

Ariel Harlap

I, Ariel Harlap, am eager to continue contributing to sharing my experience and passion for digital justice, organizational strategy and social entrepreneurship as a COCo board member. Over the last two years I have had the pleasure to participate closely in COCo's efforts to re-examine its overall vision and its ICT service strategies. I would love to continue providing my perspectives as these efforts come to fruition.

I have contributed to and co-organized various citizen-led movements in Montreal, notably 100in1day (promoting active citizenship) and Transformation Zone (gameified local urbanism), and continue to participate in the evolution of Museomix Montreal (prototyping participatory museums), and Ouishare Montreal (nurturing and connecting the collaborative economy). Throughout these networks, I have often found myself to be one of the few cultural-anglophones amidst the groups, and strive to continue bringing new and outside voices into the spaces I contribute to.

I have over 6 years of professional experience in project management, organizational strategy and various technologies, as well as another 4 years in geosciences and research. Presently, I act as co-director of the grassroots non-profit Techno Culture Club, reinventing the cultural practices of the XXI century with cultural institutions and their public. Having been acting as co-director for 6 months, and as a volunteer for the prior three years, has provided new perspectives on the needs and challenges of grassroots organizations as well as what is happening in the world of technology and culture in Montreal and Quebec.

My personal goal is to collaborate and experiment with others to create more connected and just communities in Montreal, at least that's the urban society I dream of, and thus I feel closely aligned with COCo's mission to strengthen the grassroots sector.

Caitlin Hayward

My name is Caitlin Hayward, and I'm a Toronto-transplant in love with my new community of Montreal. I am currently working at the NDG Food Depot, in a job and with a team that I love, and that challenges me on a daily basis.

I'm inspired by both the breadth and depth of what COCo does; I appreciate that organizations often need specific and technically-minded help, such as that offered by Commun-IT, but also need help to think about the big, complex and important questions like diversity and racism.

Most of my working life has been in not-for-profit organizations, and I am constantly amazed by our sector's amazing capacity for thoughtful, socially conscious, and innovative work within our communities. Likewise, I am very aware of the particular challenges of working hard at problems that seem to have no foreseeable solutions, without the financial, moral and political support that our communities need.

In 'real' terms, this translates to several years of experience doing lots of different things; program evaluation, writing and assessing grants, research and policy work, dealing with budgets, and working on any number of HR issues, including organizational re-development and governance restructuring. I have experience as a board member as well as staff in community-based NGOs, and have some insight into the importance of both roles.

I think I can contribute my experience to COCo, but more particularly, I try to always bring a thoughtful and human-oriented perspective to any group/work. Boards and staff members in community organizations are tasked with difficult and important work, and sometimes the relationships within and between these groups is tricky.

Camerin Cobb

WHO AM I? I am an artist, an organizer, a writer, a weirdo, a skeptic, an idealist, and a geek. I do my best to understand the world around me and to apply this understanding in useful and innovative ways.

WHAT PART OF MY PERSONAL IDENTITY DO I WANT TO SHARE? I believe that when individuals have the ability to thrive we all benefit. For my own part, I sometimes feel as though my Blackness, queer-ness, and genderless-ness mean I deserve less space than others. One of my most cherished goals in life is to support people in their quest to be whole and happy and to resist forces, societal, institutional, or otherwise, which diminish that potential.

WHAT GROUPS/SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AM I INVOLVED IN?/WHAT NETWORKS AM I CONNECTED TO THAT ARE RELEVANT TO COCO? I have very close ties with the QTBIPOC (“queer and trans black, indigenous, and people of colour”) community in Tiohtià:ke. It is where I invest much of my time and energy and where I receive much support and care in return. I am also connected with artists, programmers, and makers around the city. Currently, I am lucky to be involved in two projects centering QTBIPOC creators: First, as a member of *Qouleur*, I am helping to organize and run the 5th edition of our local, summer arts festival of the same name. And second, in collaboration with a fellow community organizer, Dana McKnight, I am co-curating an imprint of science fiction and fantasy stories by QTBIPOC writers called, “Swamp Bitch”. Both of these efforts are motivated by the knowledge that representation and recognition are critical for marginalized communities.

