

# Project Plan: Alexis Creek Outdoor Arena

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## Area Background:

Alexis Creek is an unincorporated town 115km west of Williams Lake, located within the heart of the Chilcotin and 2017 wildfires. The Alexis Creek Community Club (ACCC) was formed in the 1960s, at which time, the Community Hall was relocated to this site along with a riding arena and outdoor multipurpose arena.

Over the past few decades the ACCC grounds have lacked any major investments into maintaining or upgrading the structures on the site. ACCC is a non-profit that has stayed afloat through the generous donations of the local community and differing small grants.

The demographics of the area are now a vibrant seniors population of differing pioneers, along with a group of young families. Numerous Indigenous communities surround Alexis Creek, also joining in on the limited recreational opportunities the ACCC has to offer.

## Project Background:

The site of focus for this Project Plan is the Alexis Creek outdoor multipurpose arena. As of 2018, this arena is only usable as a public, free of charge, ice rink for two to three months of the year. Years prior, the arena was used for tennis, badminton, ball hockey and other summer recreational purposes. However, over the past few decades, the arena has become ingrown with weeds that prevent it from being utilized to its full potential.



Figure 1: Current outdoor arena with weed ingrowth



Figure 2: Entrance to current arena



Figure 3: Current arena

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## Purpose:

The purpose of this infrastructure project is to upgrade the current outdoor arena in order to make it usable year round for recreation and differing community events.



Figure 4: Potential look of upgraded arena

## Identified Need:

The Alexis Creek outdoor arena is in major need of upgrades based off the current maintenance schedule, lack of participation by community and surrounding area, and lack of usability.

After meeting with the current arena maintenance committee, it is glaringly apparent that the lack of upgrades to the arena has led to an outrageous maintenance schedule. In order for ice to stay on the black asphalt base, the committee must do the following work:

- Weed removal
- Seasonal patching where side boards have separated from the base
- Packing of snow to create a sun resistant base under the ice
- Piling of snow along the boards to create extra protection from water seepage.

This work is highly volatile to a changing climate where a lack of precipitation and/or warm temperatures has led to there being no ice in previous years.

Due to the shortened usability of the arena over the years due to climate change and an aging arena, recreational participation has decreased. The only viable use of the arena is as an ice rink – of which only lasts around 2 months per year. The local elementary senior secondary school chooses to drive into Williams Lake in order to access an ice rink for the youth, while many families choose not

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to being their children to the ice rink due to slush or other variable factors that make it difficult for learners to use. Currently, when in operation, the ice gets 40 (20 per hockey game) visits per week. This spread over the viable winter months would equate to 160 visit per month and 320 visits per year (2 months of ice). This participation level would increase exponentially is the outdoor arena could be used year round.

Lastly, the outdoor arena needs major upgrades due to the lack of usability of the space. During the rest of the year, the arena is nearly unused. In 2017 the arena was used for a wedding and a community Easter egg hunt. Due to weeds growing around and within the arena, no community sports or events can be held here. In July of 2013, Alexis Creek held "Alexis Creek Dayz," a small festival. This festival was held just outside of the arena due to the arena not being usable for the public and not being wheelchair accessible.

In summary, from meeting with the arena maintenance committee, along with attending all events on the arena grounds, it is very apparent that upgrades are needed to the arena in order to increase recreational opportunities.

### **Societal Impact:**

The impact of having an upgraded outdoor arena in Alexis Creek would be immense. This impact includes increased public health, strengthening of relationships between surrounding communities, increasing community adaptation to climate change, attracting potential residents to the area, and bringing a source of potential revenue to the ACCC while reducing energy expenses.

Upgrades to the current outdoor arena in Alexis Creek would drastically increase public health through increasing accessibility to a public recreational space for community sport and recreation. The arena will also be upgraded to be wheelchair accessible, increasing recreational access for those in wheelchairs.

Allowing for increased recreational opportunities will also increase relations between Alexis Creek and the neighboring Indigenous communities within the Tsilhqot'in Nation. Many of Indigenous residents access the current outdoor arena when the ice is present. Currently there are about 5 visits per week by Indigenous (20% of total visits). With little to no public gathering spaces in Alexis Creek, the opportunity to socialize is very limited. The Alexis Creek Community Hall has a capacity limit of about 100 people, making the arena a great option for larger gatherings. Having increased social opportunities for the purpose of recreation would aid in building community strength internally as well as with those outside the community as residents and non-residents get to know each other and enjoy sport/events together.

The proposed arena upgrades will address the communities' ability to adapt to climate change in many ways. During the 2017 wildfires, the ACCC grounds, including the outdoor arena, were used as a camp for first responders and wildfire fighters. With an upgraded arena, should an emergency situation happen, the arena would be even more usable as an emergency space due to reduced plant in growth on the grounds and inside the arena making the setting up of tables, tents, etc. a possibility. Also, with a concrete base to the arena rather than the current asphalt, the ability to have a recreational ice in place with limited precipitation and higher than average temperatures is completely possible.

This project also stands to increase the livability and attractiveness of Alexis Creek. Currently, the outdoor arena is the *only* recreational infrastructure in Alexis Creek that has organized events, such as hockey nights. Improving this space will increase opportunities for new people to the area to meet local people, as well as attract newcomers as an example of what Alexis Creek has to offer in terms of outdoor recreation.

While the ACCC is a non-profit, we are always looking for ways to raise funds in order to hold community events. This project has the potential to create a small amount of capital to keep other community events going, such as the baby and tot weekly program at the Community Hall, or the Halloween hot dog roast and fireworks. Upgrading the current lighting system to the arena will also reduce the energy costs of having lighting on the arena, making those funds available for other uses by the ACCC.

## **Project Costs:**

The total gross project cost \$419,750. These costs can be divided into the following categories as per a 2018 contractor budgetary estimate:

- Site survey and design
- Removal of materials
- Site preparation and materials for concrete base
- Material for arena siding and gates
- LED lighting system
- 15% contingency expenses

The ACCC is hoping the 65% of the total project costs will be eligible for the Canada Infrastructure Program for Rural and Northern Communities. The remaining 35% of the total project costs (\$146,913) is planned to be addressed through alternate applications for funding, along with seeking supporters, in-kind contributions and partners for the project.

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The ACCC has very little capital to work with in supporting this project financially. The community of Alexis Creek, however, will continue to contribute work in kind to keep the outdoor arena operating. The ACCC has offered in-kind contributions of removal of debris and any costs related to the use of basic services (electricity, water, sewer) on the property.

Project timeline:

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Forecasted Costs</b>	<b>Annual Operating Cost</b>	<b>Capital</b>
2019-2020	\$0 (volunteer work in seeking funders)	\$50 (BC Hydro)	\$0
2020-2021	\$56,350 (Site Survey, design, removal of debris)	\$50 (BC Hydro)	\$0
2021-2022	\$363,400 (site prep and install)	\$50 (BC Hydro)	\$1000 (annual \$50 fee for hockey games)
2022-2023	\$0	\$20 (BC Hydro)	\$3000 (above, rental of space for events)

## **Conclusion:**

In conclusion, it is without question that Alexis Creek and the surrounding areas would benefit by having an upgraded outdoor arena that can be utilized year round to the public. With an aging seniors population and a large boom of young families, the outdoor arena could be accessed by all year round and wheelchair accessible.

The local Indigenous population also stands to benefit from the increased access to recreational opportunities and the gatherings with residents in the area.

Rural towns are having a hard time keeping residents due to the draw of opportunities in larger centres. Anything that Alexis Creek can do to attract and retain good employees and citizens should be pursued to its fullest extent.