

HISTORY

In the 1920s, co-operative pioneers were aware that if they did not educate youth about co-operative ways, the movement would not continue to thrive. Pioneers began to use Co-op Schools to ensure the continuation of co-operatives and the use for the co-operative principles. Co-op Schools, now known as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program, has had over an estimated 42,000 participants and is the longest running co-operative youth education program in Canada.

See Appendix A for a timeline by decade.



1946, participants at Prince Albert Co-op School



1949 , participants working at the Co-op Canteen

MORE HISTORY

In the early 1900s co-operatives were the saving grace of many Saskatchewan farmers and their families on the Canadian prairies. The co-operative movement grew steadily in Saskatchewan for many years, and the people of Saskatchewan attributed much of their survival and success, often amid natural disasters, depressions and low prices, to the co-operative way of working together. They developed co-operatives to market their grains, dairy and poultry production. They created co-operative stores to meet their consumer needs, credit unions to provide financial services, curling rinks for winter amusements, community groups to fund medical services, and bull rings to improve the quality of their herds.

As early as the 1920's the pioneers of the co-op movement were concerned that the movement might not continue in Saskatchewan if it did not actively educate youth on the co-op model and its benefits. They wanted to ensure that Saskatchewan youth understood the significant role co-operatives had played in making survival possible for many rural people on the prairies. They decided to start educating Saskatchewan youth on why co-operatives are so important and that co-operation is a way of life that really works.

Originally named, "Co-op Schools," the first one-day seminar was held in 1928 and was organized for anyone who wished to become familiar with the co-operative principles, particularly young adults. Thirty-eight Co-op Schools were held that year and they drew a positive response from those both in charge and in attendance. The popularity of the Co-op Schools necessitated growth. By 1929, 127 one-day seminars were being held in different locations all across Saskatchewan. The majority of attendees were farmers and committeemen from the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool, the main grain-marketing co-operative in the province at the time. While most of those attending were older, many were younger – in their twenties and early thirties. The Co-op Schools attracted great interest and would have continued after 1929 but, when the stock market crashed and the Great Depression swept over the prairies, there were not enough financial resources to keep the Co-op Schools going. There is no recorded Co-op School Activity between 1930 and 1937.

As most people living on the prairies during the 30's were accustomed to co operating as a way of survival, they responded to the destitution of the Great Depression by working together to help themselves. The Depression stimulated the creation of many new kinds of co-operatives all over Saskatchewan. As these new co-operatives were organized and grew, it became apparent that the need for more specialized co operative training was needed.

In response to this increased need, the first weeklong Co-op School seminar was held at the University of Saskatchewan in June in 1937. This seminar had a broader scope in subjects than the previous one-day events. The participants received intensive specialized training in the areas of co-operative marketing and the operation of the co-operative business model. These longer seminars were a huge success and continued in a similar fashion through World War II and into the 1960's.

By that time, though, a new attitude toward education and learning techniques was beginning to emerge. There was considerable demand for the use of more varied teaching techniques, including the use of more visual aids and increased student participation. In response to the demand, Co-op School session leaders started moving away from lecture style techniques and towards group discussions aimed at encouraging an increased understanding among participants. The Co-op Schools were taking on new objectives, including individual and group development. There was also a change in the way that discipline was achieved in the Schools. The students, who had once been under fairly firm discipline by the instructors, were given more freedom and responsibility for their actions. Decision-making became a democratic process that involving both Co-op School participants and staff.

As Co-op Schools grew in size and popularity, it was evident that there was a need to formalize the weeklong seminars and ensure high quality, consistent co-operative education. In that regard, Co-op Schools had a major role in fostering the development of the Co-operative College of Canada (later merged with the Co-operative Union of Canada to become the Canadian Co-operative Association). Co-op Schools became the responsibility of the Co-operative College, and the seminars were held in Saskatoon at its facilities.

During the 1960's the focus of co-operative education moved towards the younger generation. In 1966 the first Junior Co-op School was held for youth between the ages of 13 and 15. Before this time, the people attending the Co-op Schools had been mainly in their late teens and twenties.

