# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 1960s

As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. This week, we go all the way back to the start to cover the league's infancy in the 1960s.

Today, British Columbia's top junior league is known as the BC Hockey League (BCHL), or as some of the more old-school fans call it, the BC Junior Hockey League (BCJHL) as it was known from 1967 to 1995. But, when the league was formed in 1961, it was called the Okanagan-Mainline Junior Hockey League or the OMJHL.

The Founding Four

The league began when the owners of four Okanagan-based Junior B teams decided to join forces and create their own league. The owners of the Kamloops Rockets, Kelowna Buckaroos, Penticton Junior Vees and Vernon Junior Canadians met in a Vernon hotel and Canadians owner Bill Brown persuaded his three colleagues to create the province's first ever Junior A hockey league. The Okanagan-Mainline Junior Hockey League played its first games in the fall of 1961 and Brown served for two years as the league's first President.

Kamloops dominated the early years of the league, winning the league championship four out of the first five seasons. The Kelowna Buckaroos were also a top-end team. They won the title in 1965 after finishing second the three years prior.

The OMJHL underwent many changes throughout the '60s as it tried to find its footing as a league. The Penticton Junior Vees went on hiatus after the 1962-63 season and returned a year later as the Broncos.

Name changes seemed to be a theme at that time as well. In 1963, the league officially changed its name to the Okanagan Junior Hockey League or the OJHL (not to be confused with the current-day Ontario Junior Hockey League which uses the same abbreviation). Kamloops changed its name from the Junior Rockets, to the Kraft Kings and then back to the Rockets all within a six-year span. It was the same thing in Vernon as the Junior Canadians rebranded to the Blades and then the Essos during the decade.

Tom Williamson was a member of the Blades and the Essos and got the opportunity to play for his hometown team in Vernon from 1966 to 1968. He remembers a league that was bursting with a sense of community, even though the players at the time had to be tough as nails.

"My first year, I was 10th in scoring, but I also was 10th in penalties, so if you add the two, I was the leading scorer," Williamson said with a chuckle. "There were no helmets, so the attitude was, don't pretend to be tough unless you are."

"It was a community then. The other cities were the same too. One of the reasons why we attracted a lot of fans in those days is we were all Vernon kids. We all played minor hockey together. There was that sense of community there."

Another good way to gauge how different the game of hockey and life in general was back then is a quote from the late Vern Dye, who was one of the founders of the BCHL, an owner of Vernon's franchise for decades and the current namesake of the league's Most Valuable Player trophy.

"In our first year, our budget was $15,000.00," he said. "We traveled by car to road games and we did pay the players a bit. They got $20 to $40 a month and room and board. Back then, skates cost $50 and sticks were $1.10."

First Expansion

The rebranding of teams and the Penticton hiatus wasn't even the biggest change of the decade. That came in the form of expansion.

Just like the NHL, the league decided to add teams in 1967. They introduced the New Westminster Royals and the Victoria Cougars both in the same year. Since the league expanded beyond just the Okanagan, a new name was needed. Thus, the BC Junior Hockey League or BCJHL was born and the league would be known as such for the next 28 years. Before the end of the decade, one more team was added when the short-lived Vancouver Centennials joined the fold in 1969, only to cease operations three years later.

The BCJHL also crowned new champions late in the decade as the Penticton Broncos won back-to-back titles in '67 and '68 and the Victoria Cougars became the first expansion team to win the league in 1969.

Looking back

Three of the founding four teams are still alive today. Although there was the brief hiatus and several name changes, the Penticton Junior Vees live on today and are back under the Vees name. The Vernon Junior Canadians experienced the same thing with a brief hiatus in the 1970s and several name changes, but are currently known as the Vernon Vipers.
You may think the Kamloops Junior Rockets are defunct, but that is not the case. After a brief move to White Rock in the 1973-74 season, the team packed up and headed to Merritt where they have been known as the Centennials ever since. They are the longest continuously-run franchise in the BCHL.

The Kelowna Buckaroos weren't so lucky. After winning the 1965 and 1974 league championships, they moved to Summerland in 1983 and eventually folded in 1988 after a 27-year run. BCJHL hockey came back to Kelowna shortly after the Buckaroos left and now days they are able to cheer for the West Kelowna Warriors franchise.

When he reflects on the BCHL's 60 years, Williamson says the league's longevity and ability to withstand adversity in those early days is what is most impressive.

"What stands out the most is the fact that [the league] has sustained itself over time," he said. "I know Penticton had to drop out at one point and Vernon suspended operations for a period as well. Different owners came along and really made it roll."

# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 1970s

January 18, 2022 ... https://bchl.ca/60th-anniversary-spotlight-1970s



As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. Today, we go back to the league's second decade of existence, the 1970s.

The first decade of the BCHL mainly featured the founding four teams, located in Kamloops, Kelowna, Penticton and Vernon, but by 1970 the league had already begun expanding. That would continue to be a big theme as the following decade played out when another 10 teams entered the league, although many of them were short lived.

The founding four teams continued to dominate in the early part of the decade, but a new powerhouse team emerged in the years that followed.

Expansion Boom

With the recently renamed BC Junior Hockey League (BCJHL) searching for viable markets to expand their reach in the 1970s, the result was a lot of trial and error. The New Westminster Bruins, Victoria Cougars and Vancouver Centennials entered the fold in the late '60s, but all said goodbye after just four years.

In 1970, the league welcomed the Chilliwack Bruins, then the Bellingham Blazers and Nanaimo Clippers in 1972. The year after, it was the Langley Lords turn to join the club. The second half of the decade saw even more teams enter the fray, including the Kamloops Braves (after the Rockets moved), Abbotsford Flyers, Chilliwack Colts (after the Bruins left), Delta Suns, Richmond Sockeyes and Nor'Wes Caps.

For current-day BCHL fans, the Clippers are likely the most recognizable name from that group. With the exception of one season when they were known as the Esquimalt Clippers in 1982-83, the team has remained virtually untouched since 1972.

In addition to the expansion boom, the decade also saw some existing BCJHL teams relocate. Most significantly, the Kamloops Rockets moved to White Rock and became the Centennials in 1973 and less than a year later, they moved again to Merritt where they remain today.

