

Director's Report
to the
Advisory Board

Murray Fulton, Director
Centre for the Study of Co-operatives
November 2018



Centre for the
Study of Co-operatives

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives is an interdisciplinary teaching and research institution at the University of Saskatchewan. Contract partners in the co-operative sector include Federated Co-operatives Limited, Concentra, The Co-operators, and CHS Inc.

The Centre is also supported by the University of Saskatchewan and is formally affiliated with the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy.

The university not only houses our offices but provides in-kind contributions from a number of departments and units as well as financial assistance with operations and non-salary expenditures.

We acknowledge with gratitude
the ongoing support of all our partner organizations.



Concentra®



Highlights of Centre Activities — June 2018 to November 2018

Saskatoon Co-op Association Contract

CCUA Contracts

Vancity Contract

Graduate Certificate Update

Online Course in Co-operative Governance

History of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives

Contemplating Co-ops — The Blog Update

Seminar Series – Public and Student

Co-op Week 2018 Activities

Website and Social Media Analytics

Thematic Breakdown of Centre Activity

Governance

Co-operative

Development Rural and

Agricultural Indigenous

Teaching, Administration, Professional Activities

Appendix

Faculty/Staff/Board Member News

Research

Publications

Presentations

Conferences, Workshops, Meetings

Saskatoon Co-operative Association Consulting Contract

The final report for this project is complete and the final draft will be forwarded to the Saskatoon Co-op shortly. This project includes three major sections: a literature review and analysis of motivations for member engagement in large co-operatives, a framework for thinking about the process of decision making on boards and the characteristics that help lead to success, and a review of governance during amalgamations in the CRS system. The report created a framework for member engagement and effective decision making that enshrines the uniqueness of the co-op identity. Centre researchers have conducted and analyzed interviews with the board, examined comparable co-operatives, and developed case studies of a variety of co-operatives that have recently undergone amalgamations. Significant analysis of member level data was undertaken to ground research and recommendations in the member profile of the Saskatoon Co-op. Opportunities to publish or present on broad themes from this report will be ongoing.

CCUA Consulting Contracts

Canadian Credit Union Legislation: A Cross-Jurisdictional Scan

This past summer, third-year law student Bryden Wudrich undertook a comprehensive review of the credit union legislation and regulations in each province and, where appropriate, the federal Bank Act, then compiled a final report outlining the areas of similarity and difference. We delivered the report to CCUA at the end of August and provided an amendment to the contract to further investigate the required capital ratios, liquidity ratios, leverage ratios and deposit premiums for credit unions in each Canadian province. This research was completed and provided to CCUA at the beginning of November.

Stitching Together the Second Tier: Lessons from Federated Co-operatives Limited

Jen Budney, a post-doctoral fellow with the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, worked with Brett and Murray on an in-depth case study of FCL's success in ensuring member buy-in and effectively using the second-tier model to achieve both governance and economic objectives. The research highlighted important issues for the credit union system to consider in implementing second-tier activities. We delivered the report to CCUA at the end of August.

Vancity Consulting Contract

Marc-André worked with Vancity on a project entitled Chair Selection, Tenure, Evaluation and Remuneration: A Co-operative Perspective. In this study, Marc-André used document analysis, interviews, and a literature review to identify the governance processes that contribute most to deepening and extending the co-operative nature of an organization, particularly with respect to board chair succession. A presentation and a report including analysis and recommendations were delivered to the board in October 2018.

Graduate Certificate in the Social Economy and Co-operatives

Due to class scheduling issues, admission to the Certificate program was shifted from fall to spring. The core course — Co-operatives in the New Economy: Institutions, Policy, and Sustainability — was offered in a condensed format in May 2018. There was very little uptake in the certificate for a start in May. As a result, the online course — Co-operative Governance and Leadership in Action — that was to be offered from September 2018 to May 2019 has not been offered. Conversations are ongoing as to the next logical step for the certificate.

