

## Next stop Six Nations for Ladner Pioneers

### Newly crowned B.C. champs will play at least eight games at President's Cup

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Ryan Keith and the Ladner Pioneers begin play Sunday at the President's Cup national senior "B" lacrosse championships in Six Nations. It will be the first of eight round-robin games in seven days. Photograph By Mark Booth

It will be more like a marathon than a sprint when the Ladner Pioneers make their first appearance at the President's Cup in a decade.

The B.C. champions leave Friday for Six Nations, ON. where they will be part of a nine-team tournament with representation from across the country. The Pioneers will play eight round-robin games over seven days, starting with a Sunday evening tilt against the Saskatoon Brewers. Their lone doubleheader will take place next Saturday against Quebec champions Kahanwake Mohawks and the host Six Nations Slash.

The top six finishers will close out the national senior "B" championships on Sept. 3, including the first and second place teams squaring off for gold.

When Ladner last made its way east in Owen Sound in 2007, the format was much more condensed with a steady diet of eastern-based teams and a playoff structure that included a semi-final round. Now there is an emphasis on giving the participants more "bang for their buck" with a week full of games.

The Pioneers have won two national titles, were third as hosts in 2006 and fourth in their last appearance.

Head coach Ross Frehlick admits he doesn't know what to expect this time but is hoping the experience will go along way towards helping his young team in 2018 when they look to be part of the championships again in Nanaimo.

"Hopefully, we will be playing nine games and for a medal on Sunday. We would love to go there and win but, realistically it's going there for these kids to understand what it takes to step up to the next level," said Frehlick.

"This was a three-year plan (to get to nationals) and somehow we did it a year early. I don't know what is going to happen there but it's going to be a battle."

The Pioneers capped a dominant season in the West Coast Senior Lacrosse Association with a five-game series win over the Royal City Capitals in the final. However, they knew about two weeks earlier they would be heading east after being one of only two WCSLA clubs willing to make the financial commitment to attend nationals.

It has taken extensive budgeting to plan the trip and keep players' travel costs to a minimum. The club is appreciative of sponsorship support from the Sundance Pub and The Bromley Wealth Management Team at National Financial Bank.

Other participating teams include: Native Sons (Can Am), Nova Scotia Privateers (Nova Scotia), Six Nations Rivermen (Ontario), St. Albert Miners (Alberta) and St. Regis Braves (3 Nations Lacrosse League). St. Albert is the defending champion. The Rivermen took top honours in 2015, while St. Regis were gold medal winners in 2011 and 2012. A B.C. team has not been victorious since Ladner's triumph back in 2004.

The Pioneers are adding Colin Bell (Victoria) and Joe Fendick (Nanaimo) for the nationals. Both were among the top scorers of their respective teams.