

Saskatchewan Co-operative Focus

UNIQUE CO-OPERATIVE MEETS ASPIRATIONS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

By Wendy Whitebear

In 1989, Many Nations Benefit Corporation Ltd. (MNBC) was developed out of a need to provide Indigenous organizations and their employees with affordable and culturally appropriate group Pension and Health Benefits. The mission of this new non-profit company struck a cord with many Indigenous employers and the company quickly expanded to exceed their own expectations. The company continued to develop and redefine its mission to better meet the needs of the growing client base and to reflect the changing conditions in the insurance industry.

In 1995, the Corporation's Board approved and established MNBC and its subsidiary Many Nations Financial Services Ltd.. The new organization began to operate with the mission "To assist our Members in achieving the best possible affordable and culturally appropriate solutions for their needs in pension, employee benefits, insurance, retirement planning and risk management." Today, Many Nations Financial Services Ltd. is focused on providing a full range of insurance and investment products to more than 300 Indigenous organizations with over 10,000 members across Canada.

Many Nations



Once MNBC created a subsidiary that could effectively address the Group Pension and Health Benefit requirements of its Membership, the Board of Directors focused its attention on other matters that were pertinent to the aspirations of the Indigenous communities it served. This proved to be a daunting task. When MNBC was originally developed, it was designed to include every individual in each organization that utilized Many Nations products and services per province. The Board of Directors soon realized that due to the size of MNBC's Membership, a more efficient and effective design was needed to accommodate this national endeavour.

The Board re-developed the goals and objectives for a sustainable co-operative governance structure that was more efficient for all national participants. Through consultation and collaboration with the many stakeholders involved, a new structure was developed to encompass the national configuration that MNBC represents. It was determined that each employer that utilized the products and services would have Membership in the Co-operative rather than each individual. As MNBC has a national Membership, it was decided to divide the country into seven regions.

Part of the re-structuring process included developing a mission that addressed the common vision of the Co-op's Indigenous communities to "Build the largest national Indigenous economic and information network" in Canada. Protecting the future of Indigenous people has always been a common goal amongst Indigenous communities but the Board

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ADDRESSING CHILDCARE NEEDS CO-OPERATIVELY

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April 2008

By Jennifer Divall and Tabitha Dittmer

Childcare co-operatives are widespread across Canada, providing services for over 34,000 families. In 2007, the Canadian Co-operative Association released a report on childcare co-operatives in Canada, examining the benefits and challenges of incorporating the co-operative model in childcare services. Looking at over 400 rural and urban childcare co-operatives across the country, CCA found overwhelming support for using the co-operative model to meet childcare needs. Created as an alternative to pre-school and daycare centers, co-operative childcare centers encompass principles of self-help, democracy and solidarity, and encourage parent participation to seek solutions to wider community issues through community oriented programming.

Saskatchewan has the second largest co-operative childcare sector in the country, accounting for 27% of childcare services in the province. In Saskatchewan there are

72 preschool co-ops and 40 daycare co-ops, amounting to 112 registered childcare co-ops in 2007. By joining the co-operative movement and developing a cohesive voice for lobbying efforts, childcare co-operatives have greater potential to demand government action regarding the provision of childcare services.



For more information on existing childcare co-operatives, or for information on how to start a childcare co-operative, contact Saskatchewan Co-operative Association at www.sask.coop

The CCA research paper highlights the organizational model of the childcare co-ops by exploring province specific examples. The goal of the paper is to provide people with information, examples and useful links to using the co-operative model to meet childcare needs, as well as to provide the federal government with information and analysis of the current situation of childcare across the country. Copies of *Childcare Co-operatives in Canada 2007: a Research*

Report can be found at <http://www.coopscanada.coop/resources/publications/researchreports/>

Please see COMMUNITY PROFILE: Clavet Co-operative Preschool on page 3

Quick Question and Answer:

What is a childcare co-op?

Organized in the same way as other co-operative organizations, childcare co-operatives are owned and controlled by their members. This means that member needs are the primary consideration when identifying what services will be provided. All childcare co-operatives in Saskatchewan incorporate as a not-for-profit organization, and any surplus generated is used to increase or improve the childcare services. Childcare co-ops encourage parent involvement not only as members and volunteers but as active co-op board members, determining policy, procedure and the environment of the childcare facility.

What are the benefits of childcare co-operatives?

Childcare co-operatives develop to meet specific community-identified needs. They are present in communities where other childcare facilities are not available or may not provide the scope or type of facility necessary. Childcare co-ops generally have higher adult/child ratios, and through their involvement at the board, committee and classroom levels, parents come have more opportunity for involvement than in a regular facility. Supporters of childcare co-ops describe primary benefit to be that parent involvement ensures a consistent style and quality of care between home and the childcare facility. The inclusive environment allows for cost-effective delivery of parent determined programming.

