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This past year at COCo has been one of transition. We’ve said goodbye to some of our peers and welcomed a few newbies to the team, all the while being very conscious of the imminent budget cuts to the community sector. These challenges have created opportunities to reflect on some central questions about COCo as well as to develop some exciting new projects.

At the fall retreat, we took an in-depth look at COCo’s strategic directions. We evaluated the success and challenges of each and how we saw them evolving over time through COCo’s mission, aiming to make them more participative and effective to the community.

We also recently saw the official launch of the new Commun-IT website. It now features a layout that is easier to navigate as well as a wealth of tools and training resources for community organizations. We are very pleased with how this service is developing to better serve our members.

Indeed, this year’s theme is a reflection of this work. Fellow board member Jean-Noe Landry recently completed an analysis on survey data about COCo’s interactions with its membership to help us better understand how COCo is perceived by its members. We are looking forward to delving into membership engagement more deeply in the upcoming year.

Earlier this month, COCo presented “Quebec on the Move,” an art exhibit about contemporary social movements with the support of board member Eryn Fitzgerald and Concordia’s Office of Community Engagement. It features some great interviews with community organizers and it will be on display during the AGM for all to see.

In the next year, we will quite literally be regrouping as we welcome a whole bunch of new board members to the COCo-sphere. Although we will miss the great energy of those who are leaving, we are looking forward to the fresh ideas and experiences that the next cohort will bring.

Here’s to an inspiring new year!

ALICE ISAC
COCO BOARD MEMBER
HISTORY OF COCO

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.

2005 COCo celebrates its 5th birthday. Since its inception in, 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.

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.

2007 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.

2009 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.
2010 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 en Franglais, a Forum helping organizations make the most of linguistic duality in their communities. COCo celebrates its 10th birthday!

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.

2013 COCo initiates Communities Connecting the Digital Dots, a community video project with Canadian Heritage, which marks over 13 years of project funding support and partnership.

2014-2015 COCo celebrates 15 years of working with community organizations in the province of Québec with new partnerships, initiatives and a renewed commitment to our strategic directions. Our traveling video installation project Quebec on the Move is a major success, touring 3 cities.

OUR MISSION

COCo’s Mission:
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.
WHO WE ARE

BOARD MEMBERS
Alice Isac, Eryn Fitzgerald, Shannon Franssen, Jean-Noé Landry, Jon McPhedran Waitzer, Alex Megelas, Daniel Rotman, Janelle Leblanc (interim)

STAFF MEMBERS
Sabrina McFadden, Gabriel Bergevin-Estable, Brandon Gamblen, Chris Lau, Parker Mah, Kit Malo, Spencer Mann, Chloe Gendre, Frances Ravensbergen, Audrey Villiard

CONTRACTUAL TEAM
Manoj Chandarana, Françoise Magne, Maya Wiseman, Sarah Blumel, Marie-Claude Girard, Alexis Doucet, Liam Barrington-Bush, Michel Lisée, Ron Amstutz, Pierre-Louis Fortin-Legris

NEW STAFF
Currently the project manager for Quebec on the Move as well as membership engagement coordinator, Chloe Gendre graduated with a bachelor in Agricultural Sciences from McGill University in Spring 2014. She has been involved in the non-profit sector for the past 7 years, most often in logistics, communications and development. Since 2013, she has put her energy in Seeing Voices Montreal, a recent group bringing Deaf and hearing members together to create educational, cultural and artistic collaborative projects.

Parker Mah is COCo’s new Communications coordinator. He co-coordinates COCo’s Commun-IT support service and manages COCo’s social media, governance, website and communications.

Parker has lent his skills to community development and rights advocacy organizations from Bangladesh to Senegal. His passion is participative and citizen media as a tool for social change, especially among marginalized and immigrant populations,
COMMUNITY VIDEO
Communities Connecting the Digital Dots came to a successful close with a third group completing the community video program, with the help of trainer Audrey Villiard.

RETIREMENT IN THE COMMUNITY SECTOR
COCo hosted an event with Michel Lisée around implementing a retirement plan geared towards community sector workers.

