

The birth of drum corps in Western Canada

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DCW

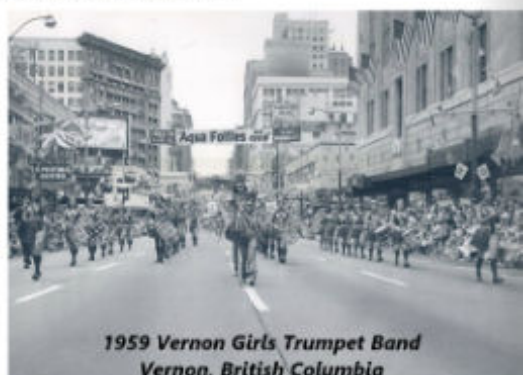
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Today we are covering British Columbia and Alberta Province drum corps. One of the first things we need to address is why some of these corps are called a "bugle band," or a drum & bugle band that is. I am guessing they simply applied a well-known moniker "band" to a new form of a band, a drum corps.



As we know, drum corps and drum corps competitions are chiefly an American phenomenon. We get that the rest of the world doesn't quite understand our insanity. There were four "drum & bugle bands" in Western Canada between 1970 and 1978. That's 50% of their drum corps population at the time.

The first known drum and bugle Band in Western Canada was the Vernon Girls Trumpet Band (Vernon, BC) who in 1962, entered drum corps competitions in Washington State. The Vernon Girls were established in 1955 and ran until 1967 with only one year marching as a corps, in 1962. All those other years they



1959 Vernon Girls Trumpet Band
Vernon, British Columbia



1967 Vernon Girls Trumpet Band



DRUM, BUGLE CORPS:
Canadians Greeted
At Competition



1962 Vernon Girls

were an all-girl "trumpet band."

Two corps started out as "bugle bands" then switched to the drum corps format, then went back to being bugle bands. They were the aforementioned Vernon Girls and the Pacificaires (Surrey BC). We might even give credit to the Canadians for leading the metamorphosis from drum corps to bands that DCI is currently championing. Afterall, in a province with few drum corps, being a band allows you more opportunities and competition.

In 1963, the first Western Canadian junior drum corps was formed; the Molson's Klondike D&BC (Edmonton ALB), aka the Edmonton Eskimo Wink Strutters Marching Band. In 1969 they became Edmonton Strutters. The corps went through five name changes before ending up as the Strutters again for the



1970 Richmond Ambassadors,
Richmond BC

1971 Alberta Girls, Edmonton ALB



final time in 2005. After the Strutters, there were another five drum corps created between 1967 and 1972. Two of those five were called "bugle bands."

In our 1974 Canadian tour, I remember we were told to plan on \$5.00 a day for all meal expenses. Can you imagine that? \$5.00 would easily buy you three meals a day, even considering that the exchange rate favored Canadian currency at the time.

We went to Calgary and Edmonton on that tour, passing by Bears Paw and Red Deer



ca1972 Alberta Girls D&BB

1972

Drifters Drum & Bugle Corps

Surrey BC



headed west, back home to Seattle.

As of 2025 we have 18 Western Canadian junior drum corps listed on our site from 1962 to 2020. That includes one all-boy, the Klondike Boys (Edmonton ALB) and three all-girl, the Red & White Aires (Calgary ALB), Vernon Girls (Vernon BC) and the Alberta Girls (Edmonton ALB). Among the 18 there were five drum and bugle bands.

Last but definitely not

1973 Drifters, Surrey BC



1975 Drifters

Red and White Aires Calgary, Alberta

1973



least, between 1964 and 1967 there were four Canadian senior corps in local competition as well, including the BC Regiment (Vancouver BC), Commonwealth Frontiersmen (Vancouver BC), Linksmen (Westminster BC) and the Queens Own Rifles (Victoria BC).

My first trip to Canada was with a drum corps. So was my first trip to California, Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, Utah . . . my first trip



**1985 PACIFIC BLUE
Drum & Bugle Corps**

anywhere outside of Washington / Oregon was made possible with drum corps. Drum corps expanded our horizons; what a life-changing experience for all of us.

All 22 Western Canadian drum corps are an integral part of our Pacific Northwest Drum Corps experience, and our lives are richer for it.

Since we've only covered six of 18 junior corps in this article, seems like we'll be returning to this subject sometime in the future.

Poutine anyone?

Long live drum corps! -- ©Pacific Northwest Drum Corps.com 2025. ■



1985 Pacificaires, Surrey BC



1994 Edmonton Strutters, Edmonton ALB



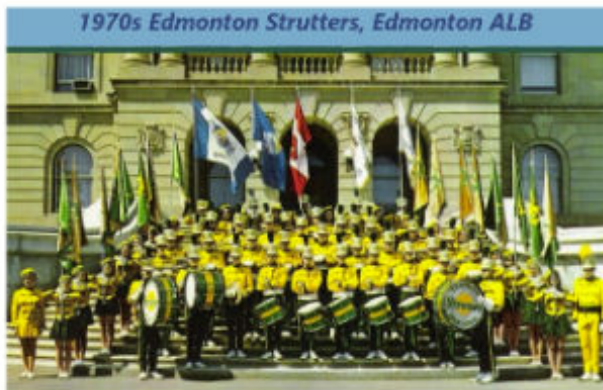
**2004 Fusion
Calgary, ALB
(above)**



1970's Alberta Girls, Edmonton ALB



**1970s Canadian Royal Aires,
Edmonton ALB**



1970s Edmonton Strutters, Edmonton ALB





1st Canadian Regiment, Edmonton ALB



Pacific Blue, Surrey BC (left)

