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tweet #COCO2016
at our AGM!
As a new Board this year, we knew it was going to be a unique experience when, during our first retreat, our icebreaker required us to share our “guilty pleasure song.” Needless to say, amid the trills of “I’m too sexy for this song,” we quickly got to know each other. What we’ve learnt is that our current team has a tremendous amount of energy, expertise and interest in supporting our work strengthening the Quebec community sector.

This year, the reality of deepening austerity measures have pushed us to become more resilient ourselves and develop new ideas and strategies for our sector. In February, COCo held the Just Talking! event to discuss the question of how our communities work best together in times of austerity. Participants shared and problem-solved issues of working in coalitions, movements and neighbourhood tables as a way of building solidarity and fighting austerity measures. In November, COCo joined 1200 other community organizations in the first ever Quebec community sector strike, a bold and innovative move by nonprofits facing incredible pressures and demands.

Like many other Quebec community organizations, COCo received a significant budget cut this year. In July, we found out that we were facing a 30% reduction in our funding from Centraide, one of our valued core funders. This external pressure demanded an unusual amount of time and focus from the COCo staff and an ad hoc hub, who have focussed on rebuilding this important relationship. Thanks to their dedication, and a significant increase in autonomous revenue, we are happy to announce that COCo has maintained a strong financial position despite these challenges.

This year brought several strategic, internal changes to COCo. While we had to say goodbye to one our most beloved (and hilarious) COCo staff members, Kit Malo, it thrills us to announce that we also hired two new staff, Juniper Belshaw and Kira Page. Together with a new board, this created the energy and opportunity to rethink what we do and dive into long-term planning initiatives. During the fall board retreat, we evaluated COCo’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This prompted us to start defining COCo’s Theory of Change, which has resulted in an ongoing process of strategic visioning and positioning work. We are also excited to share that we formed an Anti-Oppression hub to strengthen COCo’s internal and external commitment to furthering social justice. The board also received anti-oppression training as part of COCo’s mandate to incorporate more Anti-O practices into the organization.

The board would also like to take this time to thank our outgoing board members, Eryn and Laura, both of whom have been a pleasure to work with. We are excited to welcome the incoming board members and continue supporting the inspiring efforts of the COCo staff. We look forward to continuing working with organizations to build their organizational health and to foster an inclusive, social-justice oriented community sector in Quebec.

In solidarity,

Ariel Harlap and Alie Cirgenski
COCo board members
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: Ariel Harlap, Diana Lombardi, Remy Attig, Alie Cirgenski, Anurag Dhir, Laura Damecour, Eryn Fitzgerald (resigned)

Staff members: Juniper Belshaw, Sabrina McFadden, Parker Mah, Kira Page, Kevin Paul, Chloe Gendre

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

Contract Team: Manoj Chandarana, Sunny Doyle, Alexis Doucet, Maya Wiseman, Sabrina Bonfonti, Valeria Tovar-Contreras, Akki Mackay, Lorraine O’Donnell, Ron Amstutz, Françoise Magne, Slobodan Caldovic, Steven Johnson, Axel Teyssier, Desiree Rochat, Evelyn Calugay, Louise Martin

Juniper Belshaw coordinates contracts and funding development at COCo. She joins us with ten years experience in fundraising, administration, and communications in Montreal nonprofits such as Head & Hands, Dans la rue, Project 10, the Ste-Emilie Skillshare, McGill University’s Union for Gender Empowerment, and CKUT radio. Currently pursuing a masters at Concordia University in Human Systems Intervention, Juniper is passionate about creating community-based solutions to society’s toughest challenges.

Kira Page has been active in Montreal social movements for the last 8 years, with organizations such as QPIRG-McGill, the Immigrant Worker’s Centre, and the Fonds Indépendent d’Action de Solidarité (FIAS). As COCo’s Communications and Membership Engagement Coordinator, she brings a background in communications and outreach for non-profits and grassroots collectives, as well as a focus on anti-oppression practices and consensus decision-making. Outside of work, she’s most passionate about building transformative justice approaches to gendered violence.
OCCASIONS TO CELEBRATE

**Just Talking:** On February 24th, 2015, COCo hosted Just Talking, an opportunity to share and problem solve about creating effective, democratic and inclusive coalitions in the face of austerity. Using the participants’ experiences of working with bigger groups, tables de quartier or sectoral coalitions, we came up with innovative and concrete ways to build solidarity.