COMMUNITY PROFILE: CLAVET CO-OPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

Childcare co-ops are not only a more individualized way to meet childcare needs, they also foster an environment for creating community. In this month's edition of Saskatchewan Co-operative Focus we present the Clavet Preschool Co-operative as an innovative and community focused way of addressing childcare needs!

The Clavet Co-operative Preschool began in 2003, embodying the spirit of co-operation: people working together to achieve a goal and develop an integral piece of the community. A group of parents saw the need for a preschool in the community and decided that a co-operative board would be the best way to accomplish this. The preschool is now thriving on that same spirit. The Clavet Co-operative Preschool is directed by a board of parents working together to ensure early education is provided for their children. Without this active board, the preschool program would be lost, leaving parents to drive their children to Saskatoon or neighboring communities for an early education.

"We feel that preschool is a place where children learn many skills that necessary for a successful education and is essential for giving children a head start in Kindergarten" states Tabitha Dittmer, president of Clavet Co-operative Preschool. "We are fortunate to have a fabulous teacher that cares about our children and sets the framework for further learning in school." In addition to education, the preschool provides a valuable network



to meet other young families in the community. The recent addition of a playgroup program (for children ages 0 to 4) facilitates this process even further. In introducing parents to the co-operative at an earlier stage, the board hopes to familiarize them with the process of running the preschool and involve more people with the board of directors.

As Dittmer identifies, the success of co-operatives in Saskatchewan reflects on the personality of people in Saskatchewan, "I have found that residents of smaller centers, like Clavet, are drawn to co-operatives because of where they were raised; most of these families witnessed co-operatives in action as they grew up through involvement in credit unions, wheat pools and grocery stores. It is ingrained in us to work together to achieve success". With this mentality, co-operatives like Clavet Co-operative Preschool continue to grow and thrive in Saskatchewan. This year, the Preschool has shown tremendous growth with 18 families registered and several that were turned away as maximum capacity was reached. One of the challenges the Co-operative faces is the lack of a permanent facility. The Preschool currently rents the Clavet hall which means the entire classroom must be set up and put away each week. "We hope to have a more permanent home in the coming years, since the expansion of our community means an even greater need for our preschool program", states Dittmer, "The 2008-2009 school year could be our best yet!"

UNIQUE CO-OPERATIVE MEETS NEEDS OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

of Directors wanted the Co-op to reflect the empowering sharing and building opportunities for Indigenous people, communities and future generations.

MNBC is now in the position to re-launch the Co-op that represents its Memberships' voice, communities and a common vision of self-determination. The Board of Directors decided that the best way to bring the vision and communities together would be to host a National Conference on November 18 & 19, 2008 in Saskatoon. The objective of the Conference is to bring MNBC's Membership together to share information about their successes, partnerships that have been developed and any future endeavours that they may be considering.

The goal of MNBC is to provide its Membership with the opportunity to work in co-operation on economic

development initiatives and other opportunities that will help establish sustainable communities. MNBC is very proud to be the first national Indigenous Co-operative in Canada and is very pleased to share this with Indigenous Canada. MNBC currently has over 300 Member Organizations across Canada that has a wealth of knowledge to share with other Indigenous communities in several different initiatives. The Board of Directors believes that by "Building the largest Indigenous economic and information network" its Indigenous Membership will be able to view initiatives through different perspectives that will ultimately benefit everyone involved.

Further information about Many Nations Benefit Co-operative, Many Nations Financial Services and the upcoming conference, can be found at www.mannations.com or by contacting Wendy Whitebear or Gail Davison at (306) 956-4669

BUILDING YOUTHS' CO-OPERATIVE CAPACITY

By Doug Morrison

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YouthBuild Saskatchewan has been in development for four years. Starting in 2004 with a program in Saskatoon for youth facing employment barriers, YouthBuild has developed programming on the foundation of the co-operative model and the seven co-operative principles. For many of the youth, YouthBuild is the first time they had been invited to participate in the decision making processes of an organization and they react positively to the democratic governance process. YouthBuild programming strives to ensure that each person is valued as an individual.

In May 2007, YouthBuild Saskatchewan became the first international affiliate of YouthBuild International/USA (www.youthbuild.org), the largest federation of youth employment training programs in the United States. YouthBuild Saskatchewan helps its affiliates leverage funding resources provincially and facilitates the sharing of best practices in youth employment training.