Online Course in Co-operative Governance

A major accomplishment a year ago was the launch of Governance in Co-operatives, a massive, open, online course (MOOC) aimed at unlimited participation and open access via the web using the Canvas Learning Management system. Paul Thompson will instruct the course again in January 2019 in a collaboration between the Centre and Co-operatives First. The governance model presented in the course focuses on the three key elements of successful governance: cognition, strategic interdependencies, and legitimacy. Four hundred eighty students took part in the first offering of the course beginning on October 16, 2017, with 50 earning a badge and 32 a certificate of completion. The course has also been running as a self-directed course since last winter. To date, 447 have enrolled, and 30 completed the requirements for the badge. It is free to anyone interested in deepening their understanding of co-operative governance. The modules have also been extracted for use independent of the Canvas platform.

History of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives

As part of a submission to an upcoming Canadian Association for the Study of Co-operatives book on Higher Education and Co-operatives, the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives contracted with historian Merle Massie to write a history of the Centre. Through document reviews and interviews, the historical analysis explores what factors led to the establishment of the Centre, what has enabled its longevity, how the Centre has maintained ties and values alignment with the sector; the Centre's major achievements and the impact it has had on the sector and the academy, the Centre's role in the future and possible challenges moving forward, and lessons for closer collaboration between the sector and post-secondary institutions. Merle delivered the final manuscript in two pieces – the first a shorter piece on interdisciplinarity in the role of the Centre and the second a longer, historical look at the main themes in the evolution and success of the Centre. Final editing is occurring on these pieces; the shorter piece will be submitted as a chapter to CASC and the longer piece will be made into a Centre booklet.

Contemplating Co-ops — The Blog Update

A major focus in the next six months will be to revive the Contemplating Co-ops blog. The blog had been a significant driver of the Centre's online presence. Between June and November, there were no postings due to a variety of resourcing changes at the Centre.

You can find Contemplating Co-ops at <https://words.usask.ca/thinkingaboutcoops>

Seminar Series

Public

There has been one public seminar since the last report, the annual MacPherson lecture. Nathan Schneider, assistant professor at the University of Colorado, delivered the 2018 lecture. The title of the presentation was "An Internet of ownership: democratic design for the online economy." The presentation was live-streamed and is available on our YouTube channel at https://youtu.be/BOA_EuqvRI.

Students

As a way to provide deeper engagement between faculty, graduate students, visiting scholars, and staff interested in and studying co-operatives, the Centre has organized and hosted ten student discussion seminars over the last year where students and faculty presented research on which they were currently working. Over the summer period, these seminars were halted, but are beginning again in the new academic year. As in previous years, attendees at the seminars will have opportunities for discussion, questions, and to provide suggestions to the presenters.

Co-op Week 2018 Activities

Darcy Overland, Esther Awotwe (one of our graduate students), Paul Thompson, and Murray Fulton attended the flag raising, the luncheon, and the co-op merit awards in Regina. Brett Fairbairn received the Co-operative Contribution Award and was there in person to accept it. Paul Thompson worked with the Saskatchewan Co-op Association to host a film screening of *A Silent Transformation* at the Broadway Theatre.

Website and Social Media Activity

Below are statistics on the seven months since the last director's report in November, with the previous five months as a comparison. Traffic to the website dropped slightly since our last report, which can be explained by the fact that we did not post to the blog as frequently. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn activity continue to increase consistently.

Website

Current - 1 June to 31 October 2018

Users: 3,875 / Page views: 15,922 / Sessions: 7,578 / New sessions: 76%
Top countries: Canada, US, France, South Africa, Brazil

Previous - 1 November 2017 to 31 May 2018

Users: 4,481 / Page views: 21,074 / Sessions: 8,398 / New sessions:
75% Top countries: Canada, US, France, Brazil, UK, Australia

LinkedIn — for professionally oriented topics and Centre-produced materials

Current – October 31, 2018

132 followers and have made 150 posts

Previous – May 31, 2018

127 followers and have made 101 posts

Twitter — for sector updates, advertising Centre events, advice on professional topics.

Current – October 31, 2018.

