

# GAMES GUIDE

Scottish gatherings of various sorts are good occasions for members to get together and much better places to contact prospective members than telephone directories. Such gatherings include St. Andrews Day observations, Burns suppers, Celtic fairs and most importantly, Highland Games.

The Highland Games attract the largest numbers, among them more “First Timers” and the suggestions presented here are aimed principally at that type of event. With appropriate modifications suggestions gathered here can be applied elsewhere, for instance with a booth or table at an indoor event.

The importance of Clan MacLeod’s full participation in Highland Games cannot be emphasized too highly. The show of tartans, the sounds of bagpipes and drums, the beauty, grace and perfection of dancers, the ruggedness of athletes, and the grandeur of the spectators and Clan members are the outward manifestation of our Scottish ethnicity which draws not only the faithful but the curious and those unsure of their connections. These curious and unsure are our main reason to be there. With them we can demonstrate our spirit of kinship and clanship and share our knowledge of Clan History and Genealogy. In this group are potential members.

The games also provide those of us who have embraced the challenges and rewards of Clan leadership the important opportunity to meet those like ourselves of other Clans and those serving on the games committee. After a leader’s (and spouse) initiation into the mysteries of how to cope with all those strangers, it becomes sheer delight to attend the next games and see those friends you haven’t seen since the last games. It has been said “it is like, but better than, attending a family reunion”.

## **PREPARING FOR THE GAMES**

Games attendance must be planned and coordinated well in advance. The Region RVP will approve and pay the sponsorship fees unless a local clan members agrees to do so. Try to involve local clan members to assist at the tent as soon as possible. There is no better way to plan for succession to the commissioner or RVP level than by having members become involved. The fees charged by the games can vary greatly. Some provide a tent space and some also include a tent. Usually for the price of the space you will receive between two and four games tickets and a parking pass. Usually, but not always, once you participate at a game you will receive registration forms in the mail in subsequent years. More and more games require a representative to sign a “hold harmless statement”. Be aware that you cannot bind Clan MacLeod USA to such an agreement only that you personally agree.

If you have to stay overnight to set up for the games, check the games official website. Many times they will have negotiated affordable rates at an “official games hotel”. It is important to hang on to all receipts since some of your personal expenses may be tax deductible. In the case

of multiple people manning a tent, only the principle person bringing the majority of supplies or shouldering the majority of the cost can claim travel expenses on their tax returns. Any person who brings anything consumed or donates to the Clan Tent permanently, can deduct a charitable donation. If the amount is over \$250 of value, a Treasurer's letter is needed.

## **GAMES SET-UP**

You will usually be given the option of setting up the afternoon before the game or in the morning of the game. If you do it the morning of the game be aware that cars have to be off the field by a certain time, give yourself plenty of time. If you decide to set up the day before be aware of the weather forecast. There are many horror stories about what a late night thunderstorm can do to a field of tents. Also make sure the games committee is providing overnight security.

First of all, you will need a tent. If one is provided, thank goodness. Most likely though you will have to provide your own. Most people use a 10' X 10' "EZ-UP" type of tent. There are many different brands and the price can vary quite a bit. You will need more than one person to set it up but I have never been to a game where people from other clans aren't happy to pitch in and help. At some games with a large member attendance you may want to obtain a second tent and space for a hospitality area.

Now that you have a tent set up, you have to furnish it and make it appealing. Upon registration, many games list optional items that you can pay for. Sometimes a table is included but generally you will have to rent tables and chairs in an al-la-carte fashion. If you have your own tables and chairs, all the better. Just make sure you have enough chairs to make your guests comfortable.

Some of the items you will need include banners both to identify the clan tent and a banner to carry in the Parade of Tartans. A sept banner or sign is also a must. How many first time attendees named McClure realize they are part of Clan MacLeod?

**Pictures:** Dunvegan Castle, Ardvreck Castle. Chiefs Hugh, Donald and John. MacLeods enjoying different clan activities, pictures of us presenting trophies to pipers or dancers, posters of Scotland with clans, and easels.

