

The Kootenay East Youth Soccer Association (KEYSA) has been working on the multi-use indoor sports facility project over the past three years, but many of us born and raised in the region have been dreaming of an indoor facility for much longer. As youth athletes from a small East Kootenay town, we have likely all heard the go-to response from parents and coaches after receiving a convincing defeat from a team out of the lower mainland or Okanagan, "Don't worry about that. It's hard to compete with teams that have much longer seasons." Perhaps that makes some sense to a youth athlete, but how does it explain the high calibre of play that consistently came from comparable centers in other Kootenay or southern Alberta towns? The key appeared to be access to indoor facilities that allow groups to extend their seasons. So while this current project has been ongoing for the last three years, many of our citizens can attest that this initiative has actually been discussed for decades.

There have been a few preliminary investigations into constructing an indoor sports facility for our region that came and went. Towards the end of 2016 the KEYSA Board, under the strong leadership of Pamela Berry and Jason Wheeldon, decided that the time was right to see this project through. In early 2017, an indoor sports facility committee was formed that included input from multiple sports organizations, physical literacy specialists, and athletic therapists. We set out to complete four initial tasks to assess the feasibility of the project and define its scope.

The first task was to reach out to potential user groups in the region. For this project to be successful, it must be as inclusive as possible. We knew the diversity of potential user groups would be large and were encouraged with the support that was shown in just a few weeks of starting the process. Potential users included the traditional sports of baseball, football, soccer, rugby, lacrosse, and senior's programs, but surprising were the non-sport users including trade shows, graduation, special events, the Cranbrook Farmers Market, after school programs, and even the local remote control vehicle club. The initial polling of potential user groups was exceptional and pointed toward the need for this facility.

The next task we completed was to gauge local interest in directly supporting such a project either financially or through in-kind contribution. In early 2017, we completed an initial pledge drive to assess public and corporate support and received our second surprise. Jump started by generous donations from Jeannie Argatoff and Derek Spring, the first two businesses approached, we accumulated over \$120,000 in pledges in just five days!! This response in conjunction with the interest and support from a wide range of users demonstrated that we had a viable project.

Third, we approached two key partners instrumental in moving the indoor facility forward. The first was the Cranbrook Mayor and Council. We submitted a request to Mayor and Council asking that the City provide the land on which this facility will be constructed. Councillors such as our now Kootenay East MLA Tom Shypitka voiced strong support of this partnership and reiterated how long they had been hearing of the need for such a facility in the community. The decision to provide the land was unanimous. The second partner was the Community Foundation of the Kootenay Rockies (CFKR). KEYSA and the CFKR formed an agreement where the CFKR would provide the administrative services necessary surrounding receiving and tracking donations.

Developing a conceptual design and budget was the final of the four initial tasks. We reviewed three building options. Options included: renovating an existing building, constructing a new hard frame structure, or constructing an air-supported dome. Research concluded that the air-supported structure provides an acceptable cost, has been proven to work in similar climates, and is relatively simple to construct. We looked to a successful template in the City of Kelowna for much of the design. We engaged the Farley Group, a Canadian dome manufacturer, to provide a building concept from which our Business Plan was developed, compete with a construction and operational budget. Our initial cost estimate in 2017 was \$1.3 million.

From 2017 to 2020 KEYSA worked with the City, user groups, and the public to conclude designs and produce a facility tailored to the needs of our community. Our appreciation of the support of Councillor Norma Blissett and planning effort of City staff member Chris New cannot be stated enough. Berry Architecture joined the team in 2020 to provide instrumental support in project coordination and design. They were joined by McElhanney Engineering and Infinity Solutions. The final design is a dome with 25,000 ft² of artificial turf floor-space with a maximum height of 40' that is constructed at Balment Park on City of Cranbrook land. The final design cost was \$1.5 million. For context, this floor space is just over three times that of the Mt. Baker gymnasium. The design process included substantial input from various user groups to maintain that founding objective of being multi-use. The project footprint was reduced to lower the amount of land required, the height of the ceiling was set to accommodate specific parameters from sports such as football and baseball, and the playing field inside the dome was adjusted so that two, 14'x50' batting cages could be included within the warm-up area of the field. Consultation also resulted in the formation of a joint use partnership between the Cranbrook Curling Club and KEYSA, which saw the clubs partnering the two buildings to increase overall usage of the area, benefiting both facilities.

