

Fight Directors Canada AGM MINUTES – August 11th, 2025

Fight Directors Canada Annual General Meeting
Monday, August 11th at 8:10 pm Eastern Standard Time

Digital Meeting on Zoom, plus Nationals group attendance

Members in Attendance on Zoom: Brianna Johnston, Chris Mott, Emmett McCourt, Aaron Casselman, Tammy Everett, Mike Kovac, Daniel Levinson, Richard Comeau, Sasha Lampert, Tai Leathem

Members in Attendance At Nationals: Michelle Lewis, John Knight, Joe Wright, Sylvie La Riviere, Pol Cooney, JF Gagnon, Ed Mendez, Laryssa Yanchak, Nevaeh Dutta, Dalton Nelson, John Moutray, Zoe Kindrachuk, Ian Kimpton, Danielle Spilchen, Ella Schaloske, Keith Miller, Daniel Perryman, Alexandre Peeters, Shel Wyminga

AGENDA

1. Approval of Minutes
2. NEW - Secretary Report/Welcome – Emmett McCourt
3. President's Report – Mike Kovac
4. Treasurer's Report – John Knight
5. Director of Training Report – Tammy Everett
6. Director of Admin Report – Christopher Mott
7. FM Rep Report – Laryssa Yanchak
8. NEW - Fight Director Rep Report/Welcome – Sylvie La Riviere
9. OLD BUSINESS:
 - i) Awards Reminders
10. NEW BUSINESS:
11. Questions from the Floor

8:10 PM EST - Call to order by M. Kovac:

Hello everyone and welcome to the 2025 Fight Directors Canada Annual General Meeting. My name is Mike Kovac, my pronouns are he/him, and I am joining this gathering today from the ancestral and unceded homelands of the henqeminem (huan-cumm-eehnum) and Skwxwmu7mesh (Squamish) speaking people here in Burnaby, British Columbia. I'd like to welcome you to this meeting no matter where you are or how you identify. It is my pleasure and privilege to share this time with you. Thank you for being here.

1. Approval of 2024 Minutes

- i.** C Mott motions to approve; T Everett seconds.
- ii.** Motion passes

2. Secretary Report/Welcome

M. Kovac: [I wanted] to take the time to acknowledge one of the new members to the FDC Board, the new acting Secretary who is already hard at work, Emmett McCourt. Emmett, we are thrilled to have you part of the team, and thank you very much for joining up.

Emmett McCourt: No official secretary report as it's my first month, but delighted to be here.

3. President's Report and Board Thank You's: Mike Kovac

i. Board Thank-you's

[B]efore I jump into [the President's Report], I want to take the time now to address a few of the people moving away from the Board.

First up I'd like to extend my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to our previous Secretary – Brianna Johnston. For the better part of a decade now Brianna has been working tirelessly in keep us organized, on track, and moving forward when it came to Council Meetings, allocating people and information, and beyond. I was there in the room during an AGM all that time ago when she was basically volun-told she'd be taking up the position, leaving her with a paltry ten minutes before having to officially take up her duties. Thank you, Brianna – for all the hard work, dedication, and for the sound counsel each time I asked for help with something.

Secondly I'd like to thank our previous President, Nathania Bernabe. I have had the joy of working alongside Nathania as we've both come up in FDC, and out here in the Vancouver fight community, and I am extremely grateful for what she was able to accomplish during her tenure in this position. Nathania pitched in during what I think many would consider the hardest time to keep FDC afloat and succeeding. Throughout the trials and tribulations of the last four years, she has been ever positive, hard working, and a true leader. Thank you.

I would like to also extend these thanks to Jackie Hanlin, who has served on the Board as a special advisor during Nathania's term. I was around during the 2022 Nationals and bore witness

to the huge amount of work the pair of them together put in as a team to make things happen during a time of great uncertainty as the world opened up again. Thank you, Jackie.

I believe the dedication and teamwork displayed by those individuals are essentially the elements that make up Fight Directors Canada. Dedication and teamwork.

ii. President's Report

In my platform letter for this position I brought up the often-discussed question “What is Fight Directors Canada, exactly? 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 a long period of time.”

I put forward that FDC is all of things and more, with two areas wherein the organization has especially proven its worth. Those being the overall Infrastructure of our learning – complete with balances and checks in an effort to constantly improve the experience for the actor combatants, teachers, directors, and all the others we work with – and the enthusiasm in which we engage people.

