

Revamped Pipes & Drums Centre pays tribute to teacher



By Brock Weir

It isn't every day you can go to work and walk through the doors of a building bearing your name.

But, it is an honour Jim McGillivray experiences every day as he walks through the doors of the Petracheck-McGillivray Pipes & Drums Centre at St. Andrew's College.

The Centre, which is the headquarters of the school's vivid pipe corps, was formally dedicated prior to the school's 111th annual Cadet Inspection.

?As far as I know, I am the only living teacher here who has their name on a building,? says Mr. McGillivray. ?I thought it was a very special thing that they decided to recognize what they felt was an influential person at the school rather than just have their name on the building.?

The space was retrofitted thanks to a donation to the school from the Petracheck family whose son, Zachary, once served as SAC's pipe major. It was within the pipes and drums program that Mr. McGillivray says Zachary really found his niche and when his parents started looking at ways to give back to the school, Zachary knew just the ticket.

?Our building has been here since the 1960s and it was housing for support staff,? says Mr. McGillivray. ?When I first came to the school in 1998, there were people actually living in the building. Our piping and drumming program was actually situated in the basement of one of the buildings in what was once the cadets' rifle range, which isn't the greatest place to teach loud instruments like pipes and drums.?

Eventually, the building they now call home became vacant and, once they moved in, Mr. McGillivray says he found it to be a very ?functional? teaching space. But, some ?serious work? was required to bring it up to snuff. Now, the building is properly sound proofed, is fully equipped, and can now accommodate what has grown to be something of a ?visual educational museum? for pipers and drummers featuring some of the school's collection of historic prints, portraits of pipers, and watercolours of highland regiments.

Mr. McGillivray grew up in Kitchener which has a decidedly more Germanic than Scots heritage. Nevertheless, his parents had a certain fondness for the bag pipes and steered him in that direction once he decided he wanted to play a musical instrument and the accordion a door-to-door salesman tried to hawk to the family was the last thing his parents wanted to hear.

?It is quite a difficult instrument to learn and what usually captivates people about piping is the sound of the instrument when it is played well, and it is an easy instrument to hear played badly ? frequently!?, he says with a laugh, noting he strives to make sure the band is always playing in tune. ?When the middle school boys hear us and they see us in full regalia, they are very impressed and want to be a part of that. It is one of the elite groups at the school and it is one of the most respected.

?Even though we are a musical band, we are very much like a senior sports team in terms of the camaraderie, teamwork and the respect the band receives at school?