



2015 ANNUAL REPORT

A decade since the amalgamation of the Alberta Co-op Council and the Rural Education and Development Association, creating today's Alberta Community and Co-operative Association.



ALBERTA COMMUNITY AND CO-OPERATIVE ASSOCIATION



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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR'S REPORT



Healthy membership growth, check.
More co-operative education, check.
Mobilizing community leaders, check.
Downturn in Alberta's economy, check.

ACCA was resilient in 2015 and marked the tenth anniversary of the association with significant membership growth and demand for co-op education services. Our membership grew 25% over the last year and our phones rang constantly with community leaders looking to mobilize and co-operate for the common good.

Nearly 1,400 hours of in-kind time was spent educating the public about co-ops and assisting them in the early phases of co-op development.

Local champions sought ACCA's guidance on using the co-op model to foster social and economic development in First Nations communities, to see innovation in health care and seniors care, and to help Albertans invest in and directly benefit from renewable energy.

This groundwork garnered news coverage in June, when ACCA was contacted by CTV Edmonton to explain how existing businesses are exploring the co-op model as a means of succession planning and a way of keeping prized local establish-

ments alive as baby boomers retire.

June also saw a busy board meeting with the declaration of a dues task force, assigned to evaluate the member dues structure and position ACCA for long term sustainability.

Volunteers gave more than 8,200 hours of summer vacation time to help ACCA facilitate the Co-operative Youth Leadership Program and educate 230 youth about co-operatives.

The fourth annual Gathering of Alberta Co-operatives was held in November and was one of ACCA's biggest fundraisers, generating \$4,100 for the youth program curriculum update. More than 100 guests attended the conference on Leveraging the Power of Member-Ownership, and stayed to mark the tenth anniversary of ACCA with a masquerade party.

Even with a growing profile, ACCA was among those set back by Alberta's downturn. As a not-for-profit co-op, we always maintain a lean budget, but staff really stepped up in 2015 to achieve what they did, with less time and resources than usual. We have weathered one decade, and look forward to taking on another as we grow the co-operative movement.



Unleashing Local Capital: Community-Owned Renewable Energy

In 2015, we worked with several stakeholders to support the creation of the Alberta Solar Co-operative. Community-owned renewable energy in Alberta stemmed from our work under the Unleashing Local Capital Program, and connected ACCA to rural municipalities, industry partners and community leaders.

The Alberta Solar Co-operative will create the first co-operatively-owned solar farm that will be a distributed generator. This co-op provides a structure for Albertans to invest in, and own the infrastructure, that produces renewable energy. The Alberta Solar Co-op introduced the co-operative model to new communities and created new champions to promote the sector.

The work done in 2015 means more Albertans will benefit from solar and renewable projects; new jobs will be created, and new opportunities will emerge for ACCA members.

CO-OPERATIVE DEVELOPMENT & UNLEASHING LOCAL CAPITAL

Urban Co-operative Development

Chrysylys Inc. was contracted to start-up a new co-operative in the city of Calgary. In our 16 years as Management Consultants this was our first experience with co-operatives. Seth Leon of ACCA was able to guide us through our understanding of co-operatives. It was with his in-depth knowledge and willingness to offer assistance that we were able to launch a new and innovative co-operative."

*Debra Miko, Management Consultant,
Chrysylys Inc.*

Education and Outreach

Co-operative education plays an important role in addressing succession and long-term viability of the sector. Education builds the necessary skills to make the co-operative advantage a comparative advantage in the market place.

Our work at the Bissett School of Business at Mount Royal University, introduced more than one hundred post-secondary students to the co-operative movement in Alberta. This led to the inclusion of the co-op structure within course curriculum in 2016.

Innovation and Economic Development

In 2015, we also provided several presentations to municipalities and community organizations. Our online offerings also found a broad audience, reaching as far as Australia and New York City.

We also educated the City of Calgary Community Social Workers as part of their learning at work week, and provided input on the role of co-operatives within their community economic development strategy.

Looking outwards, the educational work we do promotes the sector to the next generation of members, employees, and leaders. It also connects the sector to people looking for local solutions and want to be involved in building a strong local economy.