ANARCHISTS IN THE BOARDROOM
This blockbuster event brought author and activist Liam Barrington Bush to Café l’Artère for a talk around the intersection of social movements and community organizations.

JUST TALKING
COCo launched a new discussion series entitled Just Talking: Democratic decision-making in coalitions, hosting two participative events, the latest one around austerity.
NEW MEMBERSHIP MODEL
Following the new membership definition adopted at the last AGM, COCo put the wheels into motion to further engage members with an intensive membership drive.

COCO MEMBERSHIP SURVEY
COCo designed and sent out a survey probing COCo’s services and how they are perceived by our members. 50 groups responded out of 367 polled.

NEW STAFF
Welcome Parker and Chloe! Parker is the new Communications coordinator since last August and Chloe has been busy coordinating Quebec on the Move, Par et Pour and Membership engagement.

INNOWEAVE
COCo and Commun-IT continue their partnership with Innoweave, offering a free bilingual cloud computing workshop and completing work with 2 grantees.

QUEBEC ON THE MOVE
Quebec on the Move / Quebec en mouvement, a traveling video exhibition exploring social movements in minority-language communities, tours three cities, thanks to a grant from Canadian Heritage.

CENTRAIDE/CFP EVALUATIONS
In 2014 COCo conducted two results-based program evaluations in collaboration with Centraide/CFP. One focused on program activity, the second on an information and referral service.

COMMUN-IT WEBSITE
Commun-IT launches a new website with a totally redesigned layout and a new Knowledge Base on community-focused ICT topics.

COCO AT THE PEOPLE’S SOCIAL FORUM
COCo staffers Gabriel and Sabrina were present at the People’s Social Forum to offer the bilingual COCo workshop, Power and our Role in the World.
INFO-COCO SESSIONS

COCo responds on a daily basis to requests from community groups throughout Quebec requesting assistance and information on a wide variety of topics. Info-COCO Sessions are done by phone, by email and in person. Some questions result in simple referrals, but many involve more in-depth conversations, research and follow-up.

In 2014 we provided 194 info-COCo sessions with 141 different groups totaling 106.5 hours of support. 61% of info-COCos were conducted in English, 36% in French and 3% bilingually.

The most common topics addressed were:
Board / governance related issues 18%
Human resources- 9%
Fundraising/ grant writing 8%
Finances 7%
General Organizational development support 6%.

Other topics included: incorporation, conflict, charitable status, AGM/membership, dissolution of an organization, planning, legal/liability issues, social movements, IT communications, social media use, CRM’s/contact databases, ICT planning, web development, email newsletters/blasts.

HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO RECENT YEARS?

We have had a small drop in the number of hours spent on info-COCo’s over the past four years; from 2.5 hours a week to 2.3 hrs a week in 2014. This is probably accounted for by the one staff position not filled for half of the year.

The largest primary topics of interest have remained the same over the past four years with board/governance issues consistently the most requested topic. COCo continues to slowly conduct more info COCo’s in French or bilingually with a shift from 71% being conducted in English in 2011 to the current 61%.

We are seeing a small increase in the number of info-COCo’s related to IT questions. These stats first began to be tracked in 2013 with the formation of COMMUN-IT as an information & communications technology support service to community groups.

For the first time we have tracked ‘dissolution of an organization’ as a topic. While only 2% of info-COCo’s were conducted, this represents 5 organizations asking questions about closure. Given the current socio-political context, this may necessarily become a topic with increasing requests in the next several years.
COCo provides facilitation, training and/or coaching to community groups on a sliding scale based on annual budget. The work can range from one 3-hour training workshop, to several facilitation sessions over several months, to a year-long coaching relationship.

In 2014 COCo was involved with 64 contracts of which 33 were completed during the year and 31 continue to be worked on during 2015. 56 different groups were contracted with for a total of 317 individuals. 15% of the contracts were with groups that have a focus outside of Montreal and 14% were with groups working in French. We continue to provide training to groups that pay less than the sliding scale and offered one ‘exchange of services’ in 2014.