## A New Powerhouse

Vernon was the only founding four team without a league championship in the 1960s, but they remedied that when the Essos brought the league championship home in 1970 and 1972. Kamloops, Penticton and Kelowna each won one apiece before the league gave way to some new blood.

In 1975, the Bellingham Blazers won their first of two championships in the decade, but 1976 marked the beginning of a dominant run for the Nanaimo Clippers organization. The Clippers won three straight titles from 1976 to 1978, all three times over the Penticton Vees. The third was won in controversial fashion as the Vees forfeit the series after a brawl broke out in Game 3.

According to former Nanaimo coach Larry McNabb, his team won the championship, but paid for it on the bottom line.

"It was a disaster," recalled McNabb. "We split two games in Penticton, and then we had a brawl in Game 3. Penticton's coach pulled his team off the ice, but they started it. We were declared the winner, but the problem was that I was getting 2,000 fans a game. We won a championship, but lost money. We got robbed!"

## A Monumental First

The 1970s saw the first BCJHL player selected by a team in the NHL Entry Draft. In 1974-75, Merritt Centennials forward Greg Agar put up 90 points in 52 regular-season games which undoubtedly caught the eye of scouts at the highest level. At the 1975 NHL draft in Montreal, Que., Agar was taken in the 10th round by the California Golden Seals to become the first player selected from the BCJHL.

The Vernon, B.C. native would never end up playing any NHL games, but he was the first in what became a long line of players from the league hearing their names called at the draft. Prior to that, it was common for young players to get their start in the BCJHL, then move on to the Western Canadian Hockey League (now known as the WHL) where they would eventually get drafted, but Agar was the first to be taken straight out of the BCJHL, which is common practice now days.

Agar, who is now 66-years-old, played one more year in Merritt, before embarking on a minor-league career.

## Churning Out Talent

The 1970s was also the decade where alumni from the BCJHL started to make their mark at the highest level. Several players who came through the league in the decade went on to have productive and successful careers in the NHL.

Glenn Anderson, who won six Stanley Cups in his career and totaled 1,099 points, got his start with the Bellingham Blazers in 1977-78. He is one of only three former BCHL players to top 1,000 points in the NHL.

Other players like John Ogrodnick (Maple Ridge Bruins), Mel Bridgman (Nanaimo Clippers), Stan Smyl (Bellingham), Barry Pederson (Nanaimo) and Ryan Walter (Langley Lords) all came through the BCJHL in the 1970s and went on to collect over 600 NHL points.

This group of players led the way for the crop of superstar NHL players that came from the league in the 1980s and '90s.

Another notable player in the 1970s was Vernon Essos forward Ed Johnstone. He played for Vernon for two years from 1970 to 1972 and eventually embarked on a 12-year NHL career with the New York Rangers and Detroit Red Wings.

He echoed the sentiments of many who played at the time. Back then, junior hockey was a much different game than it is now.

"There wasn't nearly as much scoring as there is today, but it was a good league," said Johnstone. "I think it was a little tougher. You had to take the body. I think there was way less stick work than there is today. If you did wield your stick around, you had to stand up for yourself. You learned how to play the game and you learned how to take a check and give a check. The number-one thing was that you learned how to protect yourself. You were a fair player. You just played the game hard."

# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 1980s

February 17, 2022 ... https://bchl.ca/60th-anniversary-spotlight-1980s



As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. Today, we go back to the 1980s, a decade which proved to be monumental for the league.

The 1980s were a landmark decade for the BC Junior Hockey League (BCJHL), as it was known at the time. Not only did the league begin to produce true NHL superstars and get consistent representation at the draft, it began to make its mark on a national level and emerge as a powerhouse Junior A league in Canada.

Superstars in the Making

The previous decade saw a crop of BCJHL alumni reach the NHL and make a significant impact. Players like

Stan Smyl, John Ogrodnick and Hockey Hall of Famer Glenn Anderson made it to the top of the professional ranks and continued on with successful NHL careers.

But it was during the 1980s when the true superstars started to filter through the BCJHL and burst onto the scene in the pros. The prime example is Brett Hull. Fresh off his 18th birthday and a season playing Juvenile hockey in the Vancouver area, Hull joined the Penticton Knights for the 1982-83 season and the rest was history. He scored 48 goals in 50 games his rookie season and finished sixth in league scoring with 104 points. His second season in Penticton was even more impressive as he set the single-season record for goals with 105 in just 56 games, a mark that still stands today. He also set the record for points in a single season with 188, another record that has yet to be broken. His scoring prowess was so notorious that the league eventually named its top scorer trophy after him.

Hull was surprisingly passed over in the NHL Draft after his rookie campaign with the Knights, but his record-breaking second year sealed the deal and he was selected in the sixth round of the 1984 draft by the Calgary Flames. Hull would go on to play two years at the University of Minnesota-Duluth and was a finalist for the Hobey Baker Award his second year after recording 84 points in 42 games. Once he reached the NHL, he turned into one of the best and purest goal scorers the league has ever seen. Hull led the NHL in goals on three different occasions, including the 1990-91 season where he scored 86 times, which was the third most in NHL history. He also won the Hart Trophy as the league's Most Valuable Player that season.

Hull won the Stanley Cup twice in his career, once with the Dallas Stars in 1999 where he scored the overtime finals clinching goal, and once more late in his career with the Deroit Red Wings. He was inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 2009.

Not to be outdone, another eventual Hockey Hall of Famer came through the BCJHL in the '80s and that was former Langley Eagle Mark Recchi. The Kamloops, B.C. native played his 16-year-old season in Langley where he put up 65 points in 51 games before jumping to the Western Hockey League and eventually being selected by the Pittsburgh Penguins in the 1988 NHL Entry Draft. Recchi played in the NHL for for 23 years, won three Stanley Cups and racked up 1,533 points, the most by any BCHL alumni.

Not quite superstars, but big-time offensive producers in their own right, players like Ray Ferraro (Penticton Knights, 1981-82), Cliff Ronning (New Westminster Royals, 1982-83), Geoff Courtnall (Cowichan Valley Capitals, 1980-81) and Joe Murphy (Penticton Knights, 1984-85) all spent time in the BCJHL during the decade and ended up having lengthy NHL careers.

