

## Meet our Board of Directors



**Michele Aasgard** is the Executive Director for the Alberta Community and Co-operative Association in Edmonton, Alberta. Michele has been the Executive Director since February of 2003. The Alberta Community and Co-operative Association objectives are to foster a healthy and vibrant co-operative sector; to provide a means [forum] for co-operatives to associate and network with other provincial and national co-operatives; to promote the co-operative model; to support the development of strong Alberta communities through co-operation; to foster the development of community leaders through education; to provide youth education and leadership; and, to foster a healthy agriculture sector through co-operation and education. One of the goads of ACCA is to create a Centre for Excellence when it comes to co-operative development resources in the Province of Alberta. Michele is working hard to create this Centre. Prior to Michele's employment with ACCA she worked 22 years for the Alberta Fish and Wildlife Division of the Alberta Government, where she specialized in both developing and delivering training programs for staff and the private sector. Michele brings extensive experience in producing educational resource materials and has completed her Certificate of Adult and Continuing Education from the University of Alberta with distinction.



**Neil Cooper's** analytical mind and focus keeps Conexus in the winning column when it comes to ensuring we are properly equipped for and understand what success looks like. As chief financial officer, Neil leads the accounting, finance and treasury functions for Conexus. With a focus on organizational financial sustainability and stewardship, he is willing to make thoughtful, tough decisions for the greater good of Conexus, its members and employees.

Neil's experience in the financial industry is supplemented by a Master of Business Administration Degree and Bachelor of Science Degree, both from University of Saskatchewan.

He currently serves on the boards of Co-operative Development Foundation of Canada and APEX I and II Limited Partnership. He has enjoyed volunteering with the Canadian Co-operative Association, Canadian Cancer Society and MS Society of Canada-



**Bruno Dragani** is a values-based leader with 25 years of financial co-operative experience. He serves as an executive for Coastal Community Credit Union and holds the position of Chief People & Administration Officer. His areas of oversight include Information Technology, Human Resources, Centralized Operations and Premises. Bruno has been instrumental in leveraging people and technology to create strategies and programs which support the credit union. Bruno holds a Master in Business Administration from Royal Roads University (MBA), and is a Chartered Professional in Human Resources (CPHR). Bruno serves as a director for the Nanaimo District Museum and is a past chair for Community Futures Central Vancouver Island. He also volunteers for the Canadian Co-operatives Association internationally and has served in Mongolia and Indonesia.



**Mark Hamel's** passion for the co-op sector is reflected in the dairy industry as well as the insurance field. Mark has built a reputation on integrity and consistently delivers results by aligning corporate governance with sound business judgement. Mark currently sits on the Board of Gay Lea Foods Ltd as a Director for 12 years, including four as Chairman, and a founding member of the Gay Lea Foundation. Mark was recently elected Chair of Howick Mutual Insurance and has more than twenty years experience in the insurance field.

Mark's career also includes sitting on the Ontario Co-operative Association Board as Past Chair. He has been a part of On-Co-op's regulatory and legislative committee and currently is a member of the joint OnCo-op and Conseil de la cooperation de l'Ontario Government Relations Committee. As well Mark is a delegate to the Co-operatives and Mutuals of Canada. Mark is married to Cathy and together they are partners with their son (4th generation) and his wife on the family dairy farm *Harmony Holsteins* in Bruce County, Ontario.



**Erin Hancock** has participated in the co-operative movement in a variety of capacities over the past 20 years, including co-op developer, manager, board member, educator, consultant and volunteer. Erin serves as the Manager of Partnership and Promotion for the Co-operative Management Education team at Saint Mary's University (Halifax). Previously, she served as the Manager of Research and Education for Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada and the Canadian Co-operative Association. She has also managed the Measuring the Co-operative Difference Research Network, served as Vice President of the Canadian Association for Studies in Co-operation, served as chair for the Canadian Co-operative Research Network, and trained credit union boards for the African Confederation of Co-operative Savings and Credit Associations (as a volunteer with CCA/CDF). She was a co-founder of the Co-operative Enterprise Council of New Brunswick and has served as staff or board member of several other co-op associations. She holds a MPhil (Public Policy & Co-operative Development) and a BPhil (Leadership Studies & International Development Studies).



**Tracey Kliesch** is the General Manager and CEO of CCEC Credit Union in Vancouver. CCEC is an autonomous and independent financial co-operative founded by community organizations and activists in 1976 with the mission of building local economy and economic change.

Tracey has worked in the credit union sector for many years. Before joining CCEC Tracey was a Community Investment Portfolio Manager with Vancity, the largest credit union in English speaking Canada.

Tracey has conducted a number of international postings with credit unions in Ghana, South Africa and the Caribbean. She was recently part of the team that brought the Credit Union Development Educator (CUDE) program to Canada for the first time.

Tracey is a trustee on the Credit Union Foundation of British Columbia where she sits on the International and Domestic Awards Committee.

Tracey holds a Master's Degree in Co-operatives and Credit Union Management from St. Mary's University and she teaches Co-operatives and Community Economic Development - part of the Advanced Sustainable Business Leadership Certificate Program at BCIT.



**Normand Lafrenière** began his working career with the Canadian Federal Government. He worked successively for the Oil and Gas Sector of the Department of Energy; for the Corporate Income Tax Competitiveness Analysis Sector of the Department of Industry; and for the Sales Tax Sector of the Department of Finance. He joined the Canadian Association of Mutual Insurance Companies (CAMIC) as President in 1993 and has been working in that capacity ever since.

Normand has a Bachelor Degree in Economics from the University of Sherbrooke and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the École nationale d'administration publique. Since February 2017, he holds an ICD.D (designation from the Institute of Corporate Directors).

