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I think I speak for COCo Board members when I say the year was busy, productive and positive. As I look back over the discussions and decisions that took place, it is clear that this has been one of engagement and forward movement. I believe the Board and staff, working together, have set COCo on a path that is stable and structured and one that will allow the association to play a progressive role in the years to come.

Some of the highlights in terms of process were the acceptance of new policies that will guide COCo actions: an advocacy policy, additions to the HR and Finance policies, a decision-making structure that clarifies how different types of decisions are made and who makes them. A calendar was developed so staff and Board will know the timeline for new initiatives that allows for reflection time and ensures that they come to the Board in a timely fashion.

COCo is committed to its members and this was the focus of many discussion and activities over the course of this year. Membership engagement, base-building and membership definition were tackled at two retreats to allow time to flesh out these important issues. In this way, a definition of a COCo member has been developed, a picture of our membership was presented showing gaps and trends vis-a-vis our strategic directions that informed (and will continue to inform) further discussion at the Board. A survey was developed and distributed to give us a better understanding of what members need or want from their association with COCo. Roles and responsibilities of the Board and Staff were clarified and a Hub/Lab structure was put in place, each with explicit terms of reference.

The Quebec Charter of Values provoked a response in the form of a statement from COCo that was distributed widely and well-accepted. This initiative was the basis for the development of the formal advocacy policy which was adopted and will guide future responses to issues in the community sector.

The collaborative structure of COCo was put to the test this year as the above issues and many others were discussed, debated and agreed-upon in a timely and collegial fashion. It is evident that staff and Board commitment to the mission of COCo is an essential ingredient that will ensure COCo continues to prosper and progress.

Natalie Chapman,
Member of the Board, The Centre for Community Organizations
Celebrating 15 years of COCo

COCo is pleased to kick-off its 15th birthday celebration with a fun-filled year of activities marking this milestone. Founded in November 1999, COCo opened its doors to community groups in early 2000 and has worked with over 750 organizations in Quebec ever since.

About to reach the 15 year mark, in the middle of its teen years, COCo is at that intermediary age: no longer a young pup, but not too old to party. And party we will! Starting with this 2013 Annual Report, presented at our party-themed AGM, we’ll live by the principle that we can grow in maturity while having a good time.

Throughout the year, COCo will be offering activities to highlight the successes of the organization and its members. It’s also a great time for us to look back on the first 15 years of the organization, to take stock and look forward.

So why not be bold? C’mon everybody! Let’s have our cake and eat it too!

COCo’s Staff and Board
Prior to the founding of COCo, Community Education Services (CES), an arm of the Montréal Catholic School Board Adult Education Department, provided subsidized training and consultation services on organizational change and management in the nonprofit sector to English-speaking, bilingual and ethno-cultural groups.

1999
On November 17, COCo is registered as a provincial non-profit in Quebec.

2000
The Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) opens its doors, with the intention of offering organizational development services to non-profits as well as to act as a community catalyst and bridge-builder across groups. Canadian Heritage supports such projects as All-A-Board, The Great Inter-Regional Forum and Training for Trainers.

2002
COCo launches its e-bulletin. Its consultants and trainers work with many community organizations across Québec. COCo works on the Eyes Wide Open project.

2003
COCo conducts Quebec’s first ever webcasts of workshops available live to organizations across the province while running 3 major projects—Vital Signs: The Health of Québec Community Organizations, Community Cash and Best Practice. In 2003, Centraide begins supporting COCo in an ongoing way, ensuring our sustainability and continued service-provision.

2004
COCo’s website goes live, receiving over 11,000 individual visits in its first year. COCo is one of the first English speaking organizations to receive a grant from SACA (Secretariat à l’action communautaire autonome). In 2004, MELS begins supporting COCo in an ongoing way, further ensuring our capacity to offer a popular education approach to our work.
COCo celebrates its 5th birthday. Since 2000, it has provided customized support to 134 groups, organized 44 events reaching 1097 people, provided 900 info-sessions, and has 1,300 subscribers to its e-Bulletin.