**THE MOST COMMON AREAS OF FOCUS WERE:**

- **25%** COMMUN-IT
- **24%** GOVERNANCE
- **19%** PLANNING/MISSION/VISION WORK
- **10%** EVALUATION
- **6%** ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE
- **5%** COMMUNICATION/CONFLICT
The most notable change in our contract work is the increase in ICT (COMMUN-IT) contracts. This area of work has gone from 10 contracts in its inception in 2013 to 16 contracts in 2014.

Governance, planning and evaluation continue to be popular topics for contracts in recent years. Lastly, we are carrying more contracts than in the recent past (with the exception of 2012) with less people participating in the sessions (down from 400 in the past two years to 317). We are also noting more requests for shorter time periods potentially indicating less availability for training and development in community groups that are part of our network.

COCO OFFERED THE FOLLOWING TYPES OF SUPPORT:

- 42% Facilitation
- 25% Training
- 19% Hybrid or Not Tracked
- 13% Coaching (Organizational or Individual)
- 1% Mediation
From its humble beginnings as a pilot project, Commun-IT has developed considerably and has now been folded back into COCo to make affordable and accessible ICT (Information and Communications Technology) support a part of COCo’s overall service offering.

Commun-IT has flourished over the last year and continues to offer services to guide, support, and empower community groups to use technology in order to better realize their missions. Our main areas of focus include:

- CRM – Constituent Relationship Management systems
- ICT Planning
- Social Media
- Website Development
- File Management
- Web Video

Commun-IT continues to work in close partnership with Innoweave, an initiative of the J. W. McConnell Foundation that provides grants to community organizations to learn, assess and implement socially innovative approaches in their work. Commun-IT partnered with Innoweave to develop and offer a bilingual Innoweave training in November 2014 around Cloud Computing.

Commun-IT also launched a vastly redesigned and expanded website in early 2015, a testament to its rapid growth. Dynamic, client-focused and easy to work with, the new website reflects Commun-IT’s working philosophy and features:

- A redesigned ICT Knowledge Base covering topics from project management and web surveys to data backups and multimedia;
- A new system to highlight the most recent tools and information relating to community-based ICT, using custom Twitter feeds;
- An updated portfolio section with a selection of the wide swath of work Commun-IT staff members have been involved in over the past 2 years;
- An ever-expanding bank of training videos and webinars.

Commun-IT will continue to offer a mix of free and paid services and support over the upcoming year, all in the context of a needs-based, participative training philosophy with sliding-scale rates. Visit http://commun-it.ca for more information.

Spencer Mann
Parker Mah
Gabriel Bergevin-Estable
Commun-IT Coordinators
IMPACT AND TESTIMONIALS
At COCo, we take our facilitation work seriously—not only in our collaborative design processes and relationships with participants, but also in our self-evaluation and reflection on our work’s impact.

After each training/facilitating/coaching, we ask people to reflect on the learning process that occurred, and how successful we were regarding helping them move key objectives forward, by gathering quantitative survey data.

At the same time, we were also focused on collecting qualitative information about our work with you, our members, and other groups. This gives us a rich, deep set of data to use regarding how we are affecting change. Many groups expressed how they noticed a shift in their ability to work together with a competent facilitator present helping guide process.
Some of the following testimonials speak to how those that worked with us this past year experienced our time together:

“The facilitation and tone of the meeting really aided in making this interactive and informational simultaneously.”

“I think taking the time to categorize some of our goals was really helpful. A lot of the time we know there are several concerns but I think it’s helpful to link things together and realize that if we achieve A, it’s going to positively affect B and C as well.”

“It was nice that we got to say in a non-accusatory way what kind of behaviors are non-respectful.”

“I was pleasantly surprised by our time together. People listened and paid attention to one another, despite obvious difficulties at times.”

“My enthusiasm after this work came from seeing everyone participating and seeing the evolution of our organization over the past couple of decades. It was helpful to orient ourselves and see where we had come from.”

“I was impressed by the way in which the team was able to move forward in spite of what sometimes appeared to be significant obstacles.”

“The style and skill of the facilitator was unique - she was able to keep us engaged, interested, focused.”

