



CUISR:

Community – University Institute for Social Research

***The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op:
A Review and Long-Term Strategy***

by Juliano Tupone



Building Healthy Sustainable Communities

Community-University Institute for Social Research

CUI SR is a partnership between a set of community-based organizations (including Saskatoon District Health, the City of Saskatoon, Quint Development Corporation, the Saskatoon Regional Intersectoral Committee on Human Services) and a large number of faculty and graduate students from the University of Saskatchewan. CUI SR's mission is "to serve as a focal point for community-based research and to integrate the various social research needs and experiential knowledge of the community-based organizations with the technical expertise available at the University. It promotes, undertakes, and critically evaluates applied social research for community-based organizations, and serves as a data clearinghouse for applied and community-based social research. The overall goal of CUI SR is to build the capacity of researchers, community-based organizations and citizenry to enhance community quality of life."

This mission is reflected in the following objectives: (1) to build capacity within CBOs to conduct their own applied social research and write grant proposals; (2) to serve as a conduit for the transfer of experientially-based knowledge from the community to the University classroom, and transfer technical expertise from the University to the community and CBOs; (3) to provide CBOs with assistance in the areas of survey sample design, estimation and data analysis, or, where necessary, to undertake survey research that is timely, accurate and reliable; (4) to serve as a central clearinghouse, or data warehouse, for community-based and applied social research findings; and (5) to allow members of the University and CBOs to access a broad range of data over a long time period.

As a starting point, CUI SR has established three focused research modules in the areas of Community Health Determinants and Health Policy, Community Economic Development, and Quality of Life Indicators. The three-pronged research thrust underlying the proposed Institute is, in operational terms, highly integrated. The central questions in the three modules—community quality of life, health, and economy—are so interdependent that many of the projects and partners already span and work in more than one module. All of this research is focused on creating and maintaining healthy, sustainable communities.

Research is the driving force that cements the partnership between universities, CBOs, and government in acquiring, transferring, and applying knowledge in the form of policy and programs. Researchers within each of the modules examine these dimensions from their particular perspective, and the results are integrated at the level of the Institute, thus providing a rich, multi-faceted analysis of the common social and economic issues. The integrated results are then communicated to the Community and the University in a number of ways to ensure that research makes a difference in the development of services, implementation of policy, and lives of the people of Saskatoon and Saskatchewan.

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ABSTRACT

The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op (CNYC) provides inner city youth with opportunities to engage in creative economic activities based on environmental principles. Youth learn to operate a co-operative business by working on group initiated environmental projects such as compost bin construction, composting, tree banding, gardening, bicycle repair, and arts and crafts. CNYC staff and youth subsequently market products and produce to Saskatoon area individuals, families, and businesses.

CNYC seeks to serve youth between the ages of 5 and 18 by offering age-appropriate projects for two groups: elementary aged youth (5-12) and high school aged youth (13-18). They learn basic skills in woodworking, gardening, bicycle mechanics, composting, and marketing. CNYC projects are primarily sustained by utilizing reusable or recyclable materials collected from the community. Over 90% of earnings derived from projects are disbursed amongst youth who participate in a particular project. Thus, youth develop financial responsibility, which may discourage them from seeking money or goods from less appropriate places. The community benefits in additional ways: youth have positive, alternative activities; partnerships are formed between youth, businesses, and community organizations; and there is a reduction in perceived fear of and actual youth crime.

This report was prepared on behalf of the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) and the Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op. It was made possible through funding from CUISR, with supplementary funding from the Saskatchewan Centennial Summer Student Program. This case study reviews CNYC's current situation and discusses potential strategies and initiatives for overcoming some of the organization's barriers.

REVIEW OF THE CORE NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CO-OP

INTRODUCTION

The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op (CNYC) is a community-based organization located in Saskatoon. CNYC was established in 1996 after significant preparatory work by members of Riversdale community, where the organization is based. Since CNYC's formation, management and staff have successfully developed innovative programs and projects for youth members. By forming partnerships, participating in community events

and continuously developing new programs, CNYC has had a significant positive impact on the Riversdale community and core neighbourhood.

CNYC management and staff have dealt with several developmental challenges and barriers since the organization's creation. Access to resources, particularly long-term facility tenancy and funding, has been one of the most significant barriers. Lack of resources has hindered CNYC's development potential. Many involved feel that government has an important role in providing CNYC with secure, long-term funding. Once funding requirements are met, CNYC will likely meet and exceed its targets and goals.

This case study was prepared on behalf of the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) and the Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op. It was made possible through funding from CUISR, with supplementary funding from the Saskatchewan Centennial Summer Student Program. CNYC's current situation is reviewed and potential strategies and initiatives for overcoming organizational barriers are discussed.

