

In the 1950's the Manitoba Scout Council wanted to start a Boy Scout Pipe Band. They approached Mr. Robert Fraser who had recently emigrated from Scotland. The Lord Selkirk Boy Scout Pipe Band (LSBSPB) had its humble start the fall of 1957. In the beginning, instructors whittled dummy chanters out of wood and drew in the finger holes! Some other key instructors in the early days were Mr. Douglas Will, Harold Cooper and Jack Gunn, to name a few. The Cameron Highlanders loaned them a set of pipes in the 1960s, and a donation from the Kiwanis Club finally enabled the band to buy bagpipes.

The band wears the Douglas tartan to honour Thomas Douglas, the Fifth Earl of Selkirk, who sent 23 Scottish settlers to the banks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers in 1812 to begin a new life. Over the past 20 years, when the band has made the trip to Scotland, they have always visited the present "Lord Selkirk" at the family estate at Lennoxlove. More recently that has been James Douglas-Hamilton, Baron Selkirk of Douglas, 11th Earl of Selkirk, and his wife Lady Susan Douglas that the boys have visited both in Scotland and in Winnipeg when the couple came to commemorate the Clearances and the statue honouring the Selkirk Settlers.

Mr. Fraser came from Arbroath, Scotland. A professional printer by trade, Mr. Fraser also served in the Royal Air Force and studied and taught piping from an early age. He was involved with The Boys Brigade in Scotland and was a member of the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. Mr. Fraser served in the Scottish Air Force in World War II, after which he married his wife, Frances. In addition to starting the Lord Selkirk band, Mr. Fraser was also Pipe Major of the St. Andrew's Society Pipe Band and the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders here in Winnipeg. Many credit Mr. Fraser's personal example of musicianship and excellence in teaching, as well as his generosity and kindness, with the band's longevity and success. Mr. Fraser has always insisted that no boy should be left behind because their family couldn't afford to pay their way. Mr. Fraser's first piping instructor would not accept payment for teaching, Therefore, in kind, Mr. Fraser has given free instruction to thousands of Manitoba boys who now are accomplished pipers, piping teachers and judges the world over. There are many drummers who have reached those same levels. For more than 50 years Mr. Fraser was the Heart and Soul of the Pipe Band. He continued to dedicate his time, efforts, talent, kindness and patience to produce outstanding pipers and drummers until just a couple of months prior to his death. An equally dedicated staff of piping and drumming alumni continue to volunteer their time each week to teach and practice with the boys. All band members have their uniforms, kit and travel expenses provided. For

thirty years Mrs. Francis Fraser was the organizational backbone of the band. The behind-the-scenes contributions Mrs. Fraser made to the Pipe Band are immeasurable. She kept all the records and minutes of the Ladies Auxiliary meetings, helped with fundraising, supervised and cared for the boys on all the trips, and opened her home for meetings and lessons on Monday nights. She was by Mr. Fraser's side at every Band trip and function. She was an accomplished artist, and would often donate one of her paintings to be raffled off as a contribution to the band. Each October the Ladies Auxiliary held a Tea under her direction at the Franciscan Friar on Edmonton Street, which was a very successful fundraiser. Sporting a good sense of humour and wanting to prove that Bob Fraser wasn't the only piper in the family, Francis organized a Ladies Pipe Band complete with kilts made of garbage bags covered in coloured tape in the Douglas tartan!

In the early years, the pipe band was associated with the Ladies' Caledonian Society and the Sons of Scotland. The original band parents were divided into the Ladies Auxiliary and the Men's Club. The Ladies made mealy pudding in the basement of the hall to fundraise and made enough money to buy 5 sets of pipes. In the early 1980's the two groups joined and became the parent committee.

The parent executive committee is now the primary fundraising force behind the Band. This executive, with the support of all the parents, is responsible for keeping the band outfitted in uniforms and instruments, planning and arranging all band trips and entrance into competitions, and maintaining the Saturday morning canteen. Most of the volunteer instructors are former band members or parents. These parents and volunteers are all dedicated to the goals of the band.

Early in the 2000's, because the band was focused entirely around instruction, performances and competitions, leaving little or no time for the boys to participate in more traditional Scouting activities, the band's charter with the Scouting movement came to an end. In 2008, the band's name officially changed to the Lord Selkirk Boys Pipe Band (LSBPB). Nothing has changed in the band's policy, in that it still helps turn young boys in to fine musicians and outstanding citizens, who also develop a keen interest and love of the culture and music of Scotland.

The band has traveled to Scotland a number of times for the boys to experience that culture first hand, and also to have the opportunity to perform at various venues and compete at the World's Pipe Band Competition in Glasgow. Most recently were trips in 2000, 2004, 2009 and 2012. In keeping with Mr. Fraser's philosophy, all participating boys had all their trip expenses paid for by the diligent fundraising efforts of the parent

committee. What a gift! In 2009, the two-week trip saw the boys playing at Sterling Castle, Piping Live in George Square which was televised on the Internet, placing 8th in the World on Glasgow Green and taking first place at the Bute Highland Games! Many other great events happen on these trips like the Edinburgh Military Tattoo, strolling the fields of Culloden and seeing heather covering the moors like a purple blanket, while driving north to Inverness.

In September 2007, a weekend of festivities took place to celebrate the band's 50th anniversary and Mr. Fraser's involvement all these years. A wonderful dinner was held at the Hotel Fort Garry and many alumni participated. As they reminisced about their time in the band, two major highlights were shared by almost everyone who spoke – their admiration for Mr. Fraser and their trips to Scotland. Sadly, Mr. Fraser passed away on March 13, 2012 at age 89, but his band proudly marches on!

<http://www.lsbpb.ca/index.html>

