



Mimico captain Devin Machin bears down on Whitby goalie Jason Weber during Junior "C" outdoor game at Peel Park on June 18th. Photo: Tim Prothero

FIELD OF DREAMS

FOR THE COMMUNITIES OF WHITBY, CLARINGTON AND SIX NATIONS, BUILDING THEIR OWN LACROSSE RINKS WAS TRULY A LABOUR OF LOVE, BUT ONE THAT WAS CLEARLY WORTH ALL OF THE TIME, EFFORT AND MONEY. IT ALSO PROVES THE OLD ADAGE TRUE: "IF YOU BUILD IT, THEY WILL COME"

// By Angela Rotundo

There is no doubt that Canadian kids from coast to coast have fallen in love with lacrosse. Unfortunately, in a few communities throughout Ontario, there isn't anywhere to play — at least that was the case in three Ontario suburban communities where lacrosse-loving kids had to settle for the streets, their backyards or local parks to throw the ball around.

Thankfully, over the past few years, this has changed in several municipalities and jurisdictions in Ontario, where the local lacrosse community bonded together to build their own lacrosse rinks.

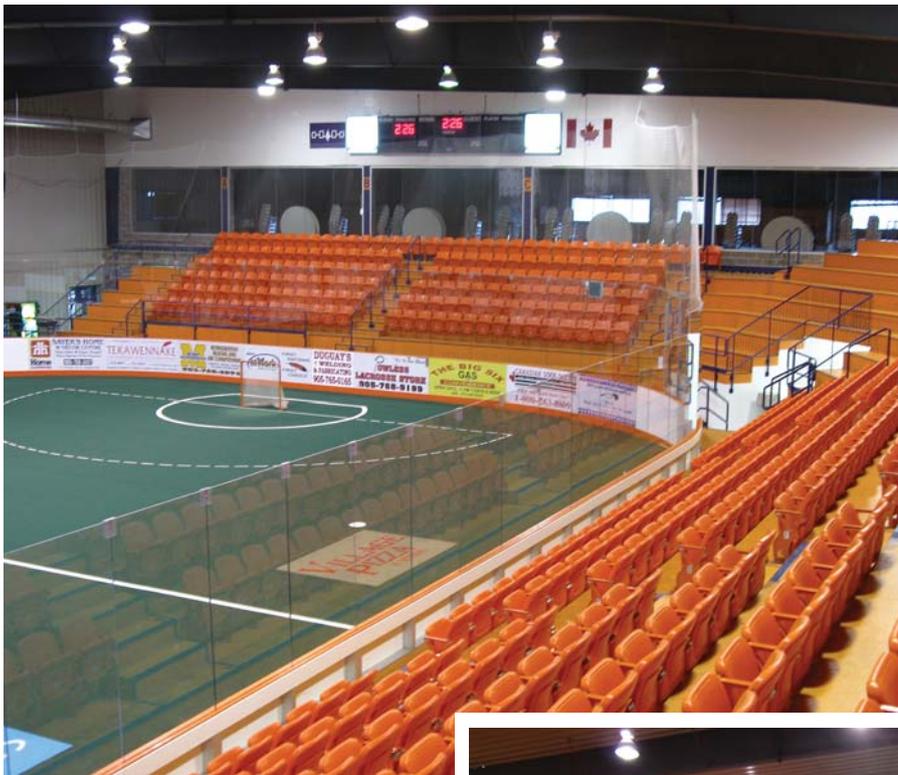
Today the communities of Clarington, Whitby and Six Nations enjoy new lacrosse rinks, primarily because of hard work and the support of volunteers and local government.



Whitby's recently built lacrosse box located in Peel Park allows members of the community to pick up a stick and throw the ball around practically anytime they want

While each community may differ in terms of field, rink, size and shape they all have the same goal: to promote and grow the sport of lacrosse within their hometowns. With that determination, the people of Whitby, Clarington and Six Nations have shown that when it comes to lacrosse, if you build it they will come.

In Clarington, for example, the community wanted to build something that would resonate the spirit of lacrosse within their already vibrant spirit. Charlie Simpson, a past president of Clarington Minor Lacrosse, knew that something was missing for those who loved lacrosse in his municipality.



roots, the town of Whitby fought very hard to have their outdoor lacrosse box not just refurbished, but completely redesigned.

McCutcheon, a past president of the Whitby Minor Lacrosse Association (WMLA), was instrumental in making sure that Whitby had a lacrosse facility it could be proud of. The WMLA campaigned with the municipal, provincial and federal levels of government in order to re-designate more than \$60,000 allotted to the project.