By 1970 it was felt that the term "Co-op School" was a bit misleading because lessons on co-operatives were no longer the only concern. Living together in a social and working environment was gaining more importance. A new name, The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program, was eventually adopted in 1970.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has changed significantly over the past 76 years. The original intent, however, "to grow the co-operative sector and educate people on the benefits of co-operatives", is still a part of today's program. Today, the aim of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program (SCYP) is to *contribute to the personal development of youth and encourage their active involvement in community and co-operative organizations*. Each summer, during the months of July and August, seven seminars are offered to Saskatchewan teens, between the ages of 14 and 18. The seminars are held in a camp-like setting and the focus of these seminars is on fun, learning, and personal growth.

SCYP seminars are an opportunity for Saskatchewan youth to gain important life skills, such as leadership, communication, co-operation, public speaking, teamwork and self-esteem. The seminars instill responsibility, as participants are responsible for organizing a co-operative to plan and run the week, and for chores such as cooking and cleaning. This gives the participants a sense of ownership of the seminar and helps everyone to bond with everyone else, developing rewarding and lasting relationships.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has evolved into a three-year progressive program. Each five or six day seminar that a participant attends builds on what they learned at the previous seminar level. Each level has curriculum that staff use to ensure quality, consistent education. Although the Youth Program is highly educational, it bears no resemblance to the more traditional methods of teaching. Skill development takes place through interactive, experiential learning. The participants work together to do activities and solve challenges - so the learning is always fun and hands-on. However, the Youth Program seminars are not all about the lessons - a

significant portion of the week is spent doing the usual fun camp activities like canoeing, swimming, campfires, volleyball and other games.

The SCYP seminars are staffed by employees and elected officials from the co-operative sector, as well as program alumni who volunteer their time. Staff responsibilities include: planning the seminar, developing and leading sessions, participating in sessions, social and recreational events, supervising participants, being involved in cooking and clean-up, and participating in daily staff meetings. Staffing a Youth Seminar is a great opportunity for staff to help make a difference in the lives of youth; to meet and work with other co-operative sector employees, to polish presentation and facilitation skills, and to learn all kinds of things about co-operatives and the co-operative way of working together. Many staff members return year after year because of their enjoyment of the seminars and the personal growth they experience.

Attending a Co-operative Youth Program seminar opens up a world of opportunities for Saskatchewan youth. It has been a significant way in which young people have been able to prepare themselves for the work place. Some previous participants have gone on to become Junior Staff or summer students in the Youth Program office. Some have participated in overseas exchanges, or gained employment in Saskatchewan co-operatives as a result of their participation in the program. Attendance at an SCYP seminar is highly regarded on a resume because it tells future employers that the youth have learned about co-operatives, are serious about learning new skills, and that they have had the opportunity to polish their communication and leadership abilities.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has been successful for more than 77 years. It has been estimated that more than 42,188 Saskatchewan young adults have attended a Co-op School or a Co-operative Youth Seminar. This is an unmistakable sign that the program has truly touched the lives of Saskatchewan people. Although the program has changed significantly throughout its history, the focus and intention behind the program has only strengthened. The uniqueness of the program stems from its ability to provide a co-operative, participatory learning experience for young people, co-op staff and volunteers within a positive, enjoyable environment.

Appendix A

Early 1900s

Co-operatives were the saving grace of many Saskatchewan farmers and their families on the Canadian prairies. As the co-operatives movement grew steadily in Saskatchewan, the people of the province attributed much of their survival and success, often amid natural disasters, depressions and low prices, to the co-operative way of working together. Among other things, co-operatives were created to market their grains, dairy and poultry production. The creation of co-operative stores met their consumer needs and credit unions provided financial services.

Early stages of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan brought about awareness of the need for co-operative education.

Formation of the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool.

-Number of Co-op Schools increased to 157.
-Stock Market Crash.

1920 1921 1922 1923 1924 1925 1926 1927 1928 1929

1920s

Pioneers of the co-operative movement knew that the movement might not continue in Saskatchewan if they did not educate youth on the co-op model and its benefits. Pioneers needed to emphasize the positive role co-operatives played in the survival of many rural people on the prairies. "Co-op Schools" became the means of education about the co-operative principles.

Agricultural co-operative conference in Regina resulting in the recommendation for co-operative education courses.

Due to a crash in the stock market and the Great Depression, lack of financial resources put a halt to the continuation of Co-op Schools. There is no recorded Co-op School Activity between 1930-1937.

Year of the first Co-op School, with a total of 39 held throughout Saskatchewan.

