



## **2026 National Indigenous Junior Hockey Championships** **July 16–19, 2026: Toronto, ON**

### **TECHNICAL PACKAGE**

The Technical Package is vital to the National Indigenous Junior Hockey Championships (NIJHC). It guides the selection of athletes by clarifying the age and eligibility requirements, assists the organizing committee by detailing tournament formats and scoring procedures, assists team coaches and managers in verifying eligibility, helps with budgeting by describing the number of participants permitted, advances coaching certification by stating minimum requirements and contributes to athlete development by identifying each Team display of elite Male and Female Indigenous U21 Hockey players.

We invite each Indigenous team representative from the registered Indigenous teams, and their team from both divisions has an obligation to read and understand every aspect of the NIJHC Technical Package.

If someone does not understand an aspect of the Technical Package, they should seek clarification from the Hockey Indigenous NIJHC Committee. The Technical Package is a standing document that is reviewed and revised as required, in the inaugural year and commencing every year before the upcoming NIJHC. Revisions are generally in the form of rule/guideline clarifications.

For any 2026 NIJHC inquiries and applications, please contact us at:  
[info@hockeyindigenous.com](mailto:info@hockeyindigenous.com)

## **NIJHC DEADLINES**

TEAM REGISTRATION	FEBRUARY 27, 2026
ROSTER REGISTRATION	MARCH 31, 2026
FINAL ROSTER ANNOUNCEMENT	APRIL 27, 2026
MEDIA ADVISORY PACKAGE	MAY 29, 2026
ON-SITE	JULY 15, 2026
COMMENCEMENT OF THE NIJHC	JULY 16-19, 2026

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. PARTICIPANTS.....	3
2. CLASSIFICATION.....	3
3. ELIGIBILITY.....	4
4. COMPETITION.....	6
5. OFFICIALS.....	9
6. GAME SCORING.....	9
7. MEDALS.....	11
8. EQUIPMENT.....	11
9. UNIFORMS.....	11
10. TEAM MANAGERS MEETINGS.....	11
11. MEDIA RELATIONS.....	12
12. TEAM REGISTRATION AND DEPOSIT.....	12
13. PROTEST RULE.....	12
14. NIJHC PROTOCOLS.....	12
15. AWARDS.....	13
16. FORMS TO BE COMPLETED ONLINE.....	13

## **1. PARTICIPANTS**

### **MALE:**

Athletes:	MAX 20 PLAYERS: 18 Skaters and 2 Goaltenders 12 Forwards, 6 Defencemen, and 2 Goaltenders
Staff:	1 General Manager 1 Head Coach 2 Assistant Coaches 1 Trainer/Equipment Manager

### **FEMALE:**

Athletes:	MAX 20 PLAYERS: 18 Skaters and 2 Goaltenders 12 Forwards, 6 Defencemen, and 2 Goaltenders
Staff:	1 General Manager 1 Head Coach 2 Assistant Coaches 1 Trainer/Equipment Manager  *Two of the bench staff must be female*

## **2. CLASSIFICATION**

### **MALE AND FEMALE**

Athletes must be U21 Age for the competitive 2026 Tournament.

**YEAR OF BIRTH:** 2005 - 2010

16, 17, 18, 19, 20, AND 21 years of age before July 20, 2026

### **ATHLETE EXCEPTIONS:**

Both Divisions - Each team is allowed a minimum of two sixteen (16) year-olds and a minimum of two (21) year-olds per team. No exceptions.

## **3. ELIGIBILITY**

### **3.1 INDIGENOUS ANCESTRY**

All team members and staff must be of Indigenous ancestry (First Nation, Métis, and Inuit). Every player and team staff must carry (bring with) their documentation that verifies their Indigenous ancestry. Picture identification and a Provincial Métis Card (from Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, or British Columbia), a Certificate of Indian Status Card, a Territories Health Card, or a Nunavut Card will be acceptable.