We have 975 followers. 57% male, 43% female. Top countries are Canada, US, and UK

August: 7,500 impressions; 251 profile visits

September: 7,302 impressions; 175 profile visits

October: 8,323 impressions; 259 profile visits

Previous – May 31, 2018

We have 811 followers. March: 7,542 impressions; 258 profile visits

April: 6,031 impressions; 94 profile visits

May: 4,121 impressions; 145 profile visits

Facebook — similar use to Twitter. 59% male, 37% female. Top countries are Canada, US, and UK

October 2018: 1013 followers

May 2018: 995 followers

October 2017: 917 followers

May 2017: 841 followers

January 2017: 773 followers

Thematic Breakdown of Selected Centre Activity

The Centre for the Study of Co-operatives has at the core of its mission the creation of new knowledge about co-operatives. New knowledge is created in the minds of people: faculty, students, co-operative leaders, the public sector, and others who experience our events, activities, and initiatives in-person and through various media. The Centre's discovery mission is currently concentrated in the areas of co-operative governance, co-operative development, rural and agricultural communities, and Indigenous co-operation. The following sections provide more depth on these four areas.

Governance — including co-operative theory, demutualization, leadership, management, community and social engagement (member or stakeholder voice), and policy

Governance is a critical determinant of the success or failure of organizations. Informed by the study of co-operatives and their distinctive issues, the Centre is producing a new synthesis of knowledge and theory about governance. This involves three elements: developing governance and organizational theory and publishing it in international forums to influence scholars and students of governance, applying theory to co-operatives and providing leaders with new insights into governance, and conducting case studies of co-operative governance.

The Centre's emerging approach views governance as the allocation of power within organizations and among stakeholders — governance is a basic question of the purpose of an organization and how it is conceptualized. Allocation of power through governance enables organizations to address three fundamental categories of problems: strategic interdependencies among stakeholders (co-operation and co-ordination among members, directors, managers, etc.), establishing a shared way of thinking to deal with an uncertain future, and maintaining legitimacy.

- Consulting contract with Saskatoon Co-operative Association Ltd. to review governance and member participation; see highlights, above, for details
- Consulting contract with Vancity to review board chair recruitment, selection and retention
- "Some thoughts on Co-operative Governance," Murray Fulton, presentation at Young Scholars Workshop, Europe 2018 ICA Research Conference, Wageningen, The Netherlands, July 2018
- "Governance in the Age of Disruption: A Co-operative Perspective," Marc-André Pigeon, Presentation at Affinity Credit Union, November 2018
- "Co-operative Governance Challenges in Canadian Credit Unions," report in progress by Dionne Pohler supported by a fellowship from the Filene Research Institute; final report due August 2018
- Review of Governance Training Module of Board Performance, Development and Evaluation, Dionne Pohler, for CCUA November 2018

Ongoing work in this area:

- “Governance of Co-operative Federations: Principles and a Framework for Research,” Brett Fairbairn, Murray Fulton, and Dionne Pohler; article, revised and resubmitted to Academy of Management Review
- “Network Governance in the Canadian Credit Union System: The Symbiotic Relationships between Regulation, Ownership Structures, Boards, and Strategy,” Dionne Pohler and Marc Schneiberg, ongoing research
- *Risk and Relevance: Change comes to Canada's Co-operative Retailing System* (tentative title) book-length manuscript covering transformational change and co-operative governance; Brett Fairbairn, draft book completed and anticipated March 2019
- “The Relationship between Size and Efficiency in Credit Unions,” ongoing research by Abdullah Mamun
- “Evidence of Earnings Management in Credit Unions and the Rationale for Such Behaviour,” ongoing research by Abdullah Mamun

Co-operative Development — *including community and social engagement, measurement of impact, ethics, history, innovation, sustainability*

The development of new co-operatives is a complex and sometimes mysterious process; a process that in the long run is important for the renewal of the co-operative sector. The teachings and history of the co-operative movement indicate that co-ops are formed by voluntary associations of people, usually at a local level, who want to address a need by forming an enterprise. At the same time, history shows that co-ops do not emerge everywhere they could, but in patterns and clusters — often connected with a citizens' or social movement, sponsorship by pre-existing co-operatives, or an action by the state. Some thrive more than others. The Centre discovers new knowledge about co-op development and creates learning opportunities for students and leaders by exploring how different factors work together to produce successful co-op development. The Centre's approach involves a strong focus on understanding community needs, capacity, and leadership, and on identifying the specific kinds of interventions that can promote self-help. We look for the best insights from around the world and for ways these can be adapted and applied in Canada and elsewhere.

