

Director's Report  
to the  
Advisory Board

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



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 nonsalary expenditures.

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

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## Highlights of Centre Activities — November 2017 to May 2018

Online Course in Co-operative Governance

Saskatoon Co-op Association Contract

CCUA Contracts

Graduate Certificate Update

Ian MacPherson Posthumous History of Credit Unions in Canada

History of the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives

Contemplating Co-ops — The Blog Update

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## Online Course in Co-operative Governance

A major accomplishment this fall 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, a Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy (JSGS) graduate, created and instructed the course, which is 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. Paul took these concepts and turned them into accessible ideas that anyone can understand and apply. The MOOC ran between October 16, 2017 and November 24, 2017. 480 students took part in the first offering of the course with 50 earning a badge and 32 a certificate of completion. The course is currently running as a self-directed course and has 264 students enrolled. 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.

## Saskatoon Co-operative Association Consulting Contract

We have recently expanded the scope of this project and extended the end date to fall 2018 to include comparisons and information from some additional co-operatives. This project includes two major sections: a literature review and analysis of motivations for member engagement in large co-operatives; and a framework for thinking about the process of decision making on boards and the characteristics that help lead to success. The goal is to create a dynamic framework for member engagement and effective decision making that enshrines the uniqueness of the co-op identity. Centre researchers have undertaken and analyzed interviews with both the board and with comparative co-operatives. Significant analysis of member level data has been ongoing to ground research and recommendations in the member profile of the Saskatoon Co-op.

## CCUA Consulting Contracts

### **Canadian Credit Union Legislation: A Cross-Jurisdictional Scan**

Two students have been hired to help review the legislation and regulations in each province, and where appropriate, the federal Bank Act, and compile a final report outlining the areas of commonality and difference. This contract is being undertaken in partnership with the College of Law. Third year law student Bryden Wudrich is undertaking the legal analysis. Gebeyehu Begashaw, Master of Public Administration candidate at JSGS is using the legal analysis to analyze the impacts on the second-tier organizations, credit unions, and their membership. The report is due at the end of August.

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

Jen Budney, post-doctoral fellow with the Centre for the Study of Co-operatives is working with Brett and Murray on an in-depth case study of FCL's success in ensuring member buy-in and in effectively using the second-tier model to achieve both governance and economic objectives. The research will draw important lessons for the credit union system to consider in implementing second-tier activities.

### **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 during May 2018. The online course — Co-operative Governance and Leadership in Action — will be available again from September 2018 to May 2019. The availability of other certificate courses during the fall and winter semesters is yet to be determined.

### **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 has contracted with historian Merle Massie to write a history of the Centre. Through document reviews and interviews, the historical analysis will explore: what factors led to the establishment of the Centre, and 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.

### **Contemplating Co-ops — The Blog Update**

The blog has been in operation for over a year and is a significant driver of the Centre's online presence. During the period between November and May we reduced postings due to a variety of resourcing changes at the Centre. Posts that are made receive excellent engagement. Recent topics include:

- a post on governance challenges in Credit Unions
- a set of posts on Top Co-op Issues, 2018
- a post on amalgamations in credit unions

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

## Seminar Series

### Public

There have been three formal public seminars since the last director's report in November. The annual Hartley and Margaret Fredeen Scholarship in Co-operative Studies Seminar was presented on Friday December 15, 2017 by Travis Reynolds, PhD candidate at JSGS and the 2017 scholarship winner. The seminar was titled "Co-operative Governance by the Numbers: An Examination of What Co-ops Get Right (and Wrong)". You can view Travis's seminar [here](#).

On January 29, 2018 we hosted Simon Berge, Business Chair of Co-operative enterprises, Faculty of Business and Economics, University of Winnipeg. He presented on work he has been doing with Arctic Co-operatives in a presentation titled "Human Resourcing and Skills Development in Indigenous Arctic Co-operatives." You can read more about Simon's work [here](#).

Keri Jacobs, assistant professor and Co-operatives Extensions specialist, Department of Economics, Iowa State University presented on May 11, 2018 in a seminar jointly hosted with the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics at the U of S. She presented on "Challenges Facing Agricultural Co-operatives: Consolidation, Efficiency, and Market Power".

### Student

As a way to provide deeper engagement between faculty, graduate students, visiting scholars, and staff interested in and studying co-operatives, the Centre organized and hosted ten student discussion seminars where either students or faculty presented research on which they were currently working. Attendees at the seminars then had opportunities for discussion, questions, and to provide suggestions to the presenters.

## Case Study Competition

The Centre organized the fourth annual student case study competition at the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operatives. Built on formats used at both policy and business schools, the case study competition allows students interested in the study of co-operatives to analyze a real-world scenario and provide analysis and alternatives informed by theory. The case this year was focused on amalgamations among credit unions and was based on a case produced through a previous CHS contract with the Center.

## 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 a slowdown as we did not post to the blog as frequently. Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn activity continues to increase consistently.