"For the longest time it was one of the few places where people could play lacrosse because there were only so many indoor facilities available," reflects McCutcheon. "It now extends the playing season, generates revenue for the Town of Whitby, and it gives us one more surface to use so that we can expand our program."

As McCutcheon begins to talk more and more about the importance of lacrosse in Whitby, it's clear that the new outdoor lacrosse

"We recognized the value of kids having a place for unstructured practice on their own time," says Simpson. "There are few places where throwing a lacrosse ball around is welcomed."

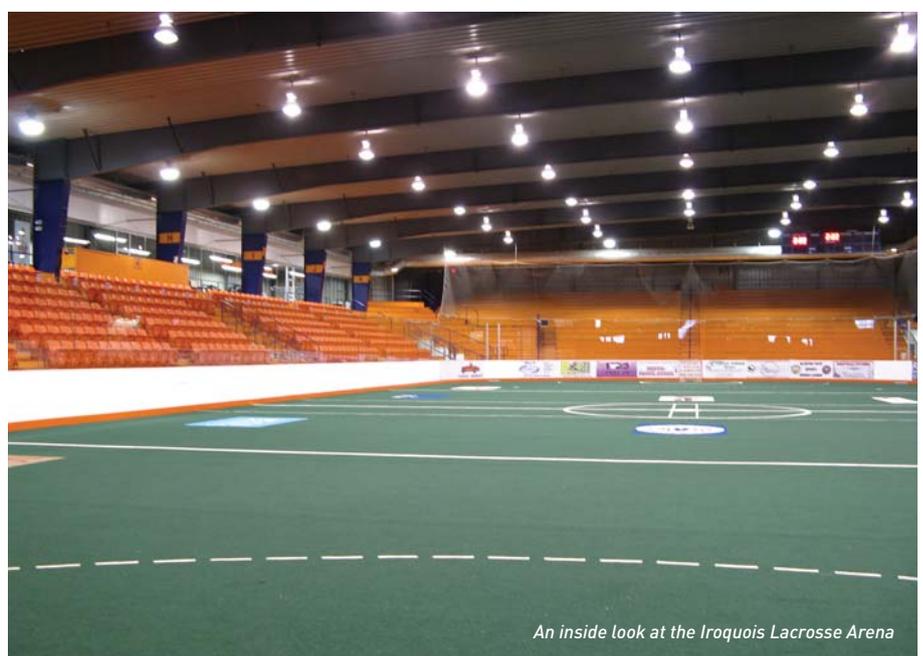
Along with his friend Steve Millard, the two investigated the costs of an outdoor bowl facility, and approached the municipality to encourage the construction of the bowl. With dedication, community support and a small contribution in the amount of \$50,000 from Clarington Minor Lacrosse the lacrosse-loving townspeople of Clarington soon had a place to call their own.

"The bowl is a wonderful tool for kids and the young at heart to practice," reflects Simpson. "It is great to drive by and see a few kids practicing because it helped raise awareness of lacrosse in the community."

Simpson isn't alone in thinking that the sight of kids playing lacrosse and having fun is a wonderful sight to see. Delby Powless Jr., of Powless Lacrosse Store, also feels that the Six Nations' privately funded rink has really helped lacrosse in his community.

"It's beginning to pay off," says Powless. "It's one of the only rinks where kids can play year round, which I think has helped developed the kids' skills not only in this community, but also in a lot of the surrounding communities as well."

The Six Nations rink is owned by Curt Styres and Delby Powless Sr. It was built be-



An inside look at the Iroquois Lacrosse Arena

cause local minor lacrosse associations were running out of places to rent, and the two owners just felt there was a need for another rink.

But what if there's already a lacrosse field or rink in a community? What if that field or rink just isn't good enough for all of the young kids who want to play the sport they love so much? Well, if you live in the town of Whitby, you do whatever it takes to get a new one.

Carolyn McCutcheon knows all too well how important lacrosse is to those in the Whitby community. For her community, the lacrosse box located in Peel Park was what they called home. But with more than 100 years of lacrosse history stemming from their

box located in Peel Park allows anyone in the community to try the sport, ultimately bringing more awareness to it. McCutcheon boasts that for a lot of the adult volunteers, having that box there brings back some of their youth and how it used to be.

These days the struggle to hold onto the essence of a community, which in the case of Clarington, Whitby and Six Nations lives in the towns' love of lacrosse, can be difficult unless proper facilities are in place to keep the sport alive.

But Simpson says it best: "Few places exist for kids to throw a ball around. We are very proud of this facility and think every community should have one." ♦