Moving forward I think we would all like to spread that enthusiastic engagement to more places, projects, and organizations. It has been my impression that once a group starts to work with FDC, they generally would like to work with us more, which is a testament to FDC’s members and leadership of the past. This is why we have recently taken steps to reach out to an expanding network of post-secondary education institutions and emerging theatre companies to establish a relationship with them in the future. In many cases this has been the first time they are learning that a) FDC is a thing and b) we are available to help them achieve safe and effective stage combat in a way that benefits everyone.

In the past we have also had the advantage of working within a greater global community of like-minded groups. Our sibling organizations around the world have been wonderful allies, and with a number of them we were able to pull off the first World Certification Conference in 2016. With cooperation and collaboration in mind, we have reached out to them in hopes of reestablishing old friendships and reigniting the possibilities of working, learning, and growing with one another.

I also hope that we can more fully and enthusiastically engage with one another. FDC is as strong and as tight-knit as our members make it. Think something can be improved? Reach out to one another. Did someone do a great job and should know that? Tell them. Does someone need help? Lend a hand. Do you need help? Remember that within our art form, no one fights alone. And as we enthusiastically engage with our colleagues, or communities, and with each other, I hope we can conduct ourselves with a sense of “True-Time,” so to speak. I’m fairly certain

everyone here knows the traditional True-Time of “Blade, Body, Base,” in attacks as so wonderfully passed down by the Masters of old, and taught by Instructors and Fight Masters of today, but I am talking about a slightly different one. I am speaking of a True-Time of Integrity. I hope that we can engage with an order of operation consisting of Intention, Observation, and Action.

Before we do anything, our Intentions matter. What we want to achieve and the effect we want to have makes a big difference as to how we are going to accomplish it. Taking time and consideration before doing so makes a difference. By guiding our thoughts with altruistic intent and acting in good faith, we set ourselves up for success, as well as those we are working for and with. What is our Intention?

To speak without thinking is to thrust without aiming. Our Observations give us the insight to aim for the target we are seeking out. We can observe that every student wants to learn and achieve to the best of their abilities. Every teacher wants to guide and unlock the potential of their class in a way that’s effective, insightful, and encouraging. Every director wants to tap into the flowing, unspoken energy within every audience and actor. And every actor wants to tread the boards with truth, entertainment, and nuance. We can observe all these things and also observe that we are all, at the same time, human.

Fight Master Daniel Levinson once asked me, “What’s the most useless technique you’ve ever been taught?” I had to think about that one for a while, and after I answered him, he replied, “What’s interesting to remember is that at one point in time that technique might have been a revolution in safely achieving that bit of storytelling. We all want the best for what is it we are working on. ‘The best’ has a way of shifting, of changing. And the best thing we can do for that is to shift and change too.” How can we best Observe our surroundings in order to embrace the best we can do when we see it?

And finally, our Actions give motion to our hopes and aspirations. Without acting, without actually doing something, our Intentions and Observations can have no life. Can we ever be perfect? No, but perfection is the enemy of progress. When I was apprenticing under Fight Master Paul Gelineau, I once spouted something close to a novella to a class in which I was trying to teach the sword parries for the first time. Afterwards, Paul took me aside and said, “Listen, there’s no way for you to explain the physical motions to them so well that they immediately do it perfectly without any mistakes. The mistakes are part of the learning, and as long as they’re paying attention to one another, they’ll be alright. No one wants to hurt anyone, so let them try it and help themselves a little bit.” Thank you, Paul. - With good intentions and observations, we must act.

4. Treasurer’s Report: John Knight

Treasurer notes can be odd to give because, like most financial reports, it is being given in the middle of the year, so it is several months old - keep that in mind.

FDC continues to be in a stable financial position. Our overall balance sheet for 2024 saw a start of year account balance of \$19,502.37 and an end of year account balance of \$20,033.74, for a total profit of \$531.37 for the year.

2024 saw an overall dip in membership revenue from years previous. This is a combined result of ongoing renovations at Rapier Wit preventing certification workshops there and an overall decline in post secondary certification opportunities.

Our Nationals event in 2024 was a success which resulted in some revenue for the organization – as always we strive to balance student affordability with the financial needs of the organization. In late November of 2024 we received notice from the CRA that we were required to be collecting GST. This was a result of total sales over the threshold amount for requiring to submit GST. We were also informed that we were needing to pay starting January 2024. This required that we go back and calculate the GST which should have been collected on prior revenue – including the largest source of revenue Nationals.

