

# **The Culture of Success: An Organizational Analysis of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band**

**David Bowman**

**Abstract.** This essay reports the findings of a qualitative organizational analysis of the organizational culture of the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band based on thirteen semi-structured interviews with band members as well as participant observation of approximately twenty-five band rehearsals. The band has been extraordinarily successful in the last decade and the goal of this research was to examine the band's organizational culture, and to determine how these cultural elements are interrelated. Results are considered in relation to three distinct levels of cultural elements; artifacts, espoused values and beliefs, and underlying assumptions.

*“Leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin”* – Edgar H. Schein

## **Introduction**

Founded originally in 1966 – the inaugural year of the university – the Simon Fraser University Pipe Band (SFUPB) has remained central to the continued success and recognition of the institution worldwide. Since 1995, the band has been crowned ‘World Pipe Band Champions’ on five occasions (1995, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2008) and ‘World Drum Corps Champions’ on three occasions (1999, 2004, 2008). In addition to their competitive success, the band has made a continued effort to perform, record, and entertain all over the world, headlining at prestigious venues including the Sydney Opera House in Australia, Carnegie Hall in New York, and the Royal Glasgow Concert Hall in Scotland. No other pipe band in the last fifteen years has achieved the same level of success as the SFUPB.

The SFUPB consists of approximately forty-five members, most of whom are located in the Greater Vancouver Area. However, several players travel to play with the band, coming from as far away as Scotland, Northern Ireland, France, and the United States. Musically, the band is split in to three sections: (1) the pipe corps, consisting of approximately twenty-eight bagpipers; (2) the drum corps, consisting of eleven snare drummers, five tenor drummers, and one bass drummer; and (3) a sub-category of the drum corps referred to as the mid-section, which includes

only the tenor drummers and bass drummer. Organizationally, the band has three main executives: the Pipe Major, the Pipe Sergeant, and the Drum Sergeant. The titles themselves derive from the British Military, as they are all official ranks in any Scottish regiment. However, in the case of the SFUPB, these official titles are purely the artifacts of tradition, and hold no militaristic connection. The principal functions of these individuals are to uphold responsibility for organizational and administrative tasks; select, compose, and arrange the musical repertoire; recruit and train new members; and to lead the band in musical performances. The Pipe Major is the executive and musical leader of the band, and has final say on all matters relating to the band. The Pipe Sergeant and Drum Sergeant are responsible for specific tasks related to the band, as well as providing support for the Pipe Major. Since 1993, the SFUPB's executive structure has remained wholly in-tact; the Pipe Major and Pipe Sergeant have been involved with the band since 1982, while the Drum Sergeant has been involved since 1993.

### ***The Concept of Culture***

The concept of culture is inherently complex, as it is embedded within both our individual and collective identities. To a great extent, culture frames the way in which we understand the social world. In addition to the inherent complexity of the concept itself, culture has been used throughout history in a wide variety of contexts while signifying an even wider variety of meanings. Anthropologists use culture to refer to the customs, norms, languages, and rituals that various societies have developed over the course of their existences. Culture has recently been used by organizational researchers to help characterize the environment, methods, structure, and practices that organizations develop in order to manage the individuals and groups that, taken together, comprise the organization itself (Schein, 1992). It is the latter of these

contexts that has proven most useful in providing a theoretical framework within which to understand the research at hand.

