

Clansman pipe their way to gold



PIPE MAJOR: Band leader Ian Richmond and the Clansman Pipe Band won top spot in their category at the Comox Valley Highland Games. Richmond is concerned that this may be the last time they will compete there.

Band focuses on rebuilding

by Chris Bolster | reporter@prpeak.com

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Powell River's Clansman Pipe Band took first place in a competition at the Comox Valley Highland Games held in Courtenay recently.

Seven bands competed in the games. "We didn't defeat them all, but we came first in our category," said pipe major Ian Richmond.

Twelve members of the band attended the competition with eight pipers and four drummers: two side, one tenor and a bass drummer. They competed as a grade five band.

Pipe bands are ranked from relatively inexperienced bands in grade five up to world-class bands in grade one.

As a grade five band, the Clansman Pipe Band was required to play a quick march medley which would last between 2.25 to four minutes in length.

"As you move up," Richmond explained, "the selections get longer and more complex."

Two piping judges and one drumming judge listened for tuning and tone and an ensemble judge focused on how the music and drums come together.

Judges' feedback is invaluable for bands' improvement. Last year, the band had tied for third place at the same competition, but was penalized for being short one drummer and ended up with fourth place.

The level that a band competes at is largely a case of self-selection, but as it wins competitions it moves up through grades. British Columbia has two grade one bands: Simon Fraser University's pipe band and the Triumph Street band, both of which compete internationally.

The Clansman Pipe Band was entered as a grade five band because it "has not competed in a good many years" and most of its players are relatively new, Richmond said.

This year will likely be the last year for the highland games in Courtenay, he said. "It's unfortunate because it's the only highland games we can get to with a day trip. It'll mean next year we'll have to go further afield."

The Clansman Pipe Band is a self-supporting organization affiliated with Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 164. It welcomes all pipers and drummers in the Powell River region and provides free instruction to anyone aspiring to join the band. For more information, readers can contact Richmond at 604.483.9673.