

735 (Winnipeg) Communication Regiment History

In many ways 735 (Winnipeg) Communication Regiment is unique perhaps because of the rare distinction of being one of six Communication Reserve Force Regiments in Canada and because of the many distinguished men and women who have graced the Regimental rolls over the years.

The history of the Regiment began in the autumn of 1903 when Federal authority was first given for organizing a Signaling Corps (Militia). With training in the most modern of visual signaling techniques, heliograph, lamp and semaphore members went to war: The War to End All Wars. Experience gained from Africa to Siberia allowed many fine and well trained officers and men to create an effective Militia Signals establishment across Canada.

In 1918, Winnipeg's first reserve Signal Unit was organized, (on paper only), as the 10th District Signals Battalion. Never formally activated for service, this unit was reorganized in 1920 and placed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel J.C. Franklin, MC (Bar) in December 1921. It is from this date that the Regiment of today traces its origin.

At this time Battalion Headquarters and #10 Signals Company were resident in Winnipeg, #17 Signals Company was in Port Arthur and #6 Signals Troop was responsible for the Winnipeg District. Two commanding Officers, Lieutenant-Colonels Biehl and North succeeded Lieutenant-Colonel Franklin before the nominal change to the 10th Divisional Signals took place on 10 October 1931.

A further change to 10th District Signals took place in October 1936 with Major Argue, ED as Commanding Officer. The 10th District Signals manned a radio station on a regular network basis from the "tower" of Minto Armouries. When a threat of war was hinted at in early August 1939 a number of operators (NCOs and Signalmen) were put on schedule fleshing out the Radio Station at Fort Osborne Barracks and Minto. Others were used in manning a Recruiting Centre in Minto Armouries when war was declared. Among those recruited was the #1 Hwy. Line Construction Company with two officers and approx. 130 other ranks drawn from Man Hydro, Wpg. Electric and high line personnel from Flin Flon, The Pas and Northern Manitoba areas.

This coy was among the first Canadians to see service in the U.K. arriving in England in time to help repair tremendous winter storm damage to power and telephone plants in early December 1939. 10th District Signals supplied three officers and 168 NCOs and men who left for Barriefield for inclusion in the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division Signals Regiment, while others departed for the 1st and 2nd CIDSRs to train at the Vimy Barracks School of Signals, then overseas. Many members of the unit distinguished themselves within the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals including Captains D.N. Gardner and J.M. Calbraith who both received the Military Cross.

After the war there was a time of rebuilding: personnel whose knowledge and abilities were forged in the field, returned. The very concept of communications had changed, maturing with advances in equipment and reflecting new sophistication. In 1948 the unit was once again reorganized, becoming the 6th Armoured Division Signals Regiment under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Scrimmes, ED. In 1954 another reorganization saw the unit become the 10th Independent Signals Squadron.

In 1959 a civil emergency - The Great Winnipeg Flood, the Squadrons personnel were there in force. The unit provided communications from Flood Control Headquarters at the Legislative Buildings to all points along the dikes. One wireless detachment almost suffered casualties when the Helmsdale dike burst, flooding their position.

Then tragedy struck. A fire in Minto Armoury virtually gutted the structure. In spite of this the unit maintained its position there, assuring the City of Winnipeg could not order destruction of the structure. Even though much of the signals equipment had fallen prey to the flames, limited operations and training continued throughout the winter of 1959/60. As a unit in one form or another, Signals has maintained a tradition of uninterrupted residence in Minto Armoury from January 1921 until today: a record unequaled by any other Militia Unit.

During the period from its inception in 1918 until the unification of our Canadian Armed Forces in 1970, under whatever designation, the unit has had a glowing history of courage and a willingness to give. During World War II, the Korean Conflict and the Winnipeg Flood, unit personnel have served well.

With unification came a new beginning. In 1970 the unit became 735(Winnipeg) Communication Squadron, a part of the newly formed Canadian Forces Communications Command. The vital difference being that the Squadron enjoyed a close working relationship the Regular Force Communications units. Newly defined roles, relationships and procedures increased the scope and capabilities of the Squadron.

Twice more in 1977 and 1979 the unit was called upon to serve against severe flood threats. Additionally, the unit has supported such diverse civil programmes as the National Youth Sailing Championships, the University of Manitoba Track Meet, the Governor General's Air Rally, the Manitoba Marathon of 1980 and the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Canada. Many personnel have served and continue to serve with NATO, in positions with the Regular Force in Canada and in all cases, on a voluntary basis.

In 1978 on 4 July, the unit returned to Regimental status. A singular honour reserved for only five other Communication Reserve units in Canada. Major M. Zawislak was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel and became the first Commanding Officer of the newly-formed Regiment. The Honourary Colonel continued to be Colonel R. Taft, late of the Winnipeg Police. During this period selected members of the Regiment were awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee medal and designs were submitted for a unit crest. On September 27th, 1980 the Regiment and its guests gathered for a Change of Command parade. Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane-Wilson "accepted the challenge".

Under Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane-Wilson the Regiment matured in to a strong, healthy unit, proud of its past but even prouder of its future. The crest was given "Royal Assent" in 1981, bringing with it a fell purpose to grow yet stronger. In 1982 the Regiment welcomed her Honour, Pearl McGonigal, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba as the new Honourary Colonel.

