



## **Fencing-Esgrime NB** **2017 Annual General Meeting** July 2016 - June 2017 Board Report

This past season had its share of ups and downs as we refocused on athlete development and invested in our coaches, referees, and equipment, while celebrating our wins. The Board had to make some tough decisions and put better guidelines in place to address concerns. A new strategic plan was created to help shape the future of fencing in New Brunswick.

A total of five policies were revised or newly created and approved by the Fencing-Esgrime NB (FENB) Board. These are: Group Travel Standards & Procedures (revised), Communications (revised), Event (new), Membership (revised), and Honours, Awards, & Archives (revised). These have been added to the Operations Policy and Procedure Manual. The Board also reviewed and made updates to the Board Policy Manual.

### Participation

#### Membership

Membership has declined for the third season in a row, reaching our lowest point in the last 12 years. Our total membership for the 2016-2017 season was 148 (↓22%) with 91 returning fencers, 45 first-time and summer fencers, and 12 associate members. Our retention rate has held fairly steadily around 60%, but it's the new fencers that we really need to focus our attention on and support the clubs in recruitment efforts. We were able to get the technical issues with the online registration system through the CFF addressed, so this process should become easier in the future and provides us with a better means of keeping track of membership numbers.

#### Tournaments

The Alfred Knappe Team Tournament was held during its traditional time in January and hosted by the UNB and Damocles fencing clubs at the Richard J. Currie Centre. We tried a different format this year offering pairs single-weapon in Open and Cadet along with the three-person foil format for Under 13. Over 35 teams participated in the competition - more than double the participants of the previous season!

With a full calendar of tournaments, it was decided that the NB Open would not run during the 2016-2017 season. It is expected to run in the current season.

Ten events ran at the New Brunswick Provincials, hosted in Moncton, with a total of 90 entries. Once again, we hosted our gala event to highlight the sport.

## Volunteer Training

Training and mentorship opportunities were offered on an ad hoc basis to member clubs for their hosted events, such as tournament secretariat.

A resource portal was launched as an extension of our website to support our volunteers and the various roles that they fulfill in the organization. It includes information on tournament organization, training and certification, guides, and grants.

## Excellence

We were delighted to see the CFF honour Barb Daniel with its most prestigious award this year at its annual banquet. The President's Award is reserved to recognize the exceptional achievement and long and outstanding contribution of an individual to the sport of fencing. Barb has been involved in the sport for over 45 years in a variety of roles. She has supported several generations of fencers, coaches, and other participants. Thank you for your contribution to fencing in the Maritimes over the years. Well deserved!

## Coach Development

We continue to have challenges with coach certification. Most coaches who pursued the Community Initiation certification during the previous season, have been certified; however, the Coach Canada record is displaying the certification for the incorrect weapon. We will be addressing this again with the Canadian Fencing Federation to have this corrected.

We hosted a coaching clinic in January where we welcomed Maître d'Armes, Ildemaro Sanchez, and Jim Stevens to lead the camp. It was aimed at all weapons and covered material for those interested in going beyond the Community Initiation level. There were 18 coaches and athletes who participated in this event.

We are pleased to see that Ildemaro has been appointed to the new CFF position of Coach Development Coordinator. We look forward to working with him on our coaching needs for the future of fencing in New Brunswick.

## Athlete Development

Despite our best intentions and having more scheduled, only two athlete training events ran during the 2016-2017 season, one of which was in conjunction with January's coaching clinic. We have made some changes, including more guidelines and tools to better support event planning.

FENB fencers travelled to several competitions outside of the province, including the North America Cup (1 fencer), Canada Cup East (17 fencers), European Circuit competition (1 fencer), January Canada Cup (3 fencers), Regional U.S. circuit competition (7 fencers), National Championships (15 fencers), and Can-Am (1 fencer).

New Brunswick fencers placed well at these competitions with some bringing home medals:

- Two gold and three bronze medals were captured by three New Brunswick fencers at the Canada Cup East, held in Montreal in October. Raphael Bradley took bronze in both cadet (under 17) and junior (under 20) men's sabre, Jenny Zhu earned gold in under 15 women's epee and took a bronze medal in junior women's epee, and Wendy Yano captured gold in Veteran's mixed Sabre and placed 12 in senior women's sabre.
- The CFF gave three New Brunswick fencers an opportunity to compete with fencers from other provinces in junior team events at the Canada Cup held in Richmond, BC. As a result, Calum Skidmore was a member of the silver medal team in junior men's epee, Raphael Bradley earned a silver medal in junior men's sabre and Jenny Zhu brought home a bronze medal in junior women's epee. In addition, Jenny Zhu earned a bronze medal in cadet (under 17) women's epee.
- Wendy Yano brought home the gold medal from the veteran's event at the Regional U.S. circuit competition held in Boston in March.
- Wendy Yano won gold in veteran women's sabre at the National Championships in Gatineau, QC in April.