In the 2005-2009 period, COCo has consistently worked with 30 to 40 groups on customized interventions per year. From 150 to 500 people attended COCo events and COCo provided from 200 to 400 Info-COCo sessions each year during the same period. In 2009, the e-bulletin reaches 2,600 subscribers and the website 23,000 visits per year.

2006
With major shifts in staffing and governance capacity, COCo experiences a period of uncertainty and reflection on its structure. The staff and advisory board decide to develop a more collaborative organizational model.

COCo begins work on its Law and Order project, a multi-year strategy to build capacity and offer legal info and services to non-profits.

2007
The organization shifts its focus to prioritize six strategic directions that include: anti-oppression, movement-building, alternative structures and community research. At the same time, community organizations participate in C’est it en Franglais: A Forum helping organizations make the most of linguistic duality in their communities.

COCo celebrates its 10th birthday!

2009

2011
COCo downsizes its staff team in order to become more concentrated and further refines its internal structures and ways of working, while running projects such as Bridging the Knowledge Gap.

2012
COCo’s important In the Know research focusing on the profiles of English-speaking, bilingual and ethnocultural organizations is published with the support of a 3-year grant from SACAIS. At the same time, COCo organizes Portes Ouvertes: Reduire l’exclusion sociale dans les groupes communautaires du Quebec. COCo receives its Charitable status.

COCo gears up to celebrate 15 years of working with community organizations in the province of Québec with new partnerships, initiatives and a renewed commitment to our strategic directions.

2013
Read all about our activities from this year in this report! Of particular note is our community video project with Canadian Heritage, which marks over 13 years of project funding support and partnership.

2014 - 2015
COCo’s mission is to promote social justice, active citizenship, democracy, and just socio-economic development by supporting the development of healthy organizations and strong communities through education.

Toward this end, COCo is a provincial, non-profit organization that works primarily with English-speaking, bilingual, and ethnocultural organizations to develop organizational health and promote community sector development through: organizational development and leadership training, information dissemination, social analysis, research, and by strengthening links between organizations and sectors.

Board members: Claire Abraham, Natalie Chapman, Shannon Franssen, Jean-Noé Landry, Jon McPhedran Waitzer, Alex Megelas, Daniel Rotman.

Volunteers: Helge Dascher, Geneviève Deguire, Andrea Floricel, Pierre-Louis Fortin-Legris, Jennifer Ivens, Mélanie Jaudon, Angela Kelly, Janelle LeBlanc, Isabelle Petit, Anna Piotrowski, Arij Riahi, Sebastian Sanchez, Lorena Sierra, Mario Stinziani

Staff members: Gabriel Bergevin-Estable, Manoj Chandarana, Brandon Gamblen, Chris Lau, Françoise Magne, Laila Malik, Kit Malo, Spencer Mann, Chandra Murdoch, Kira Page, Frances Ravensbergen
The Charter of Values
COCo took a stance on the issue of the Charter of Values. Following an internal discussion process on Bill 60, a statement was issued, an interview was given on CKUT, and it laid groundwork for COCo’s new advocacy policy.

Membership Definition
In 2013, the Membership Engagement Lab worked on revisiting COCo’s membership model and definition, a significant first step for further membership engagement initiatives.

Commun-IT continues
COCo’s Commun-IT pilot project continues, now with both Spencer and Gabriel involved, to guide, support, and empower community groups to take advantage of Information and Communications Technology in order to better realize their missions.

CFP
The 9 organizations COCo accompanied in impact evaluation since 2012 (mostly in 2013) learned how to conduct results-based evaluation, developed a deeper understanding of the impact of their work on participants, and need more support to fully integrate results-based evaluation practices in their work. It's not too late for other organizations to participate in the project. Give us a call if you’d like to learn more about this work!

Communities Connecting the Digital Dots (CCDD)
Through CCDD, 12 community groups learned hands-on how to make effective videos, covering production from start (synopsis, production planning) to finish (editing, promotion).
Constituent Relationship Management CRM
COCo completed the transition of our databases to our new CRM, Salesforce (nonprofit edition). This cloud-computing software facilitates administration of statistics, contacts, etc.

