

Seattle Seahawks' Canadian fans make up integral part of 12th Man

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At first glance, it's impossible to pick them out.

You see, they blend in seamlessly with the 67,000-plus other football fanatics clad in blue and green, yelling at the top of their lungs, rooting their Seattle Seahawks to victory and creating the most intimidating home field advantage in the NFL.

But if you dare venture further into the sea of Seahawks colours, you'll come across a loud and passionate Canadian contingent of the 12th Man that bleed blue and green just as much as they do red and white.

It's estimated that up to 10% of the fans at any given home game in Seattle are Canadian. In 2004, the Seahawks established a regional marketing office in Canada in an effort to deepen the connection between the franchise and their Canadian diehards.

Omar Mawjee, managing director of Seahawks Canada, notes that the bond between the Seahawks and Canadians can be traced all the way back to the franchise's inception in 1976. Since then, interest has continued to grow. In 1998, Seattle took on the San Francisco 49ers in an exhibition game in Vancouver.

"Canadians have a long history of supporting the Seahawks," said Mawjee. "This support dates back to the King Dome days, through the American Bowl that was hosted at BC Place, to this season where thousands of fans from Western Canada travelled to CenturyLink Field to cheer on the Seahawks. Millions more have followed on TV and

through local radio broadcasts."

And people are definitely watching. Seattle's win over the 49ers in the NFC Championship game earlier this year drew 3.7 million viewers, making it the most-watched non-Super Bowl NFL game in Canadian history.

Residents of the Pacific Northwest share a love for coffee, seafood, and the outdoors. You can add the Seahawks to that list. According to a recent NFL Canada survey, Seattle is the most popular team in Western Canada.

The core of the Canadian fan base emanates from Vancouver and the Lower Mainland but some season ticket holders travel from as far as B.C.'s Interior, Vancouver Island, and Alberta to live the 12th Man experience.

For those not fortunate enough to make the trip down I-5 into Seattle, all Seahawks games are broadcast throughout the Canadian Northwest on television and TEAM Radio in Vancouver and CFX in Victoria are affiliates of the Seahawks Radio Network.

The organization has taken notice that the passion for their team runs strong north of Seattle and they've embraced the fans who affectionately refer to themselves as #12North.

"For the last eight years, the Seahawks have recognized the support of the Canadian fan base by designating one regular season home game as 'Canada Day' – where our anthem is sung pre-game and recently we have arranged to have local high school and middle school football teams scrimmage on the field pre-game and present the Canadian flag along with the RCMP Colour Guard during the pre-game ceremonies," said Mawjee.

The support from Canada isn't lost on Seattle's players either. Quarterback Russell Wilson is bringing the Russell Wilson Passing Academy to Vancouver next July, one of six select cities chosen to host the camp, while star defensive backs Richard Sherman and Kam Chancellor have been sent as part of the Seahawks' delegation on their summer tour. The team has hosted events in Vancouver the last four years and made their first stop in Victoria last July.

"Through events like the 12 Tour and Canada Day at CenturyLink Field, the Seahawks continue to recognize the support of Canadians," said Mawjee.

One of their most ardent supporters is Ryan Strachan, a teacher from Richmond, B.C. and Seahawks season ticketholder who was profiled [here](#) by the CBC. Spurred by his love for the 'Hawks, some of his former students started a collection so Strachan could watch his beloved team face Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos in the Super Bowl – [he'll be there](#).

Flags honouring the 12th Man were symbolically raised [across B.C.](#) in anticipation of the big game. There's little doubt that the region has adopted the Seahawks as the home team.

This season has delivered a number of memorable moments, Seahawk fans have watched their team arrive to within one win from lifting the Lombardi Trophy. Many Canadians have been there every step of the way, right at home in that sea of blue and green.

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