

Kootenay Kiltie Pipe Band

Nelson has always had a strong and active Scottish community. There was a *St. Andrew's Society* active in the city by 1901 and the forming of the *Clan Johnstone Society* was celebrated at a 1912 Burns Night festivity. This evening of Scottish dancing, food, sword dancing and bagpipe playing at Nelson's Eagle Hall was attended by nearly 350 people. In the spring of 1919 members of the *Clan Johnstone* met to discuss the idea of forming a pipe band. On April 8th the name *Kootenay Kiltie Pipe Band* was settled on and a constitution drawn up with the goal of "fostering and cultivation of Highland music and dancing."

In 1921 the *Clan Johnstone Society* became the *Clan McLeary Society*, named after Pipe Major William McLeary. All members of the Kiltie Kootenay Pipe Band had to be members of the *Clan McLeary*. At the time they also had to be of Scottish descent, of good health and male. There was however a *Daughters of Scotia* ladies' auxiliary to the Clan which organised social events and highland dances.

In 1932 the first Highlands Games was organised in Nelson. This popular event was traditionally held over the Labour Day weekend and attracted bands and highland dancers from across Western Canada. In the 1960s the Kilties welcomed their first female band members who were assisted through aid and fundraising by the Kilties Ladies Auxillary.

From 1971 to 1986, the band also sponsored the Glentrium School of Piping summer school program that gave instruction on piping and drumming at Notre Dame University and later David Thompson University Centre.

In the 1990s the Kilties got the chance to promote Nelson and Canada whilst performing at the Nelson's sister city of Shuzenji in Japan. Now in their 100th year, the oldest pipe band in Interior BC remain a colourful and commanding feature of local parades and public events.