NHL Draft Representation

1975 marked the first time a player was chosen by an NHL team in the draft directly from the BCJHL when Merritt Centennial Greg Agar went in the 10th round. In the 1980s, that became a regular occurrence.

Every year from 1980 to 1989, there was at least one BCJHL player drafted by an NHL team. The most significant pick was Brett Hull to Calgary in 1984 for all the reasons above, but the highest pick was also a milestone for the league. In 1989, Jason Marshall of the Vernon Lakers was the first-ever first-round pick to come out of the BCJHL when he was selected ninth overall by the St. Louis Blues. Marshall was coming off a season where he had 40 points in 48 games for Vernon, but also had 197 penalty minutes, which was likely another enticing factor given the style of play at the time.

The 1982 NHL Draft featured eight selections out of the BCJHL, which stood as the high-water mark until 2003. The most significant player out of that year's group was Ray Ferraro, chosen in the fifth round by the Hartford Whalers after notching 135 points in 48 games for the Penticton Knights during the '81-82 campaign.

Dynasties Born and National Recognition

The Penticton Knights dominated the 1980s, winning the league championship five out of 10 years, including three straight to start the decade and another two in a row in 1985 and 1986.

The '80s also saw the dawn of the Vernon Lakers dynasty which bled into the early '90s. The Lakers won back-to-back titles in 1988 and 1989, to start their run of four championships in five years.

Mixed in with the two dynasties were a handful of first-time winners. The Abbotsford Flyers won the title in 1983, the Langley Eagles were league champions the following year after only two years of existence and the Richmond Sockeyes took home the top prize in 1987.

A key member of that Sockeyes team was Dave Tomlinson, a second-year forward at the time and Richmond's leading scorer that season with 108 points in 51 games.
Tomlinson, who went on to play 15 years of professional hockey, recalls how dominant that team was and how they seemed destined to win it all.

"As the season and the playoffs went on, we realized that there probably wasn't another team in the country that could beat us," he said. "Our coach was Orland Kurtenbach and he had a tight grip on our hockey club from the very start. I think he knew we had something special. We got better as the season went on. It was a really special team and a special feeling knowing you had a team built for the postseason."

"There wasn't a team that was setup like we were, that could play any style you wanted and of course, with Orland Kurtenbach as our coach, he really knew the temperature of a hockey game and how to get us ready for what we needed to do that night."

That Sockeyes team would go on to win the Centennial Cup as national champion, but they were not the first BCJHL team to accomplish the feat. That milestone belonged to the Penticton Knights the year prior. That was the first of many to come for the league as it established itself as a dominant force in the country. That set off a run of BCHL teams winning the national championship 14 times over the next 32 years.

Records Set, Records Broke

Keeping with the hockey trend of the high-flying '80s, the BCJHL saw several offensive records set during the decade, only to see them broken shortly after.

At the conclusion of the 1979-80 season, Nanaimo Clippers forward John Newberry set the all-time single season record for most goals with 84. That record would be tested over the next few years with Cliff Ronning scoring 83 in 1982-83, before Brett Hull shattered the mark in '83-84 with his 105 tallies.

Newberry also set the all-time points record in 1980 with 185, before Hull came along and topped that one with his 188. The league's single-season assists record was also set in the '80s when Burnaby Blue Hawks forward Bob Ginnetti recorded 111 in 1985-86.

New Blood

The '80s were not as hectic as the previous decades when it came to expansion, although some significant additions were made. The Coquitlam Comets entered the league in 1980-81, but moved to Langley to become the Eagles after just one season. The team won the league title in 1984 before moving to Chilliwack, Ladner and Bellingham. They ultimately landed in Trail and became the Smoke Eaters that are in the league today.

The Cowichan Valley Capitals also entered the fray in 1980. The team moved to Sidney, Juan de Fuca, back to Cowichan and then to Victoria before returning to the Cowichan Valley for good in 1993.

1988 sadly saw the end of one of the league's founding four franchises when the Summerland Buckaroos ceased operations. The team moved from Kelowna to Summerland in '83 before shutting things down five years later. Thankfully, the league has returned to Kelowna in several different forms since then, including the current-day West Kelowna Warriors.

# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 1990s

As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. Today, we go back to the 1990s, a decade which provided stability for the ever-growing league.

The 1990s were another formative decade for the BCHL. The league continued to establish its dominance on the national stage, something that started to build throughout the '80s. It also introduced stability in the form of new leadership, saw important records broken that stand to this day and also produced the next true superstar at the highest level.

The Next One

In 1990, a 16-year-old Vancouver-born player named Paul Kariya made his debut with the Penticton Panthers. From day one, it was clear that Kariya possessed an inordinate amount of talent and he was set on proving that every chance he got. As a rookie in the BCJHL as it was known at the time, he led his team in scoring and tied for sixth overall in the league with 112 points in 54 games.

It didn't take long for the rest of the hockey world notice there was a special talent plying his trade in the league. That year, Kariya got the invite to play for Team Canada at the Under-18s and led the country in points with 12 in five games at the tournament.

Pat Hodgins is sixth all time in BCHL scoring and was playing his fifth and final season in the league for the Victoria Warriors during Kariya's rookie campaign. He got the chance to play against him on numerous occasions that year and he recalls recognizing what a special player he was even at that young age.
"He was head and shoulders the most talented kid in the league, without question." said Hodgins. "It was a pleasure to play against him. It was hard to play against him. He was that good."

"We played against each other in Victoria. During the game, he got his 100th point, so we faced off and I said congratulations and he said thanks. Later in the game, I got my 100th point and he said congratulations and I said 'well thanks, but you're 16 and I'm 20.'

With a year of junior hockey experience under his belt, Kariya enjoyed even more success in his second season in the league, finishing second in league scoring with 132 points 41 games. He once again got to show his skills on the international stage that year, representing Canada at the IIHF World Junior Championship as a 17-year-old.

Kariya went on to play two years at the University of Maine, winning a national championship his freshman year, and was drafted fourth overall by the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim in 1993. He averaged exactly a point per game throughout his NHL career, finishing off with 989 over 16 years. He is the fourth highest scoring BCHL alumnus and second in points per game.

Throughout his illustrious career, Kariya won gold medals at the World Juniors in 1993, at the World Championships in 1994 and at the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah.