Fundraising occurred concurrently with design. It began in November 2017 by revisiting local businesses and citizens with a request to convert pledges into actual deposits. This returned nearly 100% of the initial pledges and drove momentum into the start of 2018. In January 2018, the Regional District of East Kootenay committed \$130,000 towards the project (via the Federal Gas Tax Fund), and in February New Dawn Developments became the title sponsor of the project through their substantial contribution to project construction. In March 2018, Columbia Basin Trust approved a grant of \$500,000. In just five months, the project was over 80% funded.

New Dawn Development broke ground in August 2020. Construction has been generously supported by BE Civil, Remcan, Stahl Electric, Salvador Ready Mix, King's Cat Excavating, Fabrite, Tricon, and Ramex Renovations. The dome was erected on October 15 and remains on schedule to be completed in October 2020. The day was fuelled by a large army of volunteers and coffee provided by East Kootenay Credit Union. Final tasks include insulating, lighting, and turf. We are also happy to report that the project is forecasted to meet the final construction budget.

This project is said to be long overdue. Perhaps it is. Or perhaps now is the right time for such an exceptional demonstration of community spirit. When we consider the decades that this has been discussed, three years from concept to completion is remarkable. The indoor sports facility was billed as a multi-use facility during fundraising and has proven to be throughout design. We look forward to seeing the facility in use by diverse user groups, the benefits it brings to the area, and the opportunity it provides to youth. Providing positive opportunity to youth is what this project and KEYSA exist to do. To give back to the community and show our appreciation, KEYSA will reserve a one hour after-school spot for other non-profit groups to use free of charge, with the intent of promoting organizations providing programs that encourage physical literacy in youth. While this project would not have succeeded without the support of those listed in the timeline above, our pool of donors includes many more businesses and community members. At the time of preparing this letter, we have received support from over 45 local government, business, and private organizations. Please take the time to review the sponsors of the indoor sports facility below. It takes a community to build an indoor sport facility and KEYSA is proud to be part of that community.

Project Pillars				
Columbia Basin Trust	Kootenay East Youth Soccer Association	City of Cranbrook	Regional District of East Kootenay	New Dawn Developments
Platinum (\$10,000 or greater)				
Anonymous	Anonymous	B.E. Civil	Berry Architecture	Fabrite Services/FR Rentals
King's Cat Excavating	Lotic Environmental Ltd	McElhanney Consultants	Ramex Renovations	Rob, Jess, Brooke, Reese, and Josie Niedermeyer
Salvador Ready Mix Concrete LP	Southern Interior Development Initiative Trust (SIDIT)	Stahl Electric		
Gold (\$5,000 or greater)				
Bravo Restoration Services	Canadian Tire	McDonald's Restaurant (Cranbrook)	North Star GM	Optimistic Trucking
Premier Plumbing	Re/Max Blue Sky Realty	Sandor Rental	Top Crop	Western Financial
Silver (\$2,500 or greater)				
Capital Tire	CIBC Wood Gundy's	Dr Jason and Christia Martens	Flooring Superstore	Infinity Solutions
Ken Stroud	MacDonald Hydrology Limited	Rella, Paolini, and Rogers	Spring Honda	Tri-Kon Precast Products Ltd.
Bronze (\$1,000 or greater)				
Anonymous	Artech Consulting Ltd.	Bridge Interiors	City of Fernie	Cranbrook Mixed Soccer
Debra Parker & Kambi Heywood - DLC Canadian Mortgage Experts	Fraternal Order of Eagles	KEYSA 2004 Boys Team	Ladies Auxiliary of Branch 24	O'Kane Consultants
Sidekick Stickers	The Cain Family	VAST Resource Solutions		