

CO-OP CAMP: CELEBRATING 44,000 PARTICIPANTS AND 90 YEARS OF MAGIC

SASKATOON, SK It's been called Co-op Schools, the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program, and is now commonly known throughout the province as Co-op Camp. For 90 years this celebrated youth leadership program has been promoting co-operative values and bringing out the best in young people.

Since its founding in 1928, Co-op Camp (officially known as the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program or SCYP) has evolved into a series of summer camps sessions that contribute to the personal development of youth and encourage their active involvement in community and co-operative organizations.

More than 44,000 young people have been participants in SCYP and its predecessors over the past nine decades. Jim Deane, Chair of the Board of Directors of Saskatchewan Co-operative Association - the organization that runs Co-op Camp - says that parents routinely call the office in wonderment after camp season because of the changes they've seen in their children. The positive effect is so well known it's called 'Co-op Camp Magic.' "We are pleased to see that young people are learning not only about the values and benefits of co-operatives, but are building their interpersonal skills and leadership abilities," he says.

Co-op Camp has just completed its run of sessions for 2018. Sessions ran from July 3 to August 3, and were staffed by volunteers from local co-ops, credit unions and SCYP alumni. Most of the sessions were five days long and were held at Candle Lake and Last Mountain Lake. Dates and application details for next year will be posted early in 2019 at <http://sask.coop/youth/co-op-camp/about-co-op-camp>.

Over the years, participation in Co-op Camp has led to countless young people finding work in a Saskatchewan co-operative or credit union. One of Co-op Camp's alumni is now the head of Saskatchewan's leading Top 100 business. Scott Banda was an SCYP participant and became the camp's Program Assistant in 1983, and staffed camps as a counsellor for much of the 1980s. Scott is now the Chief Executive Officer of Federated Co-operatives Limited. Scott tells us, "I grew up in a 'co-op family' and was aware of co-operatives. The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program took that awareness to a new level." He says that SCYP helped him understand the scope and scale of the co-op model, and encouraged him to learn more about what community-based organizations can do and the importance of value driven organizations. "Most of all I met many new people with diverse perspectives and clearly learned that more can be accomplished by working together. All of this has inspired my career and has remained foundational to the work I do today," he adds.

Jordan "J.D." Lemire, a Co-op Camp participant who has returned to staff 12 camp sessions, says that his two biggest take-aways from SCYP are strengthening communication skills and developing emotional intelligence. J.D. also served as the SCYP Marketing and Recruitment Officer in 2007/08 and is now employed by Conexus Credit Union. In both positions he is building on what he learned at camp. It's a safe and inclusive space, he says, "where young

people can freely identify with who they are as individuals and begin to understand the emotions of others, which can result in a change of how they would act in different situations.”

Co-op Camp participation often runs in families. Karen Timoshuk (a former participant, SCYP Program Assistant and SCA Program Officer for much of 1978-1992), says that both her husband and two daughters have attended camp. Looking back at decades of attendance lists, it’s common to see brothers, sisters, and cousins as participants.

The Co-op Camp curriculum has evolved over its 90-year history. In many ways it mirrors the changes to Saskatchewan’s co-operatives and credit unions and the province’s shift towards urbanization. Sessions are continually added and updated. Leadership, self-confidence and co-op values, though, have always been core to the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program and remain deeply embedded. After all, these are the building blocks that continue to create Co-op Camp Magic.

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CONTACT INFORMATION

To learn more about the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program and the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, please contact Victoria Morris, Executive Director, SCA **(306) 343-3582** or victoria.morris@sask.coop.

ABOUT SCA

Saskatchewan Co-operative Association (SCA) is the apex organization for the province’s 950 co-operatives and credit unions and is one of nine English-speaking provincial co-operative associations in Canada. SCA is a co-operative and is owned by its members, many of which are co-op federations or associations.

Co-operatives operate within 20 distinct economic sectors in the province. SCA strategically links them for collaboration, education, promotion, advocacy, and development. SCA also runs the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program.

ABOUT CO-OP CAMP

The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program (SCYP), also known as Co-op Camp, celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. Co-op Camp is a series of summer camp sessions held in July and August.

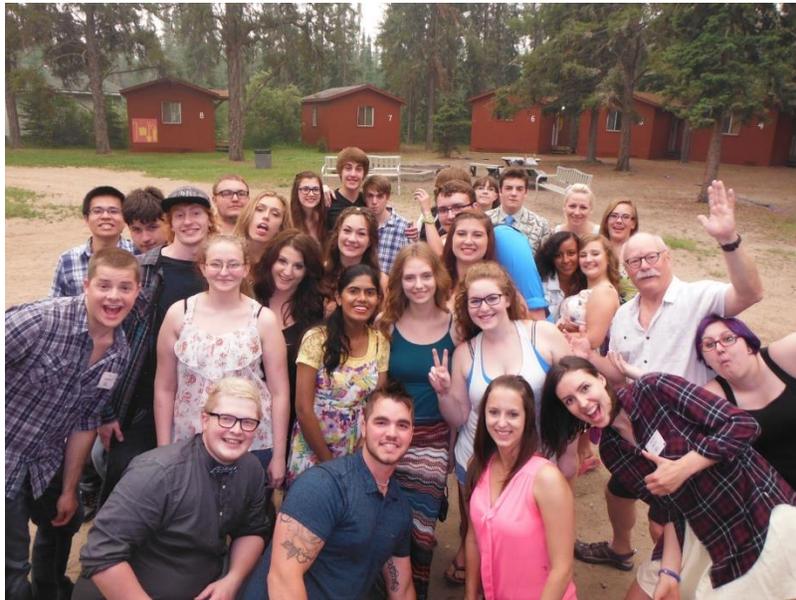
The curriculum is specially designed for youth ages 12 to 18 to meet new people, develop leadership skills, learn more about co-operatives and how to get involved in the community -- and participate in a memorable summer experience.

Activities are participatory and interactive, and challenge participants to work together. Of course, SCYP also offers swimming, canoeing, volleyball, campfires, and other recreational activities.

IMAGES AND CAPTIONS



Saskatchewan's Co-op Camp. Celebrating 90 years of youth leadership and co-operative values. Camp sessions ran between July 3 and August 3 at Candle Lake and Last Mountain Lake.



The Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program has been creating the next generation of young leaders for 90 years. Leadership, self-confidence and co-op values are deeply embedded in the Co-op Camp program.