COC 2016
ANNUAL REPORT
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tweet #COCO2017 at our AGM!
2016 was an important year for COCo. Where 2015 was marked by significant funding cuts and important challenges for our member organizations, this year was about deepening our support for local grassroots organizations, expanding our services in partnership with other organizations, growing our solidarity with the international community, and finalizing the development of COCo’s Theory of Change. It has been inspiring to witness the COCo staff come through a year of adversity and change to thrive and grow as we put 2016 to a close. The proof of this growth is evidenced throughout this annual report, and is maybe made most evident by the 40% increase in contract work, demonstrating the increasing reach and quality of COCo’s critical work with community organizations across the province.

An important part of COCo’s growth this year has been in learning how to further deepen the integration and learning of anti-oppression and anti-racist practices in our work with members, partners, and within COCo itself. As a board, we were fortunate to engage in difficult conversations about historical under-representation of people of colour and immigrant communities in positions of power in Québec non-profits, while reflecting on our own practices of anti-oppression and how they manifest in policy, governance and decision-making. Much of this work has been led by Emily Yee Clare. Part of Emily’s mandate, The Diversité d’Abord project, aims to collect data on what organizations are doing to address racial diversity and inclusion. While the results will be shared in 2017, much of the groundwork occurred this year. Much of this exploration was tied to the development of COCo’s new Theory of Change. The “TOC” has allowed us to clarify that our central vision is to support the development of a community sector where grassroots organizations are at the forefront of social change, and that COCo also wants to increase our work in convening conversations about inclusion and diversity in the sector. The TOC process has also allowed us to create clear evaluation strategies for our training and facilitation work, and promises to help COCo focus its strategic work towards these ends for years to come. It has truly been a privilege to participate in this work and dialogue with COCo staff who will continue these efforts within and outside of the organization.

Our 7 Board members met a total of 9 times together over the course of 2016. The board would also like to take this time to thank our outgoing board members: Alie, Anurag, Jihane, Myriam, and Remy. Their contributions, dedication and energy is greatly appreciated and they will be missed. We look forward to continuing to work with organizations to build their organizational health and to foster an inclusive, social-justice oriented community sector in Québec.

In solidarity,

Ariel Harlap and Anurag Dhir
COCo Board Members
COCo’s Mission & Theory of Change

COCo’s mission is to help build a more socially just world by supporting the health and well-being of community organizations in Quebec. Through organizational development and training, resource dissemination, research, and by strengthening links between organizations, COCo helps to promote the vitality of the community sector in the province.

Over the next 5 years, we have chosen two areas of focus that we believe are the most effective ways for us to nurture an inclusive, social-justice oriented Quebec community sector: first, to bolster the impact and amplify the voices of grassroots organizations, and second, to strengthen inclusion and diversity within the Quebec community sector by stewarding dialogue and learning in partnership with other coalitions and training groups. This is the basis of our Theory of Change, which we adopted at the end of 2016.

Over the last 15 years, COCo has maintained a unique commitment to prioritizing deep capacity-building and organizational change over technical or expert-based consulting. We have continued to be one of the only organizations able to offer support to organizations working in English and multilingually. Moving forward, we want to use these strengths to meet systemic oppression with systemic change. We are committing to building the skills, knowledge, and diversity required to meet the needs of the on-the-ground organizations facing the biggest challenges. We will find the resources so that we can partner with these organizations in the long term, to do our part to lift them up. We will also be increasing the amount of free resources, trainings and consultations to foster organizational health and effectiveness among these organizations.

In addition to this support, COCo will seek to partner with coalitions and other training groups so that we can work together to foster an increase in diversity and inclusion practices in the sector. Through communities of practice, events and learning exchanges, we hope to help grow the sector our communities deserve. We have a lot to learn, and we look forward to doing it alongside our wise, long-serving, and brilliant peers.
Who We Are

Board Members: Ariel Harlap, Diana Lombardi, Remy Attig (resigned), Alie Cirgenski, Anurag Dhir, Myriam Zaidi, Jihane El-Atifi

Staff: Sabrina McFadden, Parker Mah, Kira Page, Juniper Belshaw, Emily Yee Clare, Jaime MacLean

Affiliate Facilitators: Spencer Mann, Kevin Paul, Frances Ravensbergen, Kit Malo, Ed Lee, Sarah Blumel

Contract Team: Sunny Doyle, Alexis Doucet, Sanjeevan Tharmaratnam, Manoj Chandarana, Ron Amstutz, Françoise Magne, Sam Singer, Stephanie Garrow, Lara Evoy

Our board of directors are our most engaged volunteers, and they contributed 560 volunteer hours.