Under advice from a tax account we were able to confirm that GST was exempt from memberships, but needed to be charged for any other service or merchandise. Tuition taxes would need to be charged based on the province of where an event was held, meaning higher taxes in province with harmonized sales tax, and tax would need to be charged on merchandise based on where the merchandise was sold. Fortunately, our Nationals in 2024 was in Saskatchewan, which has separate provincial sales tax and GST, so any Nationals tuition or t-shirt sales were only subject to a back calculation of GST.

Based on our 2024 revenue we owed CRA \$2,849.80 in GST which was paid in March of 2025 so is not reflected in the 2024 financials. The necessity to collect GST is being built into all of our current and future event planning.

J. Knight (in person): There is technically a loss in 2024, but it is not currently reflected.

The 2025 fiscal year end is not until December 31, as such this report does not contain any details for the 2025 fiscal year. That being said, Nationals is on track to be a financial success. As most final expense for the event have not yet been made it is not possible at this time to give an accurate financial estimate for the event.

2025 continues to see little membership revenue coming in from students studying at Rapier Wit or post secondary institutions, so I anticipate a similar financial position for 2025 as 2024.

Warm regards,
John.

5. Director of Training Report: Tammy Everett

Thank you everyone for an incredible 2025! I have had the opportunity to work with so many of you over the last 12 months. Two of our main accomplishments this year were:

1. P&P Additions (Conditions & Teacher Expectations and Responsibilities section)
2. The 2025 Nationals at Saskatoon

Adding a section on Conditions will hopefully help clarify to students the three types of results that can come out of an adjudication, and reduce confusion and anxiety. This was added to the “Test Fight” portions of the P&P in Section 2.

Teacher Expectations and Responsibilities help solidify expectations for our teachers, when running a certification. Many of these practices were already being employed across AFDC, but codifying our response can help eliminate confusion, and speed up our response time in cases of an emergency. It can also ensure consistency in terms of filming and testing. Please refer to the P&P Section 7.3 for more detailed information.

We are in the middle of an exciting, and very successful 2025 nationals at the University of Saskatchewan. We have an incredible group of Instructors, and Journeys. We are working with 27 actor combatants in Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced, and have 2 wonderful Instructor Candidates (Sylvie and Joe).

I am pleased to announce that our 2026 Nationals will likely be held at the University of Alberta, in Edmonton, Alberta. We are hoping to stay for 2 years running in each city, to help create a strong, and stable stage combat presence in varying locations throughout the country (returning every few years to help strengthen our connections). The 2026 nationals will be taking place in late June-early July. We are also negotiating accommodations with the school in the hope that we can again offer students the opportunity to sign up for accommodations along-side the workshop; making it easier for those who are coming in from out of town.

I will be sending out Facebook posts and posters once contracts are signed, dates solidified, and the budget has been approved by the board. I will also provide Chris the information for FDC’s website, so people should be able to start signing up for the nationals by September-October. **We will again have early bird prices to help our students with cost. This is an excellent opportunity to take advantage of.**

T. Everett: PLEASE SIGN UP BEFORE DEC 31st - you get a discount.

This year we will be starting a continuing education opportunity for our teachers and apprentices. It will be 60-120 minutes, starting at 7pm Mountain Time, on a Sunday, every 3 months. I am sending emails out to our teachers and apprentices this week, so please check your emails for more information.

Lastly, we are adding a 'Workshop' section to the 'Resource' section of FDC's website for our members. This should help people who want to run regionals with any paperwork they need, and even a 'To Do' list to help them manage the many facets of running a workshop.

This has been an exciting third year as Director of Training. I appreciate everyone who has worked with me, taught me, and put their faith in me this past year. Thank you so much for this opportunity.

Tammy Everett
647-745-5467

6. Director of Admin Report – Christopher Mott

Membership trends

After several years of declining membership due to factors discussed in past reports, I am pleased to say that 2025 to date has shown the beginnings of a turnaround. There are a number of factors that are affecting membership numbers:

- I think we've reached the end of the COVID lockdown/slowdown/career change contraction
- With relatively fewer certifications since 2020, there are fewer people allowing their certifications to lapse as an absolute number
- Rapier Wit Studios remains under renovations (though hopefully not for much longer), so numbers in our most populous area remain low
- Large certifications classes in B.C. (Basic) and in Philadelphia (all A/C levels) alone have exceeded past year's totals, even before Nationals.

