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### **Our first year of the CURA**

Things have been heating up in the world of co-op research across Canada as you will see from some of the articles in this month's newsletter. Yours truly had the opportunity to attend the conference of our sister Co-operative Community University Research Alliance (CURA) in Quebec which looked at what role co-ops should play in tomorrow's society. An impressive list of guest speakers addressed over 500 participants.

I was particularly struck by the remarks of Felice Scalvini, President of the [CECOP](#), who noted that countries which had a strong co-operative sector did generally better during the recent economic crisis in comparison to countries which had more of a mono-culture of enterprise types. Diversity of enterprises was one of the keys to avoiding some of the worst of the downturns.

With its more than \$325 billion co-operative sector and a membership of over 17 million, Canada is one of the countries to which Scalvini's analysis applies. We hope that our research projects over the next five years can help provide the evidence to show why a strong co-operative sector is one of the keys to a more prosperous and more equitable Canada.

John Anderson, Principal Investigator,  
Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network  
and Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy,  
Canadian Co-operative Association

### **Start-up meeting with SSHRC**

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the funders of our Network, held a start-up meeting for all new Community-University Research Alliances who began funding in 2010. John Anderson (Principal Investigator), Dr. Leslie Brown (Atlantic Cluster Academic Co-Lead) and Erin Hancock (Program Coordinator for the Network) attended. The group spent September 23 and 24 learning from former CURA funding recipients and sharing plans and best practices with other research teams. The event was held in Ottawa and brought together twenty teams who are engaged in research topics ranging from eugenics to sustainable forestry.



From left: John Anderson, Leslie Brown (back),  
Erin Hancock, Éric Bastien from SSHRC

### **Peter Hough becomes Atlantic Cluster Co-Lead**

Long-time co-operator [Peter Hough](#), Financial Officer of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation becomes the Co-Lead (Community) of the Atlantic Cluster, joining Dr. Leslie Brown of Mount Saint Vincent University. Peter is based in Kentville, NS. "The Atlantic Cluster welcomes Peter Hough as a community Co-Lead. Peter contributes his expertise in co-operative development, governance, and research." -Dr. Sonja Novkovic, Network Co-Director (Academic)

## Host of our Prairie Cluster to launch online exhibit

"Building Community: Creating Social and Economic Well-Being," is a virtual exhibit of stories, research outcomes, illustrations, videos, and artifacts prepared by the [Centre for the Study of Co-operatives](#) and the Diefenbaker Canada Centre at the [University of Saskatchewan](#) highlighting examples of how communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Northern Ontario are using co-operatives and other social economy organizations to help improve their own social and economic well-being. This is an excellent example of how research can reach a broader audience.

**Launch date: October 17**

<http://usaskstudies.coop/exhibit/>



## Meet Dr. Luc Thériault, National Cluster Co-Lead (Academic)

Luc has become the National Cluster Co-Lead (Academic), joining Quintin Fox from the Canadian Co-operative Association who served as Co-Lead (Community). Luc is a Professor of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton. [Luc Thériault](#) has been trained as a sociologist



both in the French and Anglo-American traditions. His field of expertise is social policy and third sector studies. He has considerable experience doing survey research on non-profit organizations and co-operatives in Canada, including "A Portrait of Co-operatives and Credit

Unions in Atlantic Canada" with Ron Skibbens and Dr. Leslie Brown (2008).

Luc is currently involved in supervising the Sussex Co-operative project that maps the 170 year history of the rural New Brunswick co-operative, which is the world's oldest continuously operating co-operative. UNB doctoral history student David Bent is currently interviewing members of the co-operative and completing this historical project under the supervision of Luc as well as Wendy Keats of the Co-operative Enterprise Council (NB). The publication on the Sussex Co-operative is scheduled to be completed this fall. Luc is also working on the longer term national project using data from the annual survey of Canadian co-ops that is administered by the Rural and Co-operatives Secretariat (Government of Canada).

