

NHL's Kim Davis talks 'Heated Rivalry' and leading as a woman of color

News

At PRWeek's Women of Distinction event, Davis shared why the NHL needs to lean into new hockey fans.

by Diana Bradley May 20 2026



Heated Rivalry, the TV series about two ice hockey rivals-turned-lovers, has "exploded" the sport of hockey's popularity, said Kim Davis, senior EVP of social impact, growth initiatives and legislative affairs for the league, on Tuesday.

Speaking on a panel at [PRWeek's Women of Distinction event](#) in New York City on Tuesday, Davis said that while the NHL has been actively involved with the LGBTQ+ community — for example, hosting the NHL Unites Pride Cup — the league must do a "better job" of talking about its actions.

Heated Rivalry has attracted new audiences to the sport, and the NHL has "such an opportunity to lean into those 'fans in waiting' that are now so interested in hockey," Davis said.

"We need to create stickiness with those new fans," she said. Davis said the league needs to demonstrate through actions, not just words, that it is creating a welcoming environment for the LGBTQ+ community.

Asked about *Heated Rivalry* season 2, which is expected to premiere in April 2027 on Crave and HBO Max, she said it will involve a league commissioner character. However, Gary Bettman, the NHL's actual commissioner, has "shared with the co-producers that what they say about him [in the show] is not at all the way he would react" to a plot point, said Davis.

"We have work to do in preparation for that," she said.

Leading as a woman of color

Davis said that when she first joined the NHL, she knew almost nothing about hockey. However, she knew how to help organizations grow, a skill she called her "superpower."

Davis spoke about her approach to leadership as a woman of color, sharing that her grandmother, Dr. Rose Butler Browne, was an inspiration as the first Black woman to earn a doctor of education degree from Harvard University in 1939.

"She always said it was important to be supportive of women," Davis said. She brought that advice into roles she held throughout her career.

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Davis said she stands with “fearlessness and integrity” as a leader and one of her main goals is to “always get other women of color in the room.”

Davis' advice for mentors: Don't only share the good stories; share the hard ones, too.

“Talk about the moments when you weren't confident, the moments when you failed,” she said, sharing a personal story about her shock when one of her own mentors revealed he suffered from imposter syndrome.

“As leaders, we are all also very vulnerable,” Davis said. “I try to show that vulnerability to young women to show them you can be powerful and vulnerable at the same time.”

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