HISTORY

CNYC was established in 1996 as a result of Riversdale community members' vision to create a community-based organization to address self-sufficiency, co-operative principles, and environmentalism. Two current Saskatoon Environmentors' Co-operative Ltd. (SEC) board members were instrumental in establishing CNYC. Rusty Chartier, a retired police officer, and Owen Fortosky, a schoolteacher, had both been involved in co-operative movements for much of their lives. Both also grew up in the core area. Chartier and Fortosky began speaking with members of the provincial NDP government in 1991 about the importance of a co-op enterprise in Riversdale.

Fortosky was involved in forming a 3R recycling co-op at St. John's school in Saskatoon and operated with the school board's blessing. St. Mary's Credit Union also provided a \$1,000 donation to assist youth in this project and teach them how to manage money. The venture came to an end when the school ran out of usable room. After the 3R co-op disbanded, Chartier contacted city councilor Myles Heidt to investigate the possibility of moving the co-op into another building in Saskatoon's core area. Heidt was successful in reserving the old city electrical building at 414 Avenue B South for the co-op's use. Numerous concurrent meetings held with provincial Social Services and various Riversdale community stakeholders demonstrated significant support for a co-op.

Quint Development Corporation (Quint) was the community economic development body for the Riversdale area which undertook management of CNYC, as funding was not yet available. After six months, Quint stepped down as the managing body and Lenore Swystun was hired to run CNYC. At that point, the formal name *Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op* was adopted. After Quint stepped down, the Saskatoon Environmentors' Co-operative Ltd was formed to obtain government operational fund-

ing. Since CNYC's establishment, it has adhered to several key principles. For example, the SEC Board of Directors has aimed at ensuring that CNYC is at least partially self-sustaining. To this end, CNYC does not accept government money to pay kids for their attendance and work. A second CNYC principle is that the co-op is run by the participating children (those paid for their work) and employees, not volunteers.

CNYC has faced considerable challenges as a young, innovative organization. In the years since CNYC's establishment, dozens of children have participated in the program. CNYC continues to grow as a groundbreaking, progressive community-based organization. With strong community support, CNYC has successfully attracted youth from the core neighbourhood to participate in their own worker co-operative where they have learned useful skills, acquired valuable experience, contributed to the community, and earned money for themselves.

ACTIVITIES AND OPERATIONS

CNYC's facilities provide adequate indoor space for construction, storage and gardening (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001). Outdoor space is also available, providing room for storage, gardening, and recreation. Approximately 4,962 square feet of space is available at the CNYC site.

CNYC has undertaken several initiatives and projects since its inception in 1996. CNYC programs focus on projects that:

- Actively involve and enfranchise youth participants;
- Are preventative in nature and address community needs;¹
- Develop youth leadership skills;
- Enhance youth involvement with schools, fostering feelings of commitment to, and connection with, schools, thereby greatly improving the likelihood of high-risk youths completing school; and
- Are innovative and develop partnerships, such as Seeds of Strength (SOS), which combine and apply empirically tested concepts found to be effective in the promotion of child independence and prevention of school failures, delinquency, and substance abuse (Crew and Krueger, 2001)²

CNYC has used these concepts as the basis for developing youth programs.

Some of the projects that CNYC has undertaken include: tree banding; compost bin construction and sales; bicycle collection and repair; recyclable material collection; educational programs through workshops; and various educational field trips. CNYC has been active in developing partnerships with various community organizations such as Oxfam Canada, the Riversdale Business Improvement District (BID), the Saskatchewan Department of Social Services, and Quint Development Corporation.

CNYC operates with two coordinators who work with youth to develop and undertake various projects. The SEC Board of Directors assumes responsibility for hiring coordinators for CNYC. Coordinators attend monthly meetings with the SEC Board to discuss new issues and ensure that projects complement CNYC's objectives (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001). SEC Board members and CNYC coordinators have significant expertise and experience to oversee CNYC through various challenges. While two coordinators handle day-to-day operations, summer student programs, grants, or volunteer organizations occasionally enable CNYC to employ other supervisors.

Coordinators' primary responsibilities include: project co-planning; participant supervision and direction; material preparation for projects; marketing co-planning; cash management and payments for youth participants; maintaining and developing contacts with local business and community organizations; ensuring competitive pricing of CNYC's products and services; deposit account management; equipment and facility maintenance; and reporting to the SEC Board. Participant duties include: project co-planning; project labour; site maintenance; and marketing co-planning (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001). CNYC also utilizes volunteers to help supervise the children during business hours.

Children attend the youth co-op in the evenings from Monday to Thursday during the school year. Operating hours are extended during summer months. Programs are structured in a manner that allows children to decide on which projects they want to work and how to organize their time. This freedom and responsibility empowers youth and teaches them how to make decisions responsibly. Several children attend the youth co-op during business hours, planting organic herbs and vegetables, fixing recycled bicycles, or building compost bins from recycled wooden palettes. While some activities (such as compost bin construction and recycling) have always been CNYC undertakings, coordinators continue working with children to find innovative activities in which to participate.

