

SCYP Alumni *An Interview with Lee Knafelc*

Former SCYP Program Assistant

Name? Lee Knafelc

Where do you live? Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

What do you do for work? I'm Senior Director of Human Resources for Potash Corporation of Saskatchewan Inc. (PotashCorp).

What kinds of skills and knowledge do you use in the work that you do? My role is fairly broad and diverse, as I have overall responsibility for all human resource programming and strategy for approximately 2,000 PotashCorp employees in Canada, as well as global compensation programming, and facilities management for our Corporate Office. I lead a team of approximately 15 professionals, so I rely on them to have the technical expertise and knowledge to execute the many programs and initiatives we're responsible for. My job as a senior leader is to ensure we have the right people in the right jobs, focused on the right priorities. I've been a human resources professional for almost 18 years, and my role has evolved from "doing" to "managing" to "leading", and it's been a great ride!

How were you involved in SCYP? I attended my first Introductory Seminar in 1983, at the Co-op College in Saskatoon. The experience blew me away and I went on to attend another seminar there in 1984, and a graduate seminar at Goldeye Centre in Alberta as an exchange participant the next year. After a "brief hiatus" from SCYP, I got involved again while attending the University of Saskatchewan and worked as a Summer Program Assistant through four summers (1987 through 1990). I also staffed a couple of Intro Seminars at Candle Lake after I had entered the workforce in 1991 and was employed at Federated Co-operatives Limited.

How did your involvement in SCYP influence you? Where do I start?! My first SCYP experience came at a time in my life when I really needed it – even though I might not have known that at the time! I grew up on a farm in rural Saskatchewan and had been a very "involved" student, but my involvement with SCYP gave me the leadership focus and the drive to do more with the skills I had. It also exposed me to an entirely new world of contacts and friendships, some of which I maintain to this day. SCYP instilled a confidence in me that no other exposure as a youth or a young adult was able to match. The Program allowed me to practice my leadership skills in a wide variety of scenarios and in a multitude of situations, many of which are not encountered without years of work experience. It allowed me



Lee Knafelc, SCYP Alumni and former Staffer

to develop a leadership style and a self-confidence which I believe paid tremendous benefits later in my personal and professional life.

What influenced/led you to do the work that you are doing now? You mean aside from SCYP?? I have to admit that I sort of "stumbled" into human resource management as a career, but looking back it's hard to imagine building a life-long career in another field. I work in this field because I have an innate and intense interest in people. I can't imagine a job without constant interaction with people. HR allows me to learn and be involved with many aspects of the business, and I enjoy bringing the "people" perspective to business conversations. And by the way: It was a SCYP staffer who said to me in 1990, "You should work in Human Resources!"

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What do you find inspiring in your work? I'm inspired by watching other people learn and grow and flourish at whatever it is they happen to be doing, from the most basic of roles to senior leadership. I find it inspiring to know that someone has accomplished a goal that they didn't previously think they could. It's inspiring to watch people face adversity and incredible challenges and still be able to laugh and reach out to others in the midst of it all.

What else inspires you? Music will always be an inspiration. Certainly my family inspires me, gives me a centre and a purpose, and believes in me even when I doubt myself. I'm inspired by others who do selfless acts or take a chance in order to help someone else, even if they have nothing to gain.

If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go? See next question...I've had the opportunity to do some traveling and hope to do lots more as time allows. But when I'm there, I can't imagine a better place on earth than looking out at the water from our beach at Anglin Lake.

Favourite summer activity? It's more of a "year-round" activity, but we have undertaken the ambitious

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project of building a new cottage at our place at Anglin Lake in north-central Saskatchewan. Planning and construction has been a long ordeal, but then you sit out on that beach, watch the sun set, listen to the loons across the lake, and it all seems worth it....

Last book you read? At the moment I'm reading "A Suitable Boy" by Vikram Seth. It's 1,500 pages long and I only have time to read before I go to sleep – and I usually only get through 3 or 4 pages before I doze off. So it's going to be a l-o-n-g read...For "escape" reading I've lately taken a real interest in fictional works set in India and Asia. Rohinton Mistry is my all-time favourite fictional author.