



Exploring a Community-based Response to our Criminality Crisis

A blog series by Ralph Gutkin

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Part 1

Ralph Gutkin (second from right) engaged in dialogue at Peterborough Dialogues last year.



Exploring a Community-based Response to our Criminality Crisis

I have become very passionate about finding a rational, humane, and community-based response to our criminality crisis.

Some of you may wonder about the term 'crisis'. One online dictionary defines it as "a stage in a sequence of events at which

the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined; turning point." I believe that we are and have been at that point for a very long time. Over the past several months I have been laying the groundwork for a very specific initiative that holds promise for a heartfelt, restorative, and healing response here in Peterborough.

We all pay a huge price, financially and societally, every time a crime is committed. I was blown away when I read that according to the Fraser Institute, Canadians spend over \$85 billion annually being victimized by, catching, and punishing crime of which over half (\$47 billion) is attributed to victims' losses. The figures have doubled since 1998.

Another report on one (but all too frequent) category of crime, domestic violence, estimated a \$7.4 billion price tag in Canada in 2009. The majority (\$5.5 billion) coming in the form of intangible costs borne by victims in pain and suffering and loss of life and their family members through loss of affection and enjoyment. (Zhang, Hoddenbagh, McDonald, Scrim, An Estimation of the Economic Impact of Spousal Violence in Canada, 2009).

That report highlights the following sobering reminders of what our social scientists have been telling us: "Crime affects the victim most seriously, but children and other family members, neighbours and friends, employers, government, and the general public are also affected to varying degrees. In particular, children exposed to spousal violence have an increased risk of committing acts of property damage, developing mental health issues, and not reaching their full earning potential."

"It is documented that children exposed to spousal violence are more likely than other children to develop social disorders (e.g. hyperactivity and aggressiveness), emotional disorders (mental health issues), and delinquency issues...; that being raised in a household where violence is present increases the probability of exhibiting physically aggressive behaviour.

All of these negative effects present significant costs to children, their parents, and to society in general. Moreover, these problems often persist into the child's adulthood... and future generations of a family can become trapped in a cycle of violence. Female children who have been exposed to the abuse of their mothers by their fathers are more likely to be abused by their partners later in life, and males exposed to this behaviour often reproduce this behaviour with their future spouses."

We all pay a huge price, financially and societally, every time a crime is committed.

"Over the decade from 2002 to 2012 the crime rate has fallen by roughly 27 per cent... Nonetheless the cost of dealing with crime by the justice system has risen by 35 per cent." (The Fraser Report). That ten year comparison roughly coincides with the Harper administration and its various 'tough on crime measures' including a dramatic increase in our incarceration rates.

There is a growing body of literature that paints a very grim picture of the costs, financial and non monetary of crime: Over \$85 billion in 2014, a staggering amount that belies the human cost.

In my next post I'll touch on the linkage between poverty, unemployment and the commission of crime as well as what our recidivism rates are telling us.



Understanding Systemic Contributors to Crime and Recidivism

We all pay a staggering cost for crime — ‘we’ being victims most noticeably, but also children, other family members, neighbours and friends, employers, government, the general public and the offender.

There are many factors that lead to the commission of crime, and every situation has its own unique variables. That said, it is abundantly clear that poverty, unemployment and lack of education represent a significant contribution to criminality. The authors of the Fraser Report that I referred to in my first blog, highlight the research which shows that as a group, convicted offenders often have

relatively low levels of education and less employment. They comment: “Employment plays a large part in society and detachment from work prior to incarceration is common among offenders. In 2003/2004, 45 per cent of those incarcerated were unemployed (yet able to work) prior to incarceration while 42 per cent were employed (Beattie, 2005). Five years later there has been little change: 47 per cent of inmates were unemployed prior to incarceration while 41 per cent indicated they were employed) at least part time (Calverley, 2010).”