If the athlete or staff does not have such proof, a letter from their Community and a parent/grandparent Identification card must be submitted. It will be authenticated and endorsed by the parent(s) or guardian(s) with the letter from their Community and NIJHC Committee.

Proof of certification for all team officials (as listed above) must be submitted by March 31, 2026.

### **3.2 TRAINERS**

Should an applicant who is non-Indigenous coaching staff have a current First Aid Certification, they must submit a written request to the Hockey Indigenous NIJHC Committee for a special exemption that would enable them to apply as a certified NON-Indigenous Athletic Trainer, certified paramedic, or a medical doctor. The request for exemption must be submitted by March 31, 2026.

### **3.3 COMPETITORS**

- a) Male and female teams may select players who have played regular season games (No minimum) during the 2025/2026 season from all levels (Ex, CHL, Junior A, Junior B, Junior C, JWHL, CSSHL, USPORTS, NCAA D1 OR D3, Europe, AAA, AA, A, House, Grassroots, or Community)
- b) All players participating who are under 18 in the 2026 NIJHC must be enrolled in and attending school, and/or have completed the necessary requirements for their high school diploma (or the equivalent)
- c) Each team must assign a **General Manager (Mandatory)**. The NIJHC committee will deal directly with the assigned manager on all aspects of the event and game details. Any issues raised with the event in all aspects will be dealt with by the team's manager.
- d) **The general manager will be responsible for submitting and signing off on the final rosters.**

### **3.4 TEAM ELIGIBILITY, TEAM EXCEPTIONS, AND PLAYER EXCEPTIONS (Please read carefully!)**

- a) **Male Divisions** - First Nation Communities will enter teams under a community name in respect to their community, with their designated nickname. (Ex: Island Point Eagles - \*Not a real Indigenous team\*)
- b) **Male Divisions** - The Manitoba Métis Federation and other recognized Métis settlements are permitted to draw a team from their Métis Federation/Settlements that the NIJHC committee must approve.
- c) **Male Divisions** - Inuit Communities in Nunavut can enter under a Territory name; however, they are permitted to draw from a territorial area that the NIJHC committee must approve. This is due to the isolation factor.
- d) **Male Divisions** - Communities in the Northwest Territory and Yukon will enter under Team North; however, they are permitted to draw from a territorial area that the NIJHC committee must approve. This is due to the isolation factor.
- e) **Male Divisions** - A Tribal Council, Traditional Regional Council, or Indigenous Self-Government will enter a team and must provide information on which communities are associated within their respective region or territory. The NIJHC committee must approve.
- f) **Male Divisions** - The four (4) provinces of NL, NS, PE, and NB may jointly field a team and register as Team Atlantic, which the NIJHC Committee must approve. This is due to the scale factor.
- g) **Male Divisions** - Akwesasne Mohawk Territory shall be permitted to field their own team if desired for one division. If any player from Akwesasne Mohawk Territory wishes to be a free agent, that will be acceptable; however must submit proof of residency and Indigenous documentation.
- h) **Female Divisions** - Teams are permitted to create their own teams as this division is considered an open division; all players must have Indigenous identifications.
- i) For the purposes of the Male Division, the number of permitted import players shall be determined solely by the population of the individual First Nation community represented, in accordance with the table above. Import status applies only to players, not goaltenders, and all imports must meet Indigenous ancestry requirements and be clearly identified on official rosters and in all sanctioned games. The Female Division (Must be of all be Indigenous status) shall be designated as an open division and shall not be subject to import limitations.

Competitors must meet all eligibility requirements outlined in the 2026 NIJHC outlines.

### **3.5 IMPORT ELIGIBILITY & GOALIE RULE**

- a) What is an Import Rule? An **import rule** in hockey is a regulation that limits the number of players a team may roster who are not from the Indigenous team's designated home community, region, or eligibility area. These rules are used to promote local player development, maintain competitive balance, and protect the integrity of the tournament. This only applies to players, not goalies.