In 2016, COCo worked with 1,083 people compromising 285 community organizations through our free and sliding-scale consulting services. We also met 335 people through our free and public events. We have 128 organizational members.
Events & Public Workshops

Meet, Greet, and Raise Money: a 5 à 7 for Fundraisers!

In June, COCo hosted a free event for non-profit staff and volunteers interested in learning more about fundraising and funding development opportunities. The 18 participants discussed donor-based fundraising strategies, fundraising for small but mighty organizations, and approaching public and private foundations. COCo also provided access to all participants to Fundtracker, our fundraising database, during the event. 84% of attendees wanted at least one more event of this type, so stay tuned!

Putting Our Values Into Practice:
Non-Hierarchical or Consensus-Based Decision-Making

In August, COCo partnered with Interpares and the Réseau Québécois des Groupes Écologistes to talk about non-hierarchical work structures as part of the World Social Forum. The event was standing room only, with 75 people in attendance. Since we held this event, COCo has received an increase in organizations exploring consensus-based, or “flat” organizational models.

How can social movements and organizations make the most of linguistic diversity?

As part of the World Social Forum, COCo hosted a discussion with a dozen organizers and activists from around the world about using linguistic diversity in our favour. We introduced tools, resources, and shared strategies around ensuring inclusiveness in organizations and social movements and making our organizations as strategic and broad-ranging in their communications as possible.

COCo Talks Meetings and Facilitation

In November, COCo hosted our first ever Facebook Live event, an hour-long discussion about facilitating better meetings. COCo staff discussed best practices, tricks and tips, and answered audience questions about their own challenges with meetings. The video was viewed 230 times.
In 2016, we provided 232 information sessions, a 15% increase from 2015. These information sessions were also longer than in previous years: 20% of our info-cocos lasted longer than an hour, and 34% between 30-60 minutes. In total, COCo provided 160 hours of support, almost double what was offered the year previous. 182 different organizations benefited from these services.

At COCo, we know that navigating non-profit law and organizational challenges on your own can be difficult, which is why we offer free Information sessions by phone, email, and in person over a cup of tea. Our staff provide referrals, offer resources and information, and help groups think through their problems. Often calling us in crisis or at times of significant change, community organizations find that the opportunity to talk something out and get crucial information in a pinch can be invaluable.

People Called Us About

- Board, Governance, Bylaws, & AGMs (19%)
- Incorporation & Charitable Status (18%)
- Funding Development (12%)
- Organizational Development (14%)
- Financial Management (8%)
- Human Resources, Diversity, & Inclusion (9%)
- Conflict (5%)
- Information Technology (5%)
- Other (10%)
Organizational Development Contracts

COCo provides training and accompaniment to community organizations in Quebec with mandates for social justice—especially smaller, grassroots organizations. Our support is provided on a sliding-scale, and ranges from an afternoon training session to a multi-year projects aimed at creating long term organizational change. We believe that real change requires the active involvement of participants in the development of their organizations, and we foster this engagement at every step of the way. We focus on building skills and capacities within organizations so that learning and development continues long after the contract ends.

We are always proud to offer our services at a sliding scale to meet the needs of community organizations. In addition, we offer contracts every year for additionally discounted rates for organizations who need it.

Over the course of 2016, COCo was involved in 131 contracts, a 40% increase from 2015. 884 people participated, representing 102 organizations.

In 2016 COCo reached 4,831 people.

This year, we supported 8 organizations for free, and another 25 at a discount--twice as many as last year.
Commun-IT

5 years ago, Commun-IT began as a project of COCo aiming to support community organizations with their communications and technology needs. Commun-IT is now more integrated than ever into COCo’s service offering, and continues to provide support, accompaniment and training for community groups, with a community-based approach and favouring technology solutions that are mission-driven, easy to use and to learn, and affordable.

Of these, Commun-IT offered free services to 2 groups and was able to provide fully funded services to 3 groups through the J.W. McConnell Foundation’s Innoweave program.

In 2016, Commun-IT was involved in 45 contracts—more than double than the year previous, which was already one of our busiest years ever. We reached 34 organizations and 101 participants.
In light of Commun-IT’s 5 year anniversary, we decided that it was time to reach out once again to better understand the changing needs of community groups in an ever-shifting landscape. The data will allow us to refocus our work for the maximum impact and to create more trainings and tools for community groups.

The most prominent ICT challenges for organizations include:

**Training**

Accessing training on tools and communications strategies, and retaining tech skills, was a big challenge for most groups. Only 17% of consulted organizations had done training on a topic related to ICT within the past year.