Dr. Isobel Findlay, a University of Saskatchewan professor who has been

studying worker co-ops and their value in the rehabilitation/re-socialization of Aboriginal women presented a paper, *Through the Eyes of Women: Co-ops, Incarceration, and Integration* at the ICA Research Conference on Co-operatives and the World of Work held in Turkey in November 2015. Her findings are very consistent with other research and point to the impact of the systemic problems leading to criminality and the compounding impact of incarceration: “The interviewed women demonstrate that criminality is often the by-product of adverse life experiences, trauma, grief, and impoverished living environments that remain largely unaddressed by current correctional policies. The study’s interviews confirm that individuals who come from impoverished environments are disproportionately overrepresented amongst those who offend, and that education and work-related skills generally deteriorate as a result of incarceration, exacerbating their difficulties and adding new social stigma as criminals.”

The Who Pays study* focuses on the same cyclical impact of poverty and imprisonment: “The research in this report confirms that the financial costs of incarceration and the barriers to employment and economic mobility upon release further solidify the link between incarceration and poverty.”

When you read the plethora of literature on the cost of crime and its correlation to societal ills and shortfalls, you have to seriously question why we seem not to be addressing needs that are clearly evident. And then add in, what we know of recidivism or the likelihood of reoffending. While, the numbers are not consistent, they are disturbing:

- About two thirds of ex-prisoners in Canada reoffend (Langan & Levin, 2002)

- 37.4 per cent (provincial inmates – 2013/14) reoffend (Ministry of Community Safety and Corrections Services website)
- According to the federal government, it is within the range of 41-44 per cent for federal offenders
- Short-term inmates are the most likely (70 per cent recidivism) to reoffend when they receive few educational and other services to help them cope (Lösel, 2007).

So are there measures that can reverse these trends? I will address that in ensuing posts.

Suggested Reading:

*For those of you who are interested in studying the issue of the costs of crime on the offender, his/her family and consequently the larger community, I recommend looking at *Who Pays? The True Cost of Incarceration on Families* which is produced by the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights in the United States. It speaks to the legacy of decades of a very ‘tough on crime’ criminal justice system that “last(s) for generations and (is) felt most deeply by women, low-income families, and communities of color (which in this country, we know, includes our Indigenous population)... The repercussions of these policies extend far beyond sentencing and incarceration, affecting the employment, education, housing, and health of individuals and their families for years to come.”

The executive summary can be found at: http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/collateralconsequences/images/resources/Who_Pays.pdf

The full report at: <http://whopaysreport.org/who-pays-full-report/>



Successful Reintegration Requires Community Support

A stage in a sequence of events at which the trend of all future events, especially for better or for worse, is determined; turning point” — the definition of crisis that we looked at in the first post. A doubling of the cost in crime in 16 years, mounting research which documents the detrimental cost on children of witnessing a violent crime or of being brought up in a home with an incarcerated parent and our alarming rates of recidivism.

Martin Luther King Jr. Day was recently celebrated. King is noted for his belief in the inter-connectedness of all humanity. When he was incarcerated, King wrote “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

The rational argument for putting money and resources into an appropriate response to deal with the reintegration of offenders is well articulated in a blog posted about four years ago in the Huffington Post, *The Employment of Ex-Offenders is Important to Everyone**:

“It’s tempting not to think about folks getting out of prison, returning to our neighborhoods. If you’ve never been to prison, it’s easy to be suspicious and dismissive of those who have. If you find yourself having to deal in some way with folks getting out of prison, it’s tempting to go out of your way to avoid it as much as possible. It’s tempting to think of ex-prisoners as bound up with trouble, and of their return as bad news. It’s tempting to turn a blind eye, a deaf ear, a cold shoulder. But people are

getting out of prison and returning to our community all the time.

Their return is inevitable; it's not whether people return from prison, but how they return. Successfully or unsuccessfully. Despite our temptation to ignore them and their plight, their successful return is important to all of us... Each of these persons is someone's brother, someone's mother, someone's child, and they are all members of our community...