FEEDBACK ABOUT OUR INFO-COCO SERVICE:

“I walked in feeling pretty lost and overwhelmed, and left feeling much more equipped to deal with this situation in a way that focuses on helping everyone involved - and, ultimately, helping the organization itself to improve in the long term.”

“Thanks once again, many times over, for talking me through what I thought was a very rough spot. I’ve learned a lot through my conversations with you [and coworkers]. There are probably still some more hard conversations to come, but I hope they’ll help the organization become even healthier and more effective in the long run.”

We look forward to using your responses to our work as a guide forward in 2015 and beyond, and cannot express enough our gratitude for the commitment all who work with us are making to their organizational development and for sharing that journey together.
“I found that the content was very interesting. I went in expecting to learn simple techniques about videos and came out with so much more. I really enjoyed how we went through the different stages of video editing and that we were able to practice what we were taught.” (Participant’s evaluation)

During 5 months in 2013-2014, COCo ran Connecting the Digital Dots, a collaborative video training project that saw 12 organizations learn how to make videos from start to finish. Individuals discovered it is possible to make sleek, professional, coherent videos with a small budget and not tons of time.

The need for this project emerged from an ongoing desire in the community sector to use IT communication tools to spread word about who we are and what we do. It was made possible by support from Canadian Heritage.

Anti-oppression module development

In 2013, COCo began working on finessing anti-oppression modules and trainings to be used with groups, alongside the creation of an online assessment tool for those wanting to know more. We are thrilled to say that in 2014, we began developing a partnership with Edward Lee, who serves as one of the coordinators for AGIR. He will be using his amazing skills as a teacher and popular educator to offer anti-oppression training through COCo as of this April, 2015.

At the same time, the staff will be finessing our materials and getting training on his approach so that by September, we will begin offering Anti-O training to both English, French and Bilingual groups. We can’t wait!
QOTM ran from July 2014-March 31st, 2015. The project explores Quebec social movements in official language minority communities and features full-length videos with 22 social leaders and community builders over the past 50 years of Québec’s history.

The idea behind the project was to offer the general public an artistic, cultural event (in the form of an exhibition and 20-minute documentary that travelled to Sherbrooke, Quebec City and Montreal) that would highlight the important work that activists in minority-language communities have contributed to the fabric of social change in our Province.

The events were well attended overall and received good media coverage including features in the Link, CBC’s Breakaway, CKUT’s Off the Hour and others. The project as a whole served to bring together activists, thinkers and workers from disparate periods and communities, provoking reflection and renewed interest on the history and development of social movements in minority-language communities in Quebec.

To give a sense of who was involved, Parker Mah spoke to William Dere about his engagement in the Chinese Head Tax redress movement. Manuel Johnson and John Bradley discussed issues of social housing and healthcare accessibility in Montreal. Pamela Witcher, interviewed by Daz Saunders, shared some experiences from the American Sign Language and Langue des Signes Québécoise communities in Montreal.

While the final wrap-up of this version of Québec on the Move/En Mouvement is happening tonight at this AGM (!) we are excited to keep showing the video in classes, conferences and other spaces where issues of language, culture and identity are being considered through the lens of history and heritage. The 11 videos, as well as the 20-minute summary video, are now accessible online at http://coco-net.org/quebeconthemove
PARTICIPANTS AND CONTRIBUTORS

INTERVIEWERS | INTERVIEWEES

Parker Mah & William Dere
Robert McBryde & Nadia Alexan
Dorothy Williams & Armin Hector
Désirée Rochat & Alix Jean
Manuel Johnson & John Bradley
Michelle Duchesneau & Patricia Murphy
Evelyn Calugay & Jill Hanley
Cheryl Gosselin & Alanna Fernandes
Daz Saunders & Pamela Witcher
Rachel Garber & Rina Kampeas
Patricia Boushel & Stefan Christoff

CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS TEAM

Lorraine O’Donnell  Curator
Kit Malo  Curator
Parker Mah  Video Producer
Chloe Gendre  Project Manager

