

Northern Kings Multi-Activity Park

In 2001, the Province of Nova Scotia opened the Northeast Kings Education Centre (NKEC) on Bains Road in Canning, NS. NKEC is a grade 6 – 12 public school with a student population of approximately 1000 children. Organizationally, NKEC serves a large catchment area of Kings County. Students travel daily from several different areas such as Kentville, Canning, Kingsport, Canard, Centreville, Halls Harbour, Baxter's Harbour, Scott's Bay, Aldershot, Gibson Woods, and many other small communities.

During the winter of 2017, a number of students aged 10 – 14 years old approached the administration of the school and asked if more outdoor physical activity infrastructure could be provided for the junior students at the school. Currently, there are very few opportunities for this age group and the activities are limited to team sports such as soccer, basketball, and football. Administration was quick to agree that there was an immediate need for accessible stand-alone outdoor age appropriate equipment where students could use these physical fitness conditioning elements to improve their agility, balance, strength and confidence. The administrators of the school all agreed that meaningful physical activity opportunities are absolutely necessary if we are to provide every opportunity to ensure that our children can succeed.

Administration and students then partnered with the Provincial Department of Health & Wellness, Physical Activity, Sport, and Recreation, to have a public consultation phase to ensure that the new infrastructure would meet the needs of the students, as well as the community at large. In May, 2017, that consultation was completed and goals were established that focused on the gaps identified during the consultation phase. The end result of the consultation phase confirmed that the community as a whole (school, students, and the public) desired multi-activity structures that focused on children aged 10 – 14 years, including equipment designed for children with special needs.

In late May, 2017, the beginnings of a community project team were formed. A partnership was created between the NKEC Home & School Association, the Canning & District Recreation Commission (CDRC), NKEC Administration, the Village of Canning, NKEC Students, the AVRSB, and local citizens with community interests with a goal of establishing a new Multi-Activity Park that was ready to use by July 2018. The Project Team then began to prepare a project plan that focused on the goals provided by the public consultation phase.

The primary goal of the project is to build a Multi-Activity Park for the Northern Kings County community with components that are physically demanding; accessible; and include active components. Challenges to the upper body; motion-based activities; and a large net-based structure all appeal to this 10 – 14 year old age group.

By building this Park through a partnership of organizations and individuals, we expect to see the following positive changes within the community as a result of this project:

- 1) Pride and ownership in our community and a reminder to everyone of what can be accomplished if we all work together;
- 2) Teach our children and youth to be engaged, appreciative, responsible and respectful of what they have and what they can offer to future generations;
- 3) Give all residents a sense of belonging, comfort, and hope for a better tomorrow;
- 4) Create a welcoming, safe social hub where residents and families of all ages and abilities can gather.

There was also focus on how to determine if we had accomplished the goals that we had set. In order to know whether we have made a difference and accomplished our goals, there will be several components of evaluation:

1. Completion of the installation of a Multi-Activity Park and observing the equipment being utilized
2. Including the children/students/public at large throughout the entire process to ensure that they have the opportunity to be engaged and contribute their ideas; that they can appreciate the costs of the equipment pieces; and that they can understand the time and effort required to complete a project such as this
3. Providing everyone who wants to be involved the opportunity to participate in some way that fits their skills and allows them to feel good about contributing to / and feeling a part of the project
4. Positive feedback from the community at the completion of the project, as well as periodic checks over the first two years to ensure that it met the goals that were set.

All of the organizations involved in the public consultation expressed how they felt with respect to the positive impacts that would be seen on the quality of life of the students and children that the Multi-Activity Park would serve. Please see below for a list of these positive impacts:

- Free, unstructured play is essential in healthy child development. It contributes to the physical, social, emotional and cognitive well being of the child.
- ALL CHILDREN, regardless of their household income, will have equal access to the new activity equipment
- Children need to be provided with recreational opportunities as an outlet to channel excess energies. An activity park provides this type of opportunity for children. Without these types of recreational opportunities, children tend to have more stress and depression in their lives and feel more insecure than children who have lots of physical activity and an outlet to provide for these feelings. By providing a Multi-Activity Park where all children can play in a safe environment, children become more acceptable of one another.
- By creating friendships while at play, children develop support networks. Also, in achieving these support networks, they are better equipped to manage interpersonal conflicts.
- Our Multi-Activity Park will be in a very rural community. In order to encourage the adaptation of lifelong healthy living practices, children must have access to exercise opportunities. In our rural community where there is limited connectivity to other communities and the roads are designed to accommodate transport, not safe active

transportation corridors, we must provide opportunities where our children can be physically active. The Multi-Activity Park will be a safe, convenient, accessible, and age-appropriate area where children will have more opportunities for physical activity both during and after school. It is also a place where families can come due to the other recreational opportunities that are already in the area.

- Research shows that physical activity benefits individuals. By creating opportunities for children to be physically active, we can possibly prolong the time period before biology and genetics come into play with respect to the individual.
- The children at the school are very involved in this project. From the outset, to the design and fundraising, students have worked hard to bring the project to its current status. They will continue to be an integral part as we move forward to implementation and the grand opening day. By having everyone work together on the project, children learn to choose activities that are healthy and enhance their well being.
- We know that physical activity among children provides lifelong health benefits, and children who are physically active are much more likely to continue that physically active lifestyle into adulthood. Physical activity also contributes to the reduction of chronic diseases such as obesity, coronary heart disease, and type 2 diabetes. This multi-activity park will aid in the increased levels of physical activity of our children. By creating a supportive multi-activity park environment, we have a better chance to make positive impacts on our children's lives. We need to build physical activity into our daily lives so that it becomes part of a child's culture and continues into adulthood.

The location for the new community fitness structure will be found adjacent to the many recreational assets already located in the area of J Jordan Rd / Bains Rd in Canning – like the football field, soccer pitches, elementary-aged playground, adult exercise equipment, Glooscap Arena, Bigelow Nature Trail, picnic tables, new Multi-Complex Community Hall, and tennis courts. This new infrastructure will continue to enhance the many opportunities provided in this Recreational Hub.

The Multi-Activity Park Project Team wants to thank you for taking the time to read about our plan and look at our renderings. We trust that you see the tremendous value in this project for everyone in the greater community and hope that you will support the team in reaching their goals and ensuring that installation of the new structures can take place in 2018!

Please help us reach our financial target of \$120,427.59 as we endeavor to offer a caring and enriched educational experience for all of our children with our new Multi-Activity Park!

Thank you.