

Chapter 48 - Friars' Briar 2026, Kelowna, BC

March 2-6, 2026



When the team of David Hunter, Paul Hunter, Russ Crawford and Arnold Badke returned home to Vernon, BC from the 2025 Friars' Briar Bonspiel in Summerside, PEI, they didn't travel empty-handed. They brought home a set of gold medals, four nasty colds, and a mandate to plan the next Friars' Briar in Kelowna. They were joined in this task by BC

representative to the Friars' Briar Association, Ernie Paetsch from Salmon Arm, as well as David's spouse, Margaret Hundebly Hunter and Paul's spouse, Kerry Hunter. Work began immediately with the booking of the Kelowna Curling Club and a block of rooms at the Royal Anne Hotel. These early decisions set the tone for 2026.

The Royal Anne Hotel is a boutique hotel in the heart of downtown Kelowna, just off Okanagan Lake, surrounded by restaurants, shops, brewpubs and more. Not only did they offer a terrific rate for our event, but the accommodations were convenient, comfortable and they provided a terrific breakfast each morning. Only 1.6 kms away (1 mile for our American participants) the Kelowna Curling Club boasts twelve sheets of ice, an expansive lounge, and amazing staff to serve meals and refreshments. Manager, Jock Tyre and event manager Andrew Neville made sure all the details were taken care of, ensuring a marvelous event for the Friars.

As the registration deadline approached, we were short two teams to make a balanced draw. Fortunately, members of the planning committee met some Kelowna curlers in a bonspiel a few weeks before and spread the word. We were pleased to welcome the Blake King team and the Gary Brucker team to the Friars' Briar for their first time.

The Opening Ceremonies on Monday, March 2, began at 2:00 with committee chair David Hunter on the megaphone welcoming the Friars, introducing the committee, acknowledging sponsors, and introducing the club manager. Bagpiper John Murray of the Kelowna Pipe Band Society piped everyone out onto the ice where Paul Hunter led the singing of O Canada. Ernie Paetsch had the honour of throwing the first stone, and with that we began our competition for the 2026 Friars' Briar. With one game under our belt everyone enjoyed supper at the rink: a build your own pasta meal, salad, veggies and delicious squares for dessert.





Sixteen teams took to the ice for competition that was as fierce as expected. The scene was set with certain teams emerging as dominant players. Just when it seemed the writing was on the wall, there were upsets and surprises. Sometimes it was the ice that threw unexpected curves at the Friars. Sheet seven in particular earned a reputation for being deceptively uneven.

The top two teams from each of the four pools began to play for medals on Thursday. The drama on ice continued with some top contenders being knocked out of the medal race and when the dust settled the Kiesman team met the Oh No's (Sid Haugen's crew) in the Bronze match. Oh No's, took it. The championship was a battle between the Paris Clippers and Got Cheeses. The final

result, Paris Clippers – Silver; Got Cheeses – Gold.

In the Don Amos event honours went to Paetsch, First; M. Martin Second; Friedrich, Third. In the Hugh Christmas event prizes were claimed by Rempel, First; D. Martin, tied for Second; Baska tied for Second.

Not all of the fun was on the ice. The Antico Pizza Napoletana, across the street from the hotel, served the first meal many of the Friars experienced as they arrived in Kelowna. The Pizza was good but the service was special, including the robot server. During the week, Gary Brucker invited all the Friars to enjoy some time at his Coffee Shop and Brew House (The Barn Owl Brewery).

The Thursday banquet featured an amazing meal at the Kelowna Curling Club and lively entertainment from the Okanagan Valley Big Band which included two Friars, Paul Hunter playing tenor sax and leading the band, and David Hunter on trumpet. There were even some moves on the dance floor.

Amidst the frivolity we took a moment to remember Jeff Learmonth, spouse to board member Kelli McComb, who died in the last year after a battle with brain cancer. David Martin offered a tribute of memories and we kept a moment of silent prayer. Jack Dyck was honoured with the Amazing Grace award for his work in refurbishing the championship trophy.

The Friars' Briar got some good publicity from the local online news service called Castanet. They published an article a week before the event which stirred some local interest. [Friars' Briar on Castanet News](#) On Day 1 of the Friars' Briar Joseph Otoo from CBC Kelowna did an interview with Local Planning Committee Chair, David Hunter. [Combining faith and competitive sport on the pebbled ice | Daybreak South | On Demand | CBC Listen](#)

Overall, the 2026 Kelowna Friars' Briar was a huge success which created many good memories. All the Banners and trophies were packed up and sent on to Saskatoon where we will next convene for the 2027 Friars' Briar Bonspiel.

Participants in the 2026 Kelowna Friars' Briar

Team	Position	Name
Kinasao Kurlers (Saskatchewan)	Skip	Mang, Daryl
	Third	Johnson, Lowell
	Second	Felstrom, Darin
	Lead	Ewaskow, Quinton
M. Martin (Ontario)	Skip	Martin, Maurice
	Third	Hopkins, Ian
	Second	Metzger, Keith
	Lead	Shantz, Leroy
Short & Sweep (Ontario)	Skip	Short, Dean
	Third	Short, Brenda
	Second	Holland, Lee
	Lead	Evans, Ralph
Paris Clippers (Ontario)	Skip	Sherren, Nancy
	Third	Nadon, Dan
	Second	Sherren, Brian
	Lead	Hutchinson, Stan
David Martin (Ontario)	Skip	Martin, David
	Third	Poth, Andy
	Second	Wagler, Tim
	Lead	Baker, Marcus
The Oh Nos (Saskatchewan)	Skip	Haugen, Sid
	Third	Haugen, Kathy
	Second	Button, Steve
	Lead	Button, Tamra
Team Paetsch (BC, SK, MB, ON)	Skip	Paetsch, Ernie
	Third	Dyck, Jack
	Second	Langner, Gerald
	Lead	Dillon, Tom
Hack Hunters (BC)	Skip	Hunter, David
	Third	Hunter, Paul
	Second	Crawford, Russ
	Lead	Badke, Arnold
Baska (Alberta)	Skip	Baska, Patrick
	Third	Corrigan, Jim
	Second	Moret, Paul
	Lead	Lee, Robert
Hesky (Saskatchewan)	Skip	Sawatsky, Kurt
	Third	Matheson, Paul



	Second	Graupe, Nils
	Lead	Hesje, Harold
Team	Position	Name
Got Cheeses (Wisconsin/ONT)	Skip	Bartel, Pam
	Third	Schwanz, Chris
	Second	Anderson, Doug
	Lead	Schwanz, Heidi
Rempel (Ontario)	Skip	Rempel, Ron
	Third	Wagner, Doug
	Second	Weitzel, Glen
	Lead	Heipel, Gerald
Friedrich (Alberta)	Skip	Freidrich, George
	Third	McRae, Al
	Second	Harrison, Alex
	Lead	Perri, Carmelo
	Fifth	Springle, George
Brucker (BC)	Skip	Brucker, Gary
	Third	Wright, Steve
	Second	McIntyre, Geoff
	Lead	Haberstock, Joel
Kiesman (BC)	Skip	Kiesman, Bill
	Third	Miller, Christina
	Second	Miller, Fred
	Lead	Kiesman, Jonathan
King (BC)	Skip	King, Blake
	Third	Beckman, Frank
	Second	Johnston, Dave
	Lead	Sajna, Lyle