**Going on Strike.** COCo joined hundreds of other community organizations in a 2-day strike against austerity. We put our skills to use translating and disseminating information in English about austerity and why organizations were choosing to strike!

**We got a new website!** COCo launched a brand new website in March 2015 featuring a more dynamic, mobile-ready interface, better bilingual support, improved events listings and more robust security features. Accessing our re-organized toolbox, our new members’ directory, or our past and current e-bulletins has never been easier!

**Oka Commemoration.** In collaboration with QPIRG-Concordia, COCo worked with Ellen Gabriel and Idle No More to livestream a webinar and discussion directly from the front lawn of the Oka Golf Club in Kanehsatà:ke to mark July 11th, 2015, 25 years after the Oka crisis made headlines worldwide. The stand-off at Oka is a key part of our social and political reality and we were honoured to support the work of remembering those histories.

**Look Again:** Group Dynamics Through a Feminist Lens. COCo collaborated with Girls Action Foundation to explore how organizational culture and gender empowerment intersect and can inform each other. Taking our anti-oppression and organizational change expertise to a broad range of feminist organizations across the country was amazing, and we’re grateful for the collaboration!

**Walking the Talk.** COCo has been engaged over the past few months in evaluating and assessing our own successes and failures in applying an anti-oppression approach to our own organization- and have been moving forward with projects, actions and concrete changes we want to see over the next few years. As we continue to train organizations to become more inclusive, diverse and grassroots, we want to deepen our own practice.
WHO YOU GONNA CALL?  
INFO-COCO!

This year, the most common Info-COCo topics were:

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Incorporation</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Management</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board and governance related issues</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution and prevention</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising and grants</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General organizational development</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>6%</td>
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COCo provides Quebec community groups with up-to-date responses to their most pressing questions, free of charge. Offered by phone, email, and in-person, our staff provide referrals, offer information, and help groups think through challenges. Often calling us in crisis or at times of significant change, community groups are in urgent need of answers to urgent and emergent questions. The opportunity to talk something out and get vital information and context in a pinch can be invaluable.

In 2015, we provided 193 Info-COCo sessions to 155 groups, totaling 94 hours of support. Our support consisted of offering information (71%), helping groups think through issues (31%), and providing referrals (27%). 65% of Info-COCos were conducted in English and 34% were conducted in French.

Other topics included: charitable status, legal/liability issues, anti-oppression, website development, communications planning, email blasts, marketing, CRMs/contact databases, dissolution, movements and coalition building, information about COCo, and annual and strategic planning.
A core aspect of our work is providing facilitation, training, IT support and coaching to community groups in Quebec with social justice mandates. All of our work is designed specifically for the needs and context of the organization we are working with, and can range from an afternoon training session to a new website or multi-year evaluation process.

In 2015, COCo was involved in **95 contracts**, 65 of which were completed within the year, and 30 of which have continued into 2016. In total, we worked with **66 community groups** and **684 participants**, with 86% of contacts conducted bilingually and in English, and 14% conducted in French.

Uniquely, we offer this support on a sliding scale based on the annual budget of the organization. This allows us to offer substantial services to small, grassroots organizations who would otherwise not access the external support that can be so crucial to organizational health. Our commitment to accessibility goes even deeper, however, as we also offer a high number of reduced rate and pro-bono services. This year we are proud to note that 6% of our contracts were provided free of charge, and 15% of contracts were offered at a reduced rate, up from 10% in 2013. In addition, 17% were funded by third party funders. We were particularly proud to partner with the J.W. McConnell Foundation as Innoweave coaches for their Cloud Computing and Developmental Evaluation modules, as well as work with a number of Centraide-funded organizations across the Island of Montreal.

