

High-school band wins high praise from Games crowd

Chilliwack teens perform in Whistler

By Clare Ogilvie, The Province February 22, 2010

If there were an Olympic medal for fundraising, the Sardis Secondary School drumline band would get gold.

"We raised \$34,000 in 34 days," explained drumline music director Bruno Gagnon.

"It has been incredible and the community of Chilliwack just rallied behind us."

The 37-member band is blowing the socks off the Whistler Olympic venues this week, performing a band and flag routine put together just for these Games.

At the nordic event venue on Sunday, the crowds of enthusiastic spectators called for encore after encore.

The band of grades 10, 11, and 12 students found out in December that they were chosen to perform at the Games. Today they will be at Cypress Mountain and then at Canada Hockey Place Wednesday and Friday.

"Who are they?" asked Mary Bonville of Ontario. "They're one of the best things I've heard so far."

To perform, the band had to get a routine together, get uniforms organized and pay for accommodation, travel and food.

"We had zero except the idea," said Gagnon.

"So this is all new. The flags jumped in over the Christmas holidays, so it is amazing."

"I have

worked them very hard to prepare them for this."

-- Music director Bruno Gagnon

The band has also had a chance to see many of the events in between their marching routine, which includes diverse music from the group Coldplay to dance rhythms.

Gagnon hopes the kids get more than just a fun time out of the experience.

"I have worked them very hard to prepare them for this," he said.

"It's to prepare them to represent our school and our country the best we can. I am hoping that they realize that hard work does pay off."

Said Elyas Forstbauer, a drumline bagpipe player: "It has been really fun and they really enjoy us here, which makes it so exciting to play."

The band provided great entertainment for those waiting to have their picture taken in the Omega bobsleigh, a replica bobsleigh built specially for spectators' photos. Since the Games have opened, the photo lineup has been constant.

"We wanted to go in the bobsled because we are speed queens of Alberta," said Leonore Wilson from Sundre, Alta. "We have always wanted to go to the Olympics, so we drove down here in our Beetle and we have had a fantastic time."

The bobsleigh isn't the only lineup you'll find in Whistler these days -- there is also a steady queue for pictures inside the resort's own set of Olympic rings and at the official Olympic merchandise store.

Svend Markoff waited for 15 minutes to get into the store.

"That's not too bad," he said. "And I got some of the red Olympic mittens. It's the Olympics -- there are always lots of lineups."