On May 15, 1983 on behalf of the city his Honour the Mayor of the City of Winnipeg, William Norrie awarded 735(Winnipeg) Communication Regiment the "Freedom of the City" for its long-standing commitment to military and civil aid. A new Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel W. Sveinson "took the reins" from Lieutenant-Colonel Haldane-Wilson on 15 May 1983. The Regiment continued to develop its people and meet both the military and civil obligations it had assumed over the years. In 1987 Lieutenant-Colonel Sveinson turned the Regiment over to Major B. Folkett.

During the Regiment's history, female members have played an ever-increasing role. One such member, Major Leslie Bouchard, achieved particular distinction in September 1989 when she assumed command of the Regiment from Major Folkett. Major Bouchard on that date, became the first female officer in the Canadian Forces to command a Regiment in Manitoba. She was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel April 1990 relinquishing command of the Regiment to Major J.H. Hoekstra, CD on 08 June 1991.

Major Hoekstra was promoted to Lieutenant-Colonel in June 1992. It was under Lieutenant-Colonel Hoekstra that the Regiment once again exercised its Freedom of the City in a commemorative parade honouring the Fiftieth Anniversary on the D-Day invasion was the beginning of the Liberation of Europe.

In keeping with the concept of Total Force and the changing times in the CF amalgamating both Regular and Reserve Forces; the Regiment was commanded by a Regular Force officer for the first time in October 1994. Maj B.A. Deutscher, CD is the present Commanding Officer of the Regiment having commanded the Regiment under a Change of Command from CFCC to DISO and an amalgamated 73 and 74 Comm Gp.

In 1996 Maj Deutscher handed the unit over to Capt R. McIntosh who held the position of CO from October 1996 to September 1998.

735 Communication Regiment stood up In September 1998 with LCol J.H. Hoekstra being appointed the Commanding Officer. During the period September 1998 to January 1999, Maj W.M. Boswick was appointed the Officer Commanding of this unit. Capt D.E. Sklepowich took over the position of Officer Commanding in January 1999 where he currently remains.

In September 2000, LCol J.H. Hoekstra accepted a Class C contract in Ottawa. A change of command parade was held in Dundurn, SK and the position of Commanding Officer was handed to LCol G.J. Hawes.

In June 2003, during the change of command parade held at CFB/ASU Shilo, Capt D.E. Sklepowich was promoted to Major and became the Commanding Officer of 735 Comm Regt.

In September 2003 Maj D.E. Sklepowich transferred to the Regular Force and a Change of Command was held. Maj Sklepowich handed the unit over to Maj M.F. McCann who was appointed this unit's Commanding Officer.

On 24 January 2004 a Change of Command Parade was held and Maj M.F. McCann, who is releasing and moving back to Saint John's, handed over the unit to Maj G.A. Ritchie.

In August 2010, command of the Regt passed to Maj J.L. Bomhoff, as Signals units passed over to the Army.

In May 2011, when the unit reorganized into a squadron and 38 Signal Regiment stood up, LCol J.K. Groves became Commanding Officer.

A CHRONOLOGY OF THE REGIMENT

10th District Signals Battalion

"paper" organization	1918
reorganized	1920

activated 1921 (December)

Commanding Officers

LCol J.C. Franklin, MC(Bar), MID(2) December 1920 - May 1925
LCol W.C. Biehl May 1925 - May 1929
LCol F.J. North, MC, ED May 1929 - October 1931

10th Divisional Signals

LCol J.W. Ewinthorpe, MM, ED October 1931 - October 1936

10th District Signals

Maj J.A. Argue, ED October 1936 - February 1940
Maj H.C. Bate, ED February 1940 - October 1941
Maj. W.R.W. Henderson, ED October 1941 - May 1946

6th Divisional Signal Regiment, Armoured

LCol W.R. Scrimmes, ED May 1946 - January 1952

6th Armoured Divisional Signal Regiment

LCol H.G. Kent, ED January 1952 - September 1954

10th Independent Signals Squadron

Maj J.H. Deane, ED September 1954 - November 1959
Maj W.J.F. Ferguson, ED November 1959 - January 1964
Maj J.R. Suddaby, ED January 1964 - June 1968
Maj J.F. Campbell, ED June 1968 - June 1970

735(Winnipeg) Communication Squadron

Maj J.F. Campbell, CD June 1970 - November 1971
Maj S. Kiz November 1971 - November 1974
Maj Z.M. Zawislak November 1974 - 3 June 1978

735(Winnipeg) Communication Regiment

LCol Z.M. Zawislak June 1978 - September 1980
LCol C.R. Haldane-Wilson September 1980 - December 1983
LCol W.E. Sveinson December 1983 - June 1987
Maj B.M. Folkett, CD June 1987 - September 1989
Maj M.L. Bouchard, CD September 1989 - April 1990
LCol M.L. Bouchard, CD April 1990 - June 1991
Maj J.H. Hoekstra, CD June 1991 - June 1992
LCol J.H. Hoekstra, CD June 1992 - October 1994
Maj B.A. Deutscher, CD October 1994 - October 1996
Capt R. McIntosh October 1996 - September 1998
Maj W.M. Boskwick, CD September 1998 - January 1999
Capt D.E. Sklepowich January 1999 - May 2003
Maj D.E. Sklepowich June 2003 - September 2003
Maj M.F. McCann, CD September 2003 - January 2004

Maj G.A. Ritchie, CD
Maj J.W. Weinbender
Maj G.A. Ritchie, CD
Maj J.L. Bomhoff
LCol J.K. Groves

January 2004 – September 2007
September 2007 – November 2009
November 2009 – August 2010
August 2010 – May 2011
May 2011 - present