**Co-operative
enterprises build
a better world**

CO-OPERATIVE AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

"Partnering with ACCA has allowed us to expose students to co-ops in a number of courses within Business undergraduate programming at MRU. Having Seth in the classroom has helped students better understand co-operative business models as a viable pathway to enact social innovation, community-based enterprise, and to blend purpose with prosperity."

*James Stauch, Director, Institute for Community Prosperity
Bissett School of Business, Mount Royal University*





ANNUAL GATHERING OF ALBERTA CO-OPERATIVES

LEVERAGING THE POWER OF MEMBER-OWNERSHIP

Conference Highlights

The fourth annual Gathering of Alberta Co-operatives was all about Leveraging the Power of Member-Ownership. Guests and speakers alike all agreed—the strength of member-ownership is a differentiator and tool that we can use more effectively.

Despite corporate belt tightening as Alberta's economy saw a downturn, one hundred employees and directors from the credit union and co-op movement came to Red Deer for the conference in November.

While all of the sessions were valuable, a crowd favourite was Government Relations with guest speakers like Bill

Oemichen of the USA's Co-operative Network, and local panel members Peter Davis from Credit Union Central of Alberta, Bert Paulssen of the Federation of Alberta Gas Co-ops, as well as Jacquie Fenske, a former MLA with the Alberta Progressive Conservatives.

Trending topics in co-op innovation around renewable energy, faith-based financing, healthcare, and international development were eye-opening to even the experienced co-operators in the room. Guests also gained from Brett Fairbairn's keynote on Co-op Governance as it relates to member and employee engagement.

"We have no incentive to try and get all we can out of you, just to turn around and give it back when it was not in your best interest. So, we believe that, and this is true of all co-operatives, we believe so long as there is a need for balance in how entities are run, so long as there is a need for trust, we think that this is a potential for success in the co-operative system.

Frankly, the co-operative system is the better model. Back to getting realized efficiency – are your members seeing it when you do business with them? You try to live it in those kinds of ways every day. We believe it makes a difference, but it's not as easy as you might think to make a meaningful difference."

*Ian Glassford, Chief Financial Officer
Servus Credit Union*



Program Success

The seventh year of the Career Focus Internship Program exceeded all contract expectations with the Federal Government. Yet again, the internship program gained a more than 90% success rate, earning an extension which allowed ACCA to place 17 interns in Alberta during the 2014-15 contract.

Eight communities, from towns like Vegreville and Lac La Biche to cities like Edmonton and Calgary, all helped post-secondary graduates find meaningful work to match their education, or inspired these keen young professionals to further their education or specialty.

Highlights from Program Coordinator

"Although my role with ACCA may not be directly related to co-op development, it definitely has the capacity to educate people all across Alberta about the co-op model."

A mandatory part of the intern orientation is our workshop on the basics, Co-ops 101. Youth just starting their careers are shown the history of the co-operative movement and how co-ops differ in principles and structure."

Dianne Fortin, Program Coordinator

Lessons Learned

A key take-away from the program in 2015 was open and effective communication. So much success in this internship program comes from asking the right kind of questions, ensuring understanding across all individuals and maintaining open and on-going communication. Just as it is critical for interns and their hosts to foster a good working relationship, ACCA also concentrates on building strong relations with program participants.

"Our intern did an excellent job and I will be happy to give her a great recommendation. She is hard working, responsible and collaborative. As a small non-profit co-operative organization, this type of internship program is extremely important to us for meeting our organizational skills."

Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation

CAREER FOCUS INTERNSHIP PROGRAM





CO-OPERATIVE YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Program Overview

The summer of 2015 welcomed 232 youth participants to the leadership program, over 100 of them returning after experiencing the magic in prior years. With 59 dedicated staff volunteers, the program saw many songs, wardrobe changes and inspiring sessions to connect youth with their community, values, co-operatives and agricultural roots.

The program helps youth from all across Alberta and northern BC learn how to become active members in their community. Through self-esteem and team building, the youth learn to appreciate themselves and others, for their unique contributions in building a better future.