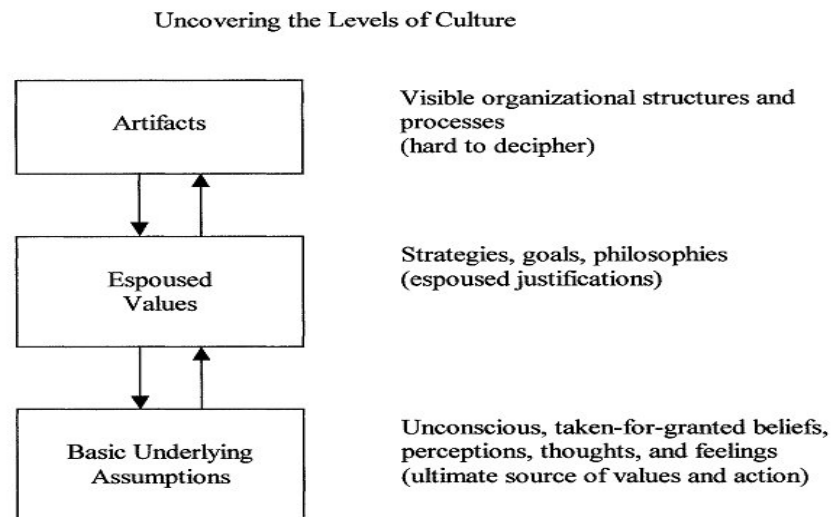
In reviewing relevant literature and conducting interviews with band members, Edgar Schein's model of organizational culture emerged as an appropriate theoretical tool with which to frame the present analysis. The goal of this research was not to test Schein's model. Instead, Schein's model has been used to organize and conceptualize the findings of this research.

### ***Schein's Model of Organizational Culture***

According to Schein (1992), culture exists simultaneously on three different levels: visible organizational structures and processes (artifacts); strategies, goals, and philosophies (espoused values and beliefs); and the taken-for-granted systems of beliefs (underlying assumptions). Figure 1 illustrates the interrelationship of these constructs, suggesting that both cultural artifacts and values are deeply embedded within the underlying assumptions of a culture or organization.

Artifacts can be found at the 'surface' so to speak, and include all that is visible, audible, and tangible, or that which someone feels when encountering a new group with an unfamiliar culture. Cultural artifacts can be both material and nonmaterial objects that communicate important information about the nature of a culture (Ott, 1989); language, music, art, architecture, technology, clothing, symbols, rituals, and ceremonies can be considered as cultural artifacts. Ott (1989) cautions researchers who attempt to discern the nature of organizational cultures from artifacts, in that there are too many opportunities to "misinterpret the relationship between artifacts and the higher levels or organizational culture" (p. 36). If a researcher has the

advantage of living within a group for a significant period of time, the meaning of artifacts may gradually become clear. Unfortunately this is not often the case; as such, the meanings of



**Figure 1 (Schein, 1992, p 17)**

artifacts are often inferred from the espoused values, norms, and rules that govern the behavior and operation of a group (Schein, 1992).

Whereas artifacts are the products of a culture's behavior, a culture's behavior is the manifestation of shared values and underlying beliefs. Beliefs are consciously held views about truth and the nature of reality (Ott, 1989). Beliefs vary to a large extent, and can range from a belief in God, to a belief that regular practice will improve one's musical aptitude. Closely related to the concept of belief is the concept of shared values. Generally speaking, values can be defined as social principles, philosophies, goals, or standards considered to have intrinsic worth (Hatch, 1993). Beliefs provide "cognitive justifications for organizational patterns", whereas values afford the "emotional energy or motivation to enact them" (Ott, 1989, p. 40). Schein (1992) suggests that all group learning ultimately reflects some set of original values –

someone's personal justification as to what is real, important, and acceptable, as well as fictitious, worthless, and intolerable.

Cultural assumptions provide stability and meaning to our daily lives; they structure our perceptions and thoughts, advise us on how to evaluate and react to our feelings, and subsequently shape our reactions to a given situation (Schein, 1996). Once a solution to a problem has been repeatedly successful or effective, it becomes taken-for-granted as an assumption. What was once a hypothesis, hunch, or individual value is now taken as truth or reality. At this point, the proposed solutions of the initial leaders/founders of a new organization start to solidify in to the core assumptions of the group – a process that is characterized by the solidification of beliefs and values in to taken-for-granted assumptions. Ott (1989) provides a useful example in thinking about this transition:

It is like applying the brakes while driving a car. After years of pushing the brake pedal and the car slowing, we quit thinking about brakes and braking: we just hit the brakes instinctively, *assuming* the car will slow down. If hitting the brakes works repeatedly, we cease thinking about braking. Our belief in the relationship between braking and slowing turns into a basic assumption (p. 42).

Thus, the founders of an organization may be seen not only as creators of the culturally expressive aspects of organizational life, but also as shaping the very actions, thoughts, and emotions of group members, as well as the meanings they attach to such actions. New organizations, or organizations that have retained the same leadership structures over time represent an opportunity to assess the transition processes from no beliefs to new beliefs, from no rules to new rules, from no culture to new culture, and to observe the adaptation of ideas into structural and expressive forms (Pettigrew, 1979).

