



PEARL GRAHAM

As a feisty young married woman living on the Graham family farm in Saskatchewan in pioneer-like circumstances where there was no “they” only “we,” Pearl Graham took the attitude that she could accomplish worthwhile things if she put her hand to them.

In the early 1960s, along with her husband Malcolm, Mrs. Graham was involved in the beginnings of a couple of agricultural co-operatives south of Lloydminster. The first was a grazing co-op. Farmers could buy shares at a reasonable cost and have summer pasture for range cows, with drilled wells and pumps that the cows operated with their heads to get the water. The second co-operative was for feeder cattle. At times when grains were more difficult to sell, farmers often fed calves through the winter, selling them before their field work started in the spring. Through the Feeder Co-op, farmers could capitalize this enterprise either with their own calves or by buying calves from other farmers. The Feeder Co-op had no capital of its own but could borrow through Saskatchewan Co-op Credit Society (today, Saskatchewan Central). Mrs. Graham was the Secretary-Treasurer of this co-op.

At the same time, she fell in love with the local credit union, Marsden and District Savings and Credit Union. She was impressed that neighbour could financially help neighbour with dignity, and that surplus funds generated were returned to the members and therefore stayed in the community. When the credit union moved out of the back of the Co-op store to set up its own store front, Mrs. Graham ended up filling in until the general manager could assume his duties. Then, when a sub-branch opened in Neilburg, a town eight miles away, Mrs. Graham was put in charge. The credit union grew and prospered in both locations. It was so successful, that it amalgamated with Lloydminster and District Credit Union.

The next move for Mrs. Graham was not such an obvious one. Malcolm got a very good job offer in the Fraser Valley of BC and they moved to Abbotsford in 1972. Mrs. Graham began working at the Clearbrook Credit Union and moved up through the ranks. She designed and decorated the layout of the Sevenoaks Branch in the Sevenoaks Mall, where she served as manager until just prior to Clearbrook’s amalgamation with East Chilliwack Credit Union, another successful merger and the forerunner of Envision Credit Union. Malcolm and she took early retirement in the early 80s and moved to Salt Spring Island.

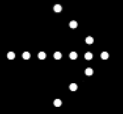
In 1986, Mrs. Graham was elected to the Board of Island Savings Credit Union. By 1994, she wanted to be further involved in the BC system and, with the encouragement of the CEO of Island Savings, she ran as a Regional Director of Credit Union Central of British Columbia. She has served as one of BC Central’s delegates to the Canadian Co-operative Association from 1996 to 2003. A rewarding by-product of that assignment was chairing the Co-operative Development Foundation.

Mrs. Graham also served a BC Central delegate to Federated Co-operatives Ltd from 1994 to 1996, and from 1998 to 2002 and as a director of CUPP Services Ltd, an insurance company owned by the Central.

Nominated by Credit Union Central of British Columbia



CANADIAN
CO-OPERATIVE
ASSOCIATION



CO-OPERATIVE ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

JUNE 9, 2006
LONDON, ONTARIO



DENNIS BANDA

Dennis Banda has been active in a number of co-operatives for well over 40 years with a majority of that time being served in co-operative leadership roles. He was born in Marcelin, Saskatchewan in 1941 and joined the Marcelin Co-operative Association and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in 1960. Shortly thereafter, he joined the Marcelin Credit Union, Prince Albert Co-operative Association, and Canadian Co-operative Implements Limited.

Mr. Banda started his career in the Federated Co-operatives Limited (FCL) accounting department in 1960 and returned to farming full-time in 1961. He was elected to the Board of the Marcelin Co-operative Association in 1967 and spent 29 years on that Board serving as President, Vice-President, and Secretary. He was elected as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool delegate from 1967 to 1974 and then, again, from 1986 to 1997. Mr. Banda served on the executive of his local Wheat Pool committee and as District Secretary.

