



Leslie Brown, Flourish Community Development Co-operative, Nova Scotia

Professor Emerita, Mount Saint Vincent University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Following a fortuitous meeting with CWCF folks at the Nova Scotia Co-op Council this summer I was asked if I would consider filling a vacancy until November, as the CWCF Board member representing the Atlantic Region. I could not have been more pleased! I now put my name forward for election to the position of Atlantic Representative on the CWCF Board.

CWCF's vision, mission, and grass roots democracy focus resonate with me on many levels. Taking part in a board that works toward the realization of such commitments would be incredibly satisfying. As a representative from the Atlantic Provinces I would learn about the experiences of worker co-ops here, and discuss with them the role of CWCF nationally.

My experience volunteering in co-operatives and other democratically inclined organizations, together with my work as a sociologist, has made it clear to me that co-operatives can play a significant role in building community, democratizing the economy, meeting diverse needs, and providing vital services. When at their best, co-ops offer concrete examples that move us toward more humane, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable communities and societies.

Early in my career as a sociologist a watershed moment occurred when, as a volunteer at Wedge Community Co-op in Minneapolis, I realized that I wanted to study Wedge and the other "New Wave" retail food co-operatives for my doctoral thesis. Precursors of a form that has evolved into what we now call "multi-stakeholder co-ops", at the time these co-ops were run by consumer members together with worker collectives. This launched me on a career studying co-ops and co-operation back in Canada and abroad. I have explored such themes as organizational democracy, capacity building, democratizing the economy, and the ways co-ops can operationalize co-op values and principles. Themes of community development and the relevance of co-operatives for rural and small-town Canada emerged too.

Volunteering is core to my life as well, and I have experience both on "working boards" and "governance boards". Most of my volunteering has been and continues to be with co-ops, credit unions, and the associations that support them. Since 2020 I have been member-at-large on the board of [Flourish Community Development Co-operative](#), a consulting co-operative that is a member of CWCF.

Through these various activities I have acquired a range of skills that I can contribute to CWCF, and a love of learning with and from those with whom I work. I would value the opportunity to serve as part of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation, together with board members, staff, CWCF members and others who are committed to supporting worker co-operatives across the country. There is no doubt in my mind that worker co-operatives have a vital part to play in helping us imagine, and build, a better world.