## **Methodology**

### ***The Sample***

All data were collected over a period of eight weeks using both participant observation and in-depth semi-structured interviews. With respect to the semi-structured interviews, a purposive sampling technique was used to collect a diverse cross-section of members. The interview sample was broken into two subsamples; a leadership group (N=3) and a general membership group (N=10). The leadership group consisted of the Pipe Major, Pipe Sergeant, and Drum Sergeant of the band. The groups differed with respect to level of confidentiality and anonymity that would be assured. It was explained to the leadership group that their appointed positions – and thus their identities – were integral to the study. They were informed that if they chose to participate, their identities would be fully connected to their participation in the study. All three executives were comfortable with this, and agreed to participate on the basis of this understanding.

The general membership group consisted of a sample of members who were not in one of the three leadership positions discussed above. The general membership group was informed that their responses would be aggregated and therefore anonymous. Any verbatim statements that the researcher wished to include in the study were first reviewed by each individual participant. Participants were given the option to retract any statement they felt unreflective of their true thoughts; no such retractions were requested. Participants were also informed that any verbatim statements would not be directly attached to their identities, as pseudonyms would be used in the final report.

Members who had been involved with the organization for significant periods time (over ten years) were particularly valuable to the study, as they were thought to have broader

understandings of band operations, traditions, structures, and symbols. The purposive sampling technique also was chosen in an attempt to ensure some variation in a relatively homogenous research group. The ages of research participants ranged from twenty-one to approximately fifty-five. Both males and females participated. All research participants were Caucasian.

### ***The Interviews***

Thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted over a period of eight weeks (February 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 – March 28<sup>th</sup> 2009). Participants who agreed to be interviewed chose when and where the interview would take place. The majority of participants chose to be interviewed in casual settings, including their homes, coffee houses, or restaurants. It is worthwhile to note that several interviews took place in a pub setting. Regardless of the location, the goal was to ensure the comfort of the participant. Interviews ranged from one hour to as long as three and a half hours.

The interviews were semi-structured, allowing for a considerable degree of flexibility on part of both the researcher and the research participants (Bryman, 1989). The conversations typically began by participants being asked to describe some personal history with respect to their involvement with the SFUPB as well as piping and drumming in general. This gave participants the ability to lead the discussion from the outset, helping to establish that a high level of detail that was both expected and encouraged (Berg, 1989). While the researcher came to the interviews with a general outline of the topics to be covered, the participants were able to tell their own stories, regardless of whether they related to the researcher's interview outline. Many of the most profound findings emerged from detailed personal anecdotes and areas of conversation that were not originally included in the interview outlines.

Eleven of the thirteen interviews were recorded using a small mp3 recording device. The researcher also took notes throughout the interviews to bring additional context and detail to the recordings (body language, tone, expression). The original methodology for the research did not include recording the interviews; however, it became clear early on during the interview process that recording would be beneficial to the overall quality of the research. Participants were informed about the recording device being present; none objected to their interview being recorded.

### ***Participant Observation***

As the researcher is also a member of the SFUPB, unique and uninhibited access was available to band rehearsals, performances, meetings, and other exclusive group events. Palys and Atchinson (2008) suggest that participant observation occurs when a researcher spends extensive time in a cultural setting while trying to understand certain aspects of the environment from the perspective of those occupying it. For the present study, the researcher attended and observed approximately twenty-five band rehearsals taking place between February 1<sup>st</sup> 2009 and April 5<sup>th</sup> 2009. Observations were recorded following each practice; as the researcher is also a member of the organization, taking notes during rehearsal would have significantly conflicted with the roles and responsibilities attached to the band. Further, taking field notes during a rehearsal would have been fairly obtrusive and could have affected members' behavior (reactivity) or produced feelings of discomfort as a result of being blatantly observed. The goal of the participant observation was to identify manifest cultural elements of the band.