- “Co-operative Research in 2018: What We Know and Don't Know,” Murray Fulton, Keynote Address to the Europe ICA 2018 Research Conference, Wageningen, the Netherlands, July 2018, and Department of Agricultural Economics Seminar, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, September 2018
- “La voie vers une meilleurs cooperation/mutualité,” Marc-André Pigeon, presentation at Canadian Association of Mutual Insurers, October 2018
- “Introduction to Co-operatives,” Brett Fairbairn, Webinar for British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture, September 2018
- “Top Co-op Issues 2018,” Darcy Overland, Radio interview, Vancouver Co-op Radio, August 2018

Ongoing work in this area

- “Social Innovation in Canada and Germany: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives,” Brett Fairbairn; ongoing research
- History of the co-operative movement in Germany, Brett Fairbairn; ongoing research
- *Co-operatives and Higher Education in Canada*, Isobel M. Findlay, Co-editor (with Darryl Reed and Judith Harris)
- The Conversion to Co-operatives Project, Dionne Pohler, Co-investigator
- Reimagining the Governance of Work and Employment, LERA Research Volume (2020 Dionne Pohler ed). Will include a chapter on the co-operative innovation project and co-op development.

Rural and Agricultural — *including food security, rural development*

Teaching and research on rural and agricultural co-operatives have long been part of the Centre's activities. Food, environment, community, and distance are important considerations that explain strengths and potential for rural co-operation not only in Canada but in other countries. The Centre's work in these areas has involved sectoral and case studies from perspectives of economics, sociology, management, and history.

- “Corruption in Agricultural Processing Firms: Co-ops versus IOFs,” Murray Fulton, Presentation to the EMNet 2018 Conference, Havana, Cuba, November 15-17, 2018
- “Economic and Social Development in Western Canadian and Rural Indigenous Communities: Lessons from the Co-operative Innovation Project,” Dionne Pohler and Murray Fulton, extended abstract submitted to United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, invited to submit a full manuscript for UN Social and Solidarity Economy conference in Spring 2019
- “Economic and Social Development in Western Canadian rural and Indigenous Communities: Lessons from the Co-operative Innovation Project,” presentation at Enhancing Inclusivity in Rural Canada Workshop, University of Alberta Augustana Campus, November 2018 and Research Seminar at University of Alberta School of Business, October 2018
- “A policy Framework for Inclusive Economic and Social Development in Canada,” Dionne Pohler. Presentation at Ontario Federal Council Meeting, June 2018.
- Michael Gertler hosted Toyohiko Matsubara, Professor of Economics and Vice-President, Ritsumeikan University, Kyoto, Japan and arranged and participated in site visits and field interviews in support of the project “Structural Change of Agricultural Co-operatives in North America,” August 2018
- Interview on Community Pastures, Michael Gertler, part of the Prairie Commons Project

Ongoing work in this area:

- Organization and economic, social, agricultural, and ecological contributions of grazing co-operatives in Saskatchewan, Michael Gertler (unfunded).
- The development of the organic sector on the Canadian Prairies: Social, economic, institutional, and agronomic factors, Michael Gertler (unfunded).
- Murray Fulton named panel member of the Ministerial Advisory Board to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to examine the future of the Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, including consideration of a co-operative structure.

Indigenous

The development and empowerment of Indigenous communities in Canada and elsewhere is one of the great societal challenges of our time. The Centre aims to contribute by investigating the synergies or tensions between co-operative forms of enterprise and First Nations, Métis, and Inuit social-economic realities and models of governance. Centre faculty and students advance knowledge in these areas through empirical studies of the breadth and diversity of enterprises in Aboriginal communities; by engagement partnerships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities and organizations to produce mutually beneficial knowledge; and by learning from Indigenous worldviews to identify ways Western organizational models can be broadened.