A Decade of Dominance

We finished off the '80s with back-to-back championships in Vernon and that theme carried all the way through the following decade. The Vernon Lakers made it four in five years by winning the 1991 and 1992 titles to cement their legacy as a true dynasty.

The team's head coach for three of those seasons was Ed Johstone, who also played for Vernon back in the early 1970s. He remembers a team that used its versatility to get the job done.

"We played you hard," said Johnstone. "We could play any way you wanted to play. If you wanted to skate and play a wide-open game, we could do that. If you wanted to bang and crash, we could do that as well." "If the players were told to do something and they didn't think it was right, they would ask questions. They took that to heart and we were successful."

Vernon changed its name to the Vipers to start the 1995-96 campaign, but they kept the winning tradition going, taking the league championship that same year as well as a fourth time in the decade in 1999.
The Kelowna Spartans also enjoyed success in the early part of the '90s, winning the Fred Page Cup in back-to-back years in 1993 and 1994 before ultimately ceasing operations a year later.

Another powerhouse was brewing in the second half of the decade in South Surrey. The Eagles won their first championship in team history in 1997, led by the scoring prowess of Shane Kuss and future NHLer Scott Gomez. They would win a second title the following year and that team would eventually be inducted into the BC Hockey Hall of Fame over 20 years later.

Other champions in the decade include first-time winners the New Westminster Royals in 1990 and the Chilliwack Chiefs in 1995.

B.C. teams dominated on the national stage as well with six of 10 winners coming from the BCHL in the '90s. The Lakers won the Centennial Cup two years in a row to start the decade, then it was the Kelowna Spartans in '93, the Vipers in '96, the South Surrey Eagles in '98 and finally the Vipers again to close things out in '99.

This would prove to be the most successful era the league would enjoy at the National Championship tournament.

An All-Time Great

Although he never played in the NHL like many of the great BCHL players from the past, one of the best and most important players in league history is former South Surrey Eagle Shane Kuss. The diminutive forward

shredded team defences for four years from 1993 to 1997 and, after registering three straight seasons of over 100 points, holds the league record for points in a career with 418 in 238 games, over 40 more than the next closest. A setup man at heart, he also holds the record for most assists in a career with 282.

Kuss is humble when discussing his accomplishments in the league and is always sure to credit his teammates and others around him at the time.

"The time I spent there, the people I played with, the memories I have, it all contributes to how I feel about that record," said Kuss. "It was a lot of fun going through that. I wouldn't have been able to accomplish a lot of those numbers without good teammates and good linemates. I was fortunate enough to have those people around me that I bonded with and was able to achieve those numbers."

Kuss' first 100-point year came in his sophomore season in the league when he collected 123 points. The next year, he notched 107, but his high-water mark came in 1996-97 when he put up 140 points on 50 goals and 90 assists to lead the league in scoring for the first time.

That final season would prove to be memorable in another way as the Eagles won their first championship in franchise history.
"The year before, we were up and down and building towards it," said Kuss. "To be able to finally win and experience what it feels like to win that championship and to share that with a group of people that you worked so hard with, you battled in practice and spent so much time with, that's what you want. That's the end prize."

"It was a great time in my life. Being able to build memories and bonds in those years, you'll never forget that."

A New Direction

In 1990, with climbing attendance numbers, increased media coverage and new corporate partnerships, the BCJHL introduced its first full-time league president in Ron Boileau. Under his guidance, the league experienced stability for the first time in its existence.
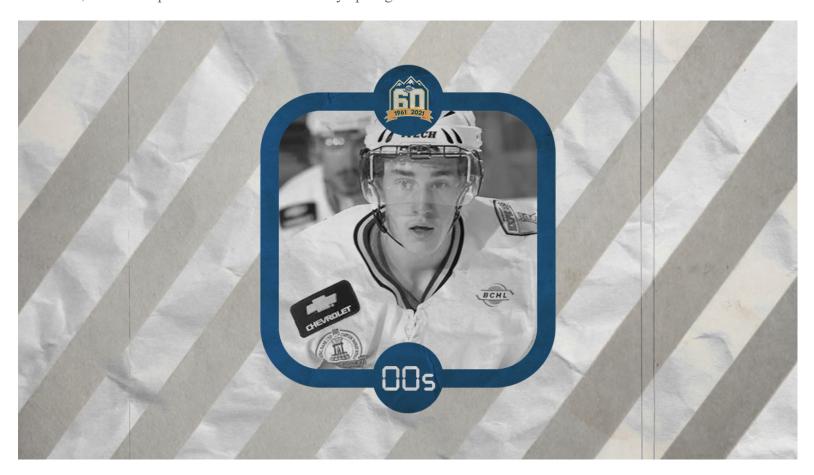
In the 1980s, there were 16 franchises that relocated, but in the 10 years after he took the job, there were only four.

Even with a new guiding hand and relative quiet when it came to relocation, there were still a number of significant teams added in the '90s that remain a huge part of today's league. The Victoria Salsa began play in 1994 and are known as the Grizzlies today. The Royal City Outlaws were also introduced that same year, and after a brief two-year stint, relocated to Prince George where the Spruce Kings Junior A chapter was born.1994 also welcomed the Langley Thunder franchise. The team stayed in Langley until 2006 when it moved to West Kelowna to become the Westside Warriors, known as the West Kelowna Warriors today. The Quesnel Millionaires came along in 1996 and stayed there until 2011 when they were reborn as the Chilliwack Chiefs. Finally, the Burnaby Bulldogs entered the league in 1998 and, after four years, moved to Port Alberni to become the Alberni Valley Bulldogs of today.

One more change during the decade was the name of the league itself. In 1996, the letter J was dropped from the acronym and the league became simply known as the BC Hockey League, or the BCHL. A name that has stuck for the past 26 years.

# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 2000s

As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. In this edition, we go back to the 2000s, a decade which saw new highs at the NHL Draft and the introduction of new leadership.

The 2000s were yet another decade of growth for the BC Hockey League. Within the decade, the league would augment its reputation amongst scouts at the highest level, establish a league office for the first time and experience expansion in the form of three new franchises.

Dominating at the Draft

During the 2000s, the BCHL really established itself as a breeding ground for NHL teams to find talent. From 2000 to 2009, there were 59 players selected from BCHL teams at the NHL Draft, which is the most of any decade to date. The fact that there were nine rounds at the time helped these numbers, but in 2003 alone, there were 11 players taken and a year later, there were 10.

