at 2:05pm Mountain Standard Time

Digital Meeting on Zoom

Members in Attendance: Chris Mott, John Knight, Michelle Lewis, Brianna Johnston, Nathania Bernabe, Jackie Hanlin, Tammy Everett, Laryssa Yanchak, Rachel Flesher, Mike Kovac, Aaron Casselman, Louisa Zhu, Shel Wyminga, J-P. Fournier, Sylvie La Riviere, Celene Harder, Geoff Malcolm, David Leslie, Matt Loop, Kevin Robinson, Graham Banville, Zachariah Payne

Ben Smith joined at 2:08pm MST

Land acknowledgement from Jackie Hanlin.

1. Approval of Minutes

- a. C. Mott motions to approve the 2022 minutes; M. Kovac seconds
- b. Motion passes

2. President's Report

From AAC Nathania Bernabe:

Hello everyone, I would like to welcome you to our 2023 Annual General Meeting. As I look back on this year I reflect about what I value most about our organization. First and foremost is the people who make up this community and next is the excellence in training we are able to provide for artists across the nation. These two work hand in hand. The training brings us together and it's through our community that we continually share our love for the artform of stage combat. And thus my main focus this year was on access to training.

We have welcomed in our New Director of Training Tammy Everett who, with her team, successfully organized and executed another National Workshop in Vancouver BC. This role is vital to our organization and I am so grateful to have Tammy on our executive, not only for her drive and work ethic, but for her massive compassion and care for the student experience. We have been learning so much about our membership needs and how they are evolving as we come back into in person training.

We are so excited to have on the board Rachel Flesher as our Fight Instructor/Apprentice Representative who has hit the ground running making sure emerging and seasoned instructors are supported as training becomes more and more available. Tammy and Rachel rolled out the Travelling Regionals Initiative and we are so grateful for Jordie Richardson to be the first to try and organize a regional in Saskatchewan. I am so excited to see membership driven training.

I understand how much time and effort goes into planning, organizing and executing. I want to recognize John Knight at Knight Fights, David Robert Leslie from To the Hilt, Abby Wolf Smith and Justin Krall for hosting stage combat classes. As well as Daniel Levinson at Rapier Wit who also hosts drop in classes and will be hosting a basic certification on September 12.

Membership engagement is the key to helping our organization grow, it can be from providing training opportunities in your region to contacting our combatant Representative Michelle Lewis if you have ideas or if you want to get involved more. As well if you are providing training opportunities to your region please let us know so we can share with our membership.

This year we awarded three grants provided by Daniel Levinson and Kirsten Gundlack Levinson. The Training Boost Grant was awarded to Abby Wolff-Smith, The Actor/Combatant Training Boost Grant was awarded to Delaney Gilmour and The Leadership-level Training Grant was awarded to Morgan Yamada.

This year we celebrated three members of our organization who have invested into the betterment of our community.

The Gelineau Award is granted to a member who has demonstrated leadership in humanitarian efforts outside of the fight community. This was awarded to Rachel Flesher.

The Henry Marshall Memorial Award is granted in recognition of Inspiration, Vision, and Excellence. This was awarded to Louisa Zhu.

The Fournier Fellowship is given to a member who exemplifies the personal and professional standards not only skill in their art, but also generosity, humility, leadership, a willingness to learn and a desire to help others. And this was awarded to Tammy Everett.

This trio of exceptional humans have contributed a lot of time and resources to our organization. Not only are they exemplars of our training and methodology but have created lasting relationships of support and creativity.

As I enter into my final year on the board I want to emphasize that FDC is truly about the people who continually invest their time into the organization. I want to thank the board of directors for the extra time and energy they volunteer to FDC and to our hardworking executive who makes sure everything runs smoothly. Our initiatives require membership voices and experiences. I encourage you to engage with us as we move into the future.

3. Treasurer's Report

From FI/FD John Knight:

FDC is in a stable financial position with all tax reporting requirements up to date. In 2022 we had a successful Nationals and a return to training saw our bank balance grow. The year ending balance was \$17,625.06 which was a total growth of \$6,874.40 over the previous year. Another major contributor to the growth was lower expenses, as we did not have a Director of the Academy in 2022.

Our financial reporting is a month behind so financials for 2023 are only available to the end of August. Due, primarily, to another successful Nationals in 2023, we have seen some deposit growth in the bank account. The balance at the end of August was \$20,845.01, which is a growth of \$3,219.95 over year-end 2022. There are still some expenses from Nationals unaccounted for in that number. Also, any regular monthly expenses to year end and any additional profits from memberships to the end of the year have not been accounted for in this number.

In conclusion, I expect FDC's financial health to remain stable into 2024.

