

St. John's

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ON OCTOBER 16, 1953 a meeting occurred at the Brantford Catholic High School for girls who were interested in joining a newly formed band, known as the B.C.H. Girls' Trumpet Band. The first Director of the Corps was Father Frank A. Dentinger, Principal of the Brantford Catholic High School, later Father H. J. Hayes took charge. The first instructors were Bob Shewchuck on drums, Fred Nicholas on bugles, George Mellor for drill and drums, and later Gord Easto on drill. The first Drum Major, known then as a "Drum Majorette" was Linda Glendinning.



B.C.H. Girls' Trumpet Band (1955)

Originally there were sixteen members, and their first uniforms were ankle-length grey skirts and white blouses. In the fall of 1954 new uniforms were issued in green and white – these were the Corps colours until 1976. Membership increased each year and in 1956 majorettes became part of the Corps. In 1958 a ten-member colour party was added, and by 1959 the Corps had fifty-three members.

In 1960 the Brantford Catholic High School changed its name to St. John's College; the Corps then became known as St. John's College Drum and Bugle Corps. In 1964, St. John's College became an all-boys school and therefore the all-girls Drum Corps was no longer a part of the school. The Knights of Columbus then took over sponsorship of the Corps and the Corps became known as the Knights of Columbus–St. John's



Karen Batson and Barb Moroz (1957)

FEATURE ARTICLE: St. John's Drum Corps (continued)

Girls' Drum Corps, or the K. of C. St. John's Girls' Drum Corps.

In 1970 the Knights of Columbus discontinued their sponsorship of the Corps and St. John's Girls Drum & Bugle Corps became a self-sponsored organization. The Board of Directors (led by the Executive Corps Director George Mellor) and the Parents' Committee strongly supported the Corps, as did the City of Brantford and its citizens, industries, and businesses.

They also won the International All-Girl Open Championships in 1972 and 1973. Another special honour bestowed upon the Corps was receiving the Holiday Inn Peace Flag in 1975. This marked the first time that the flag, designated by Holiday Inns to promote world peace through tourism, would "have a recipient other than a world government leader." In 1976 they proudly carried the United States Bi-Centennial Flag alongside the Canadian flag – they were the only Canadian Drum Corps to have been honoured by the U.S. Open Drum and Bugle Corps Championship Commission of Marion, Ohio.

The Corps began competing in 1956 and started a long history of winning parades and competitions within Canada and the United States. The Corps won their first Canadian National and Provincial Championships in 1962 and they remained Provincial Champions from 1962–1977. Their reign as Canadian National Champions



continued from 1963–1967, recaptured in 1971–1974, and then again in 1977. The Corps gained true international stature in 1972 by winning the All-Girls U.S. Open Championships, making them the first Canadian All-Girls Drum Corps to achieve this.

Winning these Championship titles created their popularity within the City of Brantford, and as result their membership increased to 110 in 1973. They were also known as the "youngest" Corps, because the average age of their members was only 14 years old. This prompted the Board of Directors to create a Junior Drum and Bugle Corps, to be known as the



Belles of St. John's (1977)

Belles of St. John's. The Belles were active until 1979 when they merged with their Senior Corps.



St John's Girls (Nationals, Waterloo, 1962)

The year 1981 marked another notable event in the Corps' history with a name change from St. John's Girls Drum and Bugle Corps to Brantford Girls Drum and Bugle Corps. Having benefited from years of valued community support and involvement, the Board of Directors voted strongly in

FEATURE ARTICLE: St. John's Drum Corps (continued)

favour of paying homage to their community and identifying the Corps with their hometown.

The Corps remained fiercely competitive in the All-Girl Class within the Ontario Drum Corps Association (ODCA) and Drum Corps International (DCI) circuits throughout 1981-1983. In 1983 they became the All-Girl Champions at the American International Open competition in Butler, Pennsylvania, for which they received a banner flag and a 4-foot-high trophy. Also, in 1983 they received the Most Improved Drum Corps Award by the Canadian Judges Association (CJA).

In August 1984 members of the Corps became “movie stars” when they were invited to appear in the movie “Sesame Street Presents: Follow That Bird”. They spent two days in the town of Georgetown, Ontario filming a brief parade segment and had the honour of meeting the late Jim Henson



St John's in "Follow That Bird" (1984)

and the famed cast and crew of Sesame Street. The movie was released in August 1985 and the Corps performed an exhibition show outside the Capitol Theatre when the movie premiered in Brantford.

In October 1984, the Corps enjoyed “15 minutes of fame” when they played for Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip at the Mohawk Chapel in Brantford.

The 1985-1986 season marked the most momentous change in the Corps' history when they decided to go co-ed. Up until that point, they were the oldest All-Girl Drum and Bugle Corps in North America, but declining membership and increased operational costs forced the Corps to break tradition and open their membership up to males. The Corps also went back to using the name St. John's Drum and Bugle Corps, and the Corps colours converted from pink and black to burgundy and black to signify the introduction of males in the Corps.

Going co-ed and re-inventing St. John's Drum & Bugle Corps proved successful during the final years of the of the 1980's decade because membership gradually increased, the Corps captured the Provincial and National B-Class championship title several times, and they returned to compete in the DCI Championships – the first time since 1982.

St. John's continued their winning ways well into the 1990's. In 1991 the Corps advanced from B-Class to A-60 Class and they had a full summer of competitions and tours to Massachusetts, Illinois, New York, Quebec, Northern Ontario. They were the Provincial and Canadian National champions that year and had the glory of winning all three caption awards in their class at Nationals.

They were Provincial and Canadian National Champions again in 1992 and became DCI Finalists for the first time in 10 years. Another notable achievement for the Corps' history books occurred when they were named “Drum Corps of the Year” in 1992 by the Ontario Drum Corps Association (ODCA) for their “dedication, tenacity and excellence”.