- b) Male Division - Please see the table below, and this only applies to the individual First Nation Community team. All imports are only considered players, at the team's discretion.

First Nation Population	Imports
1 - 999	4
1000 - 2449	3
2500 - 4999	2
5000 and more	1

- c) **Female Division - There is no limit, as this is an open division.**
- d) Male Division - All Imports must be of Indigenous descent and must be identified in all games and roster finalization.
- e) Male Division - Métis participants will be considered imports and must be identified in all games and roster finalization.
- f) Male Division - **PARENT RULE**: Participant who is registered in one of the parent First Nation/Inuit Community, and if the parent (With Status) is from another First Nation/Inuit Community, the participant can decide which team they can play for and WILL NOT count as an import.
- g) **Male Division - Goalies will not be considered imports; they will only be considered for players.**
- h) If a Tribal Council, Traditional Regional Council, or Indigenous Self-government is entering a team for the male division, no team will be allowed imports.
- i) If Team Atlantic, any territorial team (Nunavut, Northwest, and Yukon), Métis Federation/Settlement, or a regional team is entering a team for the male division as described in 3.4, in that case no team will be allowed imports.
- j) **If a player or goalie is residing in the United States of America, the player must submit all Native American documentation for participation and proof of citizenship, which will be considered an import.**

### 3.6 CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

All Roster Staff (coaches, managers, and trainers) must have a current (dated within one year of the NIJHC attending) Criminal Record Check (CRC) and CPIC or Vulnerable Sector search completed before the event. To be submitted with the Managers, Coaches, and Trainers' successful applicants.

#### **4. COMPETITION**

A maximum of twenty (20) players may dress for each game, and the coaching staff shall be allowed to have four (4) members (Head Coach, 2 Assistant Coaches, and a Trainer with First Aid qualifications) permitted on the bench. The game rosters shall consist of eighteen (18) skaters and two (2) goaltenders.

- a) An official team, according to Hockey Canada, for Championship play is comprised of thirteen (13) skaters. You must have a minimum of nine (9) players and one (1) goalie to start a game.
- b) **FIGHTING MAJORS** – Zero tolerance, players will be expelled from the Tournament immediately. All other suspensions will be as per the Hockey Canada Bulletin A1133 dated June 2022 – Minimum Suspensions for ON-ICE Infractions (APPENDIX C)
- c) All match penalties will be reviewed by the On-Ice Disciplinary Committee.
- d) **ZERO TOLERANCE RULE** – ALCOHOL, DRUGS, CANNABIS, AND TOBACCO (cigarettes, E-Cigarettes, vaping, and chewing tobacco). For any infraction of the zero-tolerance rules that occurs during the NIJHC or at a Championship event, the identified participant (player or coaching staff) will immediately be expelled from the Championships and may also receive further implications from Hockey Indigenous.
- e) **OBSCENE LANGUAGE, GENDER, or RACIAL SLURS** – Zero tolerance. Any participant (player or coaching staff) caught using obscene language, or gender or racial slurs will immediately be suspended, and the NIJHC Off-Ice Disciplinary Committee will review the infraction. If guilty of an infraction, the participant will be expelled from the Championships and may also receive further sanctions from Hockey Indigenous.
- f) **CODE OF CONDUCT** – The NIJHC Code of Conduct will be used for all on-ice and off-ice infractions. This code has been established by Hockey Indigenous.
- g) **Body Contact will be permitted in all games during the NIJHC.**

#### **4.1 TEAM FORMAT**

- a) For the male division, there will be 24 teams, while the top 16 advance to the playoffs, and the bottom 8 teams are eliminated. The playoff structure will be Round 1, and from there it will go to Round 2 and the Semifinals. Winners advance to the Gold medal game, while losers will play for bronze.
- b) For the female division, there will be 8 teams, and all teams will advance to the playoffs. The playoff structure will be Quarter Finals, and from there will go to the Semi-Finals. Winners advance to the Gold medal games, while the losers will play for bronze.