1930s

Co-operation continued as a way of survival amongst the destitution of the Great Depression. In spite of the Depression, many new kinds of co-operatives were created all over Saskatchewan. As these new co-operatives grew, it became apparent that co-operative training was needed.

Co-operative Leaders Conference spurs Wheat Pool's interest in co-operative education.

First one-week Co-op School organized by B.N. Arnason and W.B. Francis which became an annual event.

-World War II begins.
-First Co-op School under the auspice of the Wheat Pool.

1930 1931 1932 1933 1934 1935 1936 1937 1938 1939

The beginning of the Great Depression.

The first week-long Co-op School seminar was held at the University of Saskatchewan in June of 1937. This seminar had a broader scope in subjects than the previous one-day events. The seminars were a huge success and continued on similarly through World War II and into the 1960s.

Co-operation and Markets branch organized the second one-week Co-op School.



Co-op Women's Guild Charter being held by President R. A. Robinson, January 11, 1946

-Formation of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Women's Guild.
 -Co-operative Union of Canada incorporated as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Union.

First Co-op Canteen held at Youth Training School at Kenosee Lake.

First Co-op Canteen held at Co-op School.

1940

1941

1942

1943

1944

1945

1946

1947

1948

1949

-Central planning committee formed to plan one-week Co-op Schools.
 -Women invited to lecture at Co-op Schools.



Co-op School Canteen Staff, July 8, 1949

Increase to two one-week Co-op Schools held at the University of Saskatchewan and Regina College.

Increased role of Wheat Pool and Women's Guilds in planning, recruiting and lecturing at Co-op Schools.

Increased focus on group development, rather than solely basing lectures on co-ops and co-operative principles.

Increased discussion and participation recognized as necessary for learning at Co-op Schools.

Group Development added as an important component of the Co-op Schools.



Co-op Swimming Class- Marge Carleton and Virginia Howlett. Swift Current. July 9, 1956

1950

1951

1952

1953

1954

1955

1956

1957

1958

1959

Average age of participants decreases to 16.



Co-op school girls tired after a day at the Experimental Farm, July 8, 1954

Western Co-operative College incorporated in Saskatchewan.

1960s

A major shift in learning techniques occurred. Co-op School session leaders moved away from the lecture style techniques towards group discussions aimed at encouraging an increased understanding among participants. Program began to focus on individual and group development, students were given more freedom and decision-making became a democratic process.

Development of opportunities for past participants to staff and become Program Assistants for Co-op Schools.

Increased focus on leadership and communication skills at Co-op Schools.



SCYP held in Yorkton, 1971

Canadian Development Association formed to replace the Saskatchewan Co-operative Union.

Wheat Pool obtained increased amounts of control over the promotion, organization and staffing of

1960

1961

1962

1963

1964

1965

1966

1967

1968

1969

Origination of the Graduate Seminar.



August 1961, Co-op Graduate Seminar, Fort Qu'Appelle

First Jr. Co-op School Program.

First Co-op Youth Leadership Conference.

The increase in size and popularity of Co-op Schools proved that formalization of the weeklong seminars was necessary to ensure high quality, consistent co-operative education. The Co-operative College of Canada became responsible for Co-op Schools and the seminars were held at their facilities. In this decade, co-operative education moved towards the younger generation. 1966 marked the first Junior Co-op School held for youth between the ages of 13 and 15.

1970 **1971** **1972** **1973** **1974** **1975** **1976** **1977** **1978** **1979**

-Name change from “Co-op School” to “Youth Leadership Seminar” to “Co-operative Youth Seminar”.
-First Speakers Bureau and Traveling Youth Seminar.

-First Issue of “CY Information”, a newsletter for the Co-operative Youth Seminars.
-Canadian Development Association dissolved into the Western Co-operative College, which becomes the Co-operative College of Canada.

History project undertaken to interview the pioneers of the co-operative movement in Saskatchewan.

-La Conseil de la Co-operation du Quebec hosts one individual from the Co-op Youth Program for an exchange.
-Student-Employer Communication Banquet.

-Centralization of Co-op Schools and development of a Youth Program Coordinator.
-First Youth-Adult Seminar, Youth Exchange and Northern Saskatchewan Co-op Youth Seminars.

First National Co-op Youth Seminar.

