



The 154th Victoria Highland Games

The 154th Victoria Highland Games in beautiful Victoria, British Columbia was, as always, a fantastic time.

Saturday, May 13th was the kick off to the week of celebrating Scottish culture and heritage. Upon arriving at Centennial Park we were greeted by many of our Clan friends, the MacLeods, the Leslies, etc. Doug and I were joined by our friends Doug (Clan Campbell) and Connor (Clan Matheson) in representing the MacAulays as we and our fellow Clans followed the pipes and drums down Government Street to the BC legislature. After a welcome from Randy Stewart (of Stewart of Appin) we enjoyed more of the pipes and drums and a demonstration of tossing the caber. I was delighted to see the Canada 150 tulip in bloom. Then it was off to the Bard & Banker for some much-needed refreshments. There is nothing quite like seeing the pipes and drums marching into the Bard, being surrounded by them and literally feeling their power.



Wednesday, May 17 we embarked on our annual pilgrimage, aka the Twisted Kilt Pub Crawl. Together with Clan friends Mac and Karen (Clan MacLeod) and Troy (Clan Leslie) and many others on Randy and Kristina's Team Purple we started at the Bard and Banker, then off to the Yates Street Taphouse, the Irish Times and ended up at the Stratchona. Okay, and it's pretty cool to go from pub to pub by double decker bus, especially if your piper is a world champion! Can't quite describe how much fun we have at this event. Everyone ends up at the Strath so it's a hoot getting to hang out with friends we've made over the years.



Friday night is the annual formal event for representatives of the Clans, heavy games competitors, the VHGA Board and various dignitaries, including the 2017 Chieftain of the Games. VHGA President Jim Maxwell welcomed everyone. It's a great opportunity for our Clans to reconnect with friends and meet new people. A lovely evening with everyone decked out in their finest highland apparel.



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After Victoria having had a rough spring weather wise, Saturday, May 20th dawned bright, beautiful, sunny and, most importantly, warm! It's always an early start so we can get our tent set up and ready for visitors. It's a lot of work getting it set up but definitely worth the effort. We were so thrilled early Saturday morning to meet George and his son David (MacAulays!) and they joined us in marching in the opening ceremonies (with, of course, our friend Doug of the Campbells – he's essentially an honorary MacAulay). George's wife is a piper and she was a little surprised and amused to see her husband and son in the Clan march. Saturday is always a very busy day for visits to the tent. So fantastic having the opportunity to meet various MacAulays or descendants of MacAulays.



The weekend is always crazy at the games with all the competitions. Highland dance, solo piping and drumming, pipe bands, hurling, Gaelic football, potato sack races, tug of war, haggis hurling and this year, it wasn't just the heavy events, it was the Canadian Championship for heavy events. Very exciting. And throughout it all, the opportunity to meet MacAulays and people from many other Clans wanting to connect with their history.

There's also the Heritage Tent, whisky school, bouncy castles for the kids, fun vendors, great haggis and scotch pies and so much more to do. One of the best moments was on Monday when Rachel (another lovely MacAulay) that I'd previously corresponded with came to visit. We had lots of time to visit and connect. Can't forget Monday's Kilted Mile Race. This year we were lucky enough to be cheering on two competitors, my cousin Michael and our friend Doug. They did great!

The saddest part, always, for us is when the time comes to say goodbye to our many VHGA friends. We know we'll see all of them next year, but it seems like a long time to be away from such genuine, caring, sometimes crazy, friends.

Joan McAulay
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