#### **4.2 COMPETITION SCHEDULE**

The Round-Robin schedule will be posted by April 17, 2026, after the Team Registration deadline of February 27, 2026.

#### 4.3 COMPETITION FORMAT

The 2026 NIJHC game schedule will start on July 16, 2026, and end on July 19, 2026, with the Bronze and Gold Medal Games for both male and female divisions. The NIJHC Awards presentation will take place at the closing ceremony on the Sunday after the Gold Medal games. **Each team will be guaranteed a minimum of 4 games.** All teams must be in the host city no later than July 15, 2026.

#### 4.4 HOME AND VISITING TEAM

During Round 1, Round 2, Semi-Final, and Medal rounds, the home team shall be the higher-ranked team from the 2026 NIJHC standings for the male division. During the quarter-finals, Semi-Finals, and Medal Games, the home team shall be the team ranked higher after the Round-Robin for the female division.

#### 4.5 GAME FORMAT

- a) The warm-up will be 10 minutes. All regulation games (Round-Robin/Non-playoff) will consist of three (3 periods) straight-time periods of Fifteen (15) minutes.
- b) Round Robin: 5 Minutes of overtime: 3 on 3, following a shootout if OT is unsuccessful.
- c) **An intermission of 5 minutes will be set on the score clock. Each team will be allowed one (1) forty-five (45) second time-out in a game.**
- d) At the end of 10 minutes of a game not starting, the game will be considered a default, and the winning team will be awarded a 3 – 0 win.
- e) Playoffs will consist of two (2 periods) straight-time periods of fifteen (15) minutes, and a third period stop-time (3rd period) of 20 minutes.
- f) Gold medal and bronze medal games will consist of three (3 periods) stop-time periods of twenty (20) minutes.
- g) Note: See section 6.2 regarding overtime.

#### 4.6 MERCY RULE

If a team scores and creates a seven-goal (7) lead, the losing team must ensure the goal differential is six goals or less before the end of the period. Failure to remain within six goals by the end of the period results in a completed game at the end of said period. If the losing team ensures their deficit is six goals or less by the end of the period, the game will continue.

#### 4.7 RULES AND REGULATIONS

- a) All Round-Robin games will have a minimum of two (2) officials, all certified by Hockey Canada.



- b) Hockey Canada's official rules and handbook will apply as a guide, with the exceptions stated in this technical package for on-ice decisions.
- c) A minor penalty will be 2 minutes stop-time, and a major penalty will be 4 minutes stop-time for all games, including round-robin, playoffs, and championship games.
- d) A player who receives the Gross or Match Penalty will be ejected from the Tournament.
- e) Misconduct will be 10 minutes run time.
- f) The Major Penalty will be 6 minutes in Straight Time and 4 minutes stop time.
- g) No Fighting, the player will be ejected from the tournament.
- h) Any abuse of Officials on or off-ice will result in the participant or team member being ejected from the Tournament.
- i) U18-aged players will require a full-face mask and neck protector.
- j) Officials' decisions in the game are Final.
- k) No Drugs or Alcohol allowed in the arena or Dressing Room. Players under the influence will be ejected from the game.
- l) In the event of an Import listed on two or more rosters. Once the player steps on the ice before or during a game for the first team, the Player will be considered iced and will be considered ineligible for another team.
- m) Each team should be in their designated dressing rooms thirty minutes (30) prior to their scheduled time and must be out within fifteen minutes (15) after their game has been completed.
- n) All players must play one (1) game during the Round-Robin to be eligible for the playoffs and championship rounds.
- o) Any damage to the arena and banquet host property will be paid by the individual responsible. If the individual responsible cannot be identified, the team will be deemed responsible and will be removed from the championships until damages are paid in full.
- p) This event is non-sanctioned. Each team should consider a team's insurance package for travel and liabilities.
- q) The committee purchases building event liability insurance; in addition, we carry a special PLAYER / REFEREE insurance policy for some coverages for each registered player and referee.