-First Co-operative Youth Rally.
-Seminars now comprised of Jr./Sr. Intro and Jr./Sr. Grad levels.

Youth Program helps assist with the development of a Youth Seminar in Salmon Arm, British Columbia.

Increased involvement in Co-operative Youth Exchanges between provinces.

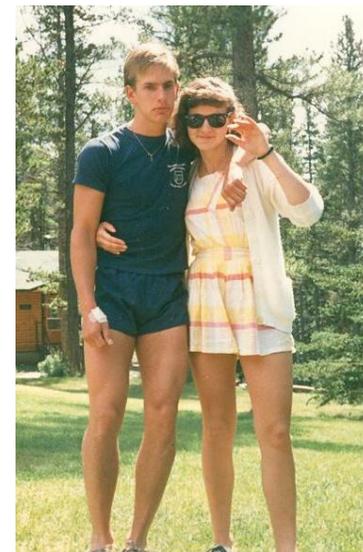
1970s
It was decided that the term “Co-op School” was misleading because educating on co-operatives were no longer the only concern. A new name, Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program was adopted in 1970.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has changed significantly over the past 80 years. It's original intent, "to grow the co-operative sector and educate people on the benefits of co-operatives" is still a part of today's program. The current aim of SCYP is "to contribute to the personal development of youth and encourage their active involvement in community and co-operative organizations."

Dialogue for Direction initiated as a forum for youth and co-operative leaders in Saskatchewan.

-“Lifeshops” developed for participants aged 20 to 30 years old.
-Development of “Scott’s Game”, a co-operative education game that continues to be utilized today.

Candle Lake utilized as main Co-operative Youth Seminar facility.



1987

1980 1981 1982 1983 1984 1985 1986 1987 1988

First Issue of “Directions”.

Major changes to the seminar’s curriculum.

Co-operative College of Canada and the Co-operative Union of Canada combine to form the Canadian Co-operative Association, with the youth seminars organized by the Saskatchewan section.

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has evolved into a three-year progressive program. Each level has curriculum that staff use to ensure quality, consistent education. The Youth Program is highly educational but bears no resemblance to the more traditional methods of teaching. Skill development takes place through interactive, experimental learning. Participants are put in situations where they must work together to do activities and solve challenges which makes the learning fun and hands-on. A significant portion of the week is spent doing the usual camp activities such as canoeing, swimming, campfires, volleyball and other games.

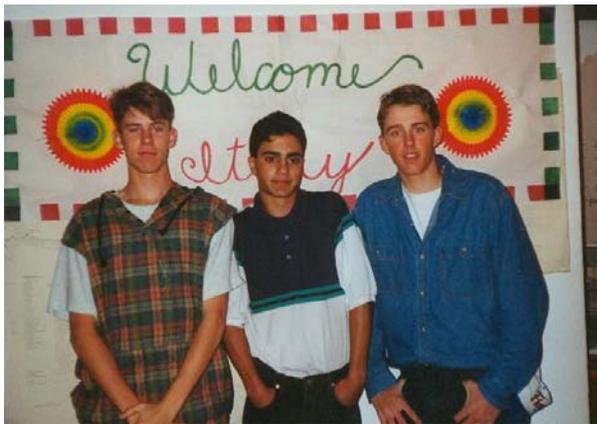
-Change from Jr./Sr. Intro and Jr./Sr. Grad to Introductory, Intermediate, and Graduate levels.
-Origination of the Global Development session.

-Co-operative Enterprise Development for Youth.
-Witinokitawin Seminar.



SCYP 1998

1990 1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999



SCYP 1993

Saskatchewan Wheat Pool's support for the program wanes.

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Curriculum Revisions to reflect changing society.

Winter Workshop and Speakers Bureau.

-First Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Day.
-Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Leadership Award.



Common Ground: Co-operative Youth Leadership Forum.

Canadian Co-operative Association Saskatchewan region incorporated as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association.

First SCYP E-Zine.

SCYP has been successful for 80 years and it is estimated that more than 42,000 Saskatchewan young adults have attended. This is an unmistakable sign that the program has truly touched the lives of Saskatchewan people. Despite the adaptations of the program, the focus and intention behind the program has only strengthened. The uniqueness of the program stems from its ability to provide a co-operative, participatory learning experience for young people, co-op staff and volunteers within a positive, enjoyable environment.