A new community service co-operative is currently being formed to support YouthBuild Saskatchewan. In its final stages of incorporation, the membership of The Advantage Community Development Co-operative Ltd. will include community organizations, businesses, and associations committed to helping Saskatchewan youth develop their leadership, academic, and work skills. The new co-op will be the Provincial sponsor of YouthBuild Saskatchewan. The Provincial Co-operative Development Assistance Program and the Federal Co-operative Secretariat Co-operative Development Initiative provided funding assistance to support the development of this new co-operative organization.

With this assistance, YouthBuild Saskatchewan has identified their top priority to be helping youth to stay in school by assisting them to find part-time employment. Using the YouthBuild USA model, one way this will be accomplished is by providing youth with opportunities to participate in building affordable green housing. The Saskatchewan YouthBuild program also strives to help youth find work with local businesses through the Work to Get Work Program.

Initiated in 2001, Work to Get Work originally focused on helping younger high school students (ages 15-16) find first jobs at local fast food companies. Helping youth connect with part time work is an important strategy for keeping youth in school and out of gangs. As one YouthBuild participant and former gang member observed, "The best way to keep youth out of gangs is a job." In 2007, Brian Gordon, founder of Work to Get Work, and YouthBuild Saskatchewan joined together in a partnership. The program is now expanding to assist older high school students (ages 17-21) to obtain higher paying jobs that require more work experience.

Youth dropping out of high school is a particularly challenging issue for Saskatchewan urban and First Nations communities and so an important component of the Work to Get Work Program is what Brian calls "reach back." Youth are expected to be community role models and often older youth give classroom presentations about the benefits of staying in school and working part time. Over the past 30 years, YouthBuild USA has demonstrated the positive impact of youth involvement in both work and school. Putting equal emphasis on school and work, this "learn and earn" strategy is being transferred to Saskatchewan through YouthBuild as one of the best ways to encourage youth to stay in school. According to Max Stadnyk, of TeamWork construction and the first YouthBuild Program Manager, "on the job training is the best method to help youth learn employment skills and see the relevance of their academic studies". Stadnyk believes that this practical approach to work and learning is what is missing in many of today's high schools. Results show that YouthBuild graduates experience high rates of success in many areas; they are able to complete high school, maintain employment, increase their wages, and significantly reduce their use of drugs and alcohol.

By engaging communities, schools, and families, YouthBuild strives to create more opportunities for youth to "learn and earn." This community-based approach of helping youth help themselves is an excellent example of co-operatives values in action. Support from the Saskatchewan co-operative movement has been very important in the development of the YouthBuild Saskatchewan. YouthBuild Saskatchewan is committed to helping develop the next generation of co-operative youth leaders in Saskatchewan.

For more information on the Advantage Community Development Co-operative and YouthBuild Saskatchewan, contact Doug Morrison, General Manager, at (306) 734-5112 or email Doug at dmorrison@advantage.coop.



Rebuilding Communities... Transforming Lives

MAKE SUMMER EVEN BETTER!

SASKATCHEWAN CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

By Victoria Morris

Summer is fast approaching and this year the Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Program (SCYP) is celebrating 80 years of providing co-operative youth education and programs in Saskatchewan! Over 80 years ago, co-operators in Saskatchewan recognized the need to ensure that new people were involved in the co-operative movement, and so SCYP was created. Every July and August, a team of volunteers, composed of youth program alumni and co-operative sector staff, lead 4 - 6 day seminar camps that feature a combination of activities to build leadership skills, educate about co-operatives, and provide fun, interactive experiences.

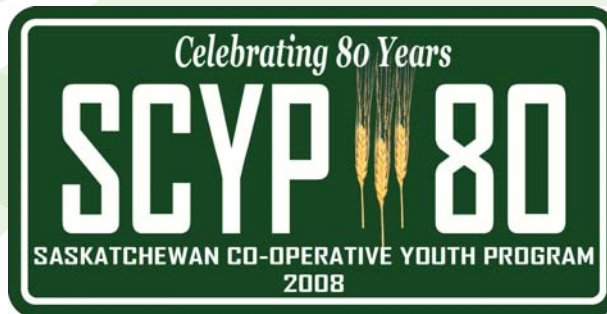
Involving youth and building youth potential is extremely important to the co-operative sector. Encouraging personal development and the active involvement of youth, SCYP not only builds awareness of co-ops and the benefits and attributes of the co-operative model, but also builds strong skills in young people – skills that they will use as co-operative leaders. The long history of Saskatchewan co-operatives spearheading and supporting co-operative youth education has a huge effect on our province, with over 42,000 youth having gone through the program so far.

"I can not speak highly enough about this program. It was truly a life changing experience for all three of my daughters!"

