

Carol Fleming, Director, Co-operative Young Leaders (2019 – present)

It has been one of the great joys of my life to be a facilitator at CYL for the last 15 years, and now the Director of the CYL program. My path to CYL was a “road less travelled” for sure. It was something I never anticipated doing as my feet were firmly planted in the world of credit and financial counselling for adults. What I was about to find out is how working with youth and other facilitators from the co-operative sector would provide me with the skills I needed to help youth members at our credit union, and focus on the larger co-operative sector.

As I look back on my co-operative journey I know that working in the co-operative sector was something I was meant to do. I started my career in the financial world at a bank, and after a couple of years moved to work at a credit union, and the difference was very noticeable. The credit union way was definitely a kinder, gentler world that really focused on the helping members achieve their life goals.

My first introduction to the larger co-operative sector came when I began my journey at CYL. Although I had spent many years working for credit unions, the provincial central and the credit union MasterCard Company, I was never really exposed to non-financial co-operatives.

CYL helped me understand co-operatives from a big picture perspective. The co-operative business model, the numerous types of co-operatives and how they really do live by the principles they take such pride in, this was the beginning of my journey to a greater understanding and appreciation for the sector as a whole.

We talk often about co-operation and what it really means both inside and outside of our sector. While all the world is struggling with the pandemic, we have seen some [amazing examples](#) of co-operation and all the benefits we get from working together. The examples of food banks, fund raising to support families in need, small businesses reinventing themselves to stay relevant and helping their community, and co-operatives reaching out to their members and employee in support and encouragement. All of the ways we have demonstrated and co-operated gives us hope for the future of our sector and humanity.

It is my hope to see you at CYL soon. It is time to share all of your experience, passion and “pranks” with a new generation of co-operative youth participants!

Yes, CYL really did **“change my life,”** and how lucky I feel to be leading a program that brought so much joy and positivity to my life.