With such an extensive network of program alumni and supporters, ACCA has been leveraging personal points of contact and those passionate about their experience, to get more Albertans involved and aware of the program.

Youth Program Coordinator Shares One of Many Success Stories

"We had a participant who after six years of coming to the program, made a speech to his peers about his experience. In the beginning, he didn't want to come to the program and didn't want to participate in anything. He shared that his upbringing had been rough, he was seen as the 'different' one, and didn't have anywhere he could belong. The ACCA Youth Program made him believe in himself, believe he was a good person and could offer society more than just quiet reflection. Over the years, he became more confident and outgoing and shared himself with others. He's extremely intelligent and always willing to learn new things. He thanked the volunteer staff for always being patient with him and encouraging him, especially when he was standoffish and introverted. He thanked his fellow participants for believing in him and for continuing to try and be friends with him throughout the years because they saw him for the awesome person he is. He was grateful that our program opened his eyes to another world and hoped that one day he could help influence others. After the Grad program ended, the post-evaluations indicated this participant had in fact made a big impact on many others."

Liane Courchesne, Youth Program Coordinator

WHY WORK WITH ACCA?

"Our ongoing work with ACCA has not only been insightful and fun, it has become an integral component of our curriculum as we prepare our students for the NEXT economy."

Dr. Catherine Pearl, Assistant Professor, Social Innovation & Entrepreneurship, Bissett School of Business, Mount Royal University

"Seth Leon gave a seminar on the co-op model to our cohort of community economic development professionals. He is whip smart and engaging! Opportunity Development Co-operatives are a very effective lever that communities can pull to regain control over local economic development."

Nicole Chaland, Simon Fraser University Certificate Program for Community Economic Development

"The operating landscape for housing co-ops across the country is changing (expiring operating agreements, the loss federal subsidies and minimal new government funding to replenish an aging stock or protect low income families). The Northern Alberta Co-operative Housing Association (NACHA) recognizes the need to broaden and adapt the scope of our programs and services. We need to be prepared for the demands of the approaching uncharted territory. "Evolve or Die" was the theme of the last regional co-operative housing federations conference. This new course is fraught with both opportunities and pitfalls for our member co-ops.

ACCA's assistance throughout 2015 and 2016 has been invaluable because it helped to stimulate a more innovative and flexible mindset in NACHA's board and staff members. Their robust and sometimes uncomfortable strategic planning process enabled the NACHA Board to articulate and recommit to its core values. It also prompted us to engage in the much needed substantive conversation about the transformative changes that are required at every level of our organization.

ACCA steadily guided us to: identify cost minimizing and revenue generating opportunities, create new programs to meet new needs (tackling deferred maintenance, structural and capital repairs that demand immediate attention resulting in housing charge increases, governance and leadership deficits), streamline operations with the help of technology, collaborate with stakeholders and natural partners – pooling knowledge, experience and resource and increase the number of full-coordination clients.

We truly appreciate the hard work, commitment and willingness to challenge the status quo received from the ACCA; helping NACHA to chart a course for a sustainable future."

*Ayanna Inniss, Acting Executive Director,
Northern Alberta Co-operative Housing Association*

CO-OPERATION AMONG
CO-OPERATIVES

OPEN & VOLUNTARY
MEMBERSHIP

INFORMATION,
EDUCATION &
TRAINING

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

DEMOCRATIC CONTROL

AUTONOMY &
INDEPENDENCE

An aerial photograph of a dense forest. The trees are in various stages of autumn, with some showing bright orange and yellow foliage, while others remain green. A dark, winding road or path cuts through the forest, running diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. The text "COMMITTEE REPORTS" is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

COMMITTEE REPORTS



GOVERNANCE REPORT

The Governance Committee is responsible for the review and management of the by-laws, democratic structure of the Association and the Board governance policies and processes. It's also responsible for facilitating the recruitment and performance review of, and compensation for, the Executive Director.