## **Results**

In keeping with the theoretical structure established earlier in this essay, the results will be presented in three separate sections; *artifacts*, *espoused values and beliefs*, and *underlying*

*assumptions*. These sections reflect the layers of organizational culture described in Schein's (1992) model. To reiterate, this theoretical framework emerged during the interview and literature review processes; the goal of this research is not to test Schein's model. Instead, Schein's model has been used to organize and conceptualize the findings of this research in to a meaningful format. The *artifacts* section is based primarily on the data obtained through participant observation, whereas the *espoused values and beliefs* and *underlying assumptions* sections are based primarily on the interview data.

### ***Artifacts***

#### *Architecture*

Upon entering the office of any company or organization, visual elements will often create an initial impression as to what the organization is, what it represents, and how it operates. When examining an organization like the SFUPB that does not have an official headquarters or main office where members are employed, the architectural elements of the organization may be less obvious than the former examples, but present nonetheless.

The band's rehearsal locations are where the band does its 'business' so to speak; therefore, the architectural elements of these locations are relevant. For the most part, the SFUPB rehearses at facilities located on the Simon Fraser University main campus in Burnaby, British Columbia. The band is usually afforded two lecture theatres for each practice; one for the drum corps, one for the pipe corps. Following individual corps rehearsals, the band gets together as a whole in the lecture theatre where the pipe corps had been rehearsing. It is interesting to note that in every rehearsal observed, the drum corps moved to room where the pipe corps had been rehearsing, never the opposite. The lecture theatres provide an environment that is free from distraction and conducive to work. As rehearsals are open to the public, there are often spectators

present. This may encourage the band to present their practice regiment in a professional and efficient way. Not all pipe band organizations have the luxury of such facilities; most pipe bands practice in legions, halls, churches, or anywhere that will allow the band to rehearse on a weekly basis, free of charge.

### *Language & Communication*

Having already entered the office or headquarters of an organization and taking note of the aesthetic elements, the next step for a researcher would be to take account of who is speaking, what they are saying, and how they are saying it. After observing only a few rehearsals, one striking feature of the SFUPB was the amount of collaboration that goes on between members with respect to composition, musical selection, and musical arrangement. When a new piece of music is distributed, members are encouraged to voice their opinions, likes, dislikes, and suggestions. The same collaborative process occurs for existing music, but since all existing music has moved through the process of collaborative criticism already, there is far less to be discussed. It is important to note that the collaborative process is not fully inclusive; senior members of the band tend to be overrepresented in these discussions, as their ideas tend to be better received by the leaders than the ideas of newer or less experienced members.

This collaborative process inherently lends itself to conflict, in that differences of opinion are bound to arise when dealing with something as subjective as the interpretation of music. Member conflict is an area in which major differences between the pipe corps and drum corps exist; whereas the pipe corps is fairly non-confrontational in its approach towards dealing with conflicting ideas, the drum corps is quite the opposite. When conflicting ideas are presented in the drum corps, a 'court room' style scenario ensues with the Drum Sergeant acting as judge,

those presenting the conflicting suggestions as the plaintiff and defendant, and the remaining members of the drum corps serving as the jury. As mentioned above, the pipe corps is far less confrontational when it comes to conflicting ideas; in speaking with research participants, it became apparent that the owners of ideas tend to gather support privately before presenting their ideas publically. Susan goes on to say:

It's best to gather some group support before tabling ideas to the powers that be. It's good to get others' thoughts and opinions; they might affect your decision to go through with the suggestion, amend it, or scrap it altogether.

In doing this, the owner of the idea creates a certain level of consensus between members of the band on their issue. Consequently, if there is a conflicting idea presented in response to their original idea, the conflicting idea is put aside quickly as there is already consensus about the validity of the original idea. A similar way in which ideas are lobbied is to first present the idea to a senior member in the band, having them subsequently present it to the leadership group. As Jacob explains:

One way ideas get heard from less experienced members of the band are by being passed through higher levels. For instance, a rookie passing on a thought to Susan, Susan speaks to Paul. A successful collaborator will know how much to say, when to say it, who to say it to, and how to be differential.

This is an effective and normative lobbying process that exists within both corps'. The reality is that inexperienced members' ideas do not hold as much weight as those who are more established and have more direct lines of communication to the leadership group.