Although it did not quite match up with the numbers from 2003 and 2004, the '07 draft may well be the most significant of the decade. From 2005 to 2007, Kyle Turris established himself as a high-end NHL prospect after putting up 193 points in 110 regular-season games with the Burnaby Express, including his last year where he came second in league scoring with 121 points as a 17-year-old. He also helped lead the Express to a league an national title in 2006.

Turris would be selected third overall by the Phoenix Coyotes at the 2007 draft and became the highest-ever pick from the BCHL and the highest ever pick of a Junior A player, a mark that stands to this day. Turris remains an NHLer and is currently in his second season with the Edmonton Oilers.

That '07 draft featured another first-rounder from the BCHL in Riley Nash who also remains in the league and is currently a member of the Arizona Coyotes.

There was one more notable name that came from the same draft year, although he had to wait until the fifth round to hear his name called. Former Victoria Grizzlies forward Jamie Benn was selected by the Dallas Stars and became the most productive NHL player to come out of the league in the 2000s. Benn has played the entirety of his career in Dallas and is the 10th all-time leading scorer among BCHL alumni with 754 points and counting over a 13-year NHL career.

A Moment of Parity

In contrast to what we saw in previous decades, the 2000s did not feature one or two teams dominating when it comes to league championships. There were no dynasties in the decade, which indicated parity within the league was on the horizon. This point was driven home when there was a six-year span with six different champions, which was something uncommon in years past.

To start off the decade, the Chilliwack Chiefs won their first title since moving from Richmond in 1990. The year after that, it was the Victoria Salsa who captured their first Fred Page Cup in franchise history.

A key part of that championship Salsa team was Kyle Greentree who played five seasons with the Salsa from 1999 to 2004 and ended up as the league's third all-time leading goal scorer and point producer.

"We had a lot of older guys," recalled Greentree. "As we went through the playoffs, it was pretty tough. We played Nanaimo, Burnaby and Merritt. I remember a lot of Game 7s. The Game 7 at home in the finals was pretty crazy when we won it. I'm from Victoria, so friends and family were there. It was something that we all worked pretty hard towards."

The Chiefs won it again in 2002, then it was the Vernon Vipers, Nanaimo Clippers, Surrey Eagles and Burnaby Express, who won in just their fifth year of existence and their first after moving to Burnaby. In 2007, the Clippers won for the second time in four years and the year after, the Penticton Vees won their first title in 22 seasons.

The Vernon Vipers would win it all in 2009, which was a signal of things to come in the following decade.

Expanding Again

As mentioned previously, the BCHL welcomed the Coquitlam Express into the fold in 2001. The team played there for four seasons before relocating to Burnaby in 2005. After winning the Fred Page Cup in their first year in Burnaby, the team was destined to return to Coquitlam a few year later, returning in 2010 where they have remained ever since.

That same season saw the addition of another current-day franchise in the Salmon Arm Silverbacks. The BCHL had tried the Salmon Arm/Shuswap market in the past with the Totems/Blazers/Tigers franchise in the '80s, but this time they got it right with the Silverbacks who have been a league member ever since.

One other expansion team entered the fray during the decade. The Williams Lake TimberWolves began play in 2002, but their experience was short-lived. The team took a two-year hiatus from 2007 to 2009 before returning for one year and ultimately ceasing operations in 2010.

Several other teams relocated during the decade to become more familiar to current-day BCHL fans. The Chilliwack Chiefs moved to Langley to become the Langley Chiefs, who eventually turned into the Rivermen. That team replaced the Langley Hornets who moved to West Kelowna in 2006 to become the Westside Warriors and eventually the West Kelowna Warriors. The Burnaby Bulldogs, founded in 1998, moved to Port Alberni in 2002 to become the Alberni Valley Bulldogs.

Last, but not least, the Victoria Salsa ditched the muscular jalapeno pepper logo and rebranded as the Grizzlies in 2006.

A Broken Record

One significant league milestone was broken in the 2000s when Mike Di Stefano set the record for most games played with 297. Di Stefano played five seasons in the league from 2000 to 2004 and suited up for four different franchises, including the Burnaby Bulldogs, Quesnel Millionaires, Powell River Kings and Chilliwack Chiefs. He even returned to the Bulldogs for a period after they had moved to Port Alberni.

"It's quite a privilege to be able to say [I own the record]," said Di Stefano. "I think about the fun I had, the friendships I made. and the experiences I went through. It's a really cool thing to have. It's something that I'll be able to show my kids and talk to my friends about."
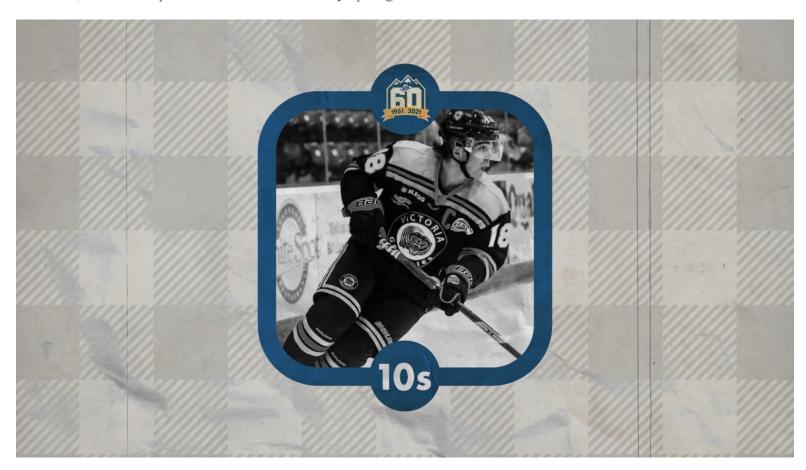
The First League Office

There was plenty to talk about on the ice in the 2000s, but the BCHL made significant strides off the ice as well. For the first time in league history, the BCHL established a league office in 2003 under the guidance of new Commissioner John Grisdale, a former NCAA and NHL defenceman.

Under Grisdale's watch, the BCHL quickly introduced a league website and eventually began live broadcasts of BCHL games, something taken for granted today.