4. Director of Training Report

From FI Tammy Everett:

Thank you everyone for an incredible 2023. This is my first year working as Director of Training for AFDC. While there was a learning curve, I was privileged to have the support of our former Directors of Training's invaluable notes (thank you Louisa and Paul), and the support of the board and the FMs.

So far we have had a successful 2023 nationals at the University of British Columbia. It was a wonderful event with enthusiastic and skilled students, and an incredible group of instructors. We welcomed nearly 20 new actor combatants, both Basic and Intermediate, into AFDC, as well as two new Instructors (welcome Steve and David), and we raised approximately \$3000 for operations.

We are also looking into extended educational opportunities, and in early December 2023, we will be holding a Mental Health First Aid training session. The hope is to give an opportunity for apprentices, instructors, and FMs who need to do their certification to work with people who are familiar with the work we do, and to provide this training at an affordable rate. Our FI representative, Rachel, will be talking further about new training opportunities for actor combatants, apprentices, and instructors throughout the year in New Business. I will be sending an email out to instructors, FMs, and apprentices soon. All actor combatants should also be able to sign up for this, and we will post information about it on Facebook. As soon as I finalize a date and prices we will make sign-up available.

Thirdly, I would like to announce that our 2024 Nationals will be held at the University of Saskatchewan, in Saskatoon. We are also hoping to hold regionals throughout the summer in various cities, but this Nationals will be taking place from August 5 to the 24th. This year people will be able to choose between signing up for just the workshop, or signing up for the workshop and accommodations, to make it easier for those who are coming in from out of town. I will be sending out Facebook posts and posters this week, as well as providing Chris the information for FDC's website, so people should be able to start signing up for the nationals this week. As usual, we will have early bird prices to help our students with cost.

Lastly, it is FDC's 30th anniversary this year! FDC became an official organization in 1993. In celebration, I have created Merch! We have some jackets, hoodies, and T-shirts that people can purchase to celebrate the 30th anniversary, and to help us raise funds. I will have photos up on Facebook, and Chris is putting up a Merch page on FDC's website this week. If people wish to purchase T-shirts, sweaters, or jackets, they can look on the FDC website for the style and size they want, and email me at director@fdc.ca with their order. We will try to organize a couple of locations in larger cities where people can go to collect things if they wish to save money on shipping, or if anyone wants it shipped directly to them it will simply be an extra \$15. We will need all orders in by December 1, so that hopefully we can get people their orders before the end of 2023!

I have been very excited to take on this role, and will be working with our board and with our College of FMs over the next three years to help create more opportunities for our members to learn and grow, and for our organization to develop and spread. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

5. Director of Admin Report

From FI Chris Mott:

2023 appears to be the year we finally see the results of the COVID lockdowns and slowdowns on our membership numbers. To set some context, both 2020 and 2021 saw very few certifications for obvious reasons, and while 2022 was far better, certifications (both new and re-certs) were at roughly 50-60% of pre-pandemic levels.

My predictions of last year have been largely accurate, and in 2023 we've seen a fairly significant shrinking of overall membership. This comes from two factors that I know of:

1. Fewer certification classes running than in 2022. I know that part of this is from ongoing renovations and plans for renovations at Rapier Wit Studio, who usually represent ~1/3 of FDC's total certs in a given year. We've also lost the Basic certifications at George Brown College since the departure of Simon Fon, and the University of Alberta does not appear to have restarted certifications since lock downs (not sure if there's a plan to there or not).
2. The blanket re-certification extension though Feb. 4th 2023. That means that every member who had lapsed during the pandemic had the opportunity to continue their certification, so long as re-cert was done by that date. Many, especially at the Basic and Intermediate levels, did not do so.

The good news is that we're also seeing certification classes becoming regular or semi-regular in some new places, notably Concordia University (JF Gagnon) and Niagara University (Adriano Gatto). We've also seen an uptick of certs in Calgary, and multi-level regional workshops have been happening in Montreal occasionally. And, of course, two well attended Nationals at UBC the last two years. Overall membership numbers and change from last year are as follows, with 2019 included to show the full pandemic effects:

	2019	2022	2023	Change
Associate	50	71	25	-51
Youth	15	0	0	0
Basic	246	123	114	-9
Intermediate	72	48	35	-13
Advanced	67	51	46	-5
FI	23	22	19	-3
FD	15	19	18	-1
FM (incl Maître d'Arme)	10	9	8	-1
Current Membership	498	343	265	-83

6. FI Rep Report

From FI/FD Rachel Flesher:

- Thank you for allowing me to be part of the FDC community in this capacity
- Our hopes it to start some initiatives for instructors and apprentices that can build communitu

- We have started a couple of things:
 - o The FDC Ongoing Education initiatives – we will be having quarterly meetings to encourage further training opportunities for our higher levels of membership
 - o Have had three meetings so far with instructors and apprentices
 - o Please give us your ideas for what you would like to see in this training!
- Also have community meetings to try and encourage and support more community
- Please send correspondence to Rachel’s personal email, as the FDC email is being a bit of a challenge
- A couple of other initiatives that are going into the board approval process – thank you to all the folks in this organization that are donating their time to building and supporting this community
- Watch your emails for support material from us

