



About the program

Co-operative Young Leaders (CYL) is a unique summer camp experience for youth ages 13 to 18. The series of week-long overnight camps brings youth together from across Ontario, in a safe non-judgmental environment where they are encouraged to be themselves.

CYL is one-part experiential learning and one-part traditional camp. Youth participants develop and practice communication, leadership, and team-building skills, learn about the history of the co-operative sector, the co-operative principles and values, and enjoy traditional camp activities like swimming, campfires, games, and hiking in the great outdoors!

CYL is held at the Gay Lea Foods Co-operative Education Centre (CEC), in Aylmer Ontario. This site is set on 98-acres of fields and trails through beautiful Carolinian forest.

“Advance your career while helping to shape tomorrow’s leaders.”



Become a CYL Facilitator!

CYL volunteer facilitators are currently employed in the co-operative sector or are part of our CYL Alumni.

Being a CYL facilitator is an incredible professional development experience – and a chance to strengthen your own leadership skills by engaging the hearts and minds of the next generation of co-operative leaders!



CYL also provides facilitators with opportunities to build their presentation and communication skills. You will emerge with new leadership abilities, an amazing team-building experience rarely found anywhere else, and a confidence born of making a tangible difference in the lives of others.



Facilitator Training

Training is held the first weekend of June on site at the CEC. This weekend gives facilitators an opportunity to meet their teams, build on their base knowledge and experience, and get energized for the upcoming CYL camp. Sessions include facilitation techniques, conflict resolution, youth mental health and CYL 101.



Bring your Creativity!

CYL has an established program curriculum, refined and updated over the decades. With our curriculum as the foundation and your own creative input to make it shine, CYL will be an amazing experience for both facilitators and participants! Each week, our experienced team leads will work with you to ensure you are well prepared, and encourage you to bring your new ideas to the table.



All Ages Welcome

We need fresh ideas, tried and tested wisdom, and everything in between. Our facilitators range in age with one thing in common - their passion for all things co-operative and a desire to share their experience with the next generation of co-operative leaders. If you have an interest in helping our youth participants learn and grow, you are the right person for this role!

CYL is both an intensive and rejuvenating week...



CYL volunteer facilitators contribute hundreds of volunteer hours towards the program each year. They are required to attend the facilitation training weekend and remain on site throughout their week of camp. The training weekend in 2023 will take place from Friday, June 2nd to Sunday, June 4th at the CEC. It is the policy of the Ontario Co-operative Association that all facilitators complete a vulnerable sector police check *prior* to the facilitation training weekend.

Explorers



Sunday, July 23 to Friday, July 28, 2023
Sunday, July 30 to Friday, August 4, 2023



Participants will explore the wonder of co-operatives, as they learn about their history and discover the CYL community that awaits! They will gain an understanding of the values and behaviours of leadership, team-building, and communication skills, and learn what makes a “great” leader in a judgement-free environment where everyone is welcome. They will have fun meeting new friends and enjoying traditional camp activities, all while learning to lead a week at camp. This week is open to participant’s ages 13 to 14, and is a great introduction to CYL!

Trailblazers



Saturday, July 15 to Friday, July 21, 2023



Participants will blaze a trail towards co-operation, as we focus on our CYL community, learn to overcome communication challenges, and lead the way towards building great teamwork and co-operative leadership skills. Activities focus on stereotyping, the rumour mill, the influence of social media, as well as diversity and equality. Participants will begin to take over leading their camp, while having fun exploring the great outdoors and enjoying traditional camp activities. This is a great opportunity to reunite with old friends and meet new ones in a safe and supportive environment. This week is open to participants ages 15 to 16, and/or participants that have completed Explorers.

Visionaries



Saturday, July 8 to Friday, July 14, 2023



Participants will implement the vision and imagination to shape the future of co-operatives, as they become innovative young leaders with the knowledge and skills to change the world! This week, we help them solidify basic knowledge of the co-operative business model, support and foster the co-operative leaders of the future, and provide them with the tools to make a difference in their communities. Participants work in teams to create a co-operative that addresses a need in their community, and develop a communication and marketing plan which is presented to a panel of senior co-operative representatives for constructive feedback. Visionaries take over the responsibility of leading the camp with the support of their facilitators. This week is open to participants ages 17 to 18, and/or participants that completed Trailblazers.



Registration for facilitators will open on January 9, 2023 and teams will be assigned their weeks on a first come first serve basis. A system-wide notification will be sent out to all co-operatives in Ontario, and our social media platforms will announce that registration is open.

If you would like more information about the Co-operative Young Leaders program, please visit our website at ontario.coop/CYL, or contact Carol Fleming, Director, Co-operative Young Leaders at cfleming@ontario.coop.