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MEDIA RELEASE

Pipe Band marks 20 years of summer teaching

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Photos (2012): <http://at.sfu.ca/HEqJwq>

Video (2012): <http://at.sfu.ca/HukOx>

Fresh on the heels of tallying a 19-year unbeaten streak in North America with a win at the recent B.C. Highland Games, the **Simon Fraser University Pipe Band** is set to celebrate another mark - two decades of summer instruction in the Okanagan.

The band is celebrating 20 years of a summer tradition - teaching students of all ages and from around the world to play the pipes and drums – at an annual summer school at Silver Star Mountain they call **Piping Hot Summer Drummer** (PHSD).

Taught by world-class members of the six-time world champion band, more than 280 students will converge on the mountaintop from July 7 – 21 – the world’s biggest piping and drumming school – to be taught by some of the world’s best pipers and drummers.

The two-week program began in 1994 with the goal of teaching youths. Later that year the band formed its junior contingent, in memory of two pipers who were tragically killed in a car accident, Robert Barbulak and Malcolm Bokenfohr. The 20-year anniversary of the **Robert Malcolm Memorial Band** (RMM) will be marked in late 2013/14.

Many of the PHSD participants hope to play with RMM. Some of those who’ve succeeded have even moved up the ranks to play in the elite, six-time world champion Grade 1 band.

The experience of daily sessions with members of the world renowned Lee family – from Pipe Sergeant Jack Lee and Pipe Major Terry Lee to their sons, all elite players, and world class drummers led by Reid Maxwell – leaves an impression that has many of the students returning each summer for more.

Last year saw students travel from as far off as New Zealand and Europe to participate. Closer to home were others from Fort St John, Nelson, Armstrong as well as Vernon.

Celebrations this year also include a rare concert in Vernon July 14 between weeks of PHSD. For details see www.sfupb.com

The sessions are as much about building confidence as musical skills, says Jack Lee, a full time piping instructor whose students span the globe, many via Skype.

“This has been a commitment of ours for two decades now, and it’s one of the more ‘hands-on’ ways we engage with the community,” adds Lee, who, with brother Terry, received **honorary degrees** from SFU this month. “Not only do the students learn more about playing the instruments, they do so in an idyllic setting.”

The two-week instructional program precedes a rigorous final practice set as the band prepares for the annual World Pipe Band Championships in Scotland in August.

The band, which has traditionally qualified directly into the final event by finishing each previous year in the top three, will have to qualify this year along with all the other bands as the event spreads into a two-day affair.

Simon Fraser University is Canada's top-ranked comprehensive university and one of the top 50 universities in the world under 50 years old. With campuses in Vancouver, Burnaby and Surrey, B.C., SFU engages actively with the community in its research and teaching, delivers almost 150 programs to more than 30,000 students, and has more than 120,000 alumni in 130 countries.

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