Membership Survey
We surveyed our members on their sector, membership at COCo, current concerns and challenges, our strategic directions, accessibility, impact of our work, and ICT challenges. Some of these results are already informing internal decisions.

Innoweave Cloud Computing Workshop
COCo’s Commun-IT project partnered with Innoweave to offer an in-depth workshop on Cloud Computing for community organizations in February, an event which drew 43 attendees. The relationship has matured, and COCo’s staff working on the Commun-IT project, Gabriel and Spencer, are now registered Cloud Computing Coaches with Innoweave.

Université Populaire (UP)
COCo participated in organizing and facilitating the COCAF’s Université Populaire in August, where groups tackled common and divergent understandings of “activism” “professionalism” and “collective action”. COCo’s involvement continues for the 2014 COCAF UP.

Website Traffic and Social Media presence
COCo’s website drew 78,900 pageviews in 2013, an average of 6,575 pageviews per month. COCo’s social media presence also significantly took off in 2013, with many COCo videos now on our YouTube channel, 400 fans on Facebook and over 600 Twitter followers.

Anti-Oppression Lab
Further developing our internal capacity for this work, COCo’s Anti-Oppression Lab really took off in 2013 as we welcomed a new member to the Lab who will help guide our work: Janelle LeBlanc. Thanks Janelle! Plans for 2014 include an event, developing a training module to provide anti-oppression trainings to groups, creating an on-line assessment resource on our website, and creating a resource webpage. Stay tuned!

COCo’s new logo
In clear visual continuity with the previous logo, the new COCo logo is easier to read, easier to work with, more modern, dynamic and pleasing to the eye.
Free consultations are conducted by phone, email or in person and last anywhere from a couple of minutes to a couple of hours, or more. Staff provide information, critical reflection on issues and referrals to other resources or tools. These consultations give us at COCo a unique glimpse into the realities, concerns and priorities of groups.

In 2013, we provided 238 info-COCo sessions with 117 groups, totaling 138 hours of support. Of these info-COCo sessions, 62% were conducted in English while 28% were conducted in French.

- Common topics addressed were:
  - Board-related or governance issues (37%);
  - General organizational development (17%);
  - Incorporation (11%);
  - Human resources and time management (11%);
  - Conflict prevention/resolution and mediation (10%);
  - Charitable status (10%);
  - Looking for community resources (9%);
  - Financial management (7%);
  - Funding and grant writing (6%);
  - AGMs/membership (5%).

Although 83% of requests involved straightforward provision of information, 38% also involved a more in-depth, critical thinking and analysis of issues being faced by the group. Approximately 2% of info-coco sessions involved an internal (within COCo) or external referral.
The most common areas of focus were:

- Evaluation (38%);
- Planning and visioning work (22%);
- Governance and board development (16%);
- Coaching (16%).
- Facilitation skills (6%);
- Human resources (6%);
- Conflict resolution and communication skills (4%).

COCo offered the following types of support:

- Facilitation (70%);
- Training (18%);
- Organizational coaching (6%);
- Mediation (4%);
- Individual coaching (2%).

Continuing with its Commun-IT Pilot project, COCo also offered services to guide, support, and empower community groups to take advantage of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in order to better realize their missions.

In 2013, Commun-IT also worked on 10 contracts, 7 of which were completed in 2013, 3 of which are ongoing in 2014.
We’ve worked on improving our understanding and reporting of the impact of our work with groups in order to inform our organizational development. As part of our membership survey in 2013, we asked groups who worked with us in 2012-2013 about the overall impact of our work with them, and are looking into other relevant ways to evaluate the specific impact of our work in the future.

We received 61 responses out of 378 member contacts, a 16% response rate. Groups were allowed to skip sections that did not relate to the work we did with them, or which they declined to answer for other reasons. This first set of data collected allowed an exploratory overview to highlight areas of interest in the impact of our work for future evaluation efforts.