FEATURE ARTICLE: St. John's Drum Corps (continued)

The Corps celebrated their 40th Anniversary in October 1993 with a three-day event that attracted alumni from all over the world. This successful event would be the beginning of other reunions and alumni events to honour milestone anniversaries and to keep their alumni in touch and involved with St. John's as their legacy continues in the years ahead.

The Corps continuously appeared in the DCI Championship Finals in Division III between 1992-1998, and in 1995 they became the Canadian National A-60 Champions for the fifth consecutive year. St. John's Winter Guard were equally successful in the 1990's. Competing in the Winter Guard International (WGI) Championships several times, they won Bronze in A-Class in 1995 and they were moved up to compete in Open Class in 1996.

A decline in membership prevented the Corps from competing in 1999 and 2000, but they

continued to rebuild and returned in 2001 as a Parade Corps. They returned to competition in 2002 and between 2002–2006 they remained competitive in the Division III, appearing in competitions throughout North America, including DCI World Championships. In 2003, they celebrated their 50th Anniversary and became one of the oldest junior Drum Corps in Canada.

There was little activity between 2006–2009, however in 2009 the St. John's Winter Guard was reborn; this time with a plan of returning to compete in the WGI Championships within five years. Although there was little year-round Drum Corps activity left in Ontario at that point, there were various Winter Guards from Ontario who competed in the Northeast Colour Guard Circuit (NECGC) that was based in New York.

Because St. John's Drum & Bugle Corps was existing in name only, but not as an active and competitive Drum & Bugle Corps, the Board of



St John's (DCI, 1987)

FEATURE ARTICLE: St. John's Drum Corps (continued)

Directors decided to change the organization's name to Brantford Entertainment Arts Team (B.E.A.T) in 2010. B.E.A.T. was to serve as an umbrella organization that performing arts groups would operate under, with the hopeful intention of revitalizing Drum & Bugle Corps activity in Ontario through the formation of Junior and Senior Winter Guards, All-Ages Drum Corps, Cadet (Junior) Corps, and Marching Percussion Lines.

For the 2009-2010 season, the Winter Guard had nine members and competed in the Cadet Class of the NECGC and in the 2010-2011 season, membership grew, and the Guard advanced to the A-1 Class.

In 2012, the current Alumni Committee was formed to plan a 60th Anniversary Reunion weekend that would take place in September 2013. This was a three-day event that consisted of a Pub Night, Banquet, and a Drum Corps show that featured the talents of various local Alumni corps, a percussion group, a Cadet corps, and the St. John's Winter

Guard. This event was another tremendous success and was again attended by alumni members from around the world who were brought together to remember their good old days, connect with old friends, and support the remaining Drum Corps and Winter Guard activity in Ontario.

The Winter Guard continued to flourish over the next couple of years, enough to have both a junior and a senior Guard that actively competed in the NECGC circuit. In 2013 the senior Guard had the unique experience of having a member from South Korea, and in 2014 the senior Guard moved up to the Independent A Class and once again competed in the WGI World Championships.

In 2016, St. John's Winter Guard became part of the Northstar Youth Organization in Kitchener for the 2016-2017 Winter Guard Season. This marked the official end of Drum Corps and Winter Guard activity for the St. John's Drum and Bugle Corps organization, however the Alumni Committee has continued to keep the rich history of the



1977 Corps Banquet George Mellor, Goldie Mellor, Kelly Pratt, Sue Monarch (Hinsely)

FEATURE ARTICLE: St. John's Drum Corps (continued)

organization alive. Using social media and holding fundraising events to keep their alumni members connected and involved, the Committee's focus is to continue to support local youths in their pursuit of the Drum Corps experience that each of us once shared and will forever treasure.



Former members of St John's who march in various alumni corps (St John's Reunion, 2013)



Belles of St John's (1977)

Photos of St John's from different eras

During the course of its existence, St John's has gone through a number of number of name changes. In addition, it has been both an all-girl corps as well as a co-ed corps. The photos that follow show the corps in various of its incarnations.

Brantford Catholic High School Trumpet Band (1953 - 1959)



First public appearance (1954)
The corps paraded in ankle length skirts and white blouses.



Anne Campbell, Mary Kavanagh and Rosemary Barnett



Karen Batson, left, of the St. John's Girls Drum Corps makes a little music with Jim Reynolds and Wendy Divine, members of other local junior trumpet and drum corps in October, 1958

Text and Photo from the Brantford Expositor.

Note: Jim Reynolds was a drummer in the Toronto Optimists.



1959 - Drum Majors - Sue (Kennally) Kislosky and Mary Ellen Naphin
Colour Guard: L-R Karen Batson, Barb Moroz, Linda Casey

St. John's Drum and Bugle Corps (1960 - 1963)



St. John's Drum Corps (Nationals, Waterloo, 1962)



St John's (Nationals, Waterloo, 1962)

Knights of Columbus - St John's Drum and Bugle Corps (1964 - 1970)



St John's (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)



St John's (Nationals, Kingston, 1968)

St John's Drum and Bugle Corps (1971 - 1980)



St John's (July 1, 1974)



St. John's in their new red and black uniforms (1977)



St. John's in their new red and black uniforms (1977)

Brantford Girls Drum and Bugle Corps (1980s)



Brantford Girls (DCI, Montreal, 1982)



Brantford Girls (Waterloo, 1983)

St John's Drum and Bugle Corps (1990s)



St John's in New Uniforms(1990)



Drum Majors Tyson Anderson and Janice Robinson (1990)



St John's Guard (1994)



St John's French Horns (1995)

St John's Winter Guard (2012)



St John's Winter Guard (2012)



St John's Winter Guard (2012)