To the dismay of some and the delight of most, the league got rid of its caveman drawing logo in 2005 in favour of the current BCHL mark that exists today.

# 60th Anniversary Spotlight: 2010s

March 28, 2022 ...   https://bchl.ca/60th-anniversary-spotlight-2010s

*As we celebrate the BC Hockey League's 60th Anniversary season, we will take a look back at the past and celebrate the teams and people that made this league what it is today. In this edition, we go back to the 2010s.*

Our final decade recap takes a look at the 2010s, where new champions were crowned, new teams were introduced and records were broken. The BCHL also set new standards when it comes to college-committed players and performance at the NHL Draft, while a new batch of potential future NHL stars were lighting up the league.

<u>42 Straight</u>

The 2011-12 Penticton Vees were always going to be a good team, but nobody could have predicted the heights they would end up reaching. The team finished second in the Interior Conference the year before, just four points back of the eventual champion Vernon Vipers. The Vees won their first-round series with the Quesnel Millionaires that year, but were bounced by a solid Salmon Arm Silverbacks team in five games in the second round.

The Vees won their first-round series with the Quesnel Millionaires that year, but were bounced by a solid Salmon Arm Silvrbacks team in five games in the second round.The Vees got off to a great start in 2011-12, going 12-3-2 through their first 17 games. On Nov. 5, 2011, they dropped a 3-2 overtime decision to the Merritt Centennials. After that, the team reeled off 42 straight winsbefore their streak was halted on the final game of the regular season. The 42 consecutive victories not only set a BCHL record, but established the mark for the Canadian Junior Hockey League.

That season, Penticton boasted six of the league's top-nine leading scorers, including Joey Benik who finished second overall with 96 points in 60 games and future NHLer Mike Reilly who led all BCHL defencemen with 83 points.

In the playoffs, Penticton got by the Chilliwack Chiefs in six, the Merritt Centennials in five and beat the Powell River Kings in four straight to clinch the Fred Page Cup.

They eventually capped off their magical season with a national championship after a 4-3 win over the Woodstock Slammers of the Maritime Junior Hockey League.

<u>Setting a New Standard at the Draft</u>

We've talked a lot about the BCHL's performance at the NHL Draft through the decades and how it peaked in quantity in the 2000s where there were the most players selected in any other decade.

But, if you're looking for quality over quantity, the 2010s might be the best stretch for the league. The 2016 draft in particular set a new standard for first-round picks as three BCHL players were chosen on the first day of the draft, the most in league history.

Penticton Vees forward Tyson Jost went 10th overall to the Colorado Avalanche, Vees defenceman Dante Fabbro was taken 17th by the Nashville Predators and Chilliwack Chiefs blueliner Dennis Cholowski was chosen 20th by the Detroit Red Wings.

Later on in the decade, the BCHL also experienced one of the better drafts in history, but what made it more special was the fact it was hosted in Vancouver, allowing many of the league's prospects to attend in person. The 2019 NHL Entry Draft saw eight BCHL players selected, an additional four that would go on to play in the league the following year and two others that had previously played in the BCHL. The highest pick that year was Victoria Grizzlies forward Alex Newhook, fresh off lighting the league up for 100 points. He was taken 16th overall by Colorado and is currently a regular in their lineup, just two years after being drafted.

"It was a pretty crazy day," said Newhook. "It's something you dream of your whole life. To have that kind of support there with my family and my friends from Victoria, it was everything I dreamed of and more."

The Last True Dynasty

We finished off the 2000s with yet another championship for the Vernon Vipers. They would carry that momentum into the next decade, winning in 2010 and again in 2011 to cap a three-year stretch of winning. This run also included back-to-back national championships in 2009 and 2010. That Vipers team would be the last dynasty the BCHL would see to date. Since then, no team has won the Fred Page Cup in consecutive years and only the Vees have won it more than once.

After their record-setting championship in 2012, Penticton won again in 2015 and 2017. The Surrey Eagles rekindled their magic from the '90s for another title in 2013, while the Coquitlam Express won their second championship in franchise history a year later.

It was the West Kelowna Warriors' turn to win their first Fred Page Cup in 2016 and they also capped it off with a national title. The decade closed out with another first-time winner, the Prince George Spruce Kings. PG dominated the BCHL playoffs, going 16-1 en route to the Fred Page Cup.

Although they did not win the league championship, the 2018 Chilliwack Chiefs were another team that left their mark during the decade. After being ousted in the first round of the BCHL playoffs, the Chiefs still had a date at the national championship tournament over a month later as they were playing hosts to the RBC Cup. The team made a coaching change after the playoffs and promoted Brian Maloney to head coach, which seemed to spark the room. The Chiefs went on a Cinderella run at the tournament, losing once in overtime in the opener to their BCHL rivals from Wenatchee, before winning five straight to capture the national championship on home ice.

Wild Times in Wenatchee

You may have noticed one year was missing in the rundown of Fred Page Cup winners during the 2010s. That would be the 2018 title, which went to the Wenatchee Wild in only their third season in the league.

In 2015-16, the Wild joined the BCHL from the North American Hockey League to become the league's lone American team. The BCHL had previously expanded south, but there had not been a team in the U.S. since the Bellingham Blazers left in 1995. The Wild immediately became contenders, finishing second in the Mainland Division their first year of existence. By 2017-18, Wenatchee was playing out of the Interior Division and were pushing Penticton and Vernon for top spot.

As the third seed, the Wild beat Merritt, Vernon and Trail on their way to the finals where the matched up against Prince George. The Spruce Kings were no match for Wenatchee's high-pace offence and lockdown defensive play and the Wild skated to a five-game series win and a championship in year three as a member of the BCHL.

Wreaking Having on the Record Books

Several BCHL all-time records were surpassed during the decade, all of which were by goaltenders.

Former Penticton Vees and Powell River Kings netminder Michael Garteig clinched multiple records in the early 2010s after he wrapped up a three-year career in the league. He set the all-time career shutouts record with 12 and the career wins mark with 92. He posted the single-season record for goals-against average in 2011-12 with 1.69, as well as the single-season record for shutouts with seven. That shutout mark was equaled in 2017-18 by Vernon Vipers goalie Ty Taylor. The two netminders are tied with former Merritt and Prince George goalie Brad Thiessen who originally set the mark back in 2005-06. The single-season save percentage record was also set during the decade when Vernon Vipers goalie Darion Hanson posted a mark of .945.

