

John Lawrence "Larry" Sernyk | 1950 - 2026 |

It is with great sadness that we learnt the news of Larry Sernyk's passing on May 1st at Mercy Hospital in Joplin, MO.

We remember Larry not only for his achievements, but also for his unwavering commitment to advancing knowledge and supporting others. As a breeder, he took part to the history of canola in the past decades.

Larry actively contributed to the success of the IRC14, in Saskatoon, 2015 as member of the Steering and Program Committees. In 2021, he joined the GCIRC Board as representant for USA, with the goal "to objectively represent the research on and production and processing of canola in the United States on the GCIRC Board", and in the perspective of enlarging the rapeseed-canola community in the States. At a very practical level, he also regularly gave his time for auditing the GCIRC accounts, a much appreciated help. Very recently, in 2025, he still had a video call to share experience as a breeder in the scope of the current OSR/Canola Hybrids Development History project.

His legacy will continue to encourage future generations and reminds us all the importance of true dedication to science and education.



Larry grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. He graduated with a PhD in canola genetics and breeding from the University of Manitoba in 1982, studying under Dr Baldur Stefansson, one of the "Fathers of Canola". He began his professional career as Assistant Professor at the University of Manitoba in 1982 and moved to private industry in 1984 working as a canola breeder and research director. He moved to the United States in 1989 where he continued working in industry until his retirement at the end of June 2014.

In 1992, while working at Agrigenetics in Madison WI, Larry and his team developed Omega-9 canola oil which is a naturally stable oil used in the restaurant, food service and consumer packaged goods industries. At his most recent employer, Dow AgroSciences, his involvement with canola as a Project Success Leader included leading the company's enhanced meal project to develop canola varieties with higher protein and reduced fiber. At Dow AgroSciences, he also worked on seed oil improvement in sunflower and peanut and biotech traits in cotton.

Throughout his working career as a plant breeder and project leader, Larry has applied his formal training and experience in chemistry and biochemistry in the development of improved oil and meal composition in oilseed crops and biotech traits in cotton. In retirement, he continues to be part of the Canadian canola industry through involvement with the annual Canola week in Saskatoon. Larry has always been very passionate about science education outreach and in retirement he continues to be very involved in several science education programs working to encourage students in science.