**Reference books:** Very important. Books about tartans, Scottish names, maps of Scotland, etc.

**Handouts:** The official quad-fold brochure with a membership application stapled to it. Sept tri-folds, as well as "Lands of the MacLeods", "MacLeod legends", Dunvegan Foundation, and others. Old copies of the news letter to give out. Genealogist's business card. Many tents are incorporating electronics, computers, or tablets. The membership tab on the Clan MacLeod USA web site has both brochures that can be printed and tablet information which can be downloaded and displayed.

**Tool kit:** As you gain experience the list will grow but the basics include: Duck tape, knife, screw drivers, braided line for tie downs, assortment of bungee cords, and hammer for tent pegs, pliers/wire cutters. A good size tarp to cover tables overnight, or make a wind/rain block.

**Food and water:** A cooler with ice is a must. Either bottled water or an insulated water jug with cups. Snacks for guests, candy to give the kids. Also trash bags for used cups and wrappers.

**Desk equipment:** Clip boards, membership applications, pens and pencils, guest register, several paperweights, tartan table cloth, cash box, rubber crest stamps and pads for games that give children “passports”. Also a camera or cell phone for taking photographs

**Flags:** The Saltire and Lion Rampant on fairly long poles to fly on corners of the tent as well as an American Flag to carry in the Parade of Tartans.

**Personnel:** Wear clan attire. Use a name tag. Smile a lot!

### **Arranging the tent:**

Most of all, the tent needs to be welcoming! Guests and potential members need to feel that this is an organization that they can visualize themselves being a part of. Through the use of pictures, posters, books, and conveying your personal experience, find out what their major area of interest is. Generally it will fall into one of several areas including

**Genealogy:** Make sure they know about our migration director and her large data base. Also the Family Tree DNA study.

**Travel:** Show them maps of Scotland and pictures of clan members at parliament and talk about what a great opportunity that presents for a visit to Scotland. Also talk about the annual AGM held in different regions and the associated enjoyable group events.

**History:** Talk about Dunvegan Castle, the Fairy Bridge, Fairy Flag, the different MacLeod lands, and other ancient legends.

**Highland Arts:** Talk about how we are one of the only clans that presents trophies for piping and dancing. Also historically how our ancient chiefs supported the McCrimmons as the MacLeod pipers.

You don't want the tent to look like a MacDonald's lunch counter with the front blocked. There should be pictures, posters, possibly a second table in the back of the tent to draw people in. Even though we enjoy talking among ourselves and reminiscing with folks we haven't seen since last year's games, all people that stop by our tent should be greeted with a sincere smile and welcome. Don't leave new people stranded from the current members. All potential members should be asked to sign the guest log.

Be sure to take plenty of pictures, especially of new members. Follow-up by posting on the region's Facebook page (if applicable) and submit some to Dorna with your region report for the next newsletter.

Walk along Clan Row and observe the other clans. You can see what setups are appealing and what are not. Never hesitate to “borrow” someone else’s ideas. After all, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

### **Follow-up:**

Very important but largely overlooked. You have just spent a great deal of your personal time, energy and yes, money, to represent Clan MacLeod at the game. Hopefully you signed up a few members and renewed others. You also had several other prospects sign the visitor’s log. When you get home, email the new and renewals thanking them. Also attach pictures that you took of them to the email. For those prospects that did not join, send an email thanking them for stopping by and attach a membership application (electronic version available at the members area of the website). You never know, after thinking about it, they may reconsider.

Eleven months later, pull out the visitors log and remind those that signed up of the upcoming game and that you will be there and looking forward to seeing them again.

When you get home after the game, think about what you missed. Did you have the right tools or did you have to scrounge from another clan? Did you have enough food, drink, ice? Do you have to do homework? Were you asked questions you didn’t have answers to? What other resource do you need? Books, posters, maps, etc.