They face, though, an uphill and almost insurmountable battle. Many emerge from prison without much more than the shirts on their backs and their criminal records. And the circumstances to which ex-offenders would return may not be conducive to good choices and positive opportunities. Too often, the circumstances they were in before they were incarcerated — lack of education, little to no income, minimal or no employment experience, impoverished neighborhoods with scarce economic opportunity and prevalence of criminal activity — are the circumstances to which, without intervention, they will likely have little choice but to return to.

But, return they will. And what does an unsuccessful return look like? Unemployment. Homelessness. Destitution. Desperation. Altogether undesirable conditions for our community. But the greatest of these is unemployment. More than anything else, the difficulty an ex-offender faces in gaining employment correlates with recidivism. Conversely, the best predictor of a successful return from prison is employment. Those who return from prison and get jobs are far more likely to keep from going back to prison. If an ex-offender can get a job, so many of the other important factors for a successful return fall into place: income, housing, food are some of the obvious tangible benefits, and self-esteem, a structured

lifestyle, and a foothold for the future are equally if not more profoundly impactful."

Einstein is quoted as saying that the definition of insanity is "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Our approach to many facets of the criminal justice system, including what we do to prepare the incarcerated for their return to society,

"We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."
— Martin Luther King Jr.

has not been, and is, not working. It can only be categorized as insensitive, insane or likely a combination of the two. Experience and research tells us that employment (and particularly one avenue thereof) can make a substantial difference. In the posts to follow, I will briefly canvass some of those programs and introduce the one approach that seems to hold the most promise of making things significantly better for everyone.

*Read the article, The Employment of Ex-Offenders is Important to Everyone, in its entirety here:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/project-return/the-employment-of-exoffender_b_2537151.html



The Rehabilitative Impact Of Social Enterprises

It is generally recognized that employment (and appropriate training/education) are crucial components in the successful reintegration following a jail sentence. As outlined in the Huffington Post blog to which I previously referred. “Those who return from prison and get jobs are far more likely to keep from going back to prison. If an ex-offender can get a job, so many of the other important factors for a successful return fall into place: income, housing, food are some of the obvious tangible benefits, and self-esteem, a structured lifestyle, and a foothold for the future are equally if not more profoundly impactful.”

In Canada and the U.S., there is a track record of funding social enterprise programs that provide life and job skills training, work experience and assistance

in finding ‘permanent’ employment for inmates and ex-offenders. Some operate within the prison institution including those who provide a ‘through the gate’ opportunity while others are entirely within the community. Two examples of that, north of the border, are KLINK Coffee in Toronto and Stella’s Circle in St. John’s, N.L. KLINK Coffee’s website describes their program as:

“KLINK assists individuals in removing barriers to entering the workforce. As a John Howard Society of Toronto social enterprise, KLINK works especially with clients coming out of the criminal justice system. Employment readiness training is offered by an employment specialist and covers topics such as work attitudes, employer expectations, long term employment behaviour patterns, job

search skills, interview skills, budgeting, and credit scores. In addition, clients are trained in topics such as disclosing a criminal record, institutional gaps in a client's resume, and the rights of a job seeker.

Following the employment readiness training, the client has the option of entering into a work placement ranging from four weeks to four months in the coffee industry. Some placements have led to clients permanently working for our employment partners... Skills and knowledge in the coffee industry, in addition to work experience and a reference, help set individuals on the right foot when entering the job market and leaving the criminal justice system."

Stella's Circle's social enterprise ventures include The Hungry Heart Café which offers training to help people enter the food service industry as cooks, servers, or kitchen staff. Both enterprises are featured in an inspiring video displayed on KLINK Coffee's website (at drinkklink.com, click 'social value' and scroll down to the middle of the page) which is produced by Corrections Canada entitled "Engaging the Community". The value of such ventures is alternately stressed by Sonya Spencer of the John Howard Society of Toronto and the two representatives of Corrections Canada and of Employment and Social Development Canada, all of whom extol the virtues of the partnerships created through inter-governmental and community collaborations.

