

# Drumline rocks Whistler

**Sardis band grabbing the attention of Olympic fans, other bands and the U.S. vice-president**

**Cornelia Naylor, The Times**

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The Sardis secondary drumline is creating an unmistakable buzz in Whistler, and last week they even grabbed the attention of U.S. vice president, Joe Biden.

The band's clearly Canadian garb caught his eye on the village walk, and he stopped--secret service entourage in tow--long enough to give crash cymbal player, Michael Redl a friendly shot on the arm, telling him he'd be coming up to Canada if ever he was done with the United States.

"I think he's just impressed with B.C. and Whistler," said Redl, adding he was pretty "jacked up" about being singled out by the VP.



**The Sardis secondary school drumline band is wowing folks gathered in Whistler for the 2010 Winter Games.**

Submitted photo

But Biden isn't the only one taking notice of Chilliwack's unofficial ambassadors to the 2010 Winter Games.

Since the 35-member drumline started performing at different Olympic venues Feb. 14, they've drawn a growing wave of media attention.

"People are just loving them," said director Bruno Gagnon. "They're getting their photos taken everywhere."

Crowds gather wherever the band sets up, and TV cameras are never far behind.

They were featured on Global National this week; they've made a couple of appearances on MuchMusic, and a Russian news crew spent about 15 minutes taping one of their sessions.

The TV clips capture lively crowds grooving to the drumline's upbeat repertoire of dance tunes.

"Young Europeans love dance beats," said Gagnon, "and they're just rocking in the streets."

On Monday, the high schoolers opened for hip hop artists, Swollen Members at the Fire & Ice Remix in Whistler, and besides playing to 5,000 enthusiastic fans, their performance was beamed live onto TV screens right across the village.

"That was nerve wracking," said snare drummer, Emily McDermid explaining the band had to play on slippery snow, and a couple of drummers--herself included--had wiped out the night before.

The drumline returned to Chilliwack Wednesday and Thursday to catch up on rest, homework and laundry, but they're back in Whistler today and will be performing at the Olympic Park Friday, Saturday and Sunday in the mornings and early afternoons.

They move their show to Whistler Village at around 4 p.m. and kick off the nightly Fire and Ice Remix at about 8:15 p.m.

On Feb. 24 and 26 the band will be outside Canada Hockey Place (a.k.a. GM Place) getting hockey fans jazzed up for the men's quarter-final and semifinal games.

They even get to slip inside once they're done provided enough dignitaries fail to claim their seats.

The drumline has been sleeping on the floor of the Howe Sound secondary school gym in Squamish and busing into Whistler every morning.

Although one news segment painted a pathetic picture of their accommodations--leaving Sardis principal, Bob Long to field more than one call from sympathetic viewers wanting to help--band members themselves are enjoying their temporary digs.

"The gym floor is a perfect spot because we've got all this room and we can all hang together," said McDermid. "We're not in these separate little hotel rooms or anything. We're just in one big room."

The Squamish MacDonald's has kicked in great breakfast deals and food vouchers to feed the troops, and on Thursday night, the drumline rewarded the restaurant with its own complimentary concert.

The success of the band's Olympic adventure has surpassed all expectations.

"When we first started playing, we had an idea that we sounded pretty cool," said McDermid. "We had no idea that people would actually crowd to come and see us."

"It's more than I expected," said Gagnon.

As a reward for raising about \$34,000 to send the band to the Games, Gagnon promised the City of Chilliwack his drumline would rock the Olympics.

Rock them they have.