

Meet the CDF Board of Directors



Michele Aasgard is the Chairperson of the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada. She is the Executive Director of the Alberta Community and Co-operative Association (ACCA) in Edmonton, Alberta. The ACCA seeks to foster a healthy and vibrant co-operative sector; to provide a forum for co-operatives to associate and network with other provincial and national co-operatives; to promote the co-operative model; to support the development of strong Alberta communities through co-operation; to foster the development of community leaders through education; to provide youth education and leadership; and, to foster a healthy agriculture sector through co-operation and education.

Before joining the ACCA, Michele worked for the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division of the Alberta Government, developing and delivering training programs for staff and the private sector. Michele has extensive experience producing educational resource materials and has completed her Certificate of Adult and Continuing Education from the University of Alberta with distinction.



Neil Cooper's analytical mind and focus keeps Conexus in the winning column when it comes to ensuring it is properly equipped for and understands what success looks like. As Chief Financial Officer, Neil leads the accounting, finance sustainability and stewardship, he is willing to make thoughtful, tough decisions for the greater good of Conexus, its members and employees.

Neil's experience in the financial industry is supplemented by a Master of Business Administration Degree and Bachelor of Science Degree, both from the University of Saskatchewan. He currently serves on the boards of the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada and APEX I and II Limited Partnership. He has enjoyed volunteering with the Canadian Co-operative Association, Canadian Cancer Society and MS Society of Canada.



Bruno Dragani is a values-based leader with 25 years of financial co-operative experience. He serves as an executive for Coastal Community Credit Union and holds the position of Chief People & Administration Officer. His areas of oversight include Information Technology, Human Resources, Centralized Operations and Premises. Bruno has been instrumental in leveraging people and technology to create strategies and programs that support the credit union. Bruno holds a Master in Business Administration from Royal Roads University (MBA), and is a Chartered Professional in Human Resources (CPHR). Bruno serves as a director for the Nanaimo District Museum and is a past chair for Community Futures Central

Vancouver Island. He also volunteers for the Canadian Co-operatives Association internationally and has served in Mongolia and Indonesia.



Mark Hamel is Vice-Chairperson of the Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada. His passion for the co-op sector is reflected in the dairy industry as well as the insurance field. Mark has built a reputation on integrity and consistently delivers results by aligning corporate governance with sound business judgement. Mark currently sits on the Board of Gay Lea Foods Ltd as a Director for 12 years, including four as Chairman, and a founding member of the Gay Lea Foundation. Mark was recently elected Chair of Howick Mutual Insurance and has more than twenty years of experience in the insurance field.

Mark's career also includes sitting on the Ontario Co-operative Association Board as Past Chair. He has been a part of On Co-op's regulatory and legislative committee and is a member of the joint On Co-op and Conseil de la cooperation de l'Ontario Government Relations Committee. As well, Mark is a delegate to the Co-operatives and Mutuals of Canada. Mark is married to Cathy and together they are partners with their son (4th generation) and his wife on the family dairy farm *Harmony Holsteins* in Bruce County, Ontario.



Erin Hancock has participated in the co-operative movement in a variety of capacities over the past 20 years, including co-op developer, manager, board member, educator, consultant and volunteer. Erin serves as the Manager of Partnership and Promotion for the Co-operative Management Education team at Saint Mary's University. She has served as the Manager of Research and Education for Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada and the Canadian Co-operative Association. She has also managed the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network, served as Vice President of the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation, served as chair for the Canadian Co-operative Research Network, and trained credit union boards for the African Confederation of Co-operative Savings and Credit Associations (as a volunteer with CCA/CDF).

Erin was a co-founder of the Co-operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick and has served as staff or board member of several other co-op associations. Erin holds a MPhil (Public Policy & Co-operative Development) and a BPhil (Leadership Studies & International Development Studies).



Tracey Kliesch is the General Manager and CEO of CCEC Credit Union in Vancouver. CCEC was founded by community organizations and activists in 1976 with the mission of building local economy and economic change.

Tracey has worked in the credit union sector for many years. Before joining CCEC she was a Community Investment Portfolio Manager with Vancity. Tracey has conducted several international postings with credit unions in Ghana, South Africa and the Caribbean. She was recently part of the team that brought the Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) program to Canada for the first time.

