

A New Zealand Tradition Since Ages Ago

It is said that the game of ice hockey originated on the frozen lakes and waterways of Canada in the 1870's with players fastening steel blades on to their boots and using crude sticks to hit a piece of wood into the goals.

From there the game has spread around the world and has become extremely popular in North America and many European countries such as Finland, Sweden, Russia, Switzerland, Germany and the Czech Republic. There are more than 65 member nations in the International Ice Hockey Federation (IIHF). Professional leagues are now played throughout the world, with North America's NHL being the pinnacle and the Stanley Cup being hockey's Holy Grail. The sport has also been part of the Winter Olympics since 1920.

Ice Hockey has been played in New Zealand for over 70 years and started in the South Island high country where farmers and farm workers played on frozen lakes. The first organised ice hockey tournament was played in 1937 when a man named Wyndham Barker donated a trophy called the Erewhon Cup. A meeting was held afterwards and the New Zealand Ice Skating Association (NZISA) formed. It wasn't until 1986 when the New Zealand Ice Hockey Federation (NZIHF) was formed at a meeting at Lake Tekapo that ice hockey began to flourish.



This photo is from the 1948 Erewhon Cup played at Opawa, near Albury in South Canterbury.



The NZIHF has been the sole national governing body for New Zealand ice hockey ever since. It links players, coaches, officials and all others involved in local ice hockey associations across New Zealand to all other regional, national and international bodies.

Today there are over 1200 registered players in New Zealand playing in local, regional and National age-grade competitions. Ice hockey is played in Auckland, Christchurch and also in Otago/Southland. There are three official Regions registered with the NZIHF: Auckland, Canterbury and the Southern Ice Hockey League, which encompasses clubs in Gore, Tekapo, Dunedin, Ranfurly, Alexandra and Queenstown.



Each Region holds its own local leagues in the respective age grades and is responsible for conducting these competitions.