To ensure the co-op's operational success, new board members, staff, and co-op members must learn co-operative principles. Several SEC board members belong to other co-ops and understand co-op principles and *The Co-operatives Act* of Saskatchewan. At CNYC, education is a foundation of every project undertaken. Children are always learning, whether practical skills such as basic woodworking or from guests from organizations such as the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives at the University of Saskatchewan and Credit Unions in Saskatoon speaking about co-operative principles.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND INVOLVEMENT

The neighbourhood of Riversdale has played a key role in CNYC's establishment, growth and on-going success. The organization has had a positive impact on the Riversdale community and the City of Saskatoon since it began operations. The greatest impact has

been on youth participants. CNYC provides a safe environment for at-risk youth to engage in positive, constructive activities. Many youth involved with CNYC have been in the social justice system and are considered “at-risk.” CNYC provides a place where measures can be taken to help youths stay out of the social justice system. Participants learn how to operate a co-operative business by working on group-initiated environmental projects. They also benefit directly from revenue generated by these projects (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001). Most studies show that criminal behaviour begins at a very young age. A poor child living in conditions of neglect and lacking supervision and recreation facilities will look to other sources of entertainment and role models (Canada, 2000; Canada 1995). Intervention with children as young as five can benefit entire communities as each child learns skills of self-sufficiency and initiative, and gains self-worth and a sense of ownership and co-operation (Crew and Krueger, 2001). CNYC keeps children off the street by giving them a place to go and work to earn money.

CNYC has successfully partnered with other community organizations and businesses. Chartier Greenhouses has worked closely with CNYC to help ensure the co-op’s success. For example, they provide CNYC with herbs, flowers and vegetables to plant and grow organically. CNYC uses this to teach children about gardening and, as the produce is sold to local businesses, marketing.

CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

Resources

As a new and growing organization, CNYC has faced, and will continue to face, many challenges. Absence of long-term government funding is one of the most significant barriers. CNYC has received government grants since its inception, but this funding is determined on a year-to-year basis, providing little financial certainty. In July 2001, CNYC received \$30,000 from the provincial Social Services and Economic and Co-operative Development Departments. CNYC, in partnership with the Child Hunger and Education Program (CHEP), received a \$5,000 dollar grant from the Associated Entities Fund to establish the Seeds of Strength (SOS) pilot project. CNYC’s ability to obtain government funding and grants on a year-to-year basis is important and invaluable, but has not eliminated the need for guaranteed long-term funding. Several other community-based organizations continuously face funding difficulties and other challenges resulting from lack of resources. To partially address this insecurity, a comprehensive list of potential funding sources for community-based organizations needs to be developed and maintained. CNYC could access grants available to community-based organizations and co-ops to undertake new initiatives while continuing to pursue long-term funding from various levels of government.

CNYC’s funding difficulties result in a general lack of resources for the organization. While CNYC has been fortunate to have experienced and committed coordinators

and board members, additional resources are required. CNYC's activities and programs require hardware resources and other assets. For example, small tools and inputs such as wood and other recyclable scraps are used. Several activities and services involve travel within the community. Tree banding and recycling, for example, require a vehicle for traveling from site to site with the necessary equipment and youth members. Some of these resource shortages could be alleviated by working with other community-based organizations to appeal to various levels of government for surplus equipment donations. Availability of space is an additional challenge. CNYC's current location has thus far proven adequate, but there is no guarantee that the building will remain available in years to come. CNYC must address these issues to ensure long-term viability.

Human Resources

There have also been challenges with respect to staff. CNYC has been fortunate in its hiring of exceptional coordinators and supervisors over the past few years. Despite this success, the challenge to recruit qualified and dedicated staff remains. To this end, the SEC Board of Directors and current CNYC staff members have developed a far-reaching network of community activists, volunteers, and workers who have experience and skills in community-based organizations and economic development.

During busy times, there can be a shortage of supervisors at CNYC (e.g. field trips, outings, or when more children than expected show up on weeknights). To alleviate this problem, CNYC should develop a list of volunteers to assist at such times. CNYC could build this list with other community organizations, such as CHEP or churches. One Saskatoon co-op, the Steep Hill Food Co-op, requires working members to volunteer two hours per month in exchange for lower food prices at the Steep Hill store. Volunteering at the Saskatchewan Environmental Society or Synergy Magazine, for example, satisfies work hour requirements. Perhaps CNYC and Steep Hill could develop a partnership where Steep Hill members are able to work at CNYC to satisfy work hour requirements.

Many CNYC youth are under 10 years and require greater supervision than high school aged youth. It is important to keep younger children interested in CNYC so that they will continue to participate. It would be worthwhile for coordinators to look into increasing interaction between younger children and teenagers. Perhaps a pilot project could be undertaken where both elementary-aged children and teenagers attend CNYC one day a week (currently, the elementary-aged children and teenagers attend on different days). If such a pilot project proved successful, perhaps teenagers could mentor elementary-aged children and partner together for various tasks. Such an initiative would require more volunteers and greater organization, but is otherwise not unworkable.

