

## **“Four Mac’s”- Co-op Study Clubs in the 1930's**

- D.J. MacEachern
- Joe MacIsaac
- Gus MacDonald
- Neil MacNeil

Known as the Four Mac’s due to their last names, this group of men hailed from St. Francis Xavier University, Nova Scotia.

During the late 1930's, they conducted fieldwork all over Newfoundland & Labrador, especially on the west coast.

The Four Mac’s spread co-operative philosophy in the province.

1937- First Co-op Credit Society in NL was set up in Lourdes on the Port Peninsula.

In the late 1930's, the St. Francis Xavier University of Antigonish, Nova Scotia (NS) was renowned for its work in co-operative development as a form of Adult Education. Gerald Richardson, who graduated from St. Francis Xavier University, introduced co-operative education methods in Newfoundland & Labrador (NL), which were already popular in NS. In his discussion with the local people of NL, Richardson talked about the fish harvesters and farmers from Eastern NS who benefitted greatly from the co-op movement. He introduced study clubs as a means of sharing co-operative knowledge and gathering community members.

As a result, study clubs emerged all over the province; these clubs later became small credit societies. Consequently, study clubs acted as an informal space to share and gather co-operative knowledge, with the idea of avoiding the formality of a regular school.

The Four Mac’s organized study clubs following this format: there were 10-15 people per club, a leader was selected by the members, and meetings were held weekly in a member’s home or a public space. Approximately 1,200 active study clubs were formed in NL; most clubs were located on the West Coast due to Joe MacIsaac’s and D.J. MacEachern’s efforts in that area to spread the co-operative philosophy.

In 1937, MacEachern organized NL’s very first Co-op Credit Society in Lourdes on the Port Peninsula. This Co-op Credit Society served the community for over 30 years and closed as a result of the unavailability of suitable management.