The most common areas of focus were:

- Commun-IT (27%)
- Organizational change (23%)
- Governance (19%)
- Planning, mission, vision (16%)
- Communication and Conflict (6%)
- Evaluation (4%)

COCo offered the following types of support:

- Facilitation (31%)
- Training (27%)
- Commun-IT support (21%)
- Coaching (10%)
- Mediation (3%)
- Hybrid or other (7%)

“I was quite nervous going into the mediation, but Kira did a good job of explaining the process, guiding solutions, and creating a calm space. She helped us all get to where we needed to be by the end without feeling rushed…”

- Mediation participant
The Quebec on the Move project explored 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 engaging artistic and 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 Quebec. 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. QOTM ran from July 2014-March 31st, 2015.

In a series of video interviews, younger activists interviewed their mentors or elders about their own involvement and history social movements. 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.

Over the three months that exhibition was installed, we estimate that over 3,200 individuals visited the exhibition. In addition, the 13 videos have been viewed over 1,300 times. When we asked attendees about their experience, over 90% of respondents indicated that they had an increased understanding of minority-language issues and a sense of pride in their identities, as many of the themes had been previously unknown to them. COCo had five offers from school boards and conferences to show the installation elsewhere as the video was seen to be, as one person explained “a crucial illustration of a hidden history that connects us all to this province in deeply meaningful ways”.

For us, a central outcome of this project was the deep relationships we built with a variety of organizations and organizers across the province.
“By & For Us? The community at the head of the organization” was an initiative focusing on the experiences of community organizations that are run by, or centre the voices of, the community they serve. Over the course of three forums, representatives of community organizations came together to learn from one another's experiences, discuss challenges, create solutions, and build new relationships, partnerships and networks.

“By & For Us” reached leaders of organizations who serve the LGBTQ community, marginalized youth, immigrants and refugees, transgender people, people with disabilities, people of colour, and women. Participating organizations included a diverse group of by and for community organizations based in Montreal, including the South Asian Women’s Community Centre, PINAY, Desta Black Youth Network, and Head & Hands. A total of around 25 organizers and activists were present, representing 12 organizations.

By and for organizations’ staff and board members often face multiple barriers to participation due to poverty, precarious immigration status, or social exclusion due to gender identity or sexual orientation. The systemic marginalization they face as organizations means they require additional support on topics central to non-profit functioning such as fundraising, or face particular challenges related to low organizational capacity or lack of financial resources.

In this context, the final step of the project was the creation of three resources started during the forums, in an effort to share knowledge, and create solutions to some of the issues raised. These resources include an accessibility guide for facilitators and trainers, a visioning guide for by and for organizations, and a video resource.

This project is one of numerous COCo efforts to address issues of representation and inclusion in the community sector in Quebec. The under representation of marginalized communities in places of power in the community sector is severe, something that our members recognize: in our 2014 membership survey, 90% of respondents said that a key issue for them was increasing social inclusion on their teams. For us, supporting the strength and development of by and for organizations is a key strategy in changing the landscape of the Quebec community sector.
Until last year, COCo’s membership structure was one where the people we worked with automatically became members, often without realizing. After many years of discussion, we’ve made a change— at last year’s Annual General Meeting! As of then, our members choose to be our members: because they share our vision and values.

Last year, we conducted our first membership drive. As of now, we have **115 members**. Almost all of them are community organizations who have received COCo support in the past and are now returning it in kind.

This past year, we’ve started taking our social media to the next level: writing original content, posting resources and tools, and hosting discussions. We believe we bring a unique perspective and purpose to the Quebec community sector, and we want to let that shine. Increases in our reach and engagement on social media in particular has been the proof that our community wants that also. We’re excited to continue shaping these spaces into places of vibrant dialogue and knowledge sharing about the challenges and opportunities in the sector.

**Facebook Activity in 2015**

- +239 likes
- **2X** average reach doubled
- **3X** average post likes tripled

This year, we had 36,783 visits to our website, made up of 23,123 unique visitors. Our monthly e-bulletin list had 3,800 subscribers.

“I was impressed with the facilitation COCo provided. In watching I already learned some facilitation tricks that I will implement in my staff meetings.”

- Workshop participant
COCo’s community technology branch, Commun-IT, empowered 24 community groups in 2015 to better realize their mission using the most effective, manageable and well-suited Information and Communications Technology (ICT). At its core, Commun-IT addresses three central issues: that it is difficult for small community groups to find funding for their technology needs, that community groups need tech that is built for their context and their values, and that we can make ICT accessible to anyone who wants to learn!