After representing the Marcelin Co-operative Association as a delegate to FCL, Mr. Banda was elected as a Director of FCL in 1993. In 1997 he was elected President of the Board of FCL, a post he was re-elected to until his retirement in 2005. Mr. Banda served on a number of FCL Board committees prior to his election as President of the Board and after as an *ex-officio* member of all FCL Board committees. During this time, he was also President of Consumers' Co-operative Refineries Limited and as a Director and Officer of numerous FCL subsidiaries and affiliates.

Mr. Banda served as a member of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan from 1975 until 1982. He chaired the Provincial Farm Support Review Committee from 1992 to 1996. He later represented FCL on the provincial Action Committee on Rural Economy from 2000 to 2005.

He was a Director of the Centre for Agricultural Medicine (University of Saskatchewan) and Co-chair of the Institute of Agriculture – Rural & Environmental Health.

Mr. Banda was a delegate to the International Co-operative Alliance Congress in 1999 and a delegate to the Canadian Co-operative Association.

Mr. Banda's leadership has been recognized with a Governor's General Commemorative Medal for Community Service in 1993, the Queen's Jubilee Medal – Community Service in 2002, and a Saskatchewan Co-operative Merit Award in 2005.

In his multiple co-operative leadership roles, his goal has always been to enhance the lives of the members of the co-operative. Grassroots democracy and responsible representation are critical to that goal and are processes that Mr. Banda has strongly advocated. He has supported and promoted co-operatives and their principles all of his life and has done so with enthusiasm and integrity.

Nominated by Federated Co-operatives Limited

LOUISE CHAMPAGNE



“Raised poor” [her words] as one of seven children in a Métis family, Louise Champagne is passionate about her Aboriginal and co-op identity and is widely known for her founding and continuing role as President of Neechi Foods Co-op Ltd.

Neechi Foods Co-op is a worker co-operative that operates Neechi Foods Community Store, located in Winnipeg's impoverished, inner-city “North-End” amidst Canada's largest urban Aboriginal population. Now in its 17th year, the store produces fresh bannock and deli products, and sells wild rice, wild blue berries, freshwater fish, other Aboriginal specialty foods, moccasins crafted by neighbourhood and northern artisans, and Aboriginal children's books, as well as conventional groceries.

During the 1990s, unemployment, abandoned housing, drug dealing, prostitution and other gang activities became rife in Neechi's immediate neighbourhood. In spite of this the worker-owned co-operative managed to keep its business afloat, without any operating subsidies. Part of the reason lies in Neechi's enduring commitment and connection to its broader community. ‘Neechi’ means ‘sister/brother/friend’ in Cree and Ojibwa. The Co-op is well known for its commitment to community economic development. Neechi provides employment, training and collective business ownership to inner-city residents. All of Neechi's 12 employees are Aboriginal.

The Co-op's impact goes well beyond employment, skill development, and business ownership. Neechi workers subsidize a “kids-only” fruit basket at the front counter, sell tobacco for ceremonial purposes only, run a diabetes awareness program, have organized two community dry socials, promote affordable high-nutrition specialty foods, and have helped to initiate neighbourhood patrols and community policing. In 2004, Neechi – Ms. Champagne in particular – was named as recipient of a national diabetes prevention award that was presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Diabetes Association. In 2005 Neechi was recipient of a Healthy Living Award from Winnipeg's Reh-Fit Centre Foundation.

In 1994, Ms. Champagne delivered a list of 11 CED principles/criteria, which had been drawn up at a Neechi Foods Co-op meeting, to an inner-city church and labour panel on poverty. Those principles received instant media attention and were subsequently adopted by other agencies and businesses that share a commitment to community development in Winnipeg.

In addition to her continuous role as Co-op president, Ms. Champagne worked as general manager during the store's first seven years. She also served as the initial Prairie representative on the national Board of the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation (CWCF) and as the first CWCF representative on the Manitoba Cooperative Council. In 2002 she was honoured to receive the CWCF Worker Co-op Merit Award. Currently, she is in her fourth year as a member of the ministerial advisory committees for the Innovations and Research component of the federal Co-operative Development Initiative and is a member of the Canadian Women's CED Council.

Nominated by the Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation