



Sustainable Jobs, Sustainable Local Economies

Follow up from John and Peter's April 5th conversation with

Michael Peck

North American Delegate, Mondragon Corporation

and

Kristen Barker

Founder and President, Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative

Questions from callers not addressed during the conversation

Are there Native American tribes using cooperatives?

Michael Peck's answer:

Thrive Market is working with the Lakota Sioux to address the food desert issues there.

This is a bit dated now but here's a report that the Canadian Co-operative Association did in 2012 about Aboriginal co-operatives (existing and in development) in

Canada: http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/CoopsInAboriginalCommunities2012_FINAL_lowrez.pdf

In Canada, Cando is the leading organization for Aboriginal community economic development. <http://www.edo.ca>

- ICA / LEAF have done some work in this area. Financing was provided to Navasew, a 71% Navajo worker-owner LLC in Montezuma Creek, Utah. LEAF is paying particular attention to asset deployment in Persistent Poverty Counties (PPC's) and many of the North American Indian Tribes are located in areas designated as PPC's.
- We at the Democracy Collaborative are working with five Native American groups on creating cooperatives, employee-owned companies, and social enterprises; we're in year 3 of a 5-year project. You can see more at <http://lab.community-wealth.org/>

Among the groups we are working with:

- Thunder Valley CDC on Pine Ridge is creating a whole planned community, the Regenerative Community, and is creating a worker-owned construction company to do much of the work.
- Native American Natural Foods on Pine Ridge is a \$3 million existing company, Native-owned, that is converting to employee ownership. They are also working to create a buffalo cooperative that will be Native-owned.
- Spokane Tribal Enterprises in Wellpinit, WA, is working with us on revamping a tribally owned trading post. It is a grocery store that is tribally owned and has been losing money for a long time. They have turned it around, it will soon be in the black. This could be a model for all of Indian country. We are working with them to incorporate aspects of cooperative ownership, like possibly patronage refunds, and consumer input via a council; they have decided not to become a cooperative as they see tribal ownership as close to the same thing.
- Northwest Area Foundation does a lot of work with tribes and Indian Country. They have helped fund the creation of a lot of Native CDFIs. Their view, and ours, is that cooperatives are one new form of ownership that deserves a bigger role in Indian Country; but we have found that other models are often more appropriate, including worker ownership in other forms (eg. S. Corp.), social enterprise (owned by Native-run nonprofits), and tribal ownership with aspects of cooperative design. We have found it's important to stay attuned to

reality on the ground, and not push cooperatives in every case.

Also, NWAF has a new Social Enterprise project, on which we at Democracy Collaborative are advising them. See grants from last quarter of 2015. More will be coming in first quarter 2016. <http://www.nwaf.org/grant-listing/>

- The [Common Enterprise Development Corporation](#) (CEDC) has been doing interesting/good work with Native American communities in North Dakota, South Dakota, and Minnesota around access to food, quality healthcare, and other issues.
- We (the Public Banking Institute) presented to some tribal leaders in attendance at the Bretton Woods IV conference last October and discovered a new prospect for their community development agenda, creating tribally-owned public banks. They were very interested and we've begun conversations with them about how to proceed. The tribes are the Akwesasne Mohawks (NY and Canada) and the Iroquois. I'd be happy to connect you with them if you think it worthwhile.
- Canada - Neechi Foods is a massive indigenous worker-owned grocery and native crafts store with a restaurant in Winnipeg. The folks at Canadian CED Network do a lot with them.
- The Democracy Collaborative has also been doing community wealth work with native CDFIs in South Dakota but we don't know if it's co-ops or tribally owned and non-profit enterprises.
- There's some interesting tribally owned renewable energy work going on in Arizona.

Additional information from Jonah Fertig, [Cooperative Development Institute](#) Cooperative Development Specialist, [Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative](#) Board Member and [Celebration Tree Farm](#) Co-Owner:

For the past year, with the Cooperative Development Institute I have been doing some work with members of the Penobscot Nation in Maine to form a cooperative farm and market. Unfortunately that project took a backburner as primary members of the cooperative were also fighting the State of Maine's further theft of their territory.

Last fall, I attended a Wabanaki Wellness Gathering (the Wabanaki are the federation of tribes in Maine) to talk about possibilities of a Wabanaki Cooperative that could bring together the tribes to re-invigorate trading amongst the tribes. This was an idea of a Penobscot organizer. This idea was in the beginning stages but there was a lot of interest. This year I will probably work with them further on this idea and also help with a cooperative pop-up craft market on Passamaquoddy Territory.

I have also had some conversations with members of the Secwepemc Nation, in British Columbia, about a Native-owned cooperative online marketplace. But again, these organizers were fighting further destruction of their territory and so the cooperative idea took a backburner.

The Cooperative Development Institute is also working with members of the Mohawk Nation to form a collective farm. Not formally a cooperative, but it will be cooperatively organized.