There are numerous examples of such programs in the U.S. including the Delancey Street Foundation which started in San Francisco and which has been in operation for over 45 years (its website, delanceystreetfoundation.org, has a lot of useful/interesting information — be prepared to spend some time navigating it), Project Return and the Fortune Society. The posting on Project Return's site

Wouldn't it be exciting to take the very best ideas... of all of these social enterprises and add in a different business model that would bolster the experience of the ex-offender in turning his/her life around?

compares its 13.7 per cent recidivism rate for former offenders who completed its program to the national average of 50 per cent. The Fortune Society reports that its programs helped participants avoid over 88,000 days in jail and prison in one year, saving the City and State of New York over \$8 million.

For all of the good that these social enterprises certainly provide, my discussions with the directors of a couple of local social service agencies and with the manager of another, highlight the precariousness of these ventures. They tend to be non self-sustaining requiring a continuous infusion of money. Problems arise if a need has been created and the doors have to be closed due to a lack of funding.

Wouldn't it be exciting to take the very best ideas, the greatest achievements of all of these social enterprises and add in a different business model that would bolster the experience of the ex-offender in turning his/her life around and in reinforcing the underpinnings of reintegration and rehabilitation?

Starting with my next post, we'll look at the worker co-op model and why we should be investing in it.



A Co-operative Approach to Reintegration

In my previous post we looked at our track record of funding programs that provide life and job skills training, a work experience and assistance in finding ‘permanent’ employment for inmates and ex-offenders. We know that these have proven quite valuable in the reintegration/rehabilitation process but the model has its sustainability issues. We will now shift our focus to the (multi-stakeholder) worker co-op model, examine what we know of its efficacy and the plan I am proposing for this community.

First of all, let’s examine these terms:

“**Worker co-operatives** are businesses that are owned and democratically controlled by the members... through operating an enterprise that follows the Co-operative Values and Principles.” (Canadian Worker

Co-op Federation, Starting a Worker Co-op: A Canadian Handbook)

“**Multi-stakeholder co-operatives** (MSCs) are co-ops that formally allow for governance by representatives of two or more “stakeholder” groups within the same organization, including... workers, volunteers or general community supporters. Rather than being organized around a single class of members the way that most co-operatives are, multi-stakeholder co-operatives enjoy a heterogeneous membership base. The common mission that is the central organizing principle of a multi-stakeholder co-operative is also often more broad than the kind of mission statement needed to capture the interests of only a single stakeholder group, and will generally reflect the interdependence of interests of the multiple partners.”

(Lund, Solidarity as a Business Model: A Multi-Stakeholder Co-operatives Manual, Co-operative Development Center at Kent State University)

The seedling for this project spontaneously emerged last June as I was listening to a report on the CBC radio program, The Sunday Edition, regarding worker co-operatives in California. I immediately went back to Starting a Worker Co-op: A Canadian Handbook published by the Canadian Worker Co-op Federation and confirmed my belief of the obvious synchronicity of the principles of rehabilitation/reintegration with those of the co-op movement:

“Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. Co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.”

This was recognized by the John Howard Society Canada which published a report entitled, Prisoner-based Co-operatives: Working it out in Canada, in 2013:

“Co-operatives are based on the values of self-help, democracy, equality, equity, and solidarity. Co-operative members believe in the ethical values of honesty, openness, social responsibility, and caring for others.”

“Being a member of a co-operative exposes prisoners to a set of values that are consistent with good citizenship and should in themselves support a successful reintegration.”