7. Old business

a. FI/Apprentice Representative position

Rachel Flesher has been elected into this position, which was vacant as of last year’s AGM.

b. Welcome packets and student onboarding

Michelle is on the final draft of this package. It has taken many forms and has been asked to hold many different things, but has come to a final stage. The only thing left is to pass it off to conform it to our visual branding, and then it will be available to membership.

c. Training Boost Grants and Leadership Level Training Grant

These grants could not have been provided for the organization without Daniel Levinson and Kirsten Gundlack Levinson. As we know as artists, finding funding for training is incredibly hard, and having something that is so specific to our organization is wonderful. We have three grants we have provided for membership since 2022: the Training Boost Grant, the AFDC-Certified Training Boost Grant, and, for members apprenticeship and above, the Leadership Level Training Grant, which supports two artists in a span of two years. These grants are part of a series sponsored by the principals of Rapier Wit founded by FDC Fight Master Daniel Levinson. AFDC has partnered with Daniel and his wife Kirsten Gundlack Levinson on this grant program as part of our shared desire to promote a healthy, vibrant, diverse, and truly inclusive stage combat community.

We have allocated all the funds for the Training Boost Grants. We have one more grant to award for the Leadership Level Training Grant this year and then the funding will have been allocated as given. We are in the second year of a three-year cycle in which the grant cycle is executed, following which, we will be reevaluating the ability to continue offering this funding.

8. New Business

a. FDC 30th Anniversary

Merch! Refer to Tammy’s report for additional information.

b. Curriculum Initiatives

We have had immense amounts of work done to launch our new curriculum. Thank you to everyone who has been working to make this happen! We have been learning so much, and are working on steps to allow additional training outside of the Euro-centric systems

we have previously had.

If there are folks you know who are fantastic in weapons that are less trained in but would meet the new syllabus, please reach out to Rachel so we can build connections into these new systems. We would love to build out our community to engage these folks and also diversify the training that is available to our teachers.

c. 2024 Nationals

Will be hosted at University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, plus hopefully adding some regionals around the country. Have a look at Tammy's report for additional info on this.

If you want to organize a regionals, there is an incredibly useful package of support materials made by Tammy. Please reach out to her to get the ball rolling!

d. Upcoming Elections

i. Membership Rep

The Membership Rep position is coming up for election. What the position is has never really been defined, but Michelle has been trying to focus on engaging with membership to answer their questions and help them navigate the organization.

Hopefully the package that is coming out will help with this engagement, but there is still a lot of work to be done in supporting membership. People's access needs have changed, and we are also becoming more aware of access needs, so that has been the focus.

Obviously, there is also lots of room to come in with other ideas and other focuses. The membership position is a great place to get engaged and help support the organization.

Watch your emails for additional information about nomination and voting timeline.

ii. President

Also an important role to help with membership engagement. There was a big influx of people looking to be involved a couple of years ago, but that has really died down. Please reach out and engage yourself with the organization.

Nathania still has a year left in the position, but now is the time to start thinking about who you would like to have in this seat.

Timeline – submissions for Nominations will start in May and close in mid-June; this will give candidates time to prepare their statements in time for an election mid-July, and voting will run for two weeks.

9. Questions from the Floor

D. Leslie – what has been happening with the College of Fight Masters? Is it possible for the FM Rep to present a report at the next AGM? What have they been doing to grow the organization, especially in

regards to filling the College. We have lost several FMs over the past couple years, and would love to know about the timeline to change that, as well as about an adjudicator position.

L. Yanchak – we are discussing, along with Tammy, the adjudicator position and how we want to grow that and make it a solidified process in order to facilitate having additional adjudicators. We are also in discussions about how to grow the college and are looking at possibilities for future growth. We don't currently have a timeline, but it is a discussion item that we are working on, and it something all the FMs care about. Laryssa will propose creating a report that the FMs can put together and have put into a newsletter for everyone's info within the next couple of months.

C. Harder – has there been any progress towards the establishment of an ethics committee?

R. Flesher – last year we started putting together an ethics committee, but we didn't have enough direction to decide how we were able to support FDC. As we were building the committee, it became clear that it needed to be a series of smaller committees to cover the range of initiatives that were interested in being covered. As meetings progressed, we needed more direction from the Board about what the committee needed to be; at this point, we are in a pause where the committee has reached back out to the board and also want to reach back out to the community at large about what this committee needs and wants to be.

Watch your emails for an invitation to a town hall meeting to help us move this forward.

10. J. Knight motions to adjourn; meeting adjourned at 2:48 pm MST