For a really inspiring example of Native-owned cooperatives, I recommend checking out the Arctic Cooperatives Limited. They are a federation of cooperatives in the arctic circle that provide many of the basic needs of the indigenous people there and also provide the majority of employment. I learned about them a few years ago and it is very inspiring.

This is an area of cooperative development that I hope to continue to participate in as it seems like there is an interest in Native communities and cooperatives can connect to traditional community based structures.

Do you think there is greater opportunity in supporting small neighborhood enterprise/ownership of these larger, scaled up coops? Or both.

Michael Peck: We have to target both. 1worker1vote/CUCI aims to include, design, build, launch, evaluate, replicate and scale.

Any idea of the success rate for groups attempting to create a coop?

Michael Peck: The Solidarity Research Cooperative (SRC) may know <http://solidarityresearch.coop/>. Also the Solidarity Research Center <http://solidarityresearch.org/>.

Abundantcommunity.com: Also, Sara Stephens article "Worker Cooperatives: Performance and Success Factors" may provide some insight <http://www.co-oplaw.org/worker-co-op-resources/worker-cooperatives-performance-and-success-factors/>

Questions, comments and references mentioned in the chat box or the conversation

The full video of the BBC documentary The Mondragon Experiment is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJRLsKGzyNg>

Question: German nonnuc. Energiewende movement empowers citizens 4 clean power generation co-ops & new good employment. See related opportunities here?

Humanizing the Economy: Co-ops in the Age of Capital (book, Google excerpt) by John Restakis <http://bit.ly/16ARE8r>

Holy Cooperation: Building Graceful Economies (book) by Andrew McLeod <http://bit.ly/1J4sAJ7>

In my view, one of the unique opportunities offered by employee-owned coops is the potential to include worker-members with disabilities in the work.

As cooperative ventures gain a greater share of GDP has there been any thought given to the possibility of an organized opposition developing?

In terms of operational funding, can you speak to the relationships between the Mondragon worker coops and the affiliated credit unions?

Websites, organizations, etc Michael and Kristen referred to in the conversation

CUCI initiatives <http://www.cincinnatiunioncoop.org/our-initiatives/>

The Harvard Business Review article by Polly LaBarre is “Changing Capitalism, One Organization at a Time”
<https://hbr.org/2012/06/how-to-change-capitalism-one>

1worker1vote.org website
<https://t.e2ma.net/click/rxgom/79s2wb/zbpqre>

1worker1vote.org Facebook
<https://t.e2ma.net/click/rxgom/79s2wb/f4pqre>

Democracy at Work Institute <http://institute.coop/>

US Federation of Worker Cooperatives <http://usworker.coop>

Ohio Employee Ownership Center at Kent State University
<http://www.oeockent.org/>

Canadian Worker Co-operative Federation
<http://canadianworker.coop>

More resources

[Apple Street Market](#)

Cincinnati Union Co-operative Institute

Documentary video showing how the Northside neighborhood in Cincinnati is using community ownership to solve the problem of urban supermarket shortage.

[The Cooperative Way to a Stronger Economy](#)

By Sarah van Gelder

How co-ops — just like people — can get more done together than anyone can do alone. They come in many forms, and are more common than you might imagine

[America's National Inequality Snapshot \(1941–2016\)](#)

By Michael Peck, 1worker1vote.org, February 5 -18, 2016

A look at America's political, economic, demographic, generational and racial divides over the past 75 years and how virtuous capitalism requires broad-based ownership to improve local societal realities, to create value and to share it differently.

[Audio Story: Kristen Barker](#)

We Do the Work, KSVR Studios, Mount Vernon, WA

Kristen talks about how CUCI is creating jobs that are family supporting and improve the local economy in the Greater Cincinnati area by replicating and enhancing the long standing success of Mondragon's Worker-Owned Cooperative Model by implementing the United Steelworker (USW)/Mondragon agreement.

[U.S. Mondragon Rep: Michael Peck](#)

The 25th Annual Ohio Employee Ownership Conference, Kent State University, May 2012

Two-part video of Michael on Mondragon's history and work in more than 70 countries around the world, the 10 principles that are the foundation of the Mondragon co-operatives and the made-in-America adaptation of the model. Watch at least the first three or four minutes for a deeper understanding of Michael and his work.

[What's Next for the World's Largest Federation of Worker-Owned Co-Ops?](#)

By Mary Hansen, YES! Magazine, June 12, 2015

An interview with Mondragon President Josu Ugarte on the future of the mega-co-operative.

[Sustainable Jobs, Sustainable Communities: The Union Co-op Model](#)

By Rob Witherell, United Steelworkers; Chris Cooper, Ohio Employee Ownership Center; and Michael Peck, Mondragon International USA, March 2012

Ideas and guidelines for forming new union co-ops, based on the 10 principles of the Mondragon co-operatives.