### *Symbols*

Outside of the three leadership positions, no official titles are used to indicate members' status within the band. This is not to say however that there are no identifiable displays of status: the placement of a player within the competitive formation of the band is indicative of their

status, ability, and/or experience. Figure 2 illustrates the contest formation of the SFUPB. The band begins their competitive performances in this block formation, and proceeds to march in to a circle once they begin to play. The upper block represents the pipe corps, including the Pipe Major (P/M) and the Pipe Sergeant (P/S); these leadership positions are marked in orange. All other pipers are indicated by the letter 'P'. The different gradients of blue shading represent different levels of status within the pipe corps; the darker shading indicates higher status, whereas the lighter shading indicates lower status. What is being referred to by status is more or less a composite of member's status, ability, and experience. The pipers are organized in a way

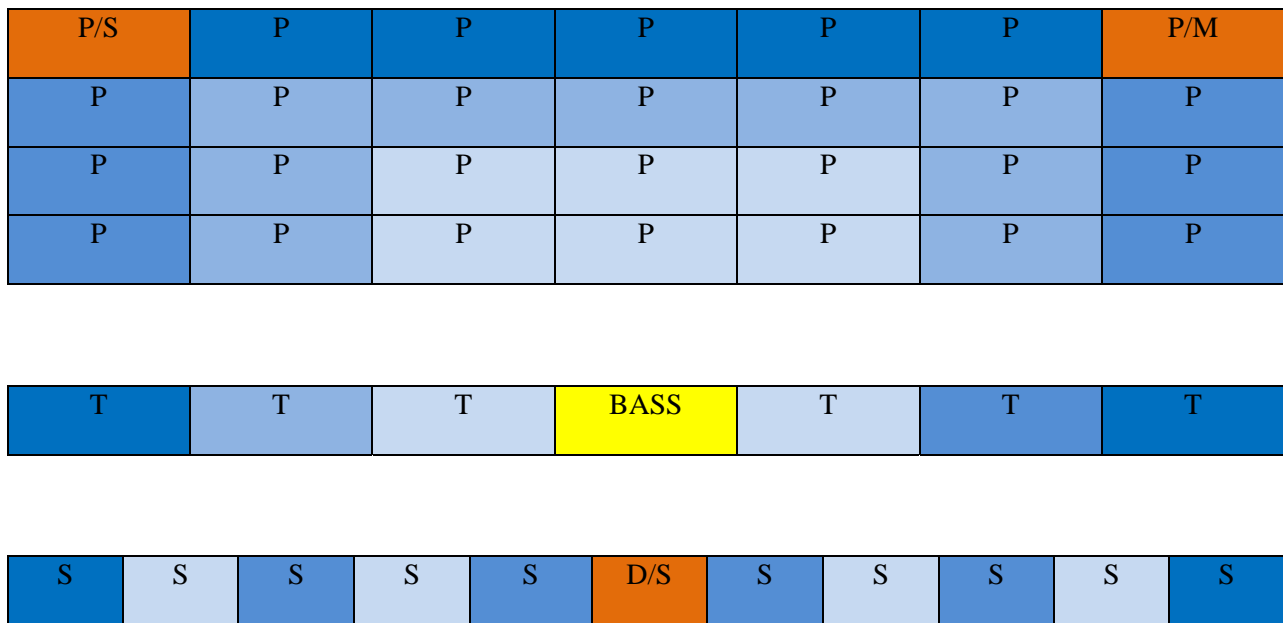


Figure 2

that the sound of the most capable players will be more audible to judges, whereas the sound of less capable players will be less audible.

The drum corps is similarly structured; the Drum Sergeant anchors the snare drummers (labeled as 'S') in the middle, with the next best players standing on the two extreme ends of the snare line. The rest of the drummers are staggered in, with the weaker players always being

situated between two stronger players. The bass drummer (labeled 'BASS') and tenor drummers (labeled 'T') – collectively known as the mid-section – stand in front of the snare drummers. The bass drummer is the anchor of this section, indicated by the yellow shading. The tenor drummers' fall in to line in much the same way as the snare drummers do, with the strongest players on the two extreme ends, with the other players are staggered according to their status (Tyler Fry, personal communication March 25<sup>th</sup> 2009).