In addition, the league reached new heights in the 2010s when it comes to NCAA scholarships. The BCHL saw an increase in college-committed players every year after 2014-15 and the league's new high was set during the 2019-20 season when it finished with 173 players with NCAA Division I scholarships.

## Happy Trails

At the conclusion of the 2017-18 campaign, it was announced that longtime Commissioner John Grisdale was retiring from his post. Grisdale was at the helm of the league office for 15 years.

Later that year, the league hired former sports executive Chris Hebb as the second Commissioner in league history. He remains in the position today.
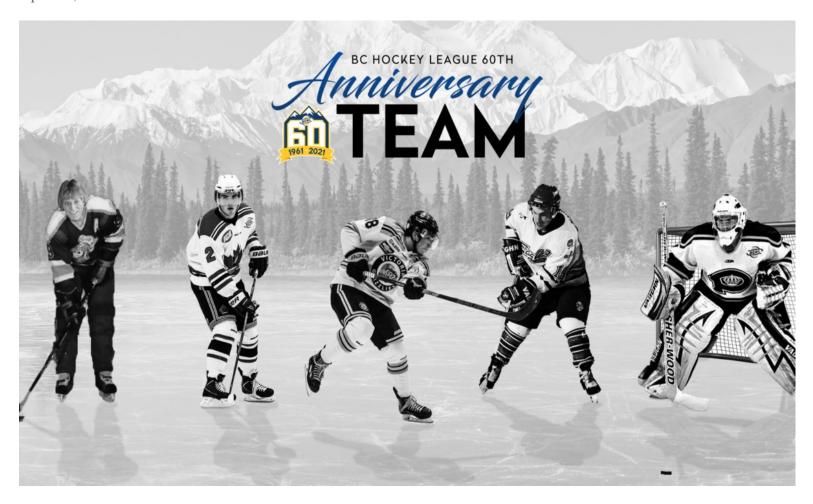
## Post Script

Since the end of the 2010s, the BCHL has not awarded a league champion because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The league was forced to cancel its playoffs after the first round in 2019 and played a shortened 20-game pod season with no playoffs in 2020-21.

In 2020, the BCHL introduced its latest expansion team, the Cranbrook Bucks. The Bucks inaugural campaign was the shortened pod season, but its first full-length season came this year. The team qualified for the postseason as the fifth seed in the Interior Conference.

2021 saw yet another standout performance at the NHL Draft as well. Former Trail Smoke Eaters forward Kent Johnson was drafted fifth overall by the Columbus Blue Jackets after playing his freshman season at the University of Michigan. Johnson won the league MVP in his final year in the BCHL and also eclipsed the 100-point mark as the league's top scorer.

# BCHL unveils 60th Anniversary Team

April 12, 2022



The BC Hockey League has spent the season honouring the league's 60th Anniversary by looking back on its six decades of existence. To finish off this year's coverage of that milestone year, the league has sourced the opinions of three BCHL experts to determine the 60th Anniversary Team. A roster featuring the all-time greatest and most impactful players that have come through the BCHL.

These players were judged solely on their BCHL careers and not what they went on to do afterwards. Goals, points and shutouts are important, but this list is full of players who made a significant impact on the league during their time. The 60th Anniversary Team is composed of 12 forwards, six defencemen and two goalies. The three experts that helped determine the roster are the BCHL's official historian Fred Hume, managing editor and creator of the BCHL Network website Brian Wiebe and Paul Beugeling, creator of VernonJrAHockey.ca a site dedicated to the history of the BCHL as well as the Vernon Vipers franchise.

Each person submitted their list of forwards, defencemen and goalies and the three were combined to determine one team. Tiebreakers were decided by the BCHL Office. The list is separated by position and in order of highest to lowest vote total.

## Forwards

**Shane Kuss (Surrey Eagles – 1993 to 1997)**
The BCHL's all-time leading scorer, this was a slam-dunk as the top forward choice for the 60th Anniversary Team and one of the few names to appear on all three submissions. Kuss played four years in the league, finishing his career with 418 points and 282 assists, both all-time best marks in a BCHL career. He capped off his four years in the league with a Fred Page Cup title in 1997.

**Brett Hull (Penticton Knights – 1982 to 1984)**
The man has a major BCHL award named after him, so naturally he appears high on the list. In 1983-84, Hull set the single-season mark with 82 goals and 188 points, a record that still stands today. He finished his two-year career with 192 points and 153 goals in just 106 games. He is the most successful BCHL alum at the NHL level, having won two Stanley Cups and one Hart Trophy for Most Valuable Player.

**Gordie McKay (Penticton Broncos/Vees – 1973 to 1977)**
McKay's name is all over the BCHL record books. In his four seasons in the league, he finished with 208 goals, the most all-time and 376 points, second only to Kuss. He also posted the fourth-highest goal total in a single season with 79 during the 1976-77 campaign.

**Paul Kariya (Penticton Panthers – 1990 to 1992)**
One of the most recognizable alumni the league has ever produced, Kariya spent two years in the BCHL starting in his 16-year-old season. After 112 and 132-point seasons, both of which he was named Interior Conference Most Valuable Player, and a World Junior Championship experience, he solidified himself as a high-end NHL prospect. After a year at the University of Maine, Kariya was selected fourth overall in the 1993 NHL Entry Draft by the Mighty Ducks of Anaheim. He finished his BCHL career with 244 points in 95 games, a 2.57 points-per-game average.

**John Newberry (Nanaimo Clippers – 1979 to 1980)**
Newberry falls under the 'here for a good time, not a long time' category. The Port Alberni, B.C. product only played one year in the BCHL, but he made a huge impact. In his lone season in the league in 1979-80, Newberry put up 185 points, second most all-time in a single season and most ever by a BCHL rookie. He also notched 84 goals, second-most in a single season and most for a rookie, as well as 101 assists, fourth-most in a single season and two off the rookie record.

**Kyle Greentree (Victoria Salsa – 1999 to 2004)**
Greentree is the BCHL's third all-time leading scorer with 375 points over his five-year career in Victoria. He is also the BCHL's third-highest goal scorer with 183 and 10th in assists with 192. In his second year in the league, he led the BCHL Playoffs in scoring with 30 points in 24 games, guiding the Salsa to their first league championship in franchise history.

