

Kay Coburn

Why are you interested in joining our board?

I've long believed that human, community, and planetary health were connected. The Co-op supports all of these through the products we sell, supporting regional producers, and encouraging responsible stewardship of the environment. I enjoy being a part of this outstanding organization. I have been on this board for the past 3 years, and the president since January 2025. I understand our most recent challenges and would like to continue the work we are doing towards creating solutions. I believe that my presence on the upcoming board will add stability to the Co-op as we welcome our new General Manager.

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

Environmental and political factors have made strengthening local food systems our most important role at the moment. Our True Local program is one example of how we are addressing that while still focusing on healthy environmental practices, and community service.

A role our Co-op can continue to play is demonstrating how a business can balance external economic pressures while maintaining integrity in the choices it makes. In a changing retail environment and difficult economy, this requires vigilance and creativity. As the C-op works successfully in this way, we help create a future and a society where integrity is as important as profit.

What personal values will you bring to our board?

I value integrity, respect for differences, and providing opportunities for everyone to thrive. Like everyone, I am a work in progress, but people who know me can attest that I put tremendous energy into trying to live my values. Being ethical is important to me. I see clear communication and educating each other about our points of view as the way forward when opinions differ.

Occupation (current and/or former)

I'm retired. Most recently, I was a college instructor. Before that I was a home-school parent/teacher and a French Immersion teacher,

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

Personal: I am an enthusiastic learner. I am very organized, a problem-solver, and tenacious about getting a job done well. I try to take all points of view into account.

Professional: I have been the president of the Co-op board since January 2025, which means balancing priorities and managing a variety of tasks. This role has given me added experience in governance, financial oversight, and strategic planning. In my teaching career I set outcomes and designed programs. I am able to create plans and execute them successfully. Through my academic work I learned to research questions and develop practical, logical responses to them. I have found all these skills very useful during my time on this board.

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

As current president of the Co-op board, I have experience in leading a diverse group as we manage our fiduciary responsibilities, work with management on strategic planning, and work towards improving and fine-tuning governance in a changing environment. I have also been a director on the board of the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy since 2018. This gives me insight into the leadership skills required for a different kind of organization, and improves my own understanding of good leadership.,

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

I've needed to work cooperatively to be an active member of both boards I sit on. As a teacher, I aimed to create welcoming, inclusive learning environments where students, often from vastly different cultural backgrounds, could work effectively in groups. I worked cooperatively with two colleagues to create a language teaching program for our local college. In addition, since becoming the president of the Kootenay Co-op board, I have been studying cooperative leadership.