ARTISTIC TEAM

Steve Topping  Exhibition Artist
Boban Chaldovich  Video Editor
Axel Teyssier  Graphic Designer
Erik Hove  Music

SPONSORS

Canadian Heritage  Sponsor
Bishops’ University  Host partner
Concordia University  Host partner
Morrin Center  Host partner

SPECIAL THANKS - SHERBROOKE

Fabian Will, Luce Couture, Anthony Di Mascio, Cheryl Gosselin, Matthew Farfan, Eastern Townships Resource Centre, Bishop’s University, Centennial Theatre, Quebec Anglophone Heritage Network

SPECIAL THANKS - MONTRÉAL

Eryn Fitzgerald, John Bradley, Aziz Choudry, Abby Lippman, Dorothy Williams, Paula Dayan, Phil Lichti, Chedly Belkhodja, Taedra Harris, Jordan Goldman, Office of Community Engagement, School of Community & Public Affairs, Concordia University, Black Community Resource Centre, Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling

SPECIAL THANKS - QUEBEC

Barry McCullough, Donald Fyson, Alex Tremblay, Gabriel Bergevin-Estable, Morrin Centre, Université Laval
2014 was a big year for COCo for partnership and connecting – we continued our work from 2013 of reaching out to people and organizations that have been foundational to COCo since our inception. In 2014, we touched base with Michael Stephens, one of COCo’s two founders, Eric Shragge from the Immigrant Workers Centre and Michael Chervin of Project Genesis to reconnect and gain insight and exchange about where we have been and where we are headed.

COCo retained an ongoing connection to organizations we are members of in 2014 – the Regroupement intersectoriel des organismes communautaire de Montréal (RIOCM), the Table régionale d’organismes volontaires en education populaire (TROVEP) and the Comité Sectoriel de Main-D’Oeuvre (CSMO).
At the same time, we continued our relationship with the QCGN, as well as the Coalition des organismes communautaires autonomes de formation (COCAF). In 2014, we led a strategic planning session with other COCAF members, as well as strengthened our relationships with Relais Femmes, Centre St Pierre (CSP), the Centre Formation Populaire (CFP) and the Centre Formation Communautaire de la Mauricie (CFCM).

The past year has also seen COCo stretch its wings and go beyond our current partnerships. Communagir and COCo came together to design a tool for understanding community engagement and mobilization, and led a webinar using it as a base for groups concerned about citizenship participation. Our work on this will continue in 2015.

We also began working with NISKA, a cooperative that works on community and organizational development management. With them, we found ourselves connecting with the Cree Social Economy Regional Table. We look forward to ongoing projects with this interesting, innovative bunch.

Many events were held in partnership with others, most notably our Quebec on the Move event which found us pairing with Concordia’s Office for Community Engagement, Bishops University, The Morrin Centre, The Centre for Oral and Digital Storytelling and others. We also ran several events under the theme “Just Talking”: a participative conversational series of different key subjects in the community sector that need active social engagement and cross-organizational mobilization to respond to.

We ran a workshop at the Institut du Nouveau Monde’s École d’Été on Power and Diversity, and held an event where Liam Barrington Bush came to speak about horizontal structures and hierarchy in organizations.

We can’t thank our amazing, inspiring partners enough for the hard work and dedication they put into our collaborations this year and we look forward with relish to further deepening relationships with these groups while building new ones.
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT & ORGANIZATIONAL RETREATS

Staff held 3 internal professional development sessions in 2014 to strengthen our conflict resolution and mediation capacities. Our first session focused on our service offer and theoretical tools and concepts. Our second and third sessions were dedicated to reviewing the skills and doing some good old role-plays!

On top of the numerous dossiers staff and Board lead together, COCo values creating time and spaces to step back from day-to-day operations and work and have a good time altogether. In 2014, COCo held its retreat in Montreal and 2 main topics were discussed. The strategic alliances hub reported on a series of interviews they conducted with key people in our community: members, former founders and staff. We also took a critical look at our advocacy policies and reviewed our strategic priorities.

COCO FINANCES

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR 2014 FUNDERS & PARTNERS!