“The very principles of co-operatives embody pro-social values that support the rehabilitation and reintegration of prisoners. Membership in co-operatives is voluntary, so only willing participants would be members, and this would increase engagement to the endeavour. The fact that all members have a voice and share in the ownership would make it an empowering experience and emphasize collaboration... The linking of the member’s share of the proceeds to the member’s contribution should promote a shared work ethic and a sense of fairness. As autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members, members make the decisions about the direction of the business. This is consistent with the research on reducing recidivism that emphasizes the significance of acquiring capacities to govern and control the direction of one’s life as well as opportunities necessary to exercise those capacities. The provision of education and training for members to enable them to contribute to the co-operative is particularly important for prisoners. It would allow them not just to get the training needed for the industry of the co-operative but would also support

their reintegration... Being a member of a co-operative exposes prisoners to a set of values that are consistent with good citizenship and should in themselves support a successful reintegration.”

There has been some exciting research conducted which supports this which I will explore in my next post.

In conclusion, let's look at some of the statistics which have been published regarding the track record of inmate/ex-offender worker co-ops:

- In Italy, where there were 1,146 prisoners employed in about 100 prison worker co-ops in 2014, their

recidivism rate dropped to less than 10 per cent from the national average of 80 per cent. (Apparently, some individual studies have shown even more remarkable results).

- Sweden estimates that worker co-ops save the equivalent of roughly \$155,000 CDN each year per worker in cost-savings to governments relating to criminal justice, addictions, social services, and health care.
- UK's Ex-cell (former inmate worker co-op) program which has been operating since 2006 has recorded reoffending rates one year after release of less than two per cent compared with the typical 40 per cent rate.



Worker Co-op Model Proving Supportive of Rehabilitation

In my last post, I quoted from the report produced by the John Howard Society which recognized how the worker co-op model could be supportive of the rehabilitation process. That suggestion has now been supported by the work of two other researchers.

The first of these studies has been conducted by Dr. Beth Weaver, a researcher and senior lecturer in the Department of Social Work and Social Policy, specialising in Criminology and Criminal Justice Social Work at the University of Strathclyde, in Glasgow, Scotland. She also lectures in the law faculty. Dr. Weaver has been studying

the role of through-the-gate social co-operatives operating in Italy. Last year, she published a paper¹ reporting on her initial findings. She notes that the law in Italy establishes co-ops as “collective organisations that invest in and engage the local community and represent the interests of different groups of stakeholders; so there is a strong co-productive element to co-operatives — public authorities, private business, social firms, and civil society organisations not only co-produce the co-operative process, but its culture and its outcomes. Indeed, social co-operatives are shaped and influenced, to a large extent, by their social networks and the culture in which

they are embedded... In terms of social values, the people I spoke to cited work, home and family as the 'social values prevalent in the(ir) community'... the integral ingredients of social integration of a 'normal life', consistent with social/cultural norms."

She reports that these co-ops "do more than simply providing a route into employment; this paper shows how social co-operatives can help overcome the stigma of a criminal record and discrimination in the labour market by providing access to work for some of those who are disadvantaged in this arena and supporting integration into 'mainstream' work... In this vein, the co-operative culture, the relational environment, is as important as the provision of paid work in contributing to the outcomes... They provide holistic and individualised resettlement support for both former/prisoners and their family... They are embedded in and

"(Social co-operatives) provide holistic and individualised resettlement support for both former/prisoners and their family... They are embedded in and inclusive of their community – they create opportunities for social participation."

"(S)ocial co-operatives can help overcome the stigma of a criminal record and discrimination in the labour market..."

inclusive of their community — they create opportunities for social participation."

Dr. Isobel Findlay is a professor at the Edwards School of Business, University of Saskatchewan and the University co-director of the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR), which is a partnership between community-based organizations and researchers, promoting and supporting economic development, community entrepreneurship, and environmental sustainability. She has published widely including in the areas of co-operative studies, cultures and communities, Aboriginal entrepreneurship, and law and culture. Dr. Findlay has completed a study² focusing on Indigenous women in Saskatchewan prisons which she describes as building "on suggestive studies in Canada... and in Europe... to explore the potential of prison co-operatives to support women during incarceration and reintegration, empowering women in terms of voice and choice, engaging their talents in productive work, and learning who they are and how they can rewrite their own life stories."