## **5. OFFICIALS**

MALE – Referees shall have a minimum level IV certification, while the linesperson shall have a minimum level III certification.

FEMALE – Referees shall have a minimum level III certification, while the linespersons shall have a minimum level II certification. Female games will be officiated by female officials when and where possible.

## **6. ROUND ROBIN GAME SCORING**

All Round-Robin games are as follows:

3 points for the winning team (if the game ends in regulation)

2 points for the winning team (if the game ends in overtime/shootout)

1 point for the losing team (if the game ends in overtime/shootout)

0 points for the losing team (if the game ends in regulation)

### **6.1 TIE-BREAKING POINTS**

In the case of a tie at the end of the Round-Robin play, the pool standings will be determined as follows:

- a) The team with the most wins in the Round-Robin gains the higher position
- b) If that game ended in a tie, the team with the better record of goals for and against (goals for minus goals against, divided by goals for plus goals against - highest fraction wins) or
- c) If again there is a tie, the team that scores the first goal in a game between the two tied teams wins.
- d) In the event of a tie between three (or more) teams for first place, standings will be determined by:
  - i) The best records of goals for and against as per sections (4b) above, and
  - ii) If a tie still exists, then the provisions of sections (4a) and (4c) above, in that order, will be applied.
- e) If teams are still tied after all previous methods have been applied, the higher position shall be determined by a single toss of a coin.
- f) Should there be three (3) or more teams tied after all previous methods have been applied, the higher position shall be determined by a draw where each team's name shall be entered.

### **6.2 PLAYOFFS ROUND**

If at the end of three (3) regulation periods, fifteen (15) minute periods will be played, and the score is tied, the rules of Hockey Canada shall apply:

- a) The puck will be "faced-off" at centre ice and play shall continue for a ten (10) minute stop-time "sudden victory" overtime period, with the first goal ending the game.
- b) If the score is still tied after the sudden victory ten (10) minute overtime period, the game will be decided by a shoot-out.
- c) Teams will select five (5) different players to alternately shoot on the opposing goaltender. If there is still a tie after all five (5) shooters have completed their shots, then there will be a sudden victory shoot-out.
- d) Each team will select one shooter (different from the previous five) to shoot at the opposing goaltender. If a tie exists, this sudden victory continues with different 9 shooters until only one team scores and the other misses.

### 6.3 GOLD AND BRONZE MEDAL GAMES

If at the end of three (3) regulation, twenty (20) minute periods, the score is tied, the rules of Hockey Canada shall apply:

- a) In the case of a tie after regulation time, the teams will remain at the same ends and commence one (1) ten (10) minute sudden-victory stop-time period.
- b) The game shall be declared over with the first goal being scored.
- c) If still tied after ten (10) minutes, the two (2) teams will retire for ice resurfacing, change ends, and then commence sudden-victory overtime periods of twenty (20) minutes each, with the first goal winning the game.

If either team declines to play in the necessary period(s), the game shall be declared a loss for that team.

## **7. MEDALS**

GOLD (one for each athlete of the team, staff members)

SILVER (one for each athlete of the team, staff members)

BRONZE (one for each athlete of the team, staff members)

- ***A player must play one Round-Robin game to be eligible to earn a medal.***

## **8. EQUIPMENT**

Athletes must provide their own hockey equipment, and for players under 18, CSA-approved helmets with full face masks and a BNQ-approved neck guard are mandatory for all teams. Mouthguards will be mandatory at all times. Athletes who are not wearing a mouthguard will be immediately removed from the game until the equipment has been put on. The player may proceed back to the game once it is remedied.

## **9. UNIFORMS**

Each team must have two (2) sets of Official Jerseys (light and dark in color) and matching socks. One set of Official Jerseys must be white (light) as the home team wears white. If there is a conflict, the visiting team changes.