- Co-operative Higher Education after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission: Energizing Post-colonial Communities, Isobel M. Findlay and Len Findlay (book chapter),

Teaching, Administration, and Other Professional Activities

In addition to their day-to-day commitments, Centre faculty and staff together serve on more than fifty committees, boards, and professional or community organizations.

Appendix to the Director's Report

Faculty/Staff/Student News

- We welcomed Marc-André Pigeon in September to his role as a Strategic Research Fellow in Co-operatives. His academic home is as an Assistant Professor at JSGS.
- Patty Scheidl, office manager for the past 17 years, retired in August.
- Murray Fulton continues directorship of the Saskatoon campus of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy which he assumed in January of 2018.
- Brett Fairbairn will become President and Vice-Chancellor of Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops BC) effective December 1, 2018.
- Paul Thompson returned to the Centre as a Knowledge Mobilization Officer after several months of paternity leave.
- Amanda Sampson, a graduate student researcher working on the Saskatoon Co-op Association project, obtained employment with Innovation Saskatchewan.
- Dionne Pohler won the Luis Aparicio Prize from the International Labour and Employment Relations Association

Research (not reported above)

- "Business Meets Science," Murray Fulton Presentation to Europe 2018 ICA Research Conference, Wageningen, The Netherlands, July 2018
- Transformations through "Community First" Engagement, special issue of the *Engaged Scholar Journal: Community-Engaged Research, Teaching, and Learning*. Isobel Findlay, Co-editor with Peter Andree and David Peacock. Forthcoming December 2018
- *Aboriginal Tenure in the Constitution of Canada*. 2nd edition (Thomson Reuters Canada). James Youngblood Henderson, Isobel Findlay and Benjamin Ralston. Forthcoming.
- Duelling Discourses of Sustainability: Neo-Conventional and Organic Farming on the Canadian Prairies. Michael Gertler, Joanne Javve and MA Beckie. In Douglas H. Constance, Jason Konefal, and Maki Hatanaka (Eds), *Contested Sustainability Discourses in the Agrifood System* (pp. 162-186). New York: Routledge/Earthscan. 2018
- "Privatizing Rural Public Transportation: Structural Adjustment Saskatchewan (Party) Style," Michael Gertler and Joanne Jaffe. Presentation at Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Portland, July 2018.
- "Advancing Dispute Resolution by Unpacking the Sources of Conflict: Toward an Integrated Framework". Budd, J., Colvin, A., & Pohler, D. (forthcoming) in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*.
- "Expanding the Canada Workers Benefit to Address the Challenges of Federalism and Work Disincentives in the Design of a Guaranteed Basic Income," Dionne Pohler (with Kourtney Koebel, preliminary draft of manuscript almost complete, modeling to be completed by end of October 2018, presenting preliminary model at Cornell ILR School in October 2018)

Director's Report / November 2018

- “The Labour Supply Effects of the Working Income Tax Benefit in Canada,” Dionne Pohler (with Kourtney Koebel, data analysis in progress, one internal brown bag and two external presentations of preliminary results scheduled in October/November 2018)
- “Unions, Job Evaluation, and Pay Equity Compliance in Private Sector Firms: A Field Audit Study,” (with Chris Riddell, data collection complete, preliminary draft of manuscript in progress)
- “What Do Labour Laws Do?” Dionne Pohler with Matthew Dimick and Natalie Shammas, revisions of theoretical framework and data compilation in progress, data collection to be completed by November 2018)

Conferences, Workshops, and Meetings

- Europe 2018 ICA Research Conference, Wageningen, The Netherlands, July 2018
- EMNet 2018 Conference, Havana, Cuba November 2018
- Tools and Strategies for Community Based Research, Summer Institute, University of Regina, August 2018
- Central1 Momentum Conference: October 2018
- Saskatchewan Central Credit Union Meeting: November 2018
- Annual Meeting of the Rural Sociological Society, Portland, Oregon, July 2018
- Enhancing Inclusivity in Rural Canada Workshop, University of Alberta, November 2018