

BC Craft Farmers Co-Op Elected Board

PROFILES

Jessika Villano

Jessika has operated the Buddha Barn retail dispensary/store in the City of Vancouver since 2014. She was among the first dispensaries to integrate on-site health services, pay all sales taxes and incorporate lab testing of products in collaboration with two federally accredited BC based laboratories. During this time Jessika served on Buddha Barn's non-profit Board and the Board of CAMCD – now known as ACCRES.

Jessika is a Founding Co-Op Member and decided to apply for the Board because she is disappointed with the product retailers are required to sell.

“My goal was to come through on the legal side with my growers. We have been working as a collective to ensure they would pass Health Canada testing since 2015. I believe the Co-Op is the way forward for dispensaries and micro growers to come together again.”

Jessika believes the Co-Op's 'envelope of rules' are all important to the members because they outlines the behaviours expected of us to ensure the co-op can thrive and provide the best services. As a Board Member, Jessika says she will devote as much time as needed to get BC growers into the legal system.

Sandra Colasanti

Sandra has been a leader in BC's cannabis sector as Treasurer for the successful MMAR Coalition Against Repeal and the Normal Women's Alliance of Canada. Today, she is President of REMO Brands Inc. which produces and sells a specialized line of nutrient products.

Sandra's original involvement started when her husband, Remo, was involved in a car accident that left him with a debilitating injury. In 2001, with her significant assistance, Remo became one of the first Canadians to be granted a medical cannabis license.

Sandra recently became aware of the BC Craft Farmers Co-Op and decided to join. When asked about organization governance, Sandra says, “I believe provisions for conflict resolution and mediation are the most important elements of the BC Craft Farmers Co-Op rules.”

Sandra says she joined the first elected Co-Op Board because, “We need to keep working on the change. I will do my best to make sure things are on the right track and stay focused on figuring out the best interests of the group.”

Nicole Post

In addition to being the new mother of a 4-month old baby, Nicole is Founder of Black Fin Extracts, a packaging and extracts company applying for a Standard Processing License. She has been active in the cannabis community for many years and seen a lot of changes.

One reason Nicole ran for the BC Craft Farmers Co-Op Board was her belief the current legal system is not working for small farmers. "I understand how overwhelming it is trying to enter the market. I want to be part of the change that brings craft cannabis back into the market and believe the Co-op is exactly what our industry needs."

Nicole's unique experience cuts across the entire supply chain. She has operated a retail shop in Victoria, an extractions wholesale company with national distribution and developed logistics, inventory and quality control policies.

Sophie Mas

Sophie is the Founder and CEO of Somas Consulting Inc. She has over 20 years' experience working in the regulatory and compliance sector for the Province of British Columbia. Until April 2018, Sophie was the Director of the BC Cannabis Regulation and Legislation Secretariat which led the development of the provincial regulatory framework for cannabis in BC.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ginyt9k2htqr2vp/SMas%20Board%20Submission.MOV?dl=0>

Bob Davidson

Bob is a medical patient cultivator under the MMAR injunction and seeking his craft micro license. Bob is a father of two in Langley with an Associate Degree in criminology and criminal justice. He says anyone who wakes up with a disability and seizes the day is his hero.

Among other things, Bob was a member of the successful MMAR Coalition against the federal government's attempted repeal of medical access. He has also worked with BC's Social Planning and Research Council to establish building codes and parking programs for people with disabilities.

Looking at the Co-Op's Rules, Bob highlights the Code of Conduct's commitment to respecting people, the plant and the planet as key values. He believes his interest and experience in legal matters will be a great help to the Co-Op.

Looking to the year ahead, Bob says, "The Co-Op needs to help roll medical growers into the craft grower program immediately, obtain access for craft cultivators to the sales market and push for an increase to allowable production yields."

Bill Day

Bill has been farming cannabis for approximately 20 years. He is a medical licence holder based on Vancouver Island. He has been an advocate for legalization since the first Trudeau government released the Le Dain Commission Report in the 1970s.

Bill owns a marine tourism business and is a former Board Member of Metro Media Association which is focused on educating social service organizations on how to use small format video production to promote their cause.

Bill decided to run for a Board position because even though the marketplace is legal, the government has put numerous barriers to entry for small farmers and processors. "It is very hard to get licences and the process has been designed without any communication with the people who are effected the most. The BC Craft Farmers Co-op can help push for improvements in the program, and I want to be part of that progress."

Bill believes the most important role for the Co-Op is to provide BC's cannabis micro cultivators and processors with a safe, accessible and sustainable alternative to the illicit market. "We need to push for a larger canopy space, government financing and a plan to reduce regulations at all levels."

Robyn Houle

Robyn is an Indigenous cannabis farmer on Vancouver Island who is thriving in the industry as a female entrepreneur. For the past 2.5 years, she has led a dedicated team specializing in bio salvation sciences, formulating recipes for edible cannabis and CBD oil testing for quality assurances.

One reason Robyn ran for the Board is because she wants to inspire more women and Indigenous farmers to be involved in leadership roles. "It would be an honour to share my experiences and knowledge to other like-minded growers that are wanting to transition into the legal cannabis market."

Among other things, Robyn believes her team and communication management experience will be an asset to the Co-Op Board. When asked about which elements of the Co-Op Rules stand out to her, she points to the Code of Conduct. "Respecting the plant and each other will help eliminate stigma because we need to speak responsibly about cannabis as a medicine and not as a drug."

Robyn believes an important issue for the Co-Op over the coming year will be providing the proper framework for independent farmers that want to transition to the legal marketplace. "We need to advocate for change. BC has the most to lose if our great farmers are not provided with a fair opportunity to participate."

Clay McCann, MA, MFA

Living in the Kootenays, Clay has worked in BC's cannabis production industry for 12+ years on a wide range of projects, including the edited collection "Cannabis in Canada" and development of a cannabis appellations program for BC. He is a Ph.D. Candidate for Industrial Cannabis / Agriculture Research at McMaster University and serves on the CJLY Community Co-Op Radio Board in Nelson.

Describing his research, Clay says, "My work concerns the social life of cannabis, and while that may seem a confusing claim, consider how cannabis is talked about in media accounts, how people identify with particular strains or consumption methods, how cannabis farmers talk about what they do and why it is important. Tracking all this conversation is challenging, yet rewarding research. It's like reading history at the very moment it transforms into historical fact."

After serving on Boards for more than three years, Clay says his experience taught him that it is a serious commitment. "You show up, having read the agenda and reports prior to meetings, with questions and concerns. Your vigilance is critical to the operation."

Clay hopes to see a Board of Directors with a variety of experience and world-views that can steer the organization effectively. He says, "Recruiting legacy producers in BC that are not members of the Co-Op will be a top priority. This population is significant."