Awareness Building

CNYC has also faced difficulty in marketing the organization, its products, and its

services. The SEC Board, CNYC employees, and children need to work together to ensure that awareness of the co-op continues to grow within the larger community (i.e. Saskatoon). CNYC must continue working with community organizations, such as CHEP and the Riversdale BID, to develop positive working relationships that complement its activities and increase its visibility in the community. Future partnership projects must be undertaken to ensure that CNYC plays a collaborative role with organizations with similar objectives. Partnership projects also enable CNYC to put limited resources to effective use by developing and taking advantage of inter-organizational synergies. Partnership projects can, and should, take multiple forms such as joint pilot projects (e.g. Seeds of Strength), collaborative marketing initiatives, and increased participation in special events such as CNYC's participation in the recent Victoria Park Festival. Working with community organizations, such as neighbourhood associations and schools, would enable CNYC to increase its exposure, acquire new customers, and increase the value of goods and services that it produces and sells to the community. Partnership project success must be evaluated in terms of CNYC's own goals and objectives.

There have also been suggestions that CNYC become more active in the political arena. For instance, annual or semi-annual presentations could be made to City Council. CNYC could become better known by becoming more active in civic politics and ensuring that CNYC members build a presence.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR THE CORE NEIGHBORHOOD YOUTH CO-OP

Arguably, the most pressing challenge faced by CNYC is securing long-term funding for staffing and operations. Several resources are required to ensure that CNYC continues to undertake effective programs and initiatives while expanding youth membership and increasing awareness among the greater community. CNYC has identified several goals as part of its mandate or mission, including:

- Introducing core community youth to environmental issues such as recycling and organic gardening;
- Ensuring that youth benefit from their participation in projects by receiving monetary payment for their work;
- Developing projects that continuously involve active participation with local businesses and community organizations;
- Developing partnerships with similar organizations that focus on community-based development, youth skill building, employment, and empowerment; and
- Developing youth experience and skills related to business management (Beveridge

and Krueger, 2001).

To date, CNYC has been successful in achieving these and other goals. To ensure long-term success, new strategies and initiatives must be undertaken.

CNYC produces and markets goods and services classified as *green goods*, that is, goods and services produced in an environmentally-friendly manner. The market for such goods and services is currently stable and growing at a faster rate than other sub-sectors of the economy, such as conventional consumer goods. The business of green goods, while promising, requires intense efforts to reach individuals and organizations who desire such goods. These are niche markets that cannot be reached using conventional marketing methods. The Saskatoon area has a substantial green goods market for a city its size. Several businesses in the Saskatoon area already cater to individuals and organizations who desire green goods. These factors are critical when considering CNYC's business aspects.

CNYC is a valuable community-based organization that strives to provide youth with valuable experience, while addressing the diverse needs of youth facing several socio-economic challenges. CNYC's innovative programs must be marketed in an effective manner to the community that CNYC represents and to various public bodies (e.g. various levels of government). CNYC has many strengths and opportunities that must be leveraged to ensure continued growth and success.

There are also significant weaknesses and threats that could hold back CNYC's growth and success. Absence of secure, long-term funding is a weakness that has significant ramifications. Additionally, changes in government environment, both at municipal and provincial levels, poses a threat to CNYC's success. A change in the provincial government, for example, could easily result in decreased support for CNYC and other community-based organizations. There are also officials within municipal government who do not share the vision of community-based development inherent in an organization like CNYC. Addressing issues such as these requires a concerted and strategic effort to publicize CNYC's benefits and untapped potential.

Specific priorities must be set and addressed in the short-term to ensure that necessary resources are acquired. Focus areas include increased lobbying for long-term funding (at least three years to ensure some degree of revenue stability) and resources. Continued partnership building with other community-based organizations, such as CHEP, is required to build awareness and support. Partnership efforts will also be useful for addressing CNYC marketing issues.

It can be said that CNYC is in a *speculative* situation where the organization has several opportunities of which to take advantage, but lacks required resources to develop these opportunities. While addressing short-term goals (e.g. increased lobbying) and long-term goals (e.g. obtaining long-term funding), CNYC must undertake a com-

prehensive marketing strategy that addresses its business and organizational needs. A marketing strategy should focus on communicating the benefits of CNYC goods and services to existing and potential customers while also justifying the need for increased public resource allocation. As part of this strategy, CNYC must focus on financial objectives, including: identifying funding requirements for the next fiscal year; obtaining commitment for operational funding from the provincial government before the end of the current fiscal year; and increasing sale of goods and services by 2.5% to 3% over the previous operating year.