### **For all Team Jerseys:**

Front crest - The Individual Indigenous Community/Tribal may use either their logo or name.

Back – the Individual Indigenous Community/Tribal name on the back nameplate above

the player number, and if applicable, the sponsor logo(s) must go below the player number on the back and may not be larger than four (4) inches in height.

## **10. TEAM MANAGERS MEETINGS**

One day before Game 1, there will be a full Team manager virtual meeting hosted in the evening, after the Team arrives, and planned for July 15, 2026. On Game Day 2 – up to and including Medal Day, there will be a Team Manager meeting daily, beginning at a scheduled time in the 9:00 AM local time. The meetings will update teams on the events of the Championships. These meetings will also deal with suspensions and updates that have or may occur. **These meetings will be mandatory.**

## **11. MEDIA RELATIONS**

- a) It is valuable for the athletes and team staff to complete the NIJHC Forms to ensure complete and proper information can be communicated to the media about the NIJHC Participants.
- b) Teams agree that National Indigenous Junior Hockey Championships and Hockey Indigenous will have the use of Team Logos and names for media, digital & promotional use. Each team is required to provide a high-quality digital logo (Example: JPEG, PNG, SVG, AI, etc..).
- c) Teams must submit their team logos before March 31, 2026.

## **12. TEAM REGISTRATION AND DEPOSIT**

All registered and confirmed teams must have their Team Registration form by February 27, 2026, with a \$500.00 Non-refundable deposit to secure your spot. The team entry fee of \$2,500.00 (Minus the \$500.00 non-refundable) must be submitted to the 2026 NIJHC (Hockey Indigenous) after successful teams are chosen following the Team Registration deadline and must be paid no later than March 13, 2026 (Arena/Insurance purposes). No late entries will be accepted. The Team entry fees can be made payable to Hockey Indigenous and can be sent by E-Transfer or cheque. **There will be no refunds, no exceptions.**

## **13. PROTEST RULE**

There will be no protest during the NIJHC. Officials' in-game decisions (calls) will not be protested as they are deemed final. Teams shall understand that Player Eligibility, Team Eligibility, Import Rule, and Final Team roster will be final and carefully inspected by the NIJHC Committee before and during the Championships.

#### **14. NIJHC PROTOCOLS**

- a) All teams must be in attendance for the NIJHC opening AND closing ceremonies.
- b) **An opportunity will be provided for all teams to have a team photograph taken. This will occur at a pre-scheduled time and date as allocated by the NIJHC Committee. This is mandatory.**
- c) Any athlete who is under 18 will have to be accompanied by an adult chaperone (Team Rep, chaperones, or parents/guardians).
- d) All teams must stay at the host hotel(s).
- e) **The NIJHC will not be responsible for injuries, illnesses that occur, or lost or stolen items. The NIJHC committee will have 1st Responders and Security available throughout the event.**

#### **15. AWARDS**

Individual awards (male and female) based on individual gameplay are as follows:

- a) Player of the Game

Individual awards (male and female) based on Round-Robin play are as follows:

- a) Most Valuable Defense
- b) Most Valuable Forward
- c) Most Valuable Goaltender
- d) Most Sportsmanlike Player
- e) Most Valuable Player (emphasizing all aspects of the game)

All-star team: applies to both divisions.

- a) Top three forwards
- b) Top two defence
- c) Top one goaltender

#### **16. FORMS TO BE COMPLETED ONLINE**

- a) 2026 NIJHC Athlete Consent/Conduct Form
- b) 2026 NIJHC Team Staff Form
- c) 2026 NIJHC Acknowledgement/Commitment Form
- d) 2026 NIJHC Declaration of Indigenous Ancestry
- e) 2026 NIJHC Academic Residency Form

***Deadline: March 31, 2026. No Exceptions.***

**The NIJHC logo was designed by Jeff Nepinak of Pine Creek First Nation.**