Tracey is a trustee on the Credit Union Foundation of British Columbia where she sits on the International and Domestic Awards Committee. Tracey holds a Master's Degree in Co-operatives and Credit Union Management from St. Mary's University and she teaches Co-operatives and Community Economic Development - part of the Advanced Sustainable Business Leadership Certificate Program at BCIT.



Normand Lafrenière began his working career with the Canadian Federal Government. He worked successively for the Oil and Gas Sector of the Department of Energy; for the Corporate Income Tax Competitiveness Analysis Sector of the Department of Industry; and for the Sales Tax Sector of the Department of Finance. He joined the Canadian Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (CAMIC) as President in 1993 and has been working in that capacity ever since.

Normand has a Bachelor Degree in Economics from the University of Sherbrooke and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the École nationale d'administration publique. Since February 2017, he holds an ICD.D (designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors). He sits on the Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC) Board of Directors as Vice President; and on the Coopérative funéraire de l'Outaouais (CFO) Board. He has served on the Pension Committee of St. John Ambulance.



Kelly McGiffin is the President & CEO of FirstOntario Credit Union and has over 40 years of experience in the financial services industry. Rising through the British Columbia credit union system, Kelly began his career as a lender and worked his way up through eight organizations, leading two credit unions as CEO and gaining accreditation in Human Resources and Marketing in the process. Kelly recently completed the Directors College curriculum to receive his Chartered Director designation and is a former member of the Board of both Central 1 and CCUA.

Kelly led the creation of the Alliance of Large Ontario Credit Unions (ALOCU), a collaborative peer group of the 12 largest credit unions in Ontario. Kelly is past chair of ALOCU, and is CEO Liaison for the Awareness Campaign. He is a former Canadian National Team coach, a Board member for the Coaching Association of Canada, and was named National Aboriginal Coach of the Year in 2005 (Kelly is a certified Metis citizen).



Mark Needham, of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories is the 1st Vice-President of the Board of Directors of Arctic Co-operatives Limited and Arctic Co-operative Development Fund where he has been an active member for the past fourteen years. A resident of Yellowknife for 25 years, Mark serves on the Board of Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op, first from 1992 -1994 and from 1996 onward, holding all executive positions.

Mark was elected to the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) Board and Co-operative Development Foundation (CDF) Board in 2013. In 2014, Mark was elected to the Board Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC) where he is the Vice-President and chairs the Audit and Finance Committee. Mark has served on the Resolutions Committee, the Human Resources Committee, and as the CMC representative on the CCA Board Nomination Committee. Mark holds a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from University of British Columbia, a Master of Business Administration Degree from Queens University and is very active in his community.



Marc-André Pigeon, Assistant Vice President of Financial Sector Policy of the Canadian Credit Union Association, is responsible for monitoring, researching and advocating on behalf of credit unions. In this capacity, he brings to bear experience as an advisor at the Department of Finance, a lead analyst for the Senate Banking and House of Commons Finance Committees, an economist at the Levy Economics Institute, and a business reporter for Bloomberg Business News. Marc-André holds a PhD from Carleton University in Mass Communications, where he is an occasional lecturer, a Master's Degree in economics from the University of Ottawa, and a journalism degree from Carleton University.



Jeanette Wakelin is the Director of Product Solutions at Atlantic Central and is responsible for the oversight and execution of product and services strategies supporting over 45 credit unions in Atlantic Canada. Having worked in the financial co-operative sector for more than 30 years, Jeanette has developed a strong passion for the co-operative way of life. She has served on the PEI Co-operative Council, the Credit Union National Benefits Committee, the Credit Union National Risk Management Committee, and the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce. She currently is on the National Committee in support of a co-operative financial literacy program and works with over 50 certified trainers in Atlantic Canada.

Jeanette is a Certified Change Management Practitioner from ADPRO and has a Sales and Service Training Certification from MOHR Development Group, a Performance Management Certification from the Hay Group, and her MBA designation specializing in Human Resource Management. Jeanette was the National Chair of the Children's Wish Foundation and now serves on its National Board as Chair of the Human Resources Committee.