



On Co-op's "From Beards to Eternity" wins first place in the 2013 CCA Communications Contest for "Best Presentation."

Guelph, June 5, 2013. The presentation's title is as enticing as it is obscure. You'd have to watch it to piece together how it relates to the colourful history of the co-operative movement, which was started long before 1844 - what most history books claim to be the kick-off year.

In mixing gentle humour and off-beat co-op facts, the presentation's key message is that "we are "far stronger, more sustainable and overall just plain better, together, than we are apart,"" says Kerr Smith, Education manager with the Ontario Co-operative Association (On Co-op), who designed the dynamic and award-winning presentation.

When asked what motivated him to put this educational piece together, Smith reveals that he wanted to find an entertaining and unique way to educate people about co-ops, and adds "What's most fascinating about our co-operative history is *not* the dates and historic timelines, but the personal and inspirational stories and the heroes behind them."

Smith has travelled across the province to share the 90-minute presentation with various groups, including the staff at The Co-operators head office in Guelph, attendees of the 2012 CHF Canada, Ontario Region Annual General Meeting in Niagara Falls, participants of the Co-operative Young Leaders Program in Richmond Hill, and youth representatives in Ottawa - chosen from across Canada to participate in the YouLead Program, which travelled to Ghana last year.

The response has been very positive. Adds Jeannie Shore, Manager of Member and Co-operative Relations with The Co-operators, "The presentation teaches us just how embedded co-operatives are in our history, but in a fun and exciting way that we can all relate to. It has been a tremendous learning tool for some of our staff who were fortunate enough to attend the presentations."

The ultimate objective behind the presentation and how it unfolds, notes Smith, is to inspire today's co-operators, by showcasing our sectors' remarkable history and its ongoing relevance in present day. "It's in part, a look back at our co-op leaders of the past, and how they stood up and made a difference...based on the simple principle of co-operation."

When pressed to disclose the inspiration behind the presentation's catchy title, he responds without hesitation "Come and listen to it and you will find out!"

Smith will next be presenting "From Beards to Eternity" on **July 17th** as part of On Co-ops 2013-2014 Speakers' Series. It will be a slightly modified version of the 90-minute presentation and conducted via webinar format, so that anyone can participate. (To register, visit: http://www.ontario.coop/programs_services/engagement_and_awareness/speaker_series)

On Co-op's membership will get a glimpse of the presentation at the upcoming AGM on June 18th.

The annual contest, run by the USA-based Co-operative Communicators Association, acknowledges "the best of the best" of co-operative communications, from writing and photography, to publications, programs and projects. The organization is a resource for development of professional communicators, and those with a vested interest in the co-operative values and principles.

This stands true for On Co-op, an information and resources network with a mission to lead, cultivate and connect co-operatives. "The presentation serves as a valuable reminder to us that we as co-operators are 'game changers' - we have the capacity to unleash the 'secret' that is the power of co-operation." Smith completes this thought with a favourite quote: "In times like these, it's helpful to remember that there have always been times like these."

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The Ontario Co-operative Association believes that co-operatives build a better world. We are the trade association that develops, engages, educates and advocates for Ontario's 1,300 co-operative businesses.