



## CWCF – CoopZone 2016 Conference Highlights

By Kaye Grant

On November 3 to 5<sup>th</sup>, 2016 we celebrated 25 years at CWCF. We looked back at our first 25 years of history and then spent some time looking forward to our next 25 years.



**Kathy Bardswick, CEO,  
The Co-operators**

Kathy Bardswick, our keynote speaker and CEO of The Co-operators, spoke to us of the importance of connection to each other as human beings in our co-operatives, and the importance of being member-driven. She also implored us to have co-operatives work more effectively together, and to reconsider the role of capital in co-operatives, linked to the work she is leading through the ICA's Blue Ribbon Commission on Capital.

Both Jessica Gordon Nembhard (Professor at CUNY) and Rebecca Kemble (City Councillor, Madison, Wisc.) provided inspiring reflections about the worker Co-op movement in the US.



**Jessica Gordon-Nembhard & Rebecca Kemble**

Worker Co-op members provided their approaches to solidarity in their co-ops in our “Co-op Ignite” presentation format which allowed us to get a quick overview of a number of worker co-ops as well as a quick Worker Co-op 101 presentation by Joy Emmanuel. The worker co-ops which presented were Vancouver Renewable Energy Co-op, Left Hand Media Co-op, Woodshop Workers’ Co-op, The Grain Exchange, and HASTE Workers’ Co-op.

There was a dynamic approach to worker co-op problem-solving in the Business Strategy Fine-tuning session, ably led by Theodora Lamb and Derek Gent and in which virtually all attendees

participated to provide advice to two worker co-ops who each shared a challenge they are facing.

Alain Bridault (CWCF's outgoing President) provided an informative session on Managing the Democratic Life in a Worker Co-op.

There was a knowledgeable panel of speakers that presented on Financing Worker Co-ops including Andy Broderick, and Elvy Del Bianco both with Vancity Credit Union and Tracey Kliesch with CCEC Credit Union.

There was also a number of breakout sessions which were all well received. Workshops included the Leap Manifesto and the Worker Co-op Movement, Maintaining Respect and Dignity within your Worker Co-op; Legal Issues in Worker Co-ops by CoopZone Legal Network members Mary Childs and Celia Chandler, Strengthening your Co-op's Value Proposition, and Open Space.

Prior to the conference Jeremy Murphy, Sustainability Solutions Group Worker Co-op, led a small group of co-operators on a co-op tour. Even though it rained throughout the tour everyone seemed to enjoy meeting local co-ops particularly the Woodworking Co-op and Vancouver Renewable Energy Co-op.

Delegates had an opportunity to celebrate, network and enjoy CWCF's 25<sup>th</sup> Birthday Cake and music by Bill Bourne at our solidarity supper on Thursday evening.