We asked groups “To what degree has your collaboration with COCo as a whole met your organizational needs?” 37 Groups responded to this question.

Contract work:
Completely (24%), A lot (49%), Somewhat (14%), A little (5%), Not at all (3%)

Info-COCos:
Completely (10%), A lot (57%), Somewhat (23%), A little (0%), Not at all (10%)
We asked groups to “Please describe if the following aspects of your organization’s work have changed as a result of COCo’s contract work (facilitation, training, coaching, mediation).” 35 groups responded to this question.

24 Groups we did contract work with, and 19 we did Info-COCos with, reported an improved understanding of their work due to that collaboration. An improved sense of organizational purpose and direction was reported by 23 groups COCo did contract work with, as well as by 17 groups using Info-COCos. 22 Groups reported an improved organizational efficiency through COCo contracts, and 20 through Info-COCos. Improved interpersonal relations were reported by 18 groups we did contract work with, and by 14 groups using Info-COCos. A total of 16 groups noticed improved impact of programs and projects following contract work, and 14 following Info-COCos. 14 Groups reported improved time-management from contract work with COCo, and 12 from Info-COCos. In handling and preventing conflicts, 16 groups we contracted with noticed improvements, as well as 15 groups who used our Info-COCo services. Finally, job clarity improved for 16 groups we did contracts with, and for 12 groups we provided with Info-COCos.

We also asked groups if working with us led to unexpected outcomes. Here are some of these responses:

- Better understood funder requests and adapted our approach to grantwriting.
- Now have a realistic understanding of our group’s strengths and weaknesses.
- Facilitation with our board helped to clarify its role and improved functioning.
- The COCo representative was absolutely brilliant and delightful to work with. I learned so much and looked forward to every session.
Testimonials

We ask groups to evaluate the work done and to give feedback after facilitation sessions. This feedback and evaluation step allows us to better assess how facilitation sessions went, but also allows individual facilitators to identify strengths and weaknesses to work on in their ongoing professional development. Here are some of the open-ended feedback comments we received in 2013:

- Facilitation style was warm, engaging but to the point. We covered much ground and the conversation was constructive.
- I think having facilitators present made a difference - Being there with us as an impartial third party was very effective.
- Learning about the decision-making process - who is responsible for what kind of decisions - will help in the long-run I think.
- The right pace and dynamics, the clarity of goals and clearly set boundaries.
- I was happy that we advanced so much and that everyone got to talk about the future and how to make it better.
- The facilitator made room for everyone to speak!
- Our facilitator did an excellent job being flexible regarding the group’s demands. We wanted to go in a variety of different directions and it was really helpful to have someone to steer us.
- Our facilitator made us feel at ease & everyone expressed themselves with respect and honesty.
- The warmth of the organizer had made the atmosphere very comfortable.
- Really appreciated these sessions and the freedom we had to talk. I feel freer to express and communicate information with less emotions then before the sessions.
- I obtained, with my colleagues, a privileged occasion to receive a brief overview of an evaluation process we rarely use in our work environment.
- I was satisfied that the approach covered a wide range of important issues and revealed areas that are a potential sources of problems.
Increasing anti-oppression capacity within community groups is one of COCo’s Six Strategic Directions, and the Portes Ouvertes project addressed this directly. Started in 2012 and completed in 2013, Portes Ouvertes brought together community organizations to share strategies, resources and ideas about anti-oppression practices in Community Organizations. We met with 10 leaders, community organizers and popular educators who work with underskilled youth, people with (dis)ability, the elderly, migrants, visible minorities, women, the LGBTQ and minority language communities. A two-day workshop was held with them to talk about strategies to deal with oppression and social exclusion used by community groups in Quebec. We produced 9 video interviews and 2 PDF tools which are being used to reach out to and inform other community groups, along with a blog to promote them hosted on the COCo website. Portes Ouvertes was made possible thanks to funding from the MELS.