She cites other research which highlights how the operating principles of the worker co-op model (which we looked at in the last post) in combination with job and life

skills training, a community orientation, “solidaristic creating” and utilization of social capital empowers its members to become “independent, self-governing, self-organized, and self-initiated individuals” thus imbuing this group of “marginalized individuals with a new sense of status, identity, and empowerment.” Dr. Findlay concludes that consistent with other studies (Canadian and European) of prison-based co-operatives “incarcerated individuals are more likely to succeed upon their release when they feel empowered by their learning and capabilities and supported by quality social bonds and effective coping strategies... Alongside worrying reports of increasing recidivism and overburdened justice systems, the study’s findings highlight the important role prison-based co-operatives could play not only in work-related skills and income but also in a sense of self-efficacy, of agency as active participants in the social world.”

In my next post, I will report on why the worker co-op model may be a more sound approach from a business perspective than, for example, the other social enterprise

structures that we briefly studied. I will introduce an outline of my vision.

Suggested Reading:

1. Weaver, “Co-producing Desistance from Crime: The Role of Social Cooperative Structures of Employment” — The Howard League for Penal Reform, ECAN Bulletin 28, February 2016: <http://howardleague.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/ECAN-Bulletin-Issue-28-February-2016.pdf>

See also Weaver and Nicholson, “Co-producing Change: Resettlement as a Mutual Enterprise”, The Prison Service Journal, November 2012: <https://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk/sites/crimeandjustice.org.uk/files/PSJ%20November%202012%20No.%20204.pdf>

2. “Through the Eyes of Women: Co-ops, Incarceration, and Integration”, paper presented at the ICA Research Conference on Cooperatives and the World of Work, Antalya, Turkey, Nov. 9-10, 2015



The Resilience of and Success Markers for Worker Co-ops

As you read in my last post, the recent research conducted by two scholars, corroborates earlier studies and concludes that the worker co-op model goes beyond just providing an employment opportunity (which is in itself a vital piece of successful reintegration) but its culture and relational environment “provide(s) holistic and individualised resettlement support for both former/prisoners and their family... which create(s) opportunities for social participation” and “a sense of self-efficacy, of agency as active participants in the social world.” From my own experience, which includes hours of chatting with and listening to prison inmates and those who

have been released, I would add to that the vital importance of gaining a sense of hope, dignity and pride in being part of a viable, pro social entrepreneurial venture.

The choice of the co-op model seems to be supported by research that shows that it can be a more resilient way of operating than a traditional non-worker owned operation:

Co-operatives in British Columbia between 2000 and 2010 had a five-year survival rate of 66.6 per cent compared to conventional Canadian businesses what had a 43 per cent and 39 per cent five-year survival rate in 1984 and 1993, respectively.

Alberta co-operatives created in 2005 and 2006 had a three-year survival rate of 81.5 per cent compared to 48 per cent for conventional businesses in that province.

A 2008 study in Quebec showed that co-ops had a five-year survival rate of 62 per cent and ten-year survival rate of 44 per cent, compared to 35 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, for other Quebec businesses.

Why? Studies point to 3 factors:

- Lower worker turnover
- Low absenteeism
- Better quality products and services.

The Co-operative Learning Centre states that “this is the result of the high motivation of workers. They know that the business belongs to them. They know that the better their work, and the greater the surplus the enterprise generates at the end of the year, the more they can increase their income through returns.”

In an article entitled *Worker Cooperatives Are More Productive Than Normal Companies*, Michelle Chen pens “A close analysis of the performance of worker-owned co-operative firms — companies in which workers share in management and ownership — shows that, compared to standard top-down

firms, co-ops can be a viable, even superior way of doing business.”

So, what needs to be in place for a worker co-op to be viable? Hilary Abell, a leading American expert on cooperative development in low-income communities published a report in 2014 *Worker Cooperatives: Pathways to Scale*, in which she identifies the following factors:

1. Ongoing training and cultivation of co-operative culture
2. Design for business success
3. Effective long-term support
4. Patient capital
5. Strong management and social entrepreneurial leadership
6. Good governance

In the next post, I will outline the enterprise that I am proposing and the reasoning behind that.

