



KIJHL ANNOUNCES TRANSITION TO SEPARATE JUNIOR A TIER 1 AND TIER 2 LEAGUES FOR THE 2026-27 HOCKEY SEASON

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Kimberley, BC – The Kootenay International Junior Hockey League (KIJHL) has announced major changes to its future structure that will see the league’s 21 members compete within separate Junior A, Tier 1 and Tier 2 leagues beginning in the 2026-27 season.

The exact composition of each league will be announced in early 2026 following BC Hockey’s Board of Directors approval. In the meantime, the KIJHL has already approved alterations to the league’s governance model and adopted a Transitional Operating Plan that will be implemented immediately to guide further changes.

“The landscape of junior hockey in British Columbia has changed significantly over the past two years, and this has presented exciting opportunities for the KIJHL and our members,” says Commissioner Jeff Dubois. “Ultimately, it became clear that the best avenue to serve our teams and athletes would be a transition to separate Tier 1 and Tier 2 leagues and we’re very excited to make this vision a reality over the next 18 months.”

Operating under the KIJHL umbrella, this new structure will provide athletes with enhanced development and advancement opportunities within BC Hockey and Hockey Canada-sanctioned programming while promoting increased competitive balance for teams within both leagues.

“We are very pleased with the KIJHL’s approach to ensure this transition is done properly and not rushed,” BC Hockey CEO Cameron Hope said. “Taking the time to prepare will help set the league up for long-term success.”

The 2025-26 season will be played under the KIJHL’s existing league structure, with all 21 members competing at the Junior A, Tier 2 level.

“Our league faces some unique geographic and logistical challenges, and so the decision to play one more season under our current structure was made to ensure the long-term sustainability of all of our members,” Dubois said. “We will be taking further steps over the next 12 months to determine which teams will compete at each level. This includes the possibility of adding Tier 2 members in new communities. A final announcement on alignment will come in early 2026.”

In July 2023, BC Hockey approved the KIJHL to be redesignated as a Junior A, Tier 2 league with a defined pathway to Junior A, Tier 1 membership. All 21 KIJHL teams subsequently participated in a Tier 1 assessment process conducted by Blackfin Sports Group, with their findings having played a significant role in the development of the structural changes announced today.

In February, the KIJHL's Board of Governors approved the following 11 teams to transition to Junior A, Tier 1 for the 2026-27 season, pending approval from BC Hockey:

- Beaver Valley Nitehawks
- Columbia Valley Rockies
- Fernie Ghostriders
- Grand Forks Border Bruins
- Kamloops Storm
- Kimberley Dynamiters
- Merritt Centennials
- Nelson Leafs
- Osoyoos Coyotes
- Princeton Posse
- Revelstoke Grizzlies

The following seven teams will have an opportunity to participate in a further assessment process overseen by Blackfin Sports Group in order to determine their status for the 2026-27 season:

- 100 Mile House Wranglers
- Castlegar Rebels
- Creston Valley Thunder Cats
- Kelowna Chiefs
- Quesnel River Rush
- Sicamous Eagles
- Williams Lake Mustangs

The following three teams will remain in Junior A, Tier 2 for the 2026-27 season:

- Chase Heat
- Golden Rockets
- Spokane Braves

The KIJHL will provide a further update regarding planning for the 2026-27 season following the league's 2025 Annual General Meeting, scheduled for June 20-22 in Kamloops, B.C.