The band's uniform is symbolic to the piping and drumming community as a whole, but perhaps even more so to the SFUPB members themselves. The band wears traditional highland dress, which includes a kilt, jacket, shirt, tie, Glengarry (hat), hose (socks), and brogues (shoes). The kilt holds significant meaning to members of the band, as it is symbolic of band membership, a tradition of excellence, and a sense of pride. Further, SFUPB is one of the only pipe bands in the world to wear the Ancient Fraser tartan; thus, the Ancient Fraser kilt has become synonymous with the SFUPB and is somewhat of a symbol in and of itself.

### *Ceremonies & Rituals*

For the SFUPB, no ceremony or ritual is more sacred than the World Pipe Band Championships. The goal of every new member is to step on the field with the band in August at the Worlds, not to be watching from the sidelines. For experienced players, the Worlds are an opportunity to set an example for less experienced players by exhibiting maturity, poise, and composure in the face of pressure, anxiety, and fierce competition. Competing at the Worlds with the band is seen as the final rite of passage for any new member:

Playing with the band at the Worlds (and not screwing up) is the ultimate rite of passage into full membership of the band. Once you have done this, you are 'in'. Even if you have put in one or two years of membership, you are not 'in' until you play at the Worlds. It's

like walking through the hot coals, and if you make it through, the rest of the band is waiting on the other side of the pit to congratulate you. If you fail, it's 'see you next year'...maybe.

Adrian brings an interesting perspective to this issue as s/he did not play at the Worlds in his first year with the SFUPB, but has since played and won with the band.

In the months leading up to the Worlds, it is important for new members to participate in band rituals and ceremonies to secure their place in the social fabric of the organization. The band often travels to compete against other elite pipe bands from across North America. Travelling to compete brings members into close contact with one another for extended periods of time, helping to develop an overall sense of unity and solidarity within the band.

Another important ritual is to invite younger players from subsidiary bands to participate in SFUPB weekly rehearsals. Adjunct to the SFUPB organization is the Robert Malcolm Memorial Pipe Band (RMMPB). The RMMPB is a youth organization that was created in the mid-nineties to help develop young local talent for the SFUPB. Inviting players from the youth organization to sit in on, and participate in SFUPB rehearsals and performances is a longstanding ritual within the organization, and an important step for young players who wish to play in the SFUPB at some point.

### ***Espoused Values and Beliefs***

The organizational artifacts discussed in the above section have been reduced to three fundamental values (individual responsibility, self awareness, social awareness) and two fundamental beliefs (equal opportunity, hierarchy). Each will be discussed in turn.

## *Values*

Individual responsibility is highly valued within the SFUPB organization; its value is often emphasized through the use of slogans, parables, and band communications. For example, one popular slogan is ‘Make it Happen’ – so popular in fact that it has been printed on a selection of the band’s merchandise (t-shirts, hats, posters). This slogan encourages members to hold themselves personally and musically accountable, refrain from making excuses or blaming others for personal shortcomings, and to overcome any obstacles that may stand in the way of fulfilling their duties related to the band. Parables of past and present members who have ‘made it happen’ circulate their way through discussion quite regularly. In the same way that elders communicate lessons of morality, virtue, and heroism to the youth of a community, leaders and senior members of the SFUPB use story-telling to illustrate the types of behavior and attitudes that are valued by the organization.

Self awareness is somewhat of a latent value within the SFUPB organization, in that it is not discussed directly by members. There is an expectation that members will possess a certain degree of confidence in their musical ability; however, it is essential that an individual’s confidence is self moderated so as not to cross in to the realm of arrogance. One must also be able to recognize their individual weaknesses and address them appropriately. Members who are unable to identify or address such weaknesses are sometimes perceived as incapable and/or ignorant. Kelly supports this notion:

Part of elevating ones’ status within the band involves learning how to arrive – learning to take care of your instrument, on your own, and showing up with things in order. If you have issues, get them sorted on your own time, not band time.

Finally, members must be aware of their individual role responsibilities and fulfill them without having to be coerced into doing so; the expectation is that all members are thankful to be involved with an elite organization like the SFUPB, and will be self-motivated to help contribute to the success of the organization.