*"It is an honour to have Luc join the National Cluster as Co-Lead. His experience as an active participant on a CURA; his passion for the co-operative model; and his critical understanding of research and analysis will be of great benefit to the National Cluster and the CURA as a whole."*

*-Quintin Fox, Co-Lead, National Cluster and Director, Consultancy and Training at CCA*

## Co-operative Community Forum held in Victoria

This spring, the Centre for Co-operative and Community-based Economy hosted the Co-operative Community Forum, which began the process of dialogue between co-op practitioners and researchers, with the goal of generating a set of research questions and a work plan for the Western Cluster. This forum included researchers from a variety of disciplines and co-op practitioners involved in a wide variety of projects on Vancouver Island and other areas of British Columbia and Alberta. The forum began with a roundtable discussion in which the group identified research issues and perspectives.



The Cluster discussed areas of current research and unexplored areas where there may be an opportunity to make a contribution. They also discussed the fact that 'co-ops' and 'communities' are diverse, and the possibility of exploring these complexities will require various methodological approaches.

The Cluster also discussed issues of inequality and injustice, and talked about how co-ops are responding to these problems, and how a research team might examine these responses in greater detail. An example of a question the group discussed is found below:

*How do co-ops respond to problems such as climate change, corporate globalization, or racism?*

Finally, they discussed the importance of creating research that engages with the ongoing problems faced by co-op practitioners, and the sector more broadly.



This fall, the Western Cluster will be circulating a discussion paper that picks up on a number of these issues and questions, in order to continue the collective conversation.

**Call for webinar speakers!** Have a co-op research project, initiative or case study you want to share with the wider community? [Contact us today.](#)

If you are looking for any of the following, visit [www.cooperativedifference.coop](http://www.cooperativedifference.coop)

- List of projects
- More details on research partners
- Network activities to date
- Network structure

### Meet the coordinators!



**Erin Hancock** is the **Program Coordinator** for the MCD Research Network (coordinating meetings, website, dissemination of research, reporting, etc) and also provides support to the **National Cluster**. She is based at the Canadian Co-operative Association in Ottawa. Erin also works with CCA's consultancy and training unit **REACH**. Prior to this, Erin has been involved in a number of co-operative and social economy activities. She has participated in a worker co-operative (MYDAS Co-op Ltd.), served as a founding director of the Co-operative Enterprise Council (NB) and has conducted research on co-operative policy in New Brunswick.

Erin currently serves as a director on the executive committee of the North American Students of Co-operation (NASCO), contributes to the Co-op Circles weekly e-newsletter, participates in the CCA Youth Caucus, and volunteers with the Ottawa Women's Credit Union.

**Katherine Kitching's** work in the co-op sector began in earnest in 2008 when she worked for the Conseil Canadien de la Coopération and the Canadian Co-operative Association evaluating applications for the Co-operative Development Initiative (CDI) in Ottawa. She then worked with the Co-operatives Secretariat in the federal government, as a program officer with CDI. After moving to Halifax, she worked for CCA researching immigrant and ethno-cultural focused co-operatives in Canada.

Katherine is currently the **Academic Co-ordinator** for MCD Research Network at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, and is also helping to coordinate the activities of the **Atlantic Cluster**. In her non-co-op life, Katherine is a certified cross-country ski instructor and personal trainer, and runs outdoor fitness classes in the beautiful nature parks around Halifax.



**Nick Montgomery** is a MA student in Political Science and Cultural, Social and Political Thought at the University of Victoria. Last year, Nick held a fellowship with the Center for Co-operative and Community-Based Economy (CCCBE) and this year he is the **Project Coordinator** for the **Western Cluster** of the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network. His research interests include co-operatives, anarchism, indigenous political theory, social movements, post-structuralist theory and political transformation. His MA thesis focuses on contemporary radical social movements and creative politics in Victoria. Nick also works on projects focusing on food security, colonialism, and workplace precarity.