To continue meeting CNYC's goals and objectives, certain strategies should be undertaken, such as utilizing alternative marketing channels and continuing pilot projects with other community-based organizations. Utilizing alternative marketing channels entails methods such as placing simple CNYC advertisements in community newsletters. CNYC has already undertaken pilot projects with other community-based organizations, such as the Seeds of Strength program with the Child Hunger and Education Program. Additional pilot projects should be developed to take advantage of synergies that exist between CNYC and other community-based organizations. To ensure that additional pilot projects are undertaken, multiple proposals should be developed. This allows comparison of proposed projects, their benefits, costs associated, and available funding. Another important CNYC initiative is to gather information on grant programs available to public organizations. This information needs to be upgraded on a regular basis.

This plan's purpose is to serve as a guide to CNYC staff, the Saskatoon Environmentors' Co-operative Ltd. Board of Directors, and other personnel, while also working to improve the organization and its ability to serve core neighbourhood youth. The methods discussed within this plan will need continuous reassessment and review to ensure that goals, objectives, and strategies are up to date and remain relevant to CNYC's operating environment.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

Need for youth development programs is validated and magnified by information that attributes long-term value to participants in these programs. Numerous studies document the direct value of youth participation in activities such as sports, recreational activities (e.g. Girl Guides and Cub Scouts), and community-oriented activities (Canada, 1995; Canada, 2000; Makoul, 2000). Several studies indicate a direct correlation, illustrating that participation and involvement in these types of activities reduce potential for involvement in recreational crime and other unconstructive activities (Canada, 1995; Canada, 2000; Makoul, 2000). Research suggests that the economic, social, and personal value of investing in the lives of children in a positive and constructive manner decreases future costs that result from youth participation in crime (Canada, 1995). To address such challenges, CNYC works with youth in a safe, positive atmosphere to develop

practical skills, self-confidence and a sense of community.

CNYC provides inner city youth with opportunities to engage in creative economic activities based on environmental principles. Youth learn how to operate a co-operative business by working on group-initiated projects such as compost bin construction, composting, tree banding, gardening, bicycle repair, educational sessions, and arts and crafts. CNYC staff and members market products and services to individuals, families and businesses in the Saskatoon area

MARKET SUMMARY

CNYC goods and services can be considered *green goods*. These are goods and services designed to be environmentally-friendly (e.g. products made from recycled materials or organic produce). Saskatoon is the market area for CNYC's goods and services. It is a fair sized city with a large enough area for CNYC to tap into and achieve a significant level of success. Saskatoon has a substantial market for green goods for a city of its size. Green goods, however, are not generic goods that sell themselves using strategies such as low-cost production and discount pricing. When marketing such goods and services, the challenge is to raise product and service awareness.

Market Demographics

CNYC has a well-established line of goods and services. While these are high quality and provide good value, additional work needs to be done to identify target markets. Individuals who purchase green goods tend to be in a middle to upper income bracket and therefore have the resources to pay a premium for goods and services considered more valuable. Green goods are an example of this because they are environmentally-friendly and often produced using progressive production methods such as recycled materials and positive labour relations. Other customers for green goods in the Saskatoon area include individuals and organizations who place a value premium on environmentally-friendly goods and services. Many individuals not in middle to upper income brackets also purchase green goods such as organic food and recycled products. For example, the Steep Hill Food Co-op has a dedicated customer base made up of individuals from a wide range of income brackets. There is a growing consumer market for green goods in the Saskatoon area. Increasing numbers of adults and teenagers are becoming aware of environmental issues and taking steps to alleviate environmental pressures such as excessive waste and use of chemicals in foods.

Market Needs

CNYC's initial reasons for existence remain relevant. Publically-sponsored and community-driven programs directed at youth are severely limited in terms of activities undertaken (e.g. the focus tends to be on sports activities), public sector resources, and a wide-spread understanding of the benefits associated with programs directed at life skills and youth development. Additionally, economic trends of the past decade have

led to decreased government spending on social programs and community-based organizations. There is growing public support for the education system to “get back to the basics” of reading, writing, and arithmetic. While these skills provide some of the fundamental building blocks for youth education and development, they do not address all the needs required for self-sustaining, community-oriented youth. CNYC is an innovative, community-based organization that caters to the diverse needs of youth facing several socio-economic challenges.

Market Trends

Demand for green goods has grown at a rate between 10 and 15% per year over the past decade (Hamm, 2001). A positive growth rate of approximately 5% has been projected over the next five to ten years by many industry sources. Significant market trends for CNYC are as follows:

- Decreased financial support for community-based organizations leading to increased difficulty in obtaining public funding;
- Increased support from the public for decreases in rates of taxation and increased public spending to priority areas such as acute health care;
- Decreased government support to social programs has increased emphasis on community-based organizations to deliver services to the public with fewer resources;
- Demand for green goods is expected to increase, but at a decreased rate, over the next five to ten years; and
- Green goods are becoming more mainstream, but still require a directed, niche marketing strategy to ensure successful contact with target markets.