Closely related to the concept of self-awareness is social awareness. Whereas self awareness involves the recognition of one's role and the responsibilities attached to it, social awareness within the SFUPB is more complicated, and involves the understanding and recognition of one's role boundaries relative to the roles of others. It is important not to overstep individual role boundaries, as this will likely interfere with the roles and responsibilities of others. Undermining the responsibilities of others can be disruptive to the operation of the band, as it invariably creates conflict. As Taylor explains:

When sharing and collaborating with other members in the band, it is important to share, but not over-share. Being a bully with a personal agenda is an easy way to be seen as undermining those around you.

Several respondents also expressed displeasure with members who insisted upon taking ownership of their individual ideas. This is seen as being self-serving and counter to the larger goals of the band.

### *Beliefs*

Most employers in the modern economy are self proclaimed 'equal opportunity employers'; the SFUPB strives to be the same. There is an expectation that members will be given equal opportunity, regardless of their relationship to the leadership group. There are several marital and familial relationships within the organization, not to mention countless life-long friendships. It is important to the successful operation of the band that there is no real or

perceived favoritism towards members who have familial, marital, or other close ties to the leadership group. Jacob brings a clear perspective to this issue:

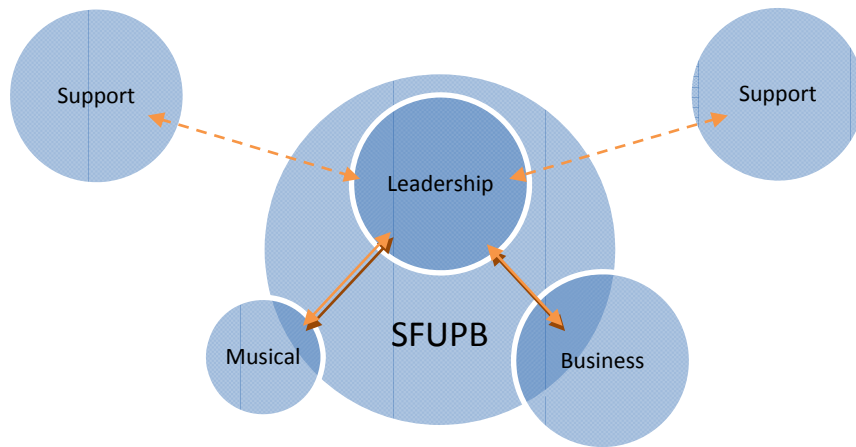
One of the biggest reasons the band has remained successful and avoided ruts along the way is because old friends of the band haven't been kept around simply because they are old friends of the band.

Pat goes on to emphasize that inclusion in the competition band is to be earned:

At the beginning of the year, the band consists of three members – the Pipe Major, the Pipe Sergeant, and the Drum Sergeant; competing with the band is a privilege that must be earned. It is also a privilege that can be terminated at any time.

Having said that the SFUPB is an organization that values equal opportunity, this does not necessarily equate to equal status. Although an expectation exists that opportunity is equally distributed amongst all members in the band, some members possess the qualities and desire necessary to take advantage of such opportunity, enabling them to elevate their status within the organizational structure of the band. Figure 3 illustrates the hierarchical structure of the SFUPB.

The large circle titled 'SFUPB' represents the band as a whole – all forty-five pipers and drummers. Contained within the general membership of the band exists the leadership structure – the Pipe Major, Pipe Sergeant, and Drum Sergeant. The arrows in this diagram represent decision-making power as well as the flow of ideas and information. As can be seen, all arrows originate from or are directed to the leadership group. Below the leadership group, but still contained within the larger framework of the SFUPB are two informal organizational bodies responsible for generating musical and business/marketing ideas. Members of these two



**Figure 3**

organizational bodies can be seen as ‘insiders’, in that they possess direct lines of communication to the leadership group. The musical group is more exclusive than the business/marketing group as it contains only four to five members at any one time, whereas the business/marketing group may contain upwards of ten members at any one time. It is important to note however that as exclusive as they may be, these two insider groups are not static – they are dynamic and ever-changing. Members shift in and out of insider positions on an ‘as-needed’ basis.