WHY DO I WANT TO BE A BOARD MEMBER? I respect the work COCo is engaged in and the ethics which govern what you do. I feel very motivated to make meaningful contributions of my time and energy to the communities sharing Tiohtià:ke. I am excited by the opportunity this position would provide to think and work in ways that are collaborative and relational, rather than hierarchical or prescriptive.

WHAT WOULD I LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE? I have an eclectic mix of skills: Over the last 10 years I have worked full-time in web programming, filmmaking, community theatre, graphic design, and office administration. My experiences on and off the job have taught me to enjoy working with many different kinds of people; to be attentive to issues of social justice beyond those that I am directly affected by; and, whenever possible, to approach conflict with compassion and patience. I am especially interested in lending my support to COCo in the areas of HR and the Commun-IT initiative.

Cora-Lee Conway

My name is Cora-Lee Conway. I use she or they pronouns. I am a first-generation Canadian born to Caribbean parents in Toronto. I am a Black, cis-gendered, abled bodied, heterosexual, Anglophone woman and I have lived in Montreal for the past five years. I moved to this city to pursue a Doctorate in Education and am also working at McGill University in Student Affairs, supporting first-year students living in residence. My career path has been non-linear, but rewarding and challenging. I have been reticent to engage in community in Montreal as I have not had the most secure opportunities here, but it is part of my personal ethic to be involved and I feel like that kind of engagement helps to create a sense of rootedness and belonging to a space.

My career prior to moving to Montreal was in the policy and non-profit world. I worked with the Ontario Government on their citizen engaged electoral reform campaign and went on to work with Right To Play, a non-governmental organization that advocates for the use of sport as a tool for development. I traveled extensively, coordinated the publication of research-based literature and planned international meetings of government delegates culminating in a Ministerial meeting at the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Then in a complete shift after that project came to an end I moved on to the Toronto Board of Trade’s policy department where I supported members of the Board in their

advocacy of business-friendly policy. My experience in policy is diverse and working in that area is exciting and challenging, as policy development helps to create the framework for healthy and thriving enterprise.

Being in Montreal and working towards my graduate degree in Education has shifted my area of focus from development to social justice. Part of this is informed by my identity and lived experience, and part of that shift is informed by my increased awareness and commitment to anti-oppressive practice. As a co-founder of collective, C-Uni-T (See Unity) a working group of both McGill and Concordia QPRIGs I have worked the work of members of the collective who are educators, activists, parents, youths and elders all to center the black experience.

I am seeking a seat on CoCo's Board because I am hopeful that my diverse experiences may lend a set of skills and experiences, and a voice on the Board that may support the work of local non-profits doing critical work in Quebec. I am in a place personal and professionally to be able to commit to Board member requirements and feel personally invested in supporting CoCo's mandate. I hope to have an opportunity to present to your membership in greater detail what I can contribute and outline the skill sets and experiences I have and how they may work to benefit the membership.

Diana Lombardi

I have been working and doing activism in the field of "l'action communautaire autonome" for about 15 years, mainly within women's groups. While I am an English speaker, I have been working all these years in a unilingual French environment. Therefore, I am quite connected to French-speaking Montréal-based community and social movements.

Before becoming a Board member for COCo in 2015, I was a long-time admirer of the mission and network of COCo. After having the privilege to be a part of COCo and getting the change to know the organisation a little better, I can only say that this admiration has grown. I am surely a proud "COCoNut"! 😊

I am humbly running for a second time for a position on the Board of directors. A lot of work has been done in the past 2 years and significant and thoughtful changes have been introduced. I would love to pursue this work with the team and see it through for the next while.

I currently work as the coordinator of *Réseau d'action des femmes en santé et services sociaux*, a feminist "regroupement" of over 45 women's groups in Montréal. I am quite connected to the health and social services network as well as other networks and movements. I am heavily involved in the anti-austerity struggle and the campaign for improved funding of the non-profit sector.