**Robb Gordon (Powell River Paper Kings – 1992 to 1994)**
Gordon had two highly productive seasons for Powell River in the early '90s. His rookie year, he put up 93 points in 60 games and in his second, he had 158 points in 60 games, good enough for the seventh highest total in a single BCHL season. He finished his two-year career with 251 points in 120 games. He won the Vern Dye Memorial Trophy for Most Valuable Player in his final season.

**John McNabb (South Surrey Eagles – 1997 to 1999)**
Picking up where Shane Kuss left off in 1997, McNabb took over as the Eagles go-to weapon on offence, en route to the team's second straight Fred Page Cup championship in 1998. McNabb finished second in league scoring his first year with 106 points and won the league scoring title the next year with 132 points. He won the league MVP in 1999.

**Wayne Dye (Vernon Essos – 1967 to 1972)**
Dye played four season in the BCHL, all with the Vernon Essos. He finished his career with 156 goals, which puts him in seventh on the all-time list. He also won two league championships with Vernon, once in 1970 and another to wrap up his career in 1972.

**Kyle Turris (Burnaby Express – 2005 to 2007)**
Turris belongs on this list for the fact that he is the league's highest ever selection in the NHL Entry Draft, going third overall to the Phoenix Coyotes in 2007, but his numbers make a strong case for him as well. After putting up 72 points as a 16-year-old in 2005-06, Turris established him self as a bona fide NHL top prospect the following year when he led the BCHL with 121 points and 66 goals and was named Coastal Conference Most Valuable Player. He currently plays in the NHL for the Edmonton Oilers.

**Alex Newhook (Victoria Grizzlies – 2017 to 2019)**
After winning the BCHL's Rookie of the Year Award in 2017-18, Newhook became the first player in three years to crack the 100-point milestone in his second campaign when he led the league in scoring with 102 points in 53 games. He also won the league's Most Valuable Player Award that season and was selected 16th overall in the NHL draft by the Colorado Avalanche. He totaled 168 points in 98 regular-season games over his career. After two years at Boston College, he is now a regular in the Avalanche lineup.

**Joe Potskin (Chilliwack Chiefs – 1990 to 1991)**
Potskin was not in the league for long, but made a major impact. The Prince George, B.C. native racked up 60 goals and 86 assists for 146 points in 57 regular-season games. He also added another 16 points in 12 playoff games.

## Defencemen

**Campbell Blair (Shuswap Totems/Summerland Buckaroos/Vernon Lakers – 1983 to 1987)**
Blair holds multiple records for offensive defencemen. In the 1986-87 season with the Lakers, Blair set the BCHL's single-season record for goals by a defenceman with 38 and points by a blueliner with 109. The dual Scottish and Canadian citizen also has the career records for assists and points by defencemen with 169 and 274 respectively.

**Ian Kidd (Penticton Knights – 1983 to 1985)**
Kidd had an incredible three-year career with Penticton in the '80s, totaling 235 points in 143 games. During his final season in the league, he tied the mark for most assists by a defenceman in a single season with 77, en route to a 108-point campaign.

**Tom Serviss (Vernon Essos – 1967 to 1968)**
Serviss has the distinction of being the only defenceman ever to lead the BCHL in scoring when he racked up 90 points in his lone season in the league on 25 goals and 65 assists.

**Scott Frizzell (Delta Flyers/Powell River Paper Kings – 1987 to 1989)**
Frizzell is another BCHL blueliner who cracked the 100-point milestone when he racked up 120 points in his second year in the league with Powell River. Between his season with the Paper Kings and his first year with the Delta Flyers, he notched 175 career points in 105 games.

**Mike Reilly (Penticton Vees – 2011 to 2012)**
Reilly entered the BCHL having already been drafted by the Columbus Blue Jackets in the fourth round the previous summer. He did not disappoint in his one season in the league, leading all defencemen in scoring with 83 points in 51 games and quarterbacking the power play of a Vees team that set a record for consecutive wins by any Junior A team in Canada with 42 straight. He was named the Interior Conference Top Defenceman and his team won the Fred Page Cup, as well as a national championship. He currently plays for the Boston Bruins.

**Dante Fabbro (Penticton Vees – 2014 to 2016)**
Fabbro played two years with the Vees, notching 100 points in 91 regular-season games and another 23 in 32 postseason games. In his second year, he led all BCHL defencemen with 67 points and was named the league's Top Defenceman. That summer, he was drafted 17th overall by the Nashville Predators, in a draft that saw three BCHL players taken in the first round. After playing three years at Boston University, he has been with the Predators ever since.

# Goaltenders

**Michael Garteig (Powell River Kings/Penticton Vees – 2009 to 2012)**
After his three-year career, Garteig would own most BCHL goaltending records. His 92 career wins and 12 career shutouts are the most all time. His 1.69 goals-against average in 2010-11 with Powell River is the best mark in a single season and his seven shutouts that year are also tied for the most. He actually appears twice on both of those single-season record lists, posting a 1.93 goals-against the next year with Penticton, good enough for ninth best, as well as five shutouts, tied for seventh. His .934 save percentage in 2010-11 is the fourth highest all time. He finished his BCHL career with a 92-23-3 record, a .921 save percentage and a 2.07 goals-against average. He was named the league's Top Goaltender in both of his final two seasons. Garteig currently plays for HIFK in Finland.

**Hunter Miska (Penticton Vees – 2013 to 2015)**
Miska is another Vees goalie whose name is plastered all over the BCHL goaltending records. His 1.88 goals-against in 2014-15 is sixth best for a single season and his .931 save percentage that year is tied for ninth highest. He also had five shutouts that season, tying him for seventh most in one campaign. He went 53-21-5 over his career, ending his time in the league with a .924 save percentage, a 2.03 goals-against and seven shutouts. He won the league's Top Goaltender award in 2015. Miska is a member of the Colorado Eagles AHL team, the affiliate of the NHL's Avalanche.

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A big thank you to the three experts that helped us out with this project. For more work from Brian Wiebe, visit the BCHL Network website. For more work from Paul Beugeling, visit VernonJrAHockey.ca