This year, the Committee met four times on August 4, October 13, January 8 and March 22. We undertook all activities required as per our Terms of Reference. Highlights of our activities over that period were:

- Reviewing the Governance Committee Terms of Reference and adopting a work calendar for the year.
- Introducing and putting into place a board Skills Matrix to identify skills gaps and areas of strength, which enable the board to better manage our affairs and know where the board may need expert outside counsel.
- Introducing and conducting our first Board Assessment to evaluate our performance as a board and identify areas for improvement leading to recommendations from the Committee.
- Reviewing and recommending to the board a new Terms of Reference of the Resolutions Committee and Nominations Committee.
- Amending and cleaning-up our Board Governance Policies manual.
- Reviewing ACCA's Management and Operational policies and determining which, if any, need to be co-approved by the Board Chair and Executive Director as a matter of good governance.
- Facilitating the board's annual performance and compensation review for the Executive Director.
- Leading the board's strategic planning process.

I wish to thank my committee members for their dedication and commitment to fulfilling our role as a committee on behalf of the board of directors and our association members.

Vern Albush, Chair, Governance Committee



AUDIT & FINANCE REPORT

This has been a very interesting and challenging year for ACCA with the changes in government, the current economic climate and the reduction in grants. ACCA, as an apex organization for the co-op sector in Alberta, is trying to find the right services to offer in a cost effective way.

The Audit and Finance Committee has met this year to review the financial information and make recommendations to the management team at ACCA. The committee also ensures risk management and internal control systems are in place while monitoring the quality and integrity of the financial and management reporting processes of the association.

Current realities for ACCA are:

- Grants have been much harder to come by and do not cover any of the overhead.
- The Alberta economy has slowed and organizations are cautious, especially those considering starting new co-operatives.
- The expected revenues from Opportunity Development Co-ops (ODCs) have been stalled because of the economic uncertainty.

Changes ACCA staff have made to adapt to today's context:

- Many expenses have been reduced or discontinued and staff costs have been lowered.
- Delivered services are now billed sooner.
- Communications and staff development have been reduced significantly.
- Reporting to the board of directors has become more detailed.

With the help of the management team at ACCA and the board, we have been busy this year trying to create a sustainable funding model for ACCA that will deliver the services members expect. One major initiative has been the creation of a Member Dues Task Force that is analyzing different models to cover the programs and services our members are looking for.

Once the year's closing financials were determined, the committee and board informed members and asked for support to cover the shortfall. In the next few months, the Dues Task Force is hoping to create a new dues structure to cover basic operations and start building a reserve. We will be asking members to provide feedback so we build a fair and transparent system. We have determined that many organizations are at their financial limit in today's economy, but we hope that through growth and adjustments to member dues, we will be able to implement a funding model that supports expert member and co-operative services.

Chris Hancock, Chair, Audit and Finance Committee, and Dues Task Force

SUSTAINABLE SERVICE & VALUE

The Dues Task Force consisted of the following committee chairs as per the September 2015 board minutes:

Audit and Finance – Chris Hancock, Task Force Chair
Governance – Vern Albush
Stakeholder Relations – Dr. Keith Degenhardt
ACCA Chair – Randy Taylor
Michele Aasgard, Executive Director

In 2015, this task force: completed an analysis of current membership dues, determination of cost for programs and services required, and expanded, conducted case-studies on alternative funding models, The task force also began working with facilitators to shape in-depth workshops in early 2016 to engage members and find out what their needs are from ACCA.

Meetings of the task force are open to all interested board members. As the team finds probable solutions, they will be connecting with members to ensure the long term changes will be fair and sustainable. ACCA will maintains accountability and continue to offer exceptional programs and services.



Audit and Finance:
Chris Hancock, Chair
Brian Scott
Carl Beniuk

Governance:
Vern Albush, Chair
Rodger Vizbar
Garth Yeomans
Evert Vandenberg

Leadership Awards:
Carl Beniuk , Chair
Garth Yeomans

Nominations:
Rick Smith, Chair
Dr. Keith Degenhardt
Rodger Vizbar

Stakeholder Relations:
Dr. Keith Degenhardt, Chair
Tara Burke
Brian Scott

Resolutions:
Harvey Hagman, Chair
Chris Hancock
Albert DeBoer

BOARD COMMITTEES

Executive Director, Michele Aasgard and Board Chair, Randy Taylor, ex-officio, are also members of each committee.



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