Once the upcoming certifications from the Nationals are added in, regardless of what happens for the rest of the year, FDC is on pace to have membership growth for the first time since 2018, and to have more certifications than any year since 2019. For reference, FDC membership peaked in 2018 with 508 active members, and lost more than 50% of total membership from 2021-24. But as of today, we're up almost 20% over last year, and at the moment I don't see any reason that that trend should not continue.

Total Certifications (new and recertifications)

Level	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025 to AGM
Basic	65	5	10	67	27	22	41
Intermediate	25	11	0	6	8	8	9
Advanced	9	0	0	9	11	9	4
FI	4	0	0	0	2	3	0
FD	1	3	0	0	0	3	0
FM	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	105	19	10	82	48	45	54

Total Active Membership (as of date of AGM)

	2018	2019	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	+/- since last
Associate	88	50	61	71	25	23	29	6
Youth	18	15	1	0	0	0	0	0
Basic	223	246	240	123 (274)	114	103	123	20
Intermediate	64	72	76	48 (74)	35	23	39	16
Advanced	69	67	69	51 (75)	46	38	40	1
FI	20	23	22	22	19	19	17	-2
FD	17	15	18	19	18	13	17	4
FM (incl Maitre d'Armes)	9	10	9	9	8	8	8	0
Current Membership	508	498	496	343 (544)*	265	226	273	45

* First number indicated current members, second includes those eligible for recert before Feb. 2023

7. FM Rep Report – Laryssa Yanchak

On behalf of all the Fight Masters, we are excited for the growth, energy and excitement that the community has and are hoping to foster and grow with the organization. Sitting on the board, I want to help remind us all of the legacy we come from and the growing pains we have been through, and I hope to demystify the FM's and what we represent - not just old people who started this thing.

I've talked with Tammy [Everett] about the initiative for instructors, and I am hoping to moderate and facilitate some of those groups, and lead instructors on anything they are interested in. We are also [working to] have pieces of wisdom from the FM's up on the website soon. I want to welcome our new board, and say thank you to Brianna [Johnston] for everything you've done. Also thank you to Tammy for all your work.

In this moment I continue to encourage everyone to give back to the organization and to each other, and to share the passion we have for this art form, because we are what keep it going - the new stuff is the life blood of the future.

8. Fight Director Rep Report/Welcome – Sylvie La Riviere

I just got this position, so I don't have a lot to report, but once everything is up and running I want to extend an invitation to contact me with thoughts, questions, ideas or concerns. We want to get started on having educational support for upcoming fight directors soon. Please don't hesitate to reach out.

9. Old Business:

Today is the last day for 2025 award nominations – it's technically still open today until the end of the day.

The awards are:

- **The Gelineau award** – granted to a member who has demonstrated leadership in humanitarian efforts outside of the fight community.
- **Henry Marshall Memorial Award** – granted in recognition of Inspiration, Vision, and Excellence in the building and promotion of the art form and it's history in a spirit of generosity, sharing and the nurturing of new talents.
- **The Fornier Fellowship** – given annually to a member who shows not only skill in their art, but also generosity, humility, leadership, a willingness to learn and a desire to help others.

If you know anyone who fits the awards, reach out to Membership Administrator Chris Mott. Please include a description of why the person qualifies for what award when sending in it.

10. New Business:

No new business to discuss.

11. Questions from the Floor

Aaron Casselman: Are the impending certs at Nationals the first to happen since the P&P have been updated?

Director of Training T. Everett: 2022 Vancouver was the first for the new curriculum, this is 4th for new curriculum. The new P&P about teachers and conditions etc, were already in general use, but weren't in writing.

A. Casselman: Is there a breakdown in our student numbers of who is completely new or who is recertifying with more experience? Would that be a valuable thing to have data on? To include a question of whether they are starting new or not on the form?

Membership Admin C. Mott: Currently we can pull out how many certs are at a certain level, but can't tell how many of this year's 9 Intermediate students are recert-ing, or who is new and has jumped in at an intermediate level. The data is in the database, but our program can't currently sort it specifically for that. We are hoping to update the database next year.

8:50 pm - Motion to end meeting:

i. J knight motions to end meeting. R. Comeau seconds.

Kovac: Thanks everyone! Nationals, our hearts are with you!

AGM ended 8:52 pm EST.

