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## MEDIA RELEASE

# Junior bands tune up in Scotland

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### Contact:

Marianne Meadahl (in Stirling), 0751-246-3673; [Marianne\\_Meadahl@sfu.ca](mailto:Marianne_Meadahl@sfu.ca)



Photos: <http://at.sfu.ca/NuMojg>

Video: <http://at.sfu.ca/lxAHUo>

Members of the Simon Fraser University pipe band's junior contingent – the Robert Malcolm Memorial band (RMM) – were tuning up their instruments within hours of landing in Scotland to prepare for the Aug. 11 World Pipe Band championships.

For many it is a first-time experience. They'll spend the next week practicing daily while based in Stirling, about an hour from Glasgow, as will the elite Gr. 1 band.

"The first practice is really about taking the pressure off and seeing where the instruments are," says Jack Lee, pipe sergeant of the Gr. 1 band and pipe major of the young Gr. 4 band.

"We've brought them over early so they could get used to the environment and take part in a few events before finding themselves on a world stage." The Gr. 4 band, ranging from nine-to-16-year-olds, performs for the first time at the international competition, attended by more than 40,000 spectators.

"We've brought the Gr. 3's over several times, but this is a first for us, taking the 3's and 4's," says Lee. "Along with their families we have nearly 250 people with us this year.

"We've had a good cluster of younger juvenile players move up to Grade 3 and several promising younger ones in our novice juvenile band, so it made sense this year to bring them all," Lee adds.

Fourteen-year-old Russell Fairley from Port Coquitlam expects to feel "the usual nerves" before playing the biggest piping gig in the world. "Like always, you do the best you can," says the six-year piper.

Max Middleton, a 13-year-old from Christchurch, New Zealand, says lots of practice will help battle the nerves. "You are always a little nervous, whenever you compete. It's good to be here and get things started."

Nine-year-old Cameron Ickert of Maple Ridge, the youngest band member, arrived the day after first practice and waited

anxiously with the group for his first chanter practice with Lee, saying, "I'm totally excited." Several of the youths wound down by playing cricket in the courtyard and napping to combat jetlag.

Members of the Gr. 3 band are primarily in their late teens and early 20s, with a few younger and older musicians, and many from around the world – including New Zealand, Maui, and Anchorage, Alaska, home of Michael New, a veterinarian and Gr. 3 piper, and son Carrig, a piper with the Gr. 4 band.

While the Gr. 3 band has performed at the Worlds several times since its 1997 debut – winning four championships – it's their first appearance since Rob Menzies of Coquitlam became pipe major.

Menzies, who has performed in various roles with the SFU band since the mid-1980s, says the band is well positioned for the Worlds. "It's looking good for this group, they're peaking just at the right time," says Menzies, whose 16-year-old son Patrick is a drummer with the Gr. 4 band.

#### **Of note:**

Both bands will participate in several events leading up to the Worlds, including the Berwick Highland Games on Aug. 4 (heavy rains are expected) and a gathering Aug. 5 at Pitlochry, about an hour from Stirling, where they'll perform with local Vale of Atholl Pipe Band.

They'll also join the Gr.1 band for performances in George Square in Glasgow on Aug. 8, during the city's Piping Live festival, leading up to the Worlds.

- The RMM band is named after Robert Barbulak and Malcolm Bokenfohr, two dedicated members of the SFU Pipe Band, who were killed in a car accident in 1993. The RMM band was formed early the next year to continue the development of talented and dedicated players.

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Simon Fraser University

8888 University Drive

Burnaby, B.C.

Canada V5A 1S6

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