The outside circles labeled ‘Support’ represent those individuals who are not active playing members of the SFUPB, but contribute significantly to its overall operation and organization. These support roles are often filled by former members of the band, spouses or family of band members, or supporters of the piping and drumming community in general.

## ***Underlying Assumptions***

The preceding *artifacts* and *espoused values and beliefs* sections have presented in detail many of the cultural elements embedded within SFUPB organization. These detailed observations and analyses have been condensed in to four basic core principles in which all of the artifacts, values, and beliefs outlined above are deeply rooted:

- 1) The group supersedes the individual
- 2) Competitive goals are paramount
- 3) Talent + Experience + Desire + Attitude = Upward Mobility
- 4) The band *will* succeed

## **Discussion**

When asked what the greatest challenges facing the SFUPB are moving forward into the future, several research participants questioned whether the organization can and will exist beyond its current leadership group. As was mentioned at the outset, the current leadership group has been wholly intact since 1993. The Pipe Sergeant and Pipe Major have been working together since 1982. The band has achieved success beyond any other pipe band in the last fifteen years; yet, questions of whether or not the leaders of this organization have built an institution that is going to last still remain. Historically, there are few bands that have managed to remain competitively successful at an elite level for more than ten or fifteen years. The ones that have remained successful have deep roots within the Celtic culture and community dating back to the turn of the century, and are exclusively located in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Several research participants spoke of succession plans, however for the time being, there does not appear to be any obvious successors to the current leadership group. This is not necessarily a bad thing, as Taylor explains:

The simple fact that we don't have a plan likely means that we don't need one. We'll know when it's time, and when the time comes, that's when we will have our answer. I don't think that time is now. The band is riding a wave of unprecedented success, and everyone involved knows it's worth seeing how far we can take this thing.

From the statements above, it would appear as though it's not time to hit the 'panic button' quite yet; however, it would be wise for the current leadership group of the SFUPB to put together a succession plan for the band moving forward into the future.

### **Conclusion**

This essay has discussed the results of a qualitative analysis examining the organizational culture of the SFUPB. It hopefully became clear throughout the essay that certain hierarchical structures and processes exist within the SFUPB. These hierarchical structures are both manifest and transparent, but nevertheless integral to the operation of the band in that members must be aware of these structures and 'buy in to them' so to speak. It is easier for members to buy in to a system that has been proven successful over time, which is led by individuals who are both talented and intriguing, and is likely to produce immediate results. The structure of the SFUPB is not static – it is dynamic and ever-changing. As new members get recruited and old members move on to new opportunities, the composition of the band is continually in a state of change and plasticity; this leaves a great deal of room for upward mobility through the ranks of the organization. As a current member of this organization, it is promising to know that by developing my ability, learning from my experiences, acknowledging those who have 'been

there' and helping to guide those who haven't, I might someday be regarded as a past member of the SFUPB who 'made it happen'.

### **Limitations**

The major limitations to this research are directly related to some of its major strengths; the fact that the researcher is a current member of the organization being studied. Participant observation can be seen as a double-edged sword in that it brings with it an incredible perspective that would be difficult (if not impossible) to achieve through other methods. Unfortunately, it can also complicate and compromise the role of the researcher in conducting the research. With respect to the present research, I feel as though the benefits of the participant-observation greatly outweigh the costs. Unlimited and uninhibited access to band rehearsals, performances, and exclusive events would not have been granted to an individual coming from outside of the organization. Further, I cannot emphasize enough how revealing and trusting research participants were during interviews; I do not feel as though an outside researcher would have been granted the level of access to uncensored opinions on important band matters that I was afforded.

Finally, reactivity and social desirability are also issues that need to be considered in this type of research. As was noted in the section on participant observation, the researcher recorded field notes following band rehearsals, not during. For this reason I feel as though reactivity would not be a major threat to the validity of the data presented in this essay. With respect to social desirability of responses, it is difficult to say whether research participants were censoring their responses; however I received the impression from participants that they were giving meaningful and uninhibited responses. Discussing anonymity and confidentiality with each research participant at the outset of the interview likely helped in this regard as well, not to

mention I maintain well-established personal relationships with all of the research participants in this study.

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