He sits on the Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada (CMC) Board of Directors as Vice President; and on the Coopérative funéraire de l'Outaouais (CFO) Board. He has served on the Pension Committee of St. John Ambulance.

Normand and CAMIC members have been providing valuable technical support to CDF as work continues with representatives from the Philippines (RIMANSI) to put in place an insurance business model similar to the Canadian mutual insurers' system.



**Kelly McGiffin**, President & CEO, FirstOntario Credit Union, is a demonstrated leader with over 40 years of experience in the financial services industry. Rising through the British Columbia credit union system, he began his career as a lender and worked his way up through eight different organizations, gaining accreditation in Human Resources and Marketing in the process. Leading two previous credit unions as CEO, Kelly was instrumental in bringing the first digital cheque program to the BC credit union system in the late 1990s. His credit union was also the Canadian pilot for the CGI owned RFS-NT data processing system in 1996. Kelly recently completed the

Directors College curriculum to receive his Chartered Director designation and is a former member of the Board of both Central 1 and CUA.

Having worked in both the British Columbia and Ontario credit union systems, Kelly has a unique multi-jurisdictional understanding of the major markets within the system. A testament to his leadership as CEO, is the success of FirstOntario over the past eight years, in which FirstOntario has grown \$2.5 billion (almost entirely organically) in Assets Under Management and added over \$50 million to retained earnings during that time - total retained earnings eight years ago was \$38 million. FirstOntario has also seen tremendous growth from 17 locations to 32 locations since Kelly's arrival. Possessing strong co-operative values, he has led initiatives in Ontario such as the creation of the Alliance of Large Ontario Credit Unions (ALOCU), a collaborative peer group of the 12 largest credit unions in Ontario. With Kelly

as the leading voice, this Ontario credit union collaboration led to an historic province-wide advertising initiative which launched in 2014. ALOCU is now a fully dues funded provincial program. Kelly is past chair of ALOCU, and is currently CEO Liaison for the Awareness Campaign. Kelly has also developed a government relations profile at Queen's Park; and has been invited to sit on several advisory committees dedicated to change and improvement in the credit union landscape.

Kelly's leadership performance extends outside of the credit union system as well. He is a former Canadian National Team coach; leading teams to six World level medal finishes; Pan Am Gold medal winner (as a coach in 2003); Board member for the Coaching Association of Canada; and the 2005 National Aboriginal Coach of the Year (Kelly is a certified Metis citizen).



**Mark Needham**, of Yellowknife, Northwest Territories has been an active member on the Board of Directors of Arctic Co-operatives Limited and Arctic Co-operative Development Fund for the past fourteen years. Mark is the 1st Vice-President of the Board of Directors. Residing in Yellowknife for 25 years, Mark serves on the Board of Yellowknife Direct Charge Co-op, first from 1992 -1994, and from 1996 onward, holding all executive positions.

Mark was elected to the Canadian Co-operative Association (CCA) Board and Co-operative Development Foundation (CDF) Board in 2013. In 2014, Mark was elected to the Board Co-operatives and Mutuels Canada (CMC) where he is now the Vice President and chairs the Audit and Finance Committee. Mark has also served on the Resolutions Committee, Human Resources Committee and as the CMC Representative on the CCA Board Nomination Committee.

Mark holds a Bachelor of Commerce Degree from University of British Columbia and a Master of Business Administration Degree from Queens University. Mark is very active in his community. He is currently president of Saint Vincent de Paul (SSVP), is an active member of St. Patrick's Parish, and volunteers for the Vinnies Thrift Store in Yellowknife.

Mark has also taught college curriculum at Southern Alberta Institute of Technology (SAIT) in Calgary and Arctic College in Yellowknife. He recently retired from Northwestel after 25 years. Mark and his wife Barb have two children. They enjoy gardening, hiking, boating and living at their cabin during the summer months.



**Marc-Andre Pigeon**, Assistant Vice President of Financial Sector Policy, is responsible for monitoring, researching and advocating on behalf of credit unions. In this capacity, he brings to bear experience as an advisor at the Department of Finance, a lead analyst for the Senate Banking and House of Commons Finance Committees, an economist at the Levy Economics Institute, and a business reporter for Bloomberg Business News. Marc-André holds a PhD from Carleton University in Mass Communications, where he is an occasional lecturer, a Master's Degree in economics from the University of Ottawa, and a journalism degree from Carleton University.



**Jeanette Wakelin** is the Director of Product Solutions at Atlantic Central.

Having worked in the financial co-operative sector for more than 30 years, Jeanette has developed a strong passion for the co-operative way of life. She has worked in Human Resources, Operations, Risk Management, Compliance and Training and Development and has served on various boards and committees including the PEI Co-operative Council, the Credit Union National Benefits Committee, and the Credit Union National Risk Management Committee; together with the Charlottetown Chamber of Commerce.

In her current role as Director of Product Solutions at Atlantic Central, Jeanette is responsible for the oversight and execution of product and services strategies supporting over 45 credit unions in Atlantic Canada. She works directly with the board and management on Corporate Social Responsibility and initiatives that support and enhance the organization's commitment to community. She currently is on the National Committee in support of a co-operative financial literacy program and works with over 50 certified trainers in Atlantic Canada. She enjoys the opportunity to work with employees in support of community involvement.

Jeanette is a Certified Change Management Practitioner from ADPRO and has a Sales and Service Training Certification from MOHR Development Group, a Performance Management Certification from the Hay Group, and her MBA designation specializing in Human Resource Management.

Jeanette has had first-hand experience in working with a charity, having served as the National Chair of the Children's Wish Foundation, the largest Canadian children's charity in Canada. She now serves on the National Board as Chair of the Human Resources Committee.