I have significant experience in community organization, network building, financial management (for non-profits), feminist analysis of government or social policies, applying for grants, social justice advocacy, "éducation populaire" and mobilization of members/volunteers/communities. I also have a keen interest in communications, anti-oppression work and the dynamics at play within community groups and networks (notably within democratic structures and systems or management styles).

I always felt that it would be beneficial for everyone if Montréal anglo and franco community groups worked together more frequently. However, I do understand the barriers (cultural and organizational) that can make this bridge difficult to cross – for both parties. I feel like I am invested in this need to help close the gap. COCo is definitely a key player for this important work. I am hoping that my (past and future) contributions to COCo will add to the efforts already made to build this bridge a little further, a little stronger.

Jasmine Ramze Rezaee

With a passion for social justice, community-based health, and Indigenous rights, I've spent the past eight years working and volunteering in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal's non-profit sectors. I currently work at McGill University, the Native Women's Shelter of Montreal, and as a freelance journalist and editor. I'm also an advisory board member of the Montreal Urban Aboriginal Health Centre and Upping the Anti, a progressive journal. I hold a MA from the University of Toronto.

I'm interested in joining your board because I can share relevant policy, communication, fundraising, and organizational skills, and I can contribute my perspectives as a woman of colour committed to inclusivity. Joining your Board would be a great opportunity for me to engage in socially meaningful work that draws upon my professional and lived experiences. I hope to learn from you and to contribute where I can, so I look forward to meeting you on March 29th!

Patrick Yanga

Je suis un nouvel immigrant, présent depuis 3 ans et demi sur le territoire Canadien. J'appartiens à ce que l'on nomme, une minorité visible. Ayant fait le parcours plutôt difficile de pas mal de migrants, j'ai suivi par la suite une formation de DESS en aménagement du territoire et développement local, parce que je suis convaincu qu'une dynamique et une mobilisation citoyenne, ne peut se détacher du territoire ou du milieu dans lequel évolue la population. Au travers de tout cela, j'ai œuvré au sein du C.L.I.C.S. Laval, qui est le Centre Lavallois pour l'intégration et la cohésion sociale. C'est un organisme, dans lequel je propose encore mes services. Cette OBNL détentrice de bonnes valeurs, a pour but d'aider à l'intégration et à l'insertion sociale des migrants de toutes parts. Elle a été particulièrement active, lors de l'accueil des réfugiés syriens qui furent nombreux au Canada et au Québec. J'y ai notamment monté des projets structurants et symboliques à l'endroit de ces populations et plus généralement pour l'ensemble des migrants.

Ce qui me sensibilise beaucoup au sein du COCo, est la volonté de l'organisme de réunir les diverses communautés formant la mosaïque Québécoise. En effet, il n'est pas toujours évident de fédérer toutes les entités variées existantes, toutefois grâce à l'effort commun, l'entraide, la justice sociale et le développement local, il y a tout simplement le désir de voir partager une issue commune, afin que la communauté progresse ensemble, en dépit de nos origines diverses.

Je souhaite dès lors vous apporter mon savoir-faire en termes de mode de gouvernance basée sur la transparence, le dialogue, l'ouverture sur de nouveaux modes d'empowerment grâce à l'innovation sociale et les ponts que l'on peut bâtir. Pour ce qui concerne mon savoir-être, j'ai le désir de vous faire montre de ma loyauté, mon engagement et ma probité dans l'exercice de mes fonctions. C'est donc important pour moi, de favoriser la meilleure des gouvernances possible avec tous les membres grâce à ces qualités requises. Je vous remercie pour votre attention.

Richenda Grazette

When I was nineteen, I was fortunate enough to be given the opportunity to work at Head & Hands as a fundraising assistant. The experience I gained and the people that I met working in this sector profoundly changed my life path. Now I am working as Director of Fundraising & Development, still at Head & Hands, and I get to spend my days raising money to uphold the amazing work that we do with Montreal youth.

Working as part of a collective means that despite being a fundraiser, I also have developed experience in other aspects of non-profit work, including writing an anti-racism policy for my organization, working on hiring committees, and peer supervising other collective members.

Through my position, I am also responsible for planning events within the NDG community, donor stewardship, and grant writing.

