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**Countdown to the International Year of Co-operatives**

Happy New Year from the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network! 2011 is a major year of preparation for co-operatives throughout Canada and the world. As the counter now installed on the CCA website reminds us daily, we are fast approaching the 2012 United Nations International Year of Co-operatives with its official theme "Co-operative enterprises build a better world".

This year will provide a special chance to reach out to people who do not already know about co-operatives, as well as enable those who do to learn more of the breadth and depth of the sector in every province and territory and in countries around the world.

For the co-operative research community, 2012 will be a golden opportunity to profile our work through presentations, media, web and all forms of written material. It will be a special occasion for researchers in the many networks, French and English, [CASC](#), [ANSER](#), and [CIRIEC](#), as well as all the co-op university centres and programs, the social economy networks, as well as the three Community-University Research Alliances (CURAs) now researching co-ops to work together.

For this CURA, in 2011 we will:

- Build on those partnerships mentioned above
- Start a series of webinars which address various facets of the co-operative difference
- Profile many of our researchers and especially our Atlantic Cluster at the CASC and ANSER meetings (being held in Fredericton, New Brunswick in June)
- Publish our first book on the history of the world's oldest continuously operating co-operative enterprise, the 170 year old Sussex & Studholm Agricultural Society, NB
- Hold our first face-to-face network meeting on May 31<sup>st</sup> in Fredericton, NB
- Hold our first conference in the fall (open conference, guests encouraged to attend)
- Share print and audio interviews on our website profiling co-operative themes

**We are really looking forward to working with you this year ... and next!**

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



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

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



**Q&A with J.J. McMurtry, Project Lead for  
Co-operatives and Alternative Energy  
Production (National Cluster)**



**Q: What are you currently working on within the network?**

**A:** I am examining the co-operative difference in alternative energy - specifically wind and solar. As the threat of human-made climate change increases, co-operatives have enormous potential to address this threat by empowering and engaging communities in their own energy production. While the co-operative alternative is not well known in Canada, interest is growing based on experiments in Europe and elsewhere. This project, which is in the data gathering stage, plans to map co-operative contributions to this sector in Canada and outline the value-added they bring to communities and the country as a whole.

**Q: What are you hoping the project and overall network will accomplish?**

**A:** I am hoping the project and the network can provide some up-to-date and well-researched data to specialists and the public at large about the *co-operative difference*. The project has a chance to shine a light on some of the most exciting entrepreneurship which is happening across the country. This research is long overdue and puts the Canadian co-operative sector at the forefront of co-operative research.

**Q: How would you define the *co-operative difference*?**

**A:** The *co-operative difference* is ultimately based for me in the democratic voice it brings to the economic realm. From this democratic base, co-operatives have the chance to return the social and ethical aspects to the provision of our material needs. This potential of co-operatives to provide an alternative, life-focus to our day-to-day existence is a difference which matters and which permeates and animates all of the [seven principles](#)!

J.J. McMurtry, Ph.D.  
Associate Professor, Business and Society  
York University

**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.](#)

The **BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)** launches ever-growing website  
<http://www.socialeconomy-bcalberta.ca/>

## Quick News

National Cluster to launch book in March, **Determined to Prosper: The Story of the Sussex Co-op, the oldest agricultural society and in the world** detailing the 170 year history of the Sussex & Studholm Agricultural Society #21 in New Brunswick. Board and Staff of the co-op as well as researchers and partners from the University of New Brunswick, the Co-operative Enterprise Council, Co-op Atlantic, Atlantic Co-operative Publishers Limited, The Co-operators, the Canadian Co-operative Association and others have been working diligently to prepare for the launch.

**Catherine Leviten-Reid**, Project Lead for *Measuring the Impact of Co-operative Housing on Household Income, Skills and Social Capital* project (Prairie Cluster), welcomed Joyce Nathaniel on December 17 at 6 pounds 11 ounces. Congratulations on a healthy baby boy!

