

FURNAL EQUINOX 2011

August 3, 2010

Dear friends and members of the furry community,

The chairs and concom of Furnal Equinox would like to state their position and the facts regarding the most recent dispute with Dan Skunk, the owner of the local Ontario Furies forum. We sincerely regret the problems caused to the local furry community by this and other incidents, and hope to set the record straight here. We have spent days researching private emails, logs, and forums to ensure all facts stated here are accurate.

The most recent episode was initiated as a result of Dan Skunk's edits to Furnal Equinox's WikiFur page. Dan added claims that he was the key figure in the creation of FE, and made similar (and further-ranging) claims on his personal WikiFur page. We objected to these claims for reasons explained below, reversed the changes, and asked him to please refrain from further edits until a mutually acceptable solution could be found, but Dan restored them immediately. After a few cycles of progressively more hyperbolic edits, we appealed to the administrators of WikiFur about both the edits to our page and the claims made on his. Dan's edits continued after a ruling and several warnings, and it is unclear what action the administrators finally took, but it appears to have made Dan very upset.

Edits to open wiki pages are not uncommon, but a convention's page on WikiFur is a component of its public image, and has to be defended. It is not a forum for everyone to advertise their grievances or claims against the event—wiki pages have discussion and comment links for that purpose. A con (or anyone else) is also within their rights to ask for corrections to inaccurate information on other pages that harms the con or its members/organizers, after all WikiFur is a communal encyclopedia. In cases of disputes, the admins ask for sources and supporting material, which were supplied and accepted.

We do not deny Dan (and his Ontario Furies forum) helped to bring together a number of the people who eventually formed the FE concom. The role of OF as the convention's organizational forum ended with the creation of a private mailing list for discussion in March, before the concom was fully organized. However, the subforum served the same role that other local cons still do, as an avenue for announcements and communications with furies not part of the core committee. For several months, Dan was also part of the

concom (and even one of the NPO directors), during which he made contributions to initial planning that were sincerely appreciated. But we firmly reject any claim that he was the "creator" of FE. We have emails from Dan (from a year ago) in which he states that the original ideas and proposals for the con effort that eventually led to FE, including the suggestion for the hotel that eventually was selected, were not (as he now claims) his ideas, and he ascribes them specifically to others. He did help to promote these ideas and deserves credit for that.

A convention is a team effort, and it takes many months of hard work by many to bring a first con from an idea to reality: not one but many ideas and personal sacrifices by all. There are many individuals who have a claim to the success of FE: our attendees, guests of honour, dealers, host hotel, volunteers, staff and concom, to name a few. They have put in thousands of hours of their time into the convention, as well as tens of thousands of dollars of their own money. For anyone to claim sole (or even special) credit for themselves is poison—even the chair(s) of a con must not do that. This is not a "dog in the manger" attitude to deny anyone special credit, it is essential to keeping any organization consisting of volunteers functioning smoothly and without jealousy and infighting.

We had every expectation that Dan would be an essential and positive contributor to the con effort, but as the FE team began to shake itself out and make serious decisions, it became clear that his continued involvement would have resulted in the dissolution of the concom. No one had expected this, and it was a rude awakening for most of us. It was a choice between letting Dan go, or ending work on the convention, and it was not taken lightly. Everyone was well aware that this would likely result in the loss of valuable resources and future repercussions. The vote was carried out at a meeting in July 2009, with a clear quorum present (at least 2/3 of voting members as required by the bylaws in effect at the time). Dan was not in attendance, but had known of the meeting and agenda a week before. The vote was by secret ballot, and everyone was encouraged to make their decision independently on this critical matter. When votes were tallied it was unanimously in favor of removal.

Since then the concom has worked closely with each other, spending the next 8 months preparing for and executing FE 2010, and continuing to work on planning for FE 2011. Unfortunately relations with Dan and Ontario Furies have become progressively more acrimonious. Dan has frequently aired his opinions on Ontario Furies and his personal journal, which have been almost universally and unfairly critical of the convention; this has hampered our efforts to promote the event. In recent months we have also seen the deletion of FE's subforums on OF (including all memorabilia posts by FE attendees), the banning of all members of the FE team, and most recently threats to ban anyone on Ontario Furies who will not boycott Furnal Equinox. We have tried to reason with Dan

at each of these episodes to no avail—the only thing that has made any difference in the past is the near-universal condemnation of his actions.

We do understand that Dan's pride and personal feelings have been injured, and we regret that, but that is no excuse for harming the furry community. The widespread bans of anyone who disagrees with him have had serious short-term repercussions on the cohesiveness of local groups. And so, to avoid further incidents and ensure we could continue to put together a successful and long-lived convention, we walked away from his forum three months ago, and have established ourselves in friendly community forums where the convention can be promoted freely. In addition to our official website (www.furnalequinox.com) and presences on Facebook, Twitter and LiveJournal, we also have subforums at Torfurs (www.torfurs.com) and furry.ca (www.furry.ca). Our members are also regulars on the #canadianfurs and #torfur IRC channels.

One of the reasons behind the creation of Furnal Equinox was to unite the GTA furry community, bring in new furies, and bring back older ones. By this measure, FE 2010 was a great success, and we will build on it at FE 2011 and for many years to come. Our goal is to promote the culture and accomplishments of the GTA furry community and attracting furs from elsewhere, making FE a truly cosmopolitan and welcoming experience. We have also collaborated with other conventions to share staff and promote each other's events.

We will continue to work for the furry community, and look forward to your continued support and help to make that happen.

Yours sincerely,

Furnal Equinox 2011 Convention Committee
(Pakesh De and Blindsight, co-chairs)