Over the past year, Commun-IT continued to offer our services at incredibly low rates, and in ways that matched the realities of community groups in the province. Among these groups are several who benefited from Commun-IT’s mandate to offer pro-bono ICT services to marginalized, resource-strapped community groups who would not otherwise be able to access the tools they need to further their missions. The result was one of our busiest years to date.

As always, we made sure to bolster our own staff skills, knowledge and efficiency through learning exchanges and improving the tech engine that quietly powers the COCo office and website!

Over the past year, our areas of focus have expanded, and now include:

- Constituent Relationship Management Systems (CRM)
- Information Technology and Communications Planning
- Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Keyword Planning
- Social Media Training and Strategy
- Website Development and Maintenance
- File Management and Cloud Computing
- Multimedia and Office Software Training

Commun-IT has also evolved in our ability to help organizations keep their data and websites safe, secure, and private. We’ve begun offering “website hardening” (protection from hackers) and analytics anonymization (making sure non-profits are not collecting data on visitors to their sites without their permission) as part of our standard website development contract.

Commun-IT also continues to ally itself closely with Innoweave, an initiative of the J.W. McConnell Foundation, in order to guide and accompany groups to adopt Cloud Computing. We share Innoweave’s commitment to helping successful organizations find and implement practical tools to increase their impact, and we thank Marc Ouimet, Mélanie Bisson and Natalie Chapdelaine for their support in this project!

We also took advantage of an Industry Canada-sponsored nationwide ICT internship program, offered via Communautique. Commun-IT is proud to welcome Kevin Paul into our midst, who has been doing a stellar job since he came on board in November 2015.

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.
“In 2011, the Centre for Community Organizations (COCo) led a workshop on anti-oppression for Articule. Following this workshop, we created the fabulous committee, whose mandate is to develop anti-oppression strategies in order to make our centre more inclusive, particularly for racialized people, as much in terms of the artists represented as the internal structure (members, Board, staff)...

Since then, this project has had real impacts on the programming and human resources of the center, well beyond our expectations. Today, a majority of the artists who show at the centre come from marginalized communities. A larger number of people of colour sit on committees and on the Board of Directors. Our staff, contract and permanent, are majority people of colour. Among these efforts was also the creation of Montreal Monochrome, an event which allowed racialized and indigenous theorists to educate the visual arts community in addressing these issues. The first edition, a roundtable, was held in 2013, at the M.A.I. (Montréal, arts interculturels). By 2015, Montréal Monochrome had moved to the Museum of Contemporary Art, becoming a day long symposium for the public at large. In 2016, it has taken the form of a three day training, inside Articule itself.

We are thrilled to pursue our work with COCo this year as we undertake the development of an anti-oppression policy.”

- Articule
This past year, Head & Hands worked with Spencer, a coach from COCo’s Commun-IT program, to implement a new CRM system in our organization, as our previous system was unable to meet our organization’s rapidly growing needs. Without the help of Spencer and Commun-IT, this CRM transition would have been nearly impossible for Head & Hands, as we lacked the internal capacity to carry out a complex IT project without the help of an experienced coach.

Throughout the project, Commun-IT’s work was informed by our organization’s vision for a new CRM platform. Spencer worked with our team to take stock of Head & Hands’ needs, organizational culture, challenges, and concerns. Our coach worked alongside us to build a CRM platform that was the best possible fit for Head & Hands and that reflected our organization’s values and politics. For example, Spencer understood and validated our concerns around avoiding certain features that we felt were in conflict with our approach to confidentiality and the privacy of our supporters’ personal data (i.e by disabling features that automatically import data from social media). Spencer took the time to involve all relevant stakeholders in our organization, and collaboratively developed a work plan that reflected Head & Hands’ collective working structure, all while keeping us on track with deadlines and moving us towards achieving our project goals.

The Commun-IT project helped build significant capacity on our team to implement and use our new CRM software. 6 staff members are now trained and equipped to use the software, as compared to two staff members before the project. These staff members also have the skills to share their training with new staff members in the future, through the training plans developed with our coach.