Communities Connecting the Digital Dots (CCDD) is a video training project for English-language community organizations. Over the course of 5 months, 12 organizations work in small groups with videographer Audrey Villiard to learn how to make videos from start to finish, covering preproduction, production, and post-production. The in-depth, intensive training allowed participants to learned what makes effective videos, experience hands-on how to handle the camera and sound equipment, how to film events, interviews, b-roll, ambient sound and staged situations using a production plan and synopsis, how to edit their films using professional software. Groups also got training from Gabriel Bergevin-Estable on uploading and promoting videos online, using their website, webinars and social media. Two groups of 4 organizations were trained in 2013, with a third training in January 2014. Communities Connecting the Digital Dots is made possible thanks to funding from Canadian Heritage.
This year, COCo was busy connecting with community partners from a diversity of backgrounds. For many years now, COCo has been involved with the COCAF (Coalition des organismes communautaires autonomes en formation). In August 2013, we participated in COCAF’s annual Université populaire (UP). La COCAF is already planning a UP event for this coming August which will bring together, for the first time in the UP’s history, people and organizations from a diverse array of sectors and linguistic realities. UP 2014 will create a space for English, French and multilingual organizers to come together and explore our cultural similarities and differences in relationships to how we work. The objective is to deepen our understanding of each other in order to help us work better across difference. Stay tuned.

COCo retains an ongoing connection to organizations we are members of - RIOCM (Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaire de Montréal) and TROVEP (Table régionale d’organismes volontaires en éducation populaire). Alongside the CSMO – we attended the AGM of each.

For the first time in COCo’s history, we have made direct links with the fabulous Communagir – talk of partnering on a webinar session and sharing our online resources is underway. We look forward to continuing to develop with this excellent organization.

In 2013, COCo met regularly with the QCGN, QELA, QALL and the Centre for Literacy to share resources and discuss the changing landscape of English-speaking organizations.

These informal get-togethers have been fruitful and rich and we are grateful for the insight of those involved.

Finally, as a way to engage directly with our 15th year anniversary, we’ve begun reconnecting with people and organizations that have been foundational to the development of COCo since its inception. In 2013, past board members, community organizers and organizations (such as Eric Shragge, Hugh Maynard, Stephanie Garrow, the Volunteer Bureau of Montréal and others) have inspired us and given us insights about where we have come from and where we are going. In 2014, we look forward to further deepening relationships with key groups and building new ones.
Professional development and organizational retreats

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

Staff held four internal professional development sessions throughout the year to strengthen our facilitation and training capacities. Our first session was an opportunity for staff to share the various facilitation and training modules we used in recent contracts. A second session focused on further structuring COCo’s approach towards organizational coaching, which enables us to support groups in a more intensive and on-going manner. Next, we focused on strategic planning, where we looked at differences between smaller- versus larger-scale processes and how to involve all internal and external stakeholders when necessary. Last but not least, we looked at strategies for further integrating our current strategic directions into all our facilitation and training work.
RETREATS

COCo Staff and Board work closely with each other in an on-going way, through staff involvement in Board meetings, as well as multiple internal committees (Hubs and Labs). However, COCo organizes two retreats throughout the year that enable us to take a step back, widen the lens a little more and to do some team building. This year’s retreats enabled us to address the following areas:

- Board and Staff roles, responsibilities and decision-making;
- Membership engagement;
- Information and communications technology planning;
- Visioning COCo’s future.

DECISION-MAKING

A significant piece of work in 2013 was done around adopting a series of decision-making processes, being clear on the decision-making roles of different bodies (board, staff, members and our committees called hubs and labs), and clearly charting all of these processes in an internal document to be shared with Staff and Board. This was done as a follow-up to work done in retreats, and is an experience (and a tool) we can share with groups who are looking at re-examining their decision-making structures.
2013 COCo Finances

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<th>Sources of revenue</th>
<th>%</th>
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<td>Canadian Heritage</td>
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<tr>
<td>Centraide du Grand Montréal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Emploi-Québec</td>
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<td>Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS) – Programme d’Action communautaire sur le terrain de l’éducation</td>
<td>34%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training revenues</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Special thanks to our 2013 funders and partners!
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