- **Happy Co-op Week! October 17-23.** [www.coopscanada.coop/coopweek2010](http://www.coopscanada.coop/coopweek2010)
- **Sister CURA in Quebec, *Développement territorial et coopération***, draws 500 guests from far and wide for an international conference on September 22-23: *Quel projet de société pour demain?* [www.projetdesociete.coop](http://www.projetdesociete.coop)
- Network partner John Restakis of the British Columbia Co-operative Association launches book **"Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital"** at luncheon for Co-op Week in Vancouver, BC on October 22. More details at <http://bccca.coop/event/co-op-week-luncheon-and-book-launch-friday-october-22>

## June 24th Atlantic Cluster start-up meeting

In the spirit of the CURA, the Atlantic Cluster's first gathering at Saint Mary's University (SMU) in Halifax was not only a meeting between core members of the cluster, but also a community event. The morning of June 24<sup>th</sup> brought together ten key members of the Atlantic Cluster, drawn from the cluster's two main project teams; 1)Co-op Index and 2)Co-operative Planning and Sustainability Practices. This group, who will act as the Steering Committee for the cluster, discussed key aspects of how the cluster should govern itself. In the afternoon over twenty co-op members, managers, consultants and others from across Canada and the US joined the steering committee at SMU via the internet, for an interactive webinar. Webinar



### ATLANTIC CLUSTER MEMBERS (in the room at SMU)

<b>Leslie Brown</b>	Professor Sociology, Mount Saint Vincent
<b>Monique Bourque</b>	Manager of Corporate Marketing & Communications, Co-op Atlantic
<b>Jeff Cheverie</b>	Research Assistant, MBA candidate, MSVU
<b>Roméo Cormier</b>	Public Affairs, Co-op Atlantic
<b>Elizabeth Hicks</b>	Professor Business & Tourism (Accounting), Mount Saint Vincent
<b>Peter Hough</b>	Canadian Worker Co-op Federation
<b>Katherine Kitching</b>	Academic Coordinator, Measuring Co-op Diff., Saint Mary's
<b>Léo LeBlanc</b>	VP HR & Corporate Affairs, Co-op Atlantic
<b>André Leclerc</b>	Professor, Economics University of Moncton
<b>Sonja Novkovic</b>	Professor, Dept of Economics, Saint Mary's
<b>Ryszard Stocki</b> ( <i>not present</i> )	Professor National-Louis University, Poland
<b>Tom Webb</b>	MMCCU (Masters at SMU) CMEC Manager - Cooperative Management Education Co-op



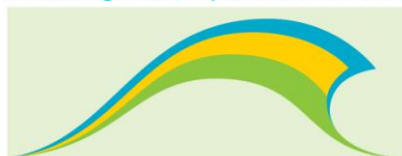
participants first learned about the Co-op Index tool, which helps co-operatives assess the degree to which their co-op adheres to the internationally-recognized co-operative principles and values. Participants and project leaders then discussed the "Co-operative Social and Environmental Accounting and Reporting Tool", designed to help co-ops measure their achievements based on a "triple-bottom-line" (i.e., not only economic impacts, but social and environmental as well). The webinar generated great excitement among the wider co-op community, many of whom were hearing about the Atlantic Cluster's research work for the first time. The cluster looks forward to exchanging more ideas and information with the community as tool development continues over the next four years.

### An active summer for the Atlantic Cluster: Co-op Index presentations

- In early August the Co-op Index for Worker Co-ops was presented in a workshop at the United States Federation of Worker Co-operatives (USFWC) Conference at Berkley, California by Peter Hough. The presentation reviewed the development of the tool and provided a brief introduction to the key assumptions drawn from the theory of Total Participation Management by Ryszard Stocki that provides the framework for the tool. The workshop also focused on the process used to define the ideal worker co-op and the different ways the tool helps a worker co-op compare itself to such an ideal.
- In September, Peter delivered another workshop at Glastonbury, Connecticut for the Democracy at Work Network of Peer Advisors, which is associated with the USFWC. This network will be administering the Co-op Index with worker co-operatives in the USA as part of their support for worker co-operatives. The workshop covered similar ground to the one at Berkley with the addition of a detailed explanation of how to administer the Co-op Index and analyze the data to develop recommendations with the worker co-operative. The Co-op Index tool was also presented at the International Association for the Economics of Participation conference in Paris in July, resulting in the expressed interest to translate the tool and adapt/administer it in Mondragon, Spain and Northern Italy.
- The Co-op Index team has been working closely with the Réseau de la coopération du Québec over the last month, adapting the French version of the tool into a potential service to the Réseau's francophone members. Learn more about the co-op index at <http://community.smu.ca/cura/presentations/CoopIndexEN.ppt>



### Measuring the Co-operative Difference



RESEARCH NETWORK

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