Suggested Watch:

I highly recommend watching the interview of Ms. Abell in which she speaks about the transformative impacts of co-ops, their role in the ecosystem, keys to success and issues relating to funding. Visit bealocalist.org/hilary-abell to see the video.



A 'Delicious Idea' for a Worker Co-op In Peterborough

We have explored the benefits of establishing a multi-disciplinary worker co-op for former offenders in Peterborough. So, what enterprise am I suggesting for this venture? From the photo, you may know...

Why a Bakery?

- Relative low cost to start one (there are various models for running a bakery, at least from the outset, including traditional storefront, truck, bakery cart — all of which need to be explored)
- Product that can potentially reach any household, restaurant, store, school

program, institution (Prison — just imagine the product being part of the daily food regime for the inmates of an institution — the hope and inspiration it could provide when the news of the source is communicated!)

- 'Intimacy of connection' between public and co-op workers. (Beth Weaver, in her paper mentioned in Part 6 of this series, addresses this point: "Various strategies for enhancing community co-operation and support include: holding social events for workers, professionals and members of the community, which are aimed at breaking down barriers and stereotypes; developing community

facing features to the co-operatives in order to be community-inclusive i.e. running a café or shop.”)

If you watched the video on KLINK Coffee’s website, Engaging the Community (at drinkklink.com, click ‘social value’ and scroll down to the middle of the page) which I mentioned in Part 4, you’ll get a real sense of this notion of “community facing features”. The video opens with a customer and Melissa, one of the employees, talking about their experience of the community connection. I still am impacted when I watch Melissa’s eyes light up and the smile break out on her face as she initially, proudly talks about the product line and then, at about the 2:34 mark, about the connection with the public, her joy in watching customers’ reactions on sampling the food and the importance of the job to her (“oh my gosh, it makes you feel so good...”)

Bakeries and cafés seem to be a relatively common start-up enterprise for ex-offender social enterprises including the bakery/café run by Stella’s Circle in St. John’s and the Delancey Street Foundation in San Francisco. There are several bakeries operating as co-ops within and outside of prison in Italy .

There are various examples of successful co-op bakeries including the award-winning Arizmendi Bakery in the San Francisco Bay area. It has established an association to serve as “a network, incubator, and technical assistance provider that is owned,

Bakeries and cafés seem to be a relatively common start-up enterprise for ex-offender social enterprises.

governed, and funded by the member workplaces it creates and serves. Our primary activity is to replicate and offer continuing support to new retail bakeries based on a proven cooperative business model.” (The Replication of Arizmendi Bakery: A Model of the Democratic Worker Cooperative Movement).

A Calgary co-op bakery, The Grain Exchange, is now up and fully operating. It attributes its successful operation to the assistance/guidance of the Arizmendi Association, which included receiving recipes and functional guidance. I have been in touch with its principal who has expressed interest in providing like help to our venture.

The bakery idea inspired me from the outset. There are certainly other possibilities which could be explored. Anyone have any thoughts/suggestions?

In the concluding post, we’ll look at how this idea fits in so well with current thinking regarding community building.



Co-creating a Restorative Community

People commit crimes for many reasons. There is a high correlation between criminal acts and unemployment, poverty, under education and substance abuse. Hugh Segal has written about it in his work on guaranteed income. It is acknowledged in the publication of the Fraser Institute, the bastion of Canadian conservative values, which I mentioned earlier in this series. People who work in the field deal with it on a daily basis. Spend any time inside prison walls or talking to those who have offended, as I have, and the connection is glaringly obvious. Crime is a societal phenomenon — our response ought as well to emanate from the collective will.

In approaching this social phenomenon of crime, it is important not to view it as a problem to be solved. Instead, we can

respond by examining the ameliorative possibilities we can create together. This focus on possibility is an approach Peter

In approaching this social phenomenon of crime... we can respond by examining the ameliorative possibilities we can create together.