Market Growth

CNYC has experienced consistent growth in youth participation since its inception. This increase is due to several factors, such as decreases in public programs for youth, resulting in an increased need for public resources benefitting youth and increased awareness of CNYC and its programs. Continuing efforts by CNYC to develop new partnerships with community organizations and government will likely result in greater demand for CNYC programs. It can be expected that CNYC will continue to attract new youth members on a regular basis.

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS ANALYSIS

CNYC’s objective is to leverage its strengths and take advantage of market opportunities, address weakness areas, and devise contingency plans.

Strengths

1. Dedicated community members support CNYC and its programs. Several SEC

Board members live in Riversdale and CNYC's core neighbourhood. Many community members support the initiatives undertaken by CNYC and its continued development and strengthening.

2. Youth participation in CNYC is strong and increasing. Indeed, coordinators and supervisors sometimes find themselves a little overwhelmed by the number of youth who come to CNYC.
3. Practical skills, co-operation and self-sufficiency are goals on which CNYC focuses. Programs and activities seek to encourage youth to work co-operatively, while teaching practical skills that increase self-sufficiency. Many of these principles are not being addressed in either the education system or other organizations.
4. CNYC produces high quality, high value goods and services. These goods and services are provided by other businesses in the Saskatoon area, but CNYC's environmentally-oriented goods and services are targeted at a growing niche market.

Weaknesses

1. CNYC and its benefits, while positive and widespread, is not well-known within the greater Saskatoon community. Many within the core neighbourhoods have not heard of CNYC. Additionally, many who might purchase CNYC's goods and services do not know that the organization exists.
2. Long-term funding has not been secured. This lack has hindered further program development, awareness building, and marketing. Long-term funding of at least three years would add a significant degree of stability and permit a focus on other organizational development.

Opportunities

1. Municipal and provincial government awareness of CNYC is increasing, creating an important opportunity. As governments become more aware of CNYC's benefits and contributions to the community, support will increase.
2. Support for organizations like CNYC is relatively widespread (i.e. not limited to the core neighbourhood or the Saskatoon area). Those familiar with co-ops, co-operative principles, and community-based organizations strongly support initiatives such as CNYC. Increased marketing efforts and awareness building are required to reach out to those supported communities.
3. No other organization of this nature exists in Saskatchewan. CNYC could serve as a model for other community-based organizations and community economic development.

Threats

1. Pressure on governments to decrease public spending and taxation rates pose a

significant threat to organizations that rely on public funding.

2. A change in government, particularly at the provincial level, could result in further cuts to funding for community-based organizations such as CNYC. Some political parties place increased emphasis on funding community organizations through private, rather than public, means.
3. There is support within the current municipal government to develop the current CNYC facilities using free-market principles. This includes allowing private interests, such as real estate developers, to lease or purchase the land and undertake property developments such as condominiums, apartment complexes, or commercial property. This threatens CNYC as the current facilities have tremendous potential for community development use.
4. Large, mainstream businesses are beginning to target consumers who desire green goods and services. For example, several large grocery stores now carry large product lines of organic produce and products made from recycled materials.

ALTERNATIVE PROVIDERS

There are several businesses within the Saskatoon area providing goods and services comparable to CNYC. Compost bins, recycling, tree banding and tree banding kits, and organic produce such as herbs and vegetables are marketed by other locally operated businesses. Some of these businesses include Wal-mart (compost bins and tree banding supplies) and food & grocery stores (several now carry a limited supply of organic produce).

The main threat and competition to CNYC from these businesses results from convenience. Wal-mart, for example, carries a large line of low-cost products conveniently located in one location. Food and grocery stores provide similar benefits to customers. These businesses also have the added advantage of large marketing budgets (particularly Wal-Mart, The Real Canadian Superstore, or Safeway).

There are also alternative providers of youth programs. During summer months (and, to a lesser degree, throughout the year), the City of Saskatoon runs youth drop-in centres throughout the city. These youth centres are typically conducted in schools and civic facilities. White Buffalo Youth Centre is an example of a civic facility that provides comparable youth services to CNYC. Unlike CNYC, however, these facilities provide traditional youth services and have not begun undertaking co-operative education programs.

SERVICES OFFERED

CNYC provides a wide range of practical programs. Youth members/participants are supervised throughout. Youth also play a significant role in choosing and planning ac-

tivities and programs to be undertaken. Some of these include:

- compost bin construction
- bicycle repair
- tree banding
- arts and crafts
- special projects/pilot projects (e.g. Seeds of Strength in partnership with CHEP)
- educational activities (e.g. guest speakers from co-operatives or government)
- recreational activities
- supervision of activities

These activities and programs focus on providing youth with practical skills while also teaching co-operative principles and self-sufficiency. Few, if any, organizations provide such services and programs to youth of such a large age range (five years to eighteen years).

