

Kendal Benesh



Why are you interested in joining our board?

Where to start? I love the Kootenay Co-op and deeply appreciate the vital role it plays in our community and in enhancing the quality of life here in Nelson and beyond. I am interested in joining the Board to serve the Co-op membership, help strengthen local food systems and support sustainable practices, and contribute in a more intentional way to this community. Serving on the board would also allow me to deepen my own connections and knowledge around food, cooperative values, and the greater Co-op membership.

What do you see as the most important role of our Co-op in our community, now and in the future?

Kootenay Co-op provides access to quality, healthy food. It supports local farmers, businesses, and contributes to economic and environmental sustainability in the region, and creates a stable, central hub for supporting local food systems. Healthy humans make healthy communities, and I think the Co-op's most important role now and into the future is to continue serving its community in these ways.

What personal values will you bring to our board?

My values include sustainability, cooperation, open communication, equity, and integrity – all of which align with Kootenay Co-op's values and mission to serve its community. This means keeping environmental stewardship and long-term community well-being top of mind, ensuring communication takes place in a way that is collaborative and respectful to all voices, and being accountable for decisions being made.

Occupation (current and/or former)

Interim Program Director, Kootenay Conservation Program

How will your personal or professional skills and experience benefit our Co-op?

With a background in environmental stewardship, program coordination, and community engagement, I think my skills would align well with the Co-op board. I have strong organizational, communication, and leadership skills developed through managing stewardship grants and facilitating collaborative initiatives with non-profits and local community groups. I also have experience planning events, supporting volunteers, and creating educational materials, all of which can contribute to outreach and member engagement. Personally, I love building relationships and working as part of a team to tackle challenges.

Do you have experience in the areas that the board seeks this year - HR, law, environmental stewardship, leadership, business operations?

I have over a decade of experience working on conservation and environmental stewardship initiatives across Western Canada. Through this work, I've collaborated with non-profits and community groups to develop and deliver stewardship and outreach programs, facilitated community engagement, and supported on-the-ground stewardship and conservation work. I also have experience in board governance, grant administration, human resources, financial tracking, and overseeing region-wide programming with a team of staff and contractors.

What skills or experience do you have in working cooperatively or collaboratively?

I have been fortunate to work in many collaborative, cross-sectoral environments, including the amazing environmental stewardship community that is active in the Kootenays. I've overseen region-wide programs, and coordinated technical committees and multi-disciplinary partnerships. I've also led staff in training, outreach, and program delivery, ensuring open communication and dialogue. I know that working collaboratively is a must to support democratic decision-making, collective problem solving, and community values.