FENB awarded its trophies to the top athletes in the under 17 categories at the 2017 New Brunswick Provincials to the following fencers:

- Sean Brilliant Trophy (sabre) - Raphael Bradley
- Barb Daniel Trophy (foil) - Pierre Arseneau
- Rick Gosselin Trophy (epee) - Calum MacDonald

The Athlete Development Committee was launched with Jim Stevens (Chair), Thierry Bourbonnais (ED), David Themens, Barb Daniel, and Marc-André LeBlanc as the participating members. They were given no easy task in developing a provincial athlete program and used the season to begin this process. The program is still in its infancy, but we are confident that it will continue to grow into something that we can all be proud of.

## Referee Development

Eight people participated in referee development training during the Alfred Knappe Team Tournament with Steven Moore. Evaluation was done by Steven Moore during the NB Provincials and an online exam was issued following the event. Given the different experiences of referees from this season and the previous season, we feel that it is necessary to standardize our program as different evaluators have different approaches to training and evaluation.

## Capacity

### Fundraising

Fundraising continues to be a challenge, particularly with no success from our efforts to get a committee going. We are mindful of the need to have a third funding source outside of government grants and our membership and event fees. We continue to look for opportunities, especially as we develop our provincial athlete program.

We attended a sponsorship workshop hosted by our partner, Sport NB, to take a closer look at the potential for funding through this stream and learn some tools and best practices.

## Equipment

The Damocles Fencing Club continues to store and maintain our equipment. We have purchased a new (lightweight!) piste for the upcoming season and are taking a serious look at a cycle to start replacing some of the old and heavily used equipment, such as the reels.

## Board, Staff, and Volunteer Recruitment

After much consideration and discussion, the Board decided not to renew the Executive Director contract with Thierry Bourbonnais at the end of the season. Although we appreciate the work that Thierry did for this organization, we felt that he was not the right fit for us and decided to seek a new Executive Director. The successful candidate in our search was David Collins who started with us in late August of the current season. Originally growing up in Saint John, David started his fencing career here in New Brunswick and fenced foil at the 1999 Canada Games. In 2004, he and his wife moved to Ontario, but were determined to one day return to the province, which they have recently done. Welcome David!

Following last year's elections, we had a couple vacancies on the Board that we eventually filled with Debi Skidmore (Fredericton) and Jane Allen (Saint John). Unfortunately, due to a conflict, Debi stepped down from her position in July.

A Tournament Committee was established, but was unable to continue to the end of the season due to members stepping down and loss of leadership.

As always, we are grateful for the people who volunteer their time and expertise to support FENB initiatives and activities. FENB could not operate without the support of these individuals at events, at competitions, on committees, and everyday operations.

Also, we would like to thank David Themens, Tammy Shaw-Reynolds, Melodie Piercey, and Debi Skidmore for the time and effort that they have put into the FENB Board this past season as well as previous years.

## Interaction

FENB held its annual Club Leader and Coach Forum in Fredericton in June. Five of the six member clubs had representatives present for the one-day session. Clubs and coaches shared their successes and challenges, and discussed athlete and leadership development.

The President presented the membership survey results, club membership report, new strategic plan, and proposed by-law changes. The calendar of events for the upcoming season was also discussed. In addition, our sport consultant shared funding information, including potential sources, with participants.

## Awareness

Building on the Marketing Communications Plan, the Executive Director continued to use the FENB Facebook page as a means to share about the sport, including adding videos taken from the NB Provincials. With the help of Barb Daniel, press releases were issued about events and results involving New Brunswick fencers.

This past August, the Board President attended the CFF AGM in Ottawa to continue to build relationships with the CFF Board and staff members as well as other PSO leaders. The highlights included: the appointment of Ildemaro Sanchez in the new Coach Development Coordinator role, promises that the dates and locations for Canada Cups and Nationals will be shared earlier in the summer, and the completion of the foil armband evaluation manual.

## The Future

- Membership fees were not raised this upcoming season as we would like to keep these relatively low and focus on getting greater numbers since our membership numbers have declined over the years.
- A new strategic plan was developed and an operational plan is being worked on to drive success on meeting our goals.
- There was a decent increase in government funding for this upcoming season. The Province of New Brunswick continues to focus on athlete development, which further justifies the need for a provincial athlete development program.
- With some restructuring at the CFF and initiatives discussed during their AGM, FENB will be active with the national association to the benefit of fencing development in the province.

2016-2017 Board of Directors: David Themens, Tammy Shaw-Reynolds, Debi Skidmore, Jane Allen, Melodie Piercey (President)

THANK YOU to all of our volunteers and members!  
Our success would not be possible without your support.