KEYS TO SUCCESS

CNYC has several areas that must be developed to ensure continued success and growth. Short-term (up to 12 months) priority areas must be set. The keys to success to be focused on are:

- lobbying civic and provincial governments for long-term funding. At least three years is required to ensure enough revenue stability to cover fixed costs;
- continued partnership building with other community-based organizations such as CHEP, community associations, and schools. Pilot projects such as Seeds of Strength need to be assessed and continued, or tailored to address CNYC's changing needs;
- partnership building efforts to address marketing issues and increased awareness of CNYC in the Saskatoon area; and
- addressing human resources requirements. Some activities require increased supervision. Due to limited resources, volunteers play an important role in fulfilling this requirement.

CRITICAL ISSUES

CNYC could be described as being in a *speculative* situation. The organization has numerous opportunities, but numerous threats present significant risks. CNYC has a chance to experience large returns for its efforts and initiatives if awareness of, and support for, the organization continues to increase. Concerted efforts in areas of partnership building (with other organizations and government) and marketing will be required

to increase returns and achieve goals. CNYC's strengths are impressive, while its weaknesses are understood and have potential solutions.

Critical issues include the following:

- Continuing to offer programs that teach practical skills, co-operation, and self-sufficiency, and differentiate CNYC from other youth organizations of a more recreational nature;
- Continuing to produce quality goods and services to maintain a favourable reputation to existing buyers, and to encourage new buyers;
- Increasing public awareness of CNYC and its benefits for youth and community; and
- Continuing to work with the public sector and community-based organizations to increase awareness and support for CNYC, and to lobby for needed resources.

MARKETING OBJECTIVES

CNYC's objectives include: providing a valuable experience for youth from the core neighbourhood; providing youth with opportunities to engage in creative economic activities based on environmental principles; and teaching youth about co-operative principles (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001). CNYC has been successful in meeting these organizational objectives. In addition to these objectives and others, in the future CNYC must focus on marketing the organization and build awareness and support in the community. Increased awareness of, and support for, CNYC in the community will also be valuable in working to address the issue of long-term funding.

MARKETING STRATEGY

CNYC provides youth in the inner city with opportunities to engage in creative economic activities based on environmental principles. Youth learn how to operate a co-operative business by working on group initiated environmental projects such as compost bin construction, composting, tree banding and organic gardening. (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001)

CNYC's marketing strategy attempts to successfully communicate the organization's unique benefits and value to participants and the community to which it belongs. This strategy redirects focus from the cost issue associated with green goods and services to the resulting benefits that CNYC members and the community experience due to the organization's initiatives. The marketing strategy will continue to identify market needs and communicate with the larger community in the most effective and positive manner possible.

Efforts to understand how CNYC can maintain the quality and effectiveness of its

programs and activities with limited financial resources, while working to develop increased awareness, community and government support and acquiring long-term public funding are ongoing. CNYC should continue to have a growth strategy, combined with awareness and partnership building.

FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES

Although the previous sections summarized CNYC's objectives with respect to marketing, there are also specific objectives surrounding financing.

1. Based on historical funding levels, identify funding requirements for the next fiscal year.
2. Obtain an operational funding commitment from the provincial government before the end of the current calendar year.
3. Increase goods and services sales by 2.5% to 3% over the previous operating year.³

TARGET MARKETS

CNYC's target market continues to be core neighbourhood youth between the ages of 5 and 18. CNYC's market area for goods and services is the City of Saskatoon. CNYC's primary target market group is people who are interested in composting, recycling, organic produce, and other green goods and services (Beveridge and Krueger, 2001).

POSITIONING

CNYC offers a unique experience for core neighbourhood youth. All youth between the ages of 5 and 18 can participate in CNYC programs and activities throughout the year. Their participation is not dependent on previous experience or skill levels, only a willingness to participate in CNYC's innovative programs. The breadth, depth, and overall quality of experience that CNYC offers cannot be matched within the Saskatoon area. CNYC offers the only local youth program that focuses on teaching principles of co-operation, practical skills, and self-sufficiency. Many community members support CNYC, and as awareness of the organization grows, so too will community support.

STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

CNYC focuses on achieving success in several areas with available resources:

- Equal opportunity participation, regardless of experience or skill levels;
- A positive, safe, and value-oriented atmosphere in which participants learn principles of co-operation, practical skills, and self-sufficiency;
- An environment where youth develop an appreciation for, and commitment to, their community;

- A broad variety of personal developmental and educational experiences to build confidence, commitment to community, and practical skills; and
- Developing partnerships with other community-based organizations and governments.

The following are suggested tactics/strategies to help achieve the CNYC's goals.

Tactic #1- Alternative Marketing Channels

Program 1-A: Develop a simple advertisement for CNYC. Most of the work related to this program has already been done. Information brochures have been developed and distributed. Additional work should be done in this area to ensure that brochures and advertisements effectively communicate CNYC's benefits.

Program 1-B: Contact and work with community organizations for newsletter advertisements and stories about CNYC.

Program 1-C: Participation in municipal and provincial government "activities."

