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**The Glengarry Scottish Highland Games: A Case
Study of an Annual Cultural Celebration Responsible
for Perpetuating Tradition and Altering the
Perception of Local Ethnicity**

In 1746, in a small area of what now is Eastern Ontario, almost fifty families established one of Canada's first Scottish settlements in Glengarry County. The next hundred years witnessed Scottish Highland land clearances and two successive waves of immigration to Glengarry on the banks of the St.

Lawrence River. In order to preserve the culture these immigrants left behind, political leaders created an annual cultural festival similar to those seen in Scotland around 1858. Residents began to celebrate Scottish Highland tradition, but a lack of commitment and funding led to the discontinuation of the Glengarry Scottish Highland Games after only a few years.

In the sweltering summer of 1948, a torch was lit in Maxville, Ontario to mark the return of a festival rich in tradition and culture. For over half a century, the small communities of Glengarry County have hosted the modern day Highland Games and have shared in the customs, music, and athletic pursuits of their ancestors. This world-class event provides an annual homecoming of former Glengarry residents and welcomes thousands of spectators and competitors from around the globe.

The Highland Games in Glengarry clearly represented something more than an annual celebration of Scottish Highland tradition. The cultural remnants of each festival resonated throughout the year, indicating a significance far beyond the weekend celebration itself. The exposure the Games provided to elements of Scottish Highland traditional dress, Celtic music, and athletics ensured the vitality of these cultural practices and maintained the unique character of the County. The Games in Glengarry represented a powerful symbol of cultural perpetuation and a means of altering the identity of local ethnicity. An event that was designed in the middle of the nineteenth century to celebrate Highland Scottish culture among Glengarry Scots, has come to influence the ethnicity of non-Scottish Glengarry residents. The lasting impression of the Games is visible everyday in the reflection of these elements within the County.

This paper utilized a narrative analytical approach in the development of prevalent themes of ethnicity and their role in establishing Scottish tradition in Canada. Archival research focused on a number of different venues. Public Libraries within the County offered a varied collection of resources. Of particular interest was the local history written by local historians and census information. The Glengarry Sports Hall of Fame in Maxville is another archive that contained valuable resources.
