

**Transcona Youth Pipe Band
City of Transcona Pipe Band
Transcona Senior Band
Transcona Junior "A" Pipe Band
Transcona Junior "B" Pipe Band
Transcona and District Pipe Band**

It all began with an idea of Mr. John Pollock. Without John Pollock and the dedication of George Lawrence, it is possible none of the above would have happened.

While serving as a piper in 402 Air Reserve Pipe Band, John Pollock got the idea of starting a youth pipe band in Transcona. He asked fellow pipers in the Band that if he got things organized would they help him. They all agreed. These men were his son-in-law, Ian McLeod and fellow pipers George McDonald and George Lawrence. Iris Lawrence, George Thompson and Joseph Hooper were to instruct the drummers of the Band. These instructors gave of their time to give instruction in their homes, separate from regular Band Practices. Many students would travel weekly to their instructor's home for lessons around the kitchen table.

On December 18, 1964, a meeting was held and Mr. Doug Hassan, Chairman of the Transcona Pipe Band, introduced the idea to the Boy Scouts of Canada, Transcona Springfield District. At this meeting Mr. Pollock was introduced to the parents and boys who were registered for instruction. There were 45 boys registered for lessons and they were all either Scouts or Cubs. Practice chanters were ordered, music books were copied and the boys were divided amongst the instructors. The lessons were started in the Scouts Hall in early 1965.

As time passed it was found that most of the boys had left the Scout movement and that some females were wanting to join, so on February 25, 1967, it was decided with reluctance that the Band would separate from the Scouting movement. A meeting of the parents was held and all the instructors with the exception of Mr. Thompson agreed to continue teaching the Band. With the Band separating from the Scouting movement an executive was elected made up mainly of parents of the students. The Transcona Youth Pipe Band was born.

The next item on the agenda was for the Band to order kilts. After much discussion it was decided that the Band would adopt the Ancient Gunn Tartan as the official band tartan. This was chosen in honour of John W. Gunn who was a grandson of one of the original Selkirk Settlers that arrived in 1813. When Transcona incorporated in 1912, he was one of the first Councilors and one of the first School Board members.

The Band ordered 21 kilts and they were presented to Band members on June 4, 1967. On Sunday, June 18, 1967, at the Transcona Legion Decoration Day Parade, Mrs. John W. Gunn met the bands who were proudly wearing the Ancient Gunn Tartan.

In the fall of 1967, the Band was looking to add new students to the organization to act as a feeder band to the present Band. More instructors would be needed as Iris Lawrence who had been filling in as a drumming instructor wished to retire. Dennis Roberts and Wally Winters joined the Band as drumming instructors.

It was decided that George Lawrence would become the Pipe Major and Instructor of the Bagpipes and Wally Winters, Drum Instructor of the new Junior Pipe

Band. This Band would comprise of younger members who would work their way up into the Senior Band.

On October 14, 1968, a letter was received from the Transcona City Council giving approval for the use of the name "City of Transcona Pipe Band". They felt that this accomplished band of young students would be a good advertisement for the City of Transcona. At this time, both Bands were becoming very adept in their performances and were winning many prizes in both Band and Solo Competitions.

In July 1970, the Senior Band was invited to The Pas to play for the Royal Family during their visit to Manitoba and in August of the same year, the Senior Band took the Band's first trip to Scotland to compete in competitions in Scotland.

In September 1970 George Lawrence and Wally Winters decided to start another group that would be known as the Transcona Junior "B" Pipe Band. Karen Somers taught bass and tenor until 1974 and Jean Lawrence was asked to help teach beginning pipers at home.

In March 1971, the Band was saddened with the untimely death of John Pollock and soon after Sandy Cherrie consented to take over the Senior Band as Pipe Major.

In August 1973, the Transcona Junior Band traveled to Scotland to compete in competitions there. They were quite successful and won the competition in Rothesay, Mr. Lawrence's hometown.