Our new CRM system has helped us better realize our mission, by strengthening both our front-line service provision and our fundraising, development, and communications. We are now able to provide more tailored referral lists to clients who access our Information and Referral services, conduct more in-depth analyses of our fundraising campaigns, and use our CRM to anchor our relationships with media contacts. In the coming months, we will continue to leverage our CRM to strengthen our organizational capacity by creating new channels for volunteers to engage with our mission, and building team capacity to respond to volunteer requests. Our team is now equipped to move into the future with NationBuilder, developing the software to meet our organization’s evolving needs.

- Head & Hands

“The analogy between fruit and types of tasks facilitated a discussion in which we were on common ground, using metaphors about work that we all share rather than complaining or one-upping with the specifics of our personal program areas. It gave me a new and fun way to evaluate my tasks and to distance myself from negative judgements and patterns.”

- Workshop participant
As a training organization ourselves, it is so important to us that we also engage in a practice of learning, reflection and skilling up! This year, the team sat down with several educators and experts to learn more about ourselves and our field. Here are some of them.

Our membership engagement work continued this year as we worked with Maya Wiseman, who, based on research culled from our membership survey in 2014, helped us design tools and strategies for better engaging our members and users. We dug deep into understanding how organizations interact with COCo and creating tools for better assessment, follow up, and increasing our impact in your organizations.

Sabrina Bonifonte sat down with us to engage took a deep dive into the tools we use as facilitators. Over COCo’s history, facilitators have developed hundreds of tools and models to help organizations really understand concepts and situations. As awesome as they are, these tools are numerous, inconsistent, and not accessible. Working with Sabrina, we figured out which ones were our favourites and what we wanted them to look like -- a process we are now taking to a graphic designer.

Frances attended a training by the Tamarack Institute on evaluating collective impact initiatives. She brought back her notes and reflections to our team, where we had a great time digging into this important and emerging work.

“People felt super super super super engaged in the workshop. The theories/concepts were simple and well introduced. The activities were flexible and smart. The COCo representatives were well organized, fun, and mastered their content!”

- Workshop participant
OUR FINANCES

**Revenues:**

- Centraide: $95,400
- Canadian Heritage - QOTM: $36,129
- MEES: $101,334
- Par et pour (PACTE - MEES): $28,751
- Autonomous revenues: $86,342
- Industrie Canada: $5,708

**Expenses:**

- Salaries and Benefits: $203,146
- Affiliated Facilitators: $106,082
- Operations: $27,605
- Communications: $3,034
- Events: $1,965
- Travel: $5,173
- Miscellaneous: $1,009

“I loved working with Sabrina and Kira, they were excellent facilitators! Their dynamism, openness and listening was the great strength of the session. The exercises helped us grow enormously in understanding and awareness.”

- Workshop participant

“The session held a mirror up to the board and its operations and enabled us to view the operational mode of the board and the interaction of its members in a non-critical way.”

- Workshop participant
PARTNERS AND ALLIES

COALITIONS, FUNDERS, AND TRAINING GROUPS

Regroupement Intersectoriel des Organismes Communautaires de Montreal (RIOCM)

Table régionale des organismes volontaires d'éducation populaire (TROVEP) de Montréal

Comité séctoriel de main d'oeuvre économie sociale et action communautaire (CSMO-ÉSAC)

Quebec Community Groups Network  •  Centre de Formation Populaire  •  Niska  •  Relais Femmes

Coalition des organismes communautaires autonomes de formation (COCAF)

Community Learning Centres  •  Communagir  •  J.W. McConnell Family Foundation  •  Centraide

Ministère d'Éducation et enseignement supérieure

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS

Idle No More  •  Girls Action Foundation  •  Accessibilize Montreal  •  AGIR

Action Santé Travesti(e) & Transexuel(le)s du Québec (ASST(e)Q)  •  Arc-en-Ciel d’Afrique

Head & Hands  •  PINAY  •  Projet Jeunesse Lambda

Immigrant Worker Centre (IWC)  South Asian Women’s Community Centre (SAWCC)

DESTA  •  Third Eye Collective  •  Qouleur Qollective