



Creston & District  
Community Investment Co-op  
*"Invest At Home"*

## Community Impact Investment Briefing UBCM Meeting September 26-30, 2016

The rapid growth in Canada's responsible investment market, now at \$1 trillion (68% increase in 2 years), is a testament that investors wish to know their money is contributing to social, environmental and economic measures. Investors are increasingly looking to feel a sense of connection to their investments. At the same time, the majority of retail investment capital is leaving British Columbia and going into far off stock markets and corporations, creating jobs and wealth elsewhere. There is a clear opportunity to create community impact investment mechanisms in our Province. This would enable British Columbia residents to leverage their investment dollars with other economic development agencies and financial institutions, while contributing to community economic development at home.

Other Canadian provinces have recognized the opportunity for return on investment and the ability to build wealth and jobs in their own jurisdictions, by retaining investment capital at home. Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Manitoba have all created various programs, policies and tax credits to incentivize local investment.

This is why Kootenay Employment Services Society (KES) has committed to researching, coordinating and incorporating a community impact investment initiative - the Creston & District Community Investment Co-op (CDCI CO-OP). KES primarily serves Creston & District - a small, rural, agricultural area devoid of large industry. Our community faces numerous economic, employment, and social challenges common to areas like ours. We have been motivated by stories from around the world about local investment vehicles successfully meeting community needs. We are particularly inspired by examples that have resourced rural affordable housing, renewable energy and agri-food infrastructure – projects that can be extremely difficult to finance through traditional methods. It is encouraging to see that these investments tend to generate not only employment and economic activity, but also civic pride and new attitudes about local capacity to drive positive community change.

The CDCI CO-OP aims to direct investment capital from local residents into local ventures with high community impact. Projects which clearly show how they will positively enrich the economic, social and/or environmental settings within Creston & District will be considered for investments. The CDCI CO-OP will provide short term capital (1-5 years) to businesses looking to launch or expand, and assist these ventures in establishing a supportive customer base and a sustainable operation for their concept.

The CDCI CO-OP has an understanding with existing financiers, the local Credit Union and Community Futures, to share the overall risk and unlock additional capital, through collaborative lending. The CDCI CO-OP will encourage borrowers to secure any long-term, or ongoing, financing through local financial institutions.

Since the 2013 provincial election, community impact investing has gained a lot of traction in British Columbia. Several new organizations have been formed to raise and place local capital. In light of this momentum the Community Impact Investment Coalition (CIIC) of BC has formed. This group consists of about a dozen local investment practitioners including KES. The CIIC has identified limitations and barriers within the existing local investment sector, as well as opportunities for the Province to create legislative, regulatory, and program changes.

Almost all of the community impact investment funds in British Columbia have been established in urban, or semi-urban areas. The Creston & District Community Investment Co-op is the first of its type in rural British Columbia. We encourage partnerships and assistance from the Province on establishing the CDCI CO-OP, so we can serve as a model for other rural BC communities facing similar economic development challenges.

If you would like to get in touch, please email the CDCI CO-OP project coordinator, **Eden Yesh** at [cif@kes.bc.ca](mailto:cif@kes.bc.ca).