Congratulations to **Nick Montgomery**, Coordinator for the Western Cluster, for successfully defending his Master's Thesis in December!

The **Centre for Co-operative and Community-based Economy (CCCBE)** located in Victoria, BC launches Speaker Series! Dr. Jill Horwitz, Research Professor of Business and Law at University of Michigan Law School, will lecture on February 17th from 4-5pm. Dr. William Carroll, Director of the UVic Program in Social Justice Studies, will conclude the series on March 17th, from 4-5pm. For more details visit: <http://www.bcics.org/>

## Opportunities for Students

**Scholarship:** The Canadian Co-operative Association has launched the 2011 competition for the **Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation (CASC) scholarships**. CCA administers three annual scholarships on behalf of CASC and two donors, the Ontario Credit Union Charitable Foundation and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada. Three scholarships valued between \$1000 and \$3000 are available to undergraduate and graduate students. Deadline is March 31st. [www.coopscanada.coop/en/orphan/CASC-Scholarships](http://www.coopscanada.coop/en/orphan/CASC-Scholarships)

**Short-term research job:** The Canadian Co-operative Association is seeking a self-motivated junior researcher to update its database of "top 100" credit unions and "top 100" co-operatives in Canada. The successful applicant will be expected to work from home and can be located anywhere in Canada. This is a short-term, part-time contract (max. 90 hours total). Work must be completed by March 31, 2011 (hourly wage of \$13 - \$15 based on experience and qualifications). **Application deadline is February 14.** <http://www.cooperativedifference.coop/en/hub/Events-Opportunities>

## Update on the Co-op Index (Atlantic Cluster)

The Co-op Index is a tool that helps co-operatives measure and assess their organizational effectiveness based on the degree of participation that employees and/or members experience in the management of the organization, and the degree of adherence to universally-recognized co-operative principles and values.

### Co-op Index Experts' Meeting - September 2010

From September 23 to the 25th, 2010, Canadian and international representatives of various co-operative sectors met at Saint Mary's University to discuss key similarities and distinguishing traits between co-operative types including producer, multi-stakeholder, consumer, financial, housing and insurance. The results of this mapping will inform the Co-op Index team's work as it customizes the Co-op Index tool for use by different types of co-ops over the course of the next few years.

Special attention was brought, during the final two days of the meetings, to producer cooperatives as the Co-op Index's next iteration will be created for their use.

### Co-op Types Experts' Panel - September 2010

As the Co-op Index tool for worker co-ops is being finalized, representatives from the various other types of co-ops (producer, consumer, multi-stakeholder, etc) meet with the project team to discuss the unique needs of each co-op type, and help the team (lead by Ryszard Stocki of Poland) give shape to the type-specific surveys.

### Development of the Co-op Index tool for Producer co-ops – September 2010 to February 2011

- a) Representatives from the producer co-op sector get together with the project team to define the attributes of an "ideal" producer co-op, allowing the involvement of relevant stakeholders and the tailoring of the process to the needs and expectations of both academic and co-operative communities
- b) Building the survey based on a)
- c) Testing and refining, including the reliability and validity analysis and partner evaluation



Stephanie Guico, a MMCCU student representing multi-stakeholder co-ops at the meeting, and Linda Russell, Registrar of Co-operatives for Nova Scotia.



Lily Ng from The Co-operators and Bob Yuill from the Scottish Agricultural Organisation Society Ltd. (SAOS)



Jim Booth from SAOS, Willy Robinson of INova Credit Union, and Kris MacLellan of Mountain Equipment Co-op

## Co-operative Sustainability Reporting & Planning Scorecard (Atlantic Cluster)

This co-operative social and environmental accounting and reporting tool is being refined to help measure sustainability and planning within co-operatives. It will contribute to co-operative theory and practice, especially in regards to the nature of the "co-operative difference" and the assessment of the impacts of co-operatives on their stakeholders (including their communities). The practices and indicators that make up this tool are rooted in the co-operative principles and values as approved by the membership of the International Co-operative Alliance (1995).

### Revised Indicators Scorecard

A special thanks goes out to the pilot project committees (PPCs) in the "pilot stores", the co-ops of Co-op Atlantic and co-op farm markets which are participating directly in helping us develop and test our scorecard.

The committee members participated in a series of workshops in 2010 that helped us identify priorities and move the project forward. Soon the revised version of the Scorecard will go out to the PPCs and managers. Pilot co-operatives will be invited to complete the section of the tool that each reviewed during the workshops. The Co-operative Sustainability and Planning Scorecard will be launched in time for the 2011 Co-op Atlantic AGM.

-From Occasional Bulletin #2 from Jeff Chevarie,  
Mount Saint Vincent University



**Q: What are you currently working on within the network?**

**A:** I am currently re-writing the history of the Sussex and Studholm Agricultural Society #21 (SSAS) in New Brunswick. This is the oldest continuously operating agricultural society/co-operative organization in the world, and is approaching its 170th anniversary. The National Cluster of the MCDRN funded my research to re-write the original history of the society, written 30 years ago by James Thomson, and bring the story up to the present day.



**Q: What are you hoping to gain from involvement in the project/cluster/overall network?**

**A:** Writing this work has helped me sharpen my thoughts on my other work. The story of the SSAS can be viewed as a microcosm of the history of the rural Maritimes and the forces of change and modernity that have shaped it since the mid-1800s. This is the focus of my dissertation, and writing about the SSAS has given me ideas to include in that project. Working on this project has also made me more acutely aware of the prevalence and importance of community organization and co-operative activity in rural areas.

**Q: How would you define the *co-operative difference*?**

**A:** Based on my work these past few months, I would say that co-ops inspire greater community organization to ensure a more just and equitable society that is geared towards community improvement and the financial benefit of producers rather than pure retail profit.

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**The Western Cluster is Growing**

The Western Cluster, lead by Dr. Ana Maria Peredo (Centre for Co-operative and Community-based Economy, University of Victoria) and John Restakis (British Columbia Co-operative Association) has increased its interdisciplinary academic research team over the past year. Welcome to its new members: Dr. Jo-Anne Lee (Women's Studies); Dr. James Rowe (Environmental Studies); Dr. Martha McMahon (Sociology); Dr. Dennis Pilon (Political Science); and Dr. Rod Dobell (CCCBE). Welcome also to Tharian Botting, from Social Justice Studies, who began as an intern in January.

**Co-operative Research Priorities Project – Fill out quick survey and help create comprehensive database of co-op research for last 5 years**

Canada's two national co-operative associations are continuing their efforts to help establish research priorities aimed at building knowledge about the co-op sector. The Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) and the Conseil canadien de la co-opération et de la mutualité (CCCM) are working in partnership with the federal government's Rural & Co-operatives Secretariat to further Canada's co-op research agenda.

A process to adopt formal priorities and strategic orientations in research is now underway. An expanded **web-based inventory of all existing co-op research in Canada** (sorted by topic) is being developed, in conjunction with a survey which has been widely distributed throughout the sector. This survey is an updated version of the one circulated in early 2009.

We would like to know about any research on co-operatives conducted within the last 5 years – either done at the university level, or on the ground in our communities. More details are available from Allison Anderson ([Allison.Anderson@coopscanada.coop](mailto:Allison.Anderson@coopscanada.coop)) who is Project Coordinator for the Co-operative Research Project. **Deadline is February 15** (or contact Allison if you will need more time).

<http://www.cooperativedifference.coop/page/61-National-Co-operative-Research-Project-Survey>

# RSVP Today! Network Meeting May 31, 2011

The Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network is pleased to announce the **first face-to-face meeting to convene network members across Canada**. This is an exciting opportunity to take stock of the progress of the network and our projects over the first year of our funding and to better define where we are headed and how we want to get there.

Because many of our network members are traveling to Fredericton for the Canadian Association of Studies in Co-operation and/or the Association of Non-Profit and Social Economy Research conferences, we have scheduled the meeting for the day before these begin.

**This event provides an opportunity to:**

- meet each other
- clarify our goals and purpose
- share research and seek feedback
- highlight our successes
- work together on any challenges
- define our targets moving forward

Researchers and contributors from both the community (our co-operative partners) as well as universities are invited to attend (partners, students and collaborators).

We are in the process of determining our budget, so **please contact your cluster leader to indicate your interest as well as if you already have secured funding** to attend the conferences. We will work creatively together to help as many people attend as possible.

**All team members please RSVP by February 10.**

## Details

Date: **May 31, 2011**

Time: Please block the whole day and the schedule will be sent closer to the event (meal/social event in the evening)

Location: **Renaissance College, Main Floor, 811 Charlotte Street, Fredericton**, New Brunswick

(Snacks and lunch provided, free parking, 10 minute walk from UNB main campus)

### **Social Economy Community-University Research Alliance Launches Repository for Practitioners and Researchers**

On February 10, join members of the Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network online for the launch of an exciting new way to access research papers and practitioners' reports on the social economy. Accessible directly through the "Google" search engine, this repository is created by and for Atlantic Canadians – it is called Social Economy Space (SE Space).

**WHAT:** A one hour web presentation and telelearning session introducing SE Space

**WHEN:** Thursday, February 10, 12-1 p.m. AST

#### **TO REGISTER OR TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION:**

Please RSVP **by Thursday February 4** to Melissa Russwurm, Communications Assistant  
Social Economy and Sustainability Research Network

[rasedpr@msvu.ca](mailto:rasedpr@msvu.ca)

<http://www.msvu.ca/socialeconomyatlantic/>

## Free Webinar Series – Register Today!!

The Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network is pleased to launch a series of webinars that help better define the co-operative difference. [Register today](#) to attend any or all of the following:

### The Co-operative Model: A Durable and Sustainable Enterprise

Friday, February 18, 9am PST (12pm EST, 1pm AST)

Featured Speakers: **Prof. Ian MacPherson** (Professor Emeritus University of Victoria and author of *A Century of Co-operation*) and **David Bent** (PhD Student in History, University of New Brunswick)

This webinar will provide evidence for co-operatives as durable, long-lasting enterprises, with a case study of the Sussex Co-op (Sussex & Studholm Agricultural Society #21) as it prepares to celebrate its 170<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

### International Development and the Co-operative Model

Thursday, March 17, 12pm EST (9am PST, 1pm AST) (Date and time to be confirmed)

Featured Speakers: **Jo-anne Ferguson** (Senior Director, International Development) and **John Julian** (Director, International Communications and Policy) from the Canadian Co-operative Association's International Development Department.

This webinar will highlight successful co-operative examples of collaborative international development, with a focus on how democratic and participatory partnerships embody the *co-operative difference* (education and economic empowerment).

### Co-operative Enterprises: Their Relevance Now and in the Future

Thursday, April 14, 11am PST (1pm CST, 2pm EST, 3pm AST)

Featured Speakers: **Dr. Lou Hammond Ketilson** (Director of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives U of S) and **John Restakis** (Executive Director of the British Columbia Co-operative Association and author of the recently-published *Humanizing the Economy: Co-operatives in the Age of Capital*)

This webinar will discuss the human, social, democratic and economic aspects of co-operatives, with special attention to the resiliency of co-operatives through the economic crisis.

Please forward widely to colleagues and other co-operators! **Register by contacting Erin Hancock (info below)**

Erin Hancock  
Overall Program Coordinator and  
National Cluster Coordinator  
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Measuring the Co-operative Difference



RESEARCH NETWORK

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Social Sciences and Humanities  
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