I believe that more youth of colour should be represented in our field. Young people have a strong voice and new energies, and once given the chance they can make real and amazing change. My passion for anti-oppression work in the sector, and my experience in funding development, are directly in line with COCo's current priorities for board members. Not only that, but as a queer Black woman - and a youth - I would bring unique perspectives and ideas to the Board of Directors.

Rio Victoria Jestin

My name is Rio and I am applying for the role of board of directors at COCo. Before moving to Montreal in 2015 I lived in Halifax, where I was involved in many community initiatives. In Halifax I was on the board of directors for NSPIRG (Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group), where I actively challenged oppression in all forms and worked with the board to stabilize and support social and environmental justice projects. I was involved with a variety of working groups and activist initiatives here. Since moving to Montreal in 2015 I have also participated in events and initiatives at QPIRG Concordia.

Between 2011 - 2015 in Halifax I founded and directed 2 N.P.O.'s and various projects, all of which aimed to cultivate safe and creative spaces for artists and community members to meet, collaborate and share their art and music. In my first year here in Montreal I have started an organization with essentially the same mission, mtl nümün. I am involved a variety of underground groups with activist themes here in Montreal.

I love being involved in constructive organizations and collaborating with community members to improve upon the shared experience, and understanding of self and environment. I am trained in financial management, and have a wealth of experience in policy development. I am an open communicator and have attended various workshops on team building, facilitation and non-violent communication. My current job is Communications Coordinator at ELAN Quebec (English Language Arts Network), which is also a N.P.O.

Aussi je suis bilingue. For these reasons I think I would be an excellent fit to the board of directors at COCo. Thank you for your time, and I hope to see you soon :)

Sara Kendall

Hi all! I'm excited to apply for a position on the Board of COCo, and to contribute some of the experience I've gained in various roles within the community sector: I've been a co-founder of two community organizations, a nonprofit director, a grant-writer, and an advisor to several inspiring grassroots groups. I'm about to complete my M.A. at Concordia University, and am now looking to bring more of my time and skills in support of organizations engaged in social justice work in Montreal.

I'm especially excited to apply to join COCo's Board in this moment, as the organization steps forward with its Theory of Change and an increased focus on anti-oppression. I hope to support COCo in carrying out this transformative work, so the organization can better support its members

in genuinely engaging and transforming power, privilege and inequity within their organizations and communities. I have a deep interest in how organizations can develop structures and practices that reflect and embody our visions for the world we want to live in, and how, in our day-to-day operations, we connect the dots between personal, organizational, and societal transformation.

A bit about my experience: In 2012 I co-founded Kite's Nest, a center for liberatory education in Hudson, NY. Kite's Nest is a small nonprofit that serves hundreds of children and teenagers: we provide programs that nurture the confidence, skills, joy, and collective leadership of young people while working to build justice and equity in our communities. I've worked for several years as one of the organization's co-directors, overseeing communications, donor development, grant-writing, and web development, and facilitating organizational visioning. I also teach classes, and I help to lead a 5-week social justice leadership training for teenagers. Previously I was the founding Station Manager of WGXC, a community radio station in NY state, where I developed the station's funding strategy, wrote organizational policies, managed hundreds of volunteers, and strived to create a structure that could balance both centralized leadership and democratic decision-making.

I've also worked as a volunteer grant-writer and advisor to two community groups: the SBK Social Justice Center, a Black-led non-profit organization; and the Columbia County Sanctuary Movement, an immigrant-led migrant justice organization. I'm on the Coordinating Committee of a chapter of Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ), which educates and organizes white people to show up for racial justice. And I'm closely connected to the Watershed Center, a retreat center in upstate NY that provides transformative trainings and consulting to social change organizations around the world. As a frequent participant in their trainings, I've been privileged to connect with dozens of grassroots organizations and collectives; with organizers from Black Lives Matter, Cosecha, Occupy Wall Street and other social movements; and facilitators from Momentum, the Wildfire Project, and other training organizations.

The specific skill sets I bring are in the areas of fundraising, donor development, and grantwriting; facilitating group process and workshops; pedagogies for supporting youth leadership; and facilitating organizational development and visioning.

Looking forward to meeting you all!