Only 8% of consulted organizations had access to ongoing IT support to help maintain networking, workstations, file management systems, cloud computing, etc, and 100% of organizations indicated that they would like better streamlined systems and workflows between the different technologies they were using.

**Communications**

44% of groups indicated that creating and implementing an effective communications strategy, including plans for social media, website, and newsletter use, was a major challenge. However, 70% of organizations believe social media helps them reach their goals.

A lack of time and budget for communications and technology was a recurring theme throughout questions, and 40% of respondents identified limited resources as their greatest technology challenge while 30% of respondents identified limited resources as their greatest communications challenge.

**CRMs**

Constituent Relationship Management Systems (CRMs) are in demand, and in use by many groups, though many organizations struggle to learn about and use all of their CRM’s features.

52% of the survey respondents are using a CRM for managing contacts and relationships (including members and clients) and/or fundraising and donor management and 26% are not using specific tools for these purposes.

22% of organizations indicated that using their CRM and/or organizing information was a major technology challenge, while difficulties organizing information was a theme throughout the survey.

33% of respondents said that they would most like to learn skills for using CRMs, which was the most commonly identified training need.
This year, COCo wrote 23 new blog posts as resources for the sector. Our 3 top blog posts were:

Let’s Smash the Overhead Myth by Victoria Pilger  
(638 unique visitors)

10 Practical Ideas to Make Your Non-Profit an Awesome Place to Work  
(285 unique visitors)

Thinking about Becoming a “Flat” Organization?  
Here are 5 things to think about  
(285 unique visitors)

We shared 15 external resources on our email newsletter, and an additional 35 on our social media.

Our website had 83,764 pageviews, and 67,668 unique pageviews, which is more than double our pageviews in 2015.

Our monthly newsletter has 3,700 subscribers.

Our Facebook page increased from 837 likes to 1197 by the end of the year, a 30% increase from the year before.

The average reach on our Facebook page tripled by the end of 2016, increasing from 90 to 300 people per post.
Partners

CoClicCo: Social Media Trainings for NonProfits

This year, COCo partnered with Centraide du Grand Montreal to offer a series of trainings on social media for small non-profits. 23 organizations participated over the course of 4 trainings—addressing issues such as creating a social media strategy, choosing platforms, a detailed look at Facebook, and managing privacy and confidentiality concerns. Participants were provided with custom-made tools and guides tailored for small organizations managing the new world of social media, and were given hands-on, one-on-one coaching and support. A Facebook group group has since been created for non-profit staff and volunteers in charge of communications to share and support each other in adapting to a new technological landscape with limited resources.

Video Toolbox: Resolving and Preventing Conflict in Community Organizations

We had the pleasure of participating in the creation of a toolbox by the Réseau Québécois des Groupes Écologistes. The video capsules address topics like creating a media strategy, managing volunteers, and efficient meetings. COCo contributed a capsule on conflict prevention and resolution in community groups. The video has 150 views. Link: https://youtu.be/7667d4luH-c

EvalPop: Evaluation Par et pour la communautaire

In collaboration with Centre de Formation Populaire (CFP) & Centraide, COCo has been providing training and support to 11 groups in the West Island on how to conduct results-based impact evaluation of their programs. Two different cohorts each have been meeting every couple of months to learn about the steps involved in impact evaluation, while simultaneously conducting an evaluation of one of its programs. The program is funded by Centraide and managed by the Centre de Formation Populaire (CFP).

Other Coalitions & Partners:

- Regroupement Intersectoriel des Organismes Communautaires de Montréal (RIOCM)
- Réseau québécois de l’Action Communautaire Autonome (RQ-ACA)
- Comité Séctoriel de main d’oeuvre en économie sociale et action communautaire (CSMO-ÉSAC)
- Coalition des organismes communautaires autonomes de formation (COCAF)
- Fondation McConnell
- Girls Action Foundation
- Interpares
Testimonials & Impact

“In March 2016, CKUT Radio received a fundraising strategies workshop from Coco’s Juniper Belshaw that was extremely helpful to our funding drive the following Fall! Other than a detailed strategic planning for the entire year, our organisation implemented new strategies on retaining and diversifying our donor base as well as increasing the amounts of donations. Complicated marketing strategies were made accessible and fun to people who normally have no prerequisites to tackles these concepts. I was surprised by how much I knew about our organisation but wasn’t actively aware of, and how important our history is to member based fundraising. Amazing!!”

- Tamara, CKUT 90.3FM

Thank you for your involvement! Thank you for your anti-oppressive approach, it is very very very appreciated. And we hope to continue to work with you. It was positive, not too heavy and task-oriented, You are very efficient!