In September 1973, George Lawrence resigned from the Transcona Pipe Band because of commitments

to the 402 Squadron Pipe Band. Wally Winters retired a short time later from his drumming instructor duties. Rod Neufled consented to take over the Junior Band and David Bihun became drum instructor along with Rod Tkachuk agreeing to teach the tenors.

The next few years saw a number of former students take over the Pipe Major role of the Band. In 1975, Ian Evans took over the Junior Band from Rod Neufeld. In 1976, Sandy Cherrie retired and Trewin Somers took over the Senior Band. In 1977, Garth Neel took over from Trewin Somers. In 1978, the Junior Band disbanded and in March 1978, Ian Evans took over the Senior Band till 1984 when the original Transcona Pipe Band folded.

In 1984, George Lawrence was still teaching students, this time with the Sea Cadets and several people had approached him to again teach their children in Transcona. After some thought he decided to return to Transcona. A meeting was held in the Transcona Legion Hall in November 1984, where he expressed his wish to re-start the Transcona Pipe Band. This time it would be a Junior Band with the age of 19 being the age of graduation from the Band. Again his friend, Wally Winters was drumming instructor and former students Dean and Jane (Drabyk) Ross, Jean (Lawrence) Stibbard and Sheila (Larkins) Fortier were piping instructors. The new Band would now be called Transcona and District Pipe Band as it would encompass a larger area and they would wear the Ancient Gunn tartan. They got started with donated drums, lots of small uniforms and \$1,000. cash from the previous Band. An executive was elected and to get things started a "Burn's Night" was held in January 1985.

Since Mr. Lawrence's return to Transcona and District, the band has traveled extensively around North America and has returned and competed in Scotland many times. The Band has been enormously successful during these many years and has become a recognized name in the Piping World as a Band who represents their teacher in a positive way. Mr. Lawrence's dedication to his craft, perseverance in his teaching of the bagpipes and determination to keep his Scottish heritage alive in Transcona shows through his students every time they travel to competitions either close to home or far away. His students always represent their instructor proudly.

George Lawrence has continued to teach the youth of Transcona and District Pipe Band, many times taking students in his home for extra lessons and in the past spending four nights a weeks teaching young pipers. He has been assisted by a number of people throughout his teaching career. These people were family members, Jean and Iris, fellow pipers, John Pollock, Ian McLeod, George McDonald, Sandy Cherrie, Dean Ross, Jane (Drabyk) Ross, Sheila (Larkins) Fortier. He was also assisted by the following drumming teachers at different times throughout his teaching; George Thompson, Joseph Hooper, Wally Winters, Dennis Roberts, Karen Somers, Bob Cooper and Mona Donald. He was also able to call upon his older students to help teach the many young chanter students on a Wednesday night when these numbers grew too many to take by himself.

George Lawrence decided to semi retire in the fall of 2002. At that time the Executive of the Transcona and District Pipe Band approached former student, Keith Petrie, who agreed to take over the running of the Band. George "handed over the reins" to his former student confident that Keith would continue to teach the youth of Transcona in the same fashion he had taught. George has

kept himself busy with the new chanter students on Wednesday night as well he can be heard telling a new student just starting out on his pipes "right you come over to my house on Monday night".

The Transcona and District Pipe Band students and parents are forever indebted to P/M George Lawrence for his commitment to the children of Transcona and District Pipe Band. Many families were able keep their Scottish heritage alive through his teaching. As well, many families have had numerous opportunities to see many places that others only dream about due to the yearly Band trips promoting Transcona and District Pipe Band.

As was stated by the Transcona City Council in 1968, this Band has been a good advertisement for Transcona due to George Lawrence's commitment to detail in his instruction, his love of the Scottish Bagpipe and his dedication to "dress and deportment". To this day, our Band is still performing around the World and is still looked upon as George Lawrence's Band.

We are all grateful to P/M George Lawrence for his many years of dedicated service to the youth of Transcona and District Pipe Band. We sadly bid him farewell in May of 2011.

Check out our website for more information at <http://www.transconapipeband.com/>