Block, noted author and community builder, maps out in compelling terms. In his book, *Community: The Structure of*

Belonging Block encourages us to shift away from the pattern of “defining, analyzing, and studying problems” as the way of making a better world. Doing so, “may actually limit any chance of the future being different from the past. The interest we have in problems is so intense that at some point we take our identity from those problems. Without them, it seems like we would not know who we are as a community,” he writes.

Restoration begins when we think of community as a possibility.

Block says that this focus leads to a retributive approach which is “based on a culture of fear, fault finding, fragmentation, and worrying more about taxes than compassion; it is more about being right than working something out, more about gerrymandering for our own interest than giving voice to those on the margin.”

Retribution by its nature serves to fragment community and reduce social capital.

His solution is restorative community which, “is created when we allow ourselves to use the language of healing and relatedness and belonging without embarrassment. It recognizes that taking responsibility for one’s own part in creating the present situation is the critical act of courage and engagement, which is the axis around which the future rotates.”

Restoration begins when we think of community as a possibility. What is the declaration of the future that we choose to live into? The communal possibility

rotates on the question, “What can we create together?” This question is at the intersection of possibility and accountability and our willingness to care for the whole.

There is growing interest in the principles of restorative justice. Restorative justice focuses on addressing conflict and crime in a way that enables the person who caused the harm, affected parties, and the community to co-create meaningful healing. Its aim is one of repairing damage, restoring relationships, promoting accountability of former offenders and the involvement of citizens in creating healthier, safer communities.

There is an obvious intersection between Block’s restorative community and restorative justice principles.

I don’t know how one can expect damage to be repaired and relationships restored if the seeds of the social phenomenon that incubate violence and crime are not addressed. What I have proposed is very much part of Block’s vision — a collaboration of community stakeholders, who, regardless of their contribution to the situation are prepared to step forward and participate in the creation of a viable possibility they have every reason to believe can work. This includes:

- **The person who had offended** who steps forward and takes responsibility to apply themselves and commits to the success of the enterprise and to follow a new life path, and who is given the guidance and support to do so
- **Those private and public visionaries** who are prepared to support the venture financially until it can be self-sustaining
- **Social agencies** who can offer counseling and support
- The business community that can offer its entrepreneurial expertise

- and leads generation
- **Members of the public** who offer their patronage.

Do we continue to spend/forfeit millions and millions of dollars, public and private in connection with crime and our response to it? Are we prepared to perpetuate the revolving prison door phenomenon? How many more generations of children are we prepared to sacrifice — who don't stand much chance of reaching beyond the plight of their birth circumstance — their lives of poverty, under education, violence and exposure to drugs and alcohol?

We know how crucial employment, financial stability, and hope are in the rehabilitation/reintegration process. In 2013, Pope Francis reminded us that “work is fundamental to the dignity of a person. It gives one the ability to maintain oneself, one's family, to contribute to the growth of one's own nation”. The co-op model goes well beyond the promise of a job. It holds out the possibility of turning lives around — of fulfilling the declaration of a future that surely all of us would embrace. We can co-create a model in Peterborough that can serve as a template

We can co-create a model in Peterborough that can serve as a template for other communities and other marginalized people.

for other communities and other marginalized people.

I am working with a small group of interested citizens to establish a multi-stakeholder, bakery, co-operative to bring the energies of possibility, restorative justice and community, and co-operative economics together in Peterborough.

In the coming weeks we will be inviting citizens, agencies, and businesses to join us in partnership and in community dialogue to uncover the abundance and possibility lying beneath the surface of our community to bring this restorative enterprise to life.

Please Join Us:

Contact me to explore the possibilities of your involvement further. I can be reached at ptbcoop@gmail.com.

Please consider joining the Peterborough Dialogues mailing list to receive invitations and communication about our progress. Visit PeterboroughDialogues.media.