- Participant

Thank you for your attention and openness. When I felt uncomfortable, I appreciated being able to talk about it with one of the facilitators, without feeling judged. On the contrary, I felt welcome and listened to. I appreciated the energy of the facilitators and their emphasis on the concrete (we came out with tasks, which will make retreat follow-up easier). Thanks!

- Workshop participant

The interactive environment and the roles distribution among our future team was so effective in creating cooperation paths among the members.

- Workshop participant
“When we contacted COCo, we were facing the related challenges of limited resources, complicated communications needs, and a lack knowledge to draw on. We were facing the intimidating problem of improving our communications approach across an underdeveloped infrastructure, and without knowing what the first step would be.

The experience was very engaging and hands-on. COCo guided us through a series of helpful, accessible exercises and provided concrete templates and resources. The enormity of the task was the most challenging part: and Kira was very adept at keeping the conversation focused, linking our communications process to the context of our organizational mission and vision.

One of the greatest impacts of the work is our sense of pride. Clarifying our communications strategy in a conscious, deliberate way, and articulating our messages with confidence, has noticeably boosted staff, board, member, and community engagement with our communications materials and, by extension, our activities. Further, comments from our members reflect a clearer sense of the spirit, breadth, and scope of our activities. To me, this confirms that our communications are more closely aligned with the reality of our work, which has re-invigorated interest from our community.

As staff, our day to day communications activities feel much more stable. With the communications plan at our disposal, we are more confident in developing content, trying new things, and analyzing results. Staff have been able to use the results of the communications planning process to develop better workflows, create customized tools for our needs (e.g. a new editorial calendar), and guide us through unfamiliar territory (e.g. evaluating whether and how to respond to social media controversies). COCo's guidance nourished our pride, confidence, and curiosity in a noticeable and lasting way.”

- Amy, the English Language Arts Network, as part of a communications planning process

“Juniper, you went above and beyond your required workshop time today, and we appreciated it. You reminded us how important it is to know what questions to ask ourselves.”

- Linda, Social Justice Connection
Our Own Learning

Our biggest project as a team this year was to engage in the creation of our new “Theory of Change”, with the help of consultants Garrow & Evoy. It was an intensive process involving our Board and Staff. Our Theory of Change has helped COCo immensely in clarifying our core beneficiaries, our desired impact, and how we plan to get there.

In January, Juniper attended a day-long exchange between facilitation and popular education practitioners hosted by Niska. Together, they addressed the question of how to anchor participatory facilitation practices into the community sector.

In March, Kira attended a Tamarack conference, Community Engagement: the Next Generation, where she dove into using new technologies with old strategies for sustained and effective community engagement.

As an advocate for anti-oppression within the Quebec community sector, COCo is committed to increasing our knowledge and practice of anti-oppression internally. During the Spring, our staff team participated in a learning exchange with Accessibilize Montreal, where we shared information about the intersections of facilitation and popular education with disability justice. This year, our staff and board used our summer retreat to understand how racism manifests in non profit organizations, discussed COCo’s own culture and environment, and talked about possible pathways forward.

In May, Kira spent a week in Toronto attending an intensive course in community conflict mediation with St. Stephen’s House.

In May, the whole staff team brushed up on our legal information skills with the help of Sam Singer, non-profit and charity lawyer.

In May, Juniper attended a week long course developing her competencies in personal and professional coaching.

In June, Sabrina and Parker headed off to Detroit for the Allied Media Conference, a convergence of community organizers from all over who are using media tools to create social change. They participated in a smorgasbord of workshops, skill-sharing, meetups and panels. The exchanges and learning that happened over the packed 4-day program left them inspired and reflective on the different ways that community groups and social movements south of the border have integrated media, communications, organizational health and anti-oppression into their strategies.

In November, Juniper participated in a training by Avenir Plus on diversifying your funding sources.
Finances & Funders

Revenues

- Ministry of Education: $107,922
- Training, facilitation, coaching, mediation, communications and IT consulting services: $91,195
- Centraide: $88,000
- Industry Canada (salary subsidy): $18,148
- Emploi-Quebec (salary subsidy): $4,730

Expenditures

- Salaries and benefits: $236,280
- Affiliate contractors: $56,210
- Professional development: $5,113
- Operations: $26,256
- Communications and IT: $4,892
- Administration fees: $1,410

Trends

While COCo saw a decrease in core funding in 2015-2016, we have also seen a steady increase in the revenue we receive from providing services to organizations. Even-- or maybe especially-- in periods of severe cuts to non-profit funding, we have seen our work increase steadily.