Attend council meetings on a regular basis to bring CNYC issues, concerns and awareness to the civic level. Continue working with the provincial government to obtain public support for CNYC (i.e. long-term funding)

Tactic #2 - Pilot Projects with other Community-based Organizations

Program 2-A: Evaluation of the Seeds of Strength pilot program with the Child Hunger and Education Program.

Program 2-B: Development of three proposals for additional partnership programs with local community-based organizations. Development of three proposals ensures that CNYC has multiple options to explore potential partnership projects. Developing multiple proposals allows for comparison of proposed projects, benefits, costs associated, and available funding. There is, admittedly, more work involved in developing multiple proposals. However, successful projects are more likely to result by laying the required foundation to undertake multiple projects. It is not likely that all proposals will prove feasible, but undertaking the developmental stage of pilot projects provides valuable experience for CNYC agents.

Program 2-B: Grant application program focus. Several grants are available to organizations like CNYC through non-governmental agencies, government departments and private organizations. The SOS pilot project, for example, was funded through a grant from the Associated Entities Fund. Up-to-date lists of available grants should be maintained and reviewed for possible funding.

Program 2-C: Increased Special Events Participation. CNYC has participated in special events sponsored by community associations (e.g. the Victoria Park Summer Festival) in the past. Increased participation in community events provides multiple

benefits, such as increased exposure and public awareness of the organization, and undertaking and evaluating new initiatives/projects by CNYC members.

CONTROLS

The purpose of the CNYC marketing plan is to serve as a guide to staff, the Board of Directors and other personnel to continue improving the organization and its ability to serve core neighbourhood youth. Action must be taken to accomplish CNYC's goals of obtaining long-term funding and increasing public awareness of the organization. The plan's methods must be reassessed and reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that they are complementary with CNYC's goals and applicable to its operating environment.

IMPLEMENTATION

CNYC programs needs to be evaluated and updated as required on a regular basis to ensure that goals are being met. The SEC Board of Directors, coordinators, and staff play a crucial role in determining the organization's direction and the success of its strategies, programs and initiatives. When undertaking new initiatives, board reviews (at regularly scheduled meetings) are a necessity. Some initiatives will require longer evaluation periods than others.

MARKETING ORGANIZATION

CNYC's marketing organization consists of the coordinators/supervisors and the SEC Board of Directors. The coordinators/supervisors interface with the SEC Board of Directors on a regular basis to discuss CNYC operations, initiatives, and organizational direction. The coordinators/supervisors already play a significant role in marketing organization efforts as front line personnel. Members of the SEC Board of Directors also play a crucial role in marketing CNYC. All current board members are involved with other community-based organizations, community groups, political groups, and businesses. The SEC Board's role in overseeing CNYC's objectives is crucial and will remain so in the future.

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

The following lists possible changes to the current operating environment that would impact CNYC's goals and future:

- Major shift in government (municipal and/or provincial) philosophy with respect to the direct and indirect support of community-based organizations—for example, an unwillingness by the City of Saskatoon to allow the continued use of current CNYC facilities or failure by the provincial government to provide additional funding;
- Increased emphasis on the funding of community-based organizations by private

means (i.e. corporate contributions and donations by private individuals); and

- Changes in the economy that could result in significant decreases in disposable income and, therefore, demand for CNYC goods and services and support for public spending targeted at the non-governmental sector.

Such changes and unforeseen others would create additional challenges for CNYC. It is the role of the SEC Board and CNYC staff and members to determine how such circumstances can be resolved. Ensuring continued success and growth is of the utmost importance. Developing contingency plans for such scenarios is a necessary on-going activity.

CONCLUSIONS

The Core Neighbourhood Youth Co-op has come a long way since it was created in 1996. Youth participation has been steady and many new members continue to find it a worthwhile place to spend their spare time learning new skills, participating in innovative activities, and making a positive contribution to their community. An organization like CNYC provides many benefits to the community. Saskatoon Environmentors' Co-operative Board members along with CNYC staff and youth members have worked hard over the past five years to build awareness of CNYC and its benefits within the Saskatoon area and the province of Saskatchewan. This organization continues to face many challenges as it strives for stability and continuous growth. Many strategies and initiatives have been undertaken by CNYC and its agents continue to develop new strategies, programs, and partnerships to ensure its long-term success. With implementation of new goals and evolving strategies, CNYC is sure to enjoy deserved widespread recognition and increased public support.

NOTES

- 1 For example, the Community Work Ready Initiative, in collaboration with various organizations, develops employment related supports to enhance at-risk youth's ability to value work and find on-going sustainable employment.
- 2 Seeds of Strength is a joint program between CNYC and the Child Hunger and Education Program (CHEP) that provides children living in Saskatoon's core neighbourhoods with opportunities to garden organically and market the produce to community organizations.
- 3 This figure is a suggested target that will revision if market conditions should change. Many analysts and economists are forecasting a recession which will directly affect the sale of consumption goods.

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