Bev Seymour, Principal of Beechy School



"This camp really lets you learn more about yourself and how to co-operate." Melissa, Lumsden.



Co-operatives continue to benefit communities around the world through the provision of valuable and much needed services and products. As a co-operative organization, Saskatchewan Co-operative Association strives to address community identified needs by providing programs such as SCYP. Through the combination of SCYP programming and support from the co-operative sector, Saskatchewan's young leaders are poised to lead the sector into a strong future of co-operation. We encourage everyone to get involved in SCYP and to help promote the program. To mark the 80th anniversary, SCYP will be leading a number of activities throughout the year. Check our website or contact the SCYP/SCA office for more information if you would like to get involved in the celebrations!

www.sask.coop

"A great experience for all participants and staff."
Doug Pusch, Manager, Peebles Co-op.



"I think the coolest part of SCYP is that participants are given an opportunity to grow and better understand themselves, while at the same time, learn about larger issues that are affecting the entire globe. The learning experience encompasses everything from the individual to the world population." Neil, Saskatoon

NEWS AND EVENTS

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13th Annual Co-op Classic July 11th 2008, Harbor Golf Club and Resort



Join the Co-op Classic as a golfer, sponsor or donor to support the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada. CDF helps people find co-operative solutions to community challenges in Canada and developing countries. Register or find more information at www.sask.coop

Saskatchewan Co-operative Youth Day May 24th 2008

Get together through-out the province to celebrate youth and co-operation in Saskatchewan! For more information on planning an activity (games, snacks, music, picnic, etc.) to celebrate Saskatchewan's Second Annual Co-operative Youth Day, contact your local co-op or credit union, or Saskatchewan Co-operative Association as sca@sask.coop

Funding for Co-op Advisory Services and Learning Exchanges

Groups of farmers involved in biofuel and other value-added agricultural co-op projects can apply for funding contributions for advisory services and/or learning exchanges. Maximum contribution to any co-op is \$75 000. To find out more about qualifying criteria, eligible costs and application procedure see www.coopzone.coop/en/ag-cdi

Next funding deadline dates are April 2 and September 8. For help with your application and more information contact: Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, Co-op Resource Officer, 244 3702



Saskatchewan Co-operative Focus is a publication of Saskatchewan Prairie Hub, a collaboration of Saskatchewan Co-operative Association and Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan with funding from the Co-operative Development Initiative. If you have a story you would like to share about co-operatives in Saskatchewan, or a story idea you would like to see published, contact Saskatchewan Co-operative Association at sca@sask.coop or (306) 244-3702 for information on submissions.

Camp Jeunes entrepreneurs

Pour une cinquième année, le Camp Jeunes entrepreneurs aura lieu en Saskatchewan. Le Camp Jeunes entrepreneurs est différent des camps de vacances ordinaires parce qu'il te permet de te familiariser avec le monde des affaires dans une atmosphère de vacances. Pendant une semaine, tu travailles en équipe à monter une petite entreprise, tu es ton patron, tu fabriques un produit, tu le mets en marché et tu le vends.

Ça t'intéresse ? Fais vite, les places sont limitées !!

Date limite : le vendredi 29 juin 2007

Contactez-nous au 1-800-670-0879 et demandez Estelle

Email: campje@ccs-sk.ca

Conseil de la Coopération de la Saskatchewan (CCS)

<http://www.ccs-sk.ca/RDEE/Jeunesse/CampJE.php>



2008 NATIONAL
CED CONFERENCE

waves of change

building people-centred economies

May 21-24, 2008 - University of Saskatchewan

Catch the Waves of Change with 400 community practitioners, civil society representatives, academics, government partners, and citizens from across Canada in vibrant Saskatoon, SK.

Key themes for 2008 include:

- Building Fairer and Stronger Economies
- Tackling Poverty and Homelessness
- Investing in Sustainable Communities

Registration now, at www.ccednet-rcdec.ca.

Highlights:

- Over 40 workshop and action sessions will explore best practices in poverty reduction; social enterprise; sustainable solutions; youth CED; women and CED; immigrant CED; policy; research; and much more!
- Engage in plenary sessions including Saskatchewan's own Paul Wilkinson and Peru's Nedda Angulo Villareal; a marketplace featuring outstanding community initiatives; and innovative participatory action sessions giving you the tools to create real change in your communities!
- Shoulder events including the Canadian CED Network AGM, and interesting site visits to local initiatives.
- Celebratory networking, dining, and social activities combined with multiple opportunities to learn about the vibrant culture of the Prairie region.

For more information, please contact Marilyn Brownlee, Local Conference Coordinator, in Saskatoon at (306) 978-4041, extension 18 or quint01@sasktel.net.