



## SUSTAINABILITY DESIGN CASE STUDY

# Engaging Community with Graphic Design

Steven Cretney's approach to sustainable design starts by selecting clients and projects that help lead a transition to a sustainable future.

### Design Challenge

The Kootenay Co-op is not your typical grocery store; it's a retailer that has holistically supported sustainable living through organic foods and products, advocacy and education, and community funding and outreach since 1975. From its mission through to its buying and operational practices, the Co-op is a perfect example of an organization that is a sustainability leader.

With limited capacity and resources, the Co-op has always faced promotion challenges in a marketplace dominated by supermarket chains and cheap, unsustainable products. Lacking communication and design expertise, the in-house marketing team had been using a variety of styles and a number of inconsistent "logos" with no visual direction or focus for 37 years.

Recognizing the potential for greater impact with a compelling visual brand, the Co-op partnered with Steven Cretney of The Forest, a professional designer with a background in communications and a foreground in sustainability. The Co-op's desire to undergo a branding exercise was accentuated by a plan for a major expansion into a new location.

The challenge was to design a visual identity package that would capture the essence of this iconic community hub, while providing the necessary support for the Co-op to sustain effective results with limited resources.

### Strategy & Solutions

Throughout the process Cretney was mindful of embedding sustainability principles, explicitly choosing materials and processes that had the lowest environmental footprint, and using trusted suppliers and local vendors. Even rolling out the brand over time was a conscious decision to be more sustainable. "This allowed the Co-op to spread the investment over several years while reducing unnecessary waste," explained Cretney. "Tossing out usable pamphlets, plastic name tags and in store banners just isn't sustainable. In most cases we were able to repurpose them and defer the need for replacement by several years."

For the initial roll-out, key pieces that anchored the new visual brand were designed; the logo, exterior signage, uniforms and marketing collateral. Cretney understood that the success of the Co-op's brand would not lie just with its design, but with its integration and application. Building the capacity of the in-house marketing team



was necessary. Flexible identity guidelines, user-friendly templates and training were provided so the continued implementation of the brand would not require reliance on outside support.

### Result

The branding process has provided the Co-op renewed clarity and focus for its marketing and outreach efforts. The essence of the Co-op has been captured, effectively speaking to the Co-op's positive place in the community, its rich history, and its continued commitments to sustainability.

The in-house marketing team now has greater capacity to effectively develop new collateral, enabling their creativity to flourish with a consistent style and tone. Staff and members are excited and it shows – from increased uptake of publications to members proudly sporting the logo on reusable shopping bags and coffee mugs. With this professional brand, the Co-op is better poised to successfully venture into its next phase of existence.

"As a designer, working with clients and projects that are creating positive and lasting benefits to the environment and society is the most sustainable thing I can do," commented Cretney. "Yes, it is important to ensure projects use fewer materials and resources, but even more significant is ensuring my energy and skills are used to increase the impact of projects leading the transition to a sustainable future."

### Credits:

The Forest Communication Design: Steven Cretney cgd  
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