### Website

*Current - 1 November to 31 May 2018*

Users: 644 / Page views: 2,162 / Sessions: 717 / New sessions: 88%

Top countries: Canada, US, France, Brazil, UK, Australia

*Previous - 1 June to 31 October 2017*

Users: 6,291 / Page views: 14,708 / Sessions: 8,567 / New sessions: 71%

Top countries: Canada, US, India, Nigeria, UK, Brazil

**LinkedIn** — for professionally oriented topics and Centre-produced materials

*Current – May 31, 2018*

127 followers and have made 101 posts

*Previous – October 31, 2017*

94 followers and have made 30 posts

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

*Current – May 31, 2018*

We have 811 followers. 57% male, 43% female. Top countries are Canada, US and UK.

March: 7,542 impressions; 258 profile visits

April: 6,031 impressions; 94 profile visits

May: 4,121 impressions; 145 profile visits

*Previous – October 31, 2017*

We have 685 followers

August: 2,309 impressions; 70 profile visits

September: 4,598 impressions; 133 profile visits

October: 5,964 impressions; 205 profile visits

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

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, officials of co-operatives and 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
- "Place or People, What's the difference?: How governance Affects the Success of Failure of 'Food Desert' Interventions. Jen Budney, Murray Fulton, and Audra Krueger. Paper revised and submitted to the journal *Geoforum*.
- "Governance as a determinant of success or failure" Murray Fulton, Presentation to the Saskatchewan Co-operative Association Conference, March 20, 2018.
- Can Credit Unions Survive Without Greater Co-operation? *Young Scholars Initiative, Cooperatives and Co-operation Working Group and Financial Stability Working Group*. Dionne Pohler, Webinar Lecture: February 2, 2018.
- Review of CCUA board training materials on Board Development, Performance and Evaluation
- Governance Challenges in Credit Unions: Insights and Recommendations. Dionne Pohler with Nora Russell. Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, *Contemplating Co-ops Blog*. January 30, 2018.



- “The Amalgamation Question”. Darcy Overland. Centre for the Study of Co-operatives Blog. May 23, 2018.
- *Federal Credit Unions: Considerations for a Credit Union Becoming a Federal Credit Union*. Joe Dierker. Research Report 2018.

Ongoing work in this area

- “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
- “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
- “Leadership, Innovation, and Cultural Change at Federated Co-operatives Limited and in the Co-operative Retailing System,” book-length manuscript; Brett Fairbairn, ongoing research — to date ~40 interviews conducted in Saskatoon and more than a dozen other communities in MB, SK, AB, and BC
- Theory and case studies of governance and innovation in co-operatives; Brett Fairbairn,
- “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, and one that in the long run is important for the renewal of the co-operative sector. The teachings and lore 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, and/or 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, proven insights from around the world and for ways these can be adapted and applied in Canada and elsewhere.

- “Pre-cursors to the Sharing Economy: Co-operatives.” Isobel Findlay. In Pia A. Albinsson and B. Yasanthi Perera, eds. *The Rise of the Sharing Economy: Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities of Collaborative Consumption*. Foreword by D. Russell Belk. Praeger Publishing (pp. 9-28). Published January 2018.
- *Demystifying the Sharing Economy: Part 1: Remembering the Co-operative Counter Narrative*. Isobel M. Findlay. *Contemplating Co-ops*. November 7, 2017.
- “Conflict as the Purpose of Co-operation: Dialogue in Federations” Brett Fairbairn, to Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation, May 30, 2018.
- *Five Big Ideas for Leveraging the Co-operative Advantage in a Rapidly Changing World. Tools for a New Reality: Agility, Innovation, Sustainability. Saskatchewan Co-operative Association Conference*, Dionne Pohler, Keynote Speaker. Saskatoon, SK: March 20, 2018
- “Top Co-op Issues 2018 Comments and Action Items” Nora Russell, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives *Contemplating Co-ops Blog*. Feb 27, 2018.
- “Top Co-op Issues 2018” Nora Russell, Centre for the Study of Co-operatives *Contemplating Co-ops Blog*. Feb 13, 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

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

Research and teaching 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.

- “Achieving Sustainable Livelihoods: The Integrated Co-operative Model in East Africa” Aasa Marshall. Centre for the Study of Co-operatives, *Contemplating Co-ops Blog*. November 21, 2017.
- “Sociology and Rural Co-operatives” special topics mini-course taught by Michael Gertler at Universidade Catlica Dom Bosco, Campo Grande, Brazil (May 4 & 7, 2018).
- “Dueling Discourses of Sustainability: Neo-Conventional and Organic Farming on the Canadian Prairies.” Gertler, Michael, JoAnn Jaffe, and Mary Beckie (Forthcoming 2018). In D. Constance, J. Konefal, and M. Hatanaka (eds), *Contested Sustainability Discourses in the Agrifood System*, Routledge/Earthscan.

