

September 22nd, 2024

To my fellow Members of Fight Directors Canada,

I have had the pleasure and the privilege of being involved with our organization for the past 20 years of my life. In that time I have come to cherish the wonderful friends, colleagues, students, directors, Fight Directors, Fight Masters, mentors, and more that I've had the chance to share such incredible experiences with.

Fight Directors Canada has given me a lot, both personally and professionally. As I sit here composing this letter, I ask myself what FDC membership means, has meant in the past, and what it can mean in the future, not just for me, but for everyone.

I have had several conversations with fellow members in which we discussed what exactly Fight Directors Canada is: Are we a club? A training school? A certification board? A pathway to mentorship and professional development? A collection of independent contractors skilled in a particular field? A bunch of friends swing swords around at each other? It's a simple question, but a complicated answer to give when three letters mean so many things to so many people over such a long period of time.

To my mind, FDC has been all these things and more, but there are two specific areas where the organization has especially proven its value. One of my goals would be to strengthen and expand these facets to the benefit of all. Those areas are:

### **Infrastructure**

Over a 30-year history, the people who have come before me have been able to establish Fight Directors Canada as a recognized and accredited presence within industry, postsecondary education institutions, and beyond. Our organization has set a standard of excellence that has gotten us noticed, and for good reason. FDC maintains a series of balances and checks, both on the physical skills and managerial side of things that ensures the quality of our students, level of education, and teaching staff is held to a high degree. It is important that we maintain these levels, but to also continue to build upon these worthy goals towards the future. What does this look like?

To begin with, FDC's relationship with the Canadian Actors' Equity Association is a valuable one. As a union member (Equity/UBCP/ACTRA) and an active participant of Equity's DCFI (Directors-Choreographers-Fight Directors-Intimacy Directors) Committee, I see full well the positive impact FDC has had within our industry, and the pitfalls of not having an experienced, safety-minded group responsible for simulated violence in a show. Creating even closer ties between FDC and productions – union and non-union alike – helps keep the entire team informed, effective, and secure.

Along similar lines, so many of our members' first experiences with our craft have occurred while attending post-secondary programs. This initial meeting allows both sides to interact and keep in contact with one another, as well as onboard future Actor-Combatants, Fight Directors, and Instructors. As a faculty member at Capilano University, and an instructor

with the University of British Columbia, Thompson Rivers University, Studio 58, and Douglas College, I want to not only keep this special relationship up, but to develop it further. Every Nationals Conference I have taken part in, whether as a student, instructor, or organizer, has taken place at a postsecondary institution. We can achieve so much when we work together! And a big part of that is ensuring these institutions know that we want to work together in the first place. We all benefit when those lines of communication are open and active.

As well on this point, as stated before, FDC is made up of an incredible group of individuals. Each student I've worked with has had much to teach me in turn. I want to make sure every member of FDC at every level is aware that the organization is in need of, and would benefit from their engagement when it comes to the course we are to take in the future. Good ideas thrive in a good environment, but people also have to feel like their inclusion will make a difference. I am confident that reaching out to our members to remind them of this would have great impact. This brings me to my next item:

### **Enthusiastic Engagement**

I can still remember the first time in my first stage combat class when I was matched up with a partner to practice this art. My body and mind were alive in a way that I'd never felt before, and I was instantly addicted to the trust that I'm convinced is the life force of what we do. Those two weeks were some of the most vibrant and exciting I'd ever had and I was eager for more when the time sadly came to a close.

To me, Fight Directors Canada is akin to a wonderful training space: open and available. The space itself is wonderful, but it is only as salient and dynamic as the activity taking place inside. If it is filled with students and teachers enthusiastically engaging with the work and one another, then the value has no measure. The global pandemic was an extremely difficult time for all of us, and had a real effect on our community. I'd like to thank our leaders for keeping us moving, even when it was extremely hard, and for maintaining the training space that is FDC as the dawn begins to break again.

Now is the time to engage with our members, our colleagues, and our communities, and to pump that enthusiasm up. I want to work to remove whatever barriers stand in the way of people working with one another, and to promote a diverse, passionate base of membership. As opposed to "passing the torch," I want us to work on lighting more torches so that the glow of our collective spirit can guide us towards where we want to take things, and to help those who will follow behind.

In conclusion, being a part of Fight Directors Canada has been one of the best experiences of my life. Through it I have gained access to a career I'm still immersed in and joyous of, and I have met people who have become my peers, friends, and family. Regardless to the outcome of voting, it is my intention to attempt to give back/pay it forward to the group that has been so beneficial in my life.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas. Thank you very much for your time and consideration, and I hope that wherever you are, we can cross swords soon.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Kovac". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Mike Kovac (he/him)  
FI/FD Fight Directors Canada  
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