



KID'S ARENA

Completion Date: **January 2012**
 Total Cost: **\$500,000**

Sport Architecture
 (Canada)

THE OFFICIAL POPULATION COUNT FOR THE CITY OF FORT ST. JOHN, IN NORTHEAST BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA, IS JUST OVER 19,000 PEOPLE. YET THIS VIBRANT COMMUNITY SERVES OVER 60,000 RESIDENTS IN THE SURROUNDING AREA. WITH EXTENDED COLD WINTER WEATHER, **DEVELOPMENT OF INDOOR SPORTING FACILITIES IS VERY IMPORTANT.**

One such building is the **Kid's Arena**, a former ice rink in the city that has been retrofitted with **Mondoturf Ecofill 3NX FTS** to create an indoor soccer field. Officially opening in January 2012, this first-class sport center will designate the Kid's Arena as a sports destination, creating a positive economic impact to the city.

OUT OF THE ASHES

The Kid's Arena was built in 1974 to replace the previous facility that suffered significant fire damage. It was also developed to address the issue of not having any indoor ice facilities. Because the city has two newer ice centers, the Kid's arena sat empty for 18 months. Thanks to some forward thinking on the part of the city council and a community group, **this facility has been given a new life with the installation artificial turf Mondoturf Ecofill 3NX FTS.**

"All of the elements were there, like seating, an observation lounge area and change rooms," says Doug Wournell, vice-president of the international architectural firm of Cannon Design. "The arena was clean and had been well maintained over the years." The renovation to the Kid's Arena involved three major components. First the appearance was upgraded with new siding and the interior was painted with bright colors. Second, the existing hockey dasher boards were replaced and modified into soccer boards. "The city went with a state-of-the-art dasher boards that include clear glass, so when you walk in the facility, you can see right through into the soccer area," says Wournell. **"It has the effect of opening up the playing space, which is no longer hidden away from full view. The Mondoturf makes the overall appearance even more spectacular."**

FITNESS FOR ALL

The age range of players at the Kid's Arena goes from three year olds to seniors. **"The great thing about the Ecofill surface is it absorbs the impact of running," says Wournell.** "This is especially important for children who are in a growth spurt phase, from ages 12-16. The Mondoturf can help them avoid injuries like shin splints. This also applies to players who are over 30. They really notice the difference with the



padding surface.”
 He adds the Kid's Arena will provide a legacy to the City of Fort St. John in switching from hockey to soccer. “I think great things will come from this change.”

MORE THAN JUST SOCCER

Wournell credits the Kids Arena Committee consisting of Councillors Bolin, Evans and City staff for turning the facility into the multi-purpose centre it is now. “This committee had the foresight to save the arena and work with the community to repurpose it to the great facility it will be. They wanted to encourage people to come out and play. **By creating this first-class indoor sport centre, players of all ages will be more interested in being a part of the latest fitness option in the city.** These options go beyond soccer, as sports like field hockey, lacrosse, or any other field sport can be played indoors year-round. Baseball drills can also take place on the Mondoturf surface. Having such a wide choice of activities is particularly attractive on the extremely cold winter days experienced by Fort St. John residents.

Although the facility can accommodate a variety of sports, soccer is still the number one draw. “We have a very vibrant group of indoor soccer players here in Fort St. John,” says Jim Rogers. “The registration for soccer currently outstrips minor hockey by a significant margin.” He adds a lot of thought went into the plan that would include a turf field that could be accessible to people with disabilities. “This was a key consideration because prior to the renovation, wheelchairs were not able to get into the building. Now, with wider doors and clear boards, spectators in wheelchairs can sit at the end of the field to watch games, something that was not available in the past.” Conversion of the concession will allow for soft drinks, coffee and snacks to be purchased rather than hot food.

OFF SEASON ALTERNATIVES

The Kid's Arena Committee wanted to have the flexibility of putting a cover over the Mondoturf in the summer months for sports that require a harder surface, such as field lacrosse or track & field. “By the time late spring or summer arrives, nobody in Fort St. John wants to be indoors,” says Rogers. “**The committee looked into the option of using the Kid's Arena for events such as car shows, antique auctions, and craft fairs, for example. We saw this as a real marriage of many needs in the community. It is a programmer's dream with events such as sports clinics, or any number of activities.**” He adds the new Kid's Arena is a first for the community. “I think it will have huge uptake in terms of attracting users.”