- “Primitive Privatization: Dismantling the Commons and the Common Carrier in Saskatchewan” JoAnn Jaffe and Michael Gertler. 2018. Society for Socialist Studies, Congress of Humanities and Social Sciences, Regina, May 29, 2018.
- “Making Agricultural Co-operatives Sustainable,” Michael Gertler, *Seminário de Cooperativismo e de Desenvolvimento Local*, (Seminar on Co-operatives and Local Development), Dorados, Brazil, May 11 and May 12, 2018.

#### 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).

#### 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 and power. Centre faculty and students advance knowledge in these areas by 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 world views to identify ways Western organizational models have been based on limited understandings and can be broadened.

- Demystifying the Sharing Economy: Part 2: Indigenizing the Co-operative Counter Narrative. November 14, 2017. Isobel Findlay.

#### Ongoing work in this area

- 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

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

## Appendix to the Director's Report

### Faculty/Staff/Student News

- Nora Russell, publications and communications officer retired after 22 years with the Centre. Patty Scheidl office manager for the past 17 years will retire in August.
- Murray Fulton assumed directorship of the Saskatoon campus of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy in January of 2018.
- Brett Fairbairn will become President and Vice-Chancellor of Thompson Rivers University (Kamloops BC) effective December 1, 2018.
- Paul Thompson, course developer for the governance course, completed his employment term with the Centre, and after several months of paternity leave will return to his position in the College of Arts and Science as a learning communities co-ordinator and academic advisor.
- Aasa Marshall, research assistant on the Saskatoon Co-op Association project, became employed by Co-operatives First.
- Amanda Sampson, a graduate student researcher, has returned from an eight-month internship with the Department of Agriculture in Regina and is working on the Saskatoon Co-op Association project.
- We have welcomed and bid farewell to three young scholars with us for the fall or winter terms. Esther Schmitt is from Germany but studying for her PhD at the University of València in Spain. She was here working with Murray and Brett on governance issues related to her dissertation. Danilo Vasconcellos is pursuing a master's degree in co-operative management at Pontificia Universidade Católica do Paraná in Curitiba, Brazil. He was here working with Centre Fellow Abdullah Mamun on credit risk in financial co-operatives. Julia Hönler, a visiting post-doctoral student at the Institute of Agribusiness Management and Food Economics at Justus Liebig University Giessen spent three months at the centre working on her research.
- Visiting scholar Sevasti Chatzopoulou, on sabbatical leave from Roskilde University in Denmark, was with us for the six months. Both she and her husband, Kostas Karantininis, were students of Murray's. Kostas, from the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, is at the University of Saskatchewan this year as Van Vliet Chair in the Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics and was named as a Centre Fellow in International Co-operatives.

### Research (not reported above)

- *Business Communication Now: 4th Canadian Edition*. Isobel M. Findlay and Kitty O. Locker. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson. Xviii + 400 pp. Published January 2018. (co-op and credit union content)
- *Maximizing the Potential of Urban Aboriginal Students: A Study of Facilitators and Inhibitors within Postsecondary Learning Environments*. Marie Battiste, Isobel M. Findlay, Joe Garcea, Jania Chilima, and Ryan Jimmy. Saskatoon: Urban Aboriginal Knowledge Network Prairie Regional Research Centre. April 2018
- Everyone Counts: Mobilizing Knowledges for the 2018 Saskatoon Point-in-Time Homelessness Count—A Case Study. Isobel M. Findlay. Research Impact Canada. Posted May 16/June 6, 2018.
- Making Stronger Causal Inferences: Accounting for Selection Bias in Associations Between High Performance Work Systems, Leadership, and Employee and Customer Satisfaction. Schmidt, J., & Pohler, D. (forthcoming) *Journal of Applied Psychology*.
- Multinationals' compliance with employment law: An empirical assessment using administrative data from Ontario, 2004-2015. Pohler, D., & Riddell, C. (forthcoming) *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*.
- Collective bargaining. In Wilkinson, A., Dundon, T., Donaghey, J., & Colvin, A. (Eds). Pohler, D. (forthcoming) *Routledge Companion to Employment Relations*. Routledge: London and New York.
- Internalizing Cognitive Bias: An Experiential Exercise for Teaching and Learning the Anchoring Effect. Kleefeld, J., & Pohler, D. (forthcoming) *Brock Education Journal*.
- "Designing future merger policy in North American rail: lessons from the past?." Nolan, James F., **Eric T. Micheels**, and Lindsay A. Pollard. In *Transportation Policy and Economic Regulation*, pp. 129-144. 2018.

### Conferences, Workshops, and Meetings

- Homelessness Partnering Strategy, Everyone Counts workshops, Vancouver, November 21-22, 2018.
- Canadian Association for the Studies of Co-operatives, University of Regina, May 30-June 1, 2018.
- Saskatchewan Co-operative Association, Saskatoon, March 20, 2018
- Institute for Gender and Economy Corporate Partner Meeting, February 28, 2018