



CO-OP CAFE

2025

Stronger Together

Balancing Autonomy & Collective Power

Detroit, MI

May 3, 2025



Columinate



About our Host, Detroit People's Food Co-op



The Detroit People's Food Co-op (DPFC) is a community-owned grocery store in Detroit's North End, established through the visionary leadership of the Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network (DBCFSN). As a Black-led cooperative, DPFC was created to confront food apartheid and economic disinvestment by providing consistent access to healthy, affordable, and culturally relevant food in its community.

Grounded in cooperative principles, DPFC is owned by its Member/Owners— residents from across Michigan who each hold a share in the co-op and a voice in its governance. These members are united by a shared commitment to centering the Black community in a city that is predominantly Black. This model supports local wealth-building, promotes democratic decision-making, and reflects deeply rooted community values. Member/Owners elect the board of directors, shape policies, and help build a more equitable food system.

DPFC operates within the Detroit Food Commons, a state-of-the-art facility that includes space for Black food entrepreneurs, educational programming, and cooperative development. As an anchor within this space, the co-op serves as a hub for empowerment, learning, and economic transformation.

Investing in DPFC means advancing Black food sovereignty, supporting local agriculture, and fostering cooperative economics in Detroit. This is more than a grocery store—it's a movement to reclaim power, build collective wealth, and ensure that Detroiters control their food and their future.

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Land Acknowledgement

Presenter: Kaela Wabanimkee-Harris

A land acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes and respects Indigenous Peoples as the original caretakers of this land. It honors the deep, ongoing relationships between Native communities and the land—relationships that have existed for thousands of years and continue today. By offering a land acknowledgement, we recognize whose ancestral homeland we are on and speak the names of the original peoples and the place itself, honoring their presence and history.

Here in Detroit, we are on the ancestral and contemporary lands of the Anishinaabe peoples—specifically the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi Nations, who make up the Three Fires Confederacy—as well as many other Indigenous nations who have lived in, traveled through, and called this area home.

This region is known in Anishinaabemowin as Waawiyaatanong, meaning “where the waters go round.” This name speaks not only to the physical geography of the Detroit River and Great Lakes, but also to the Indigenous understanding of place, movement, and connection.

A land acknowledgement is not just a formality—it’s an invitation to reflect on our place in a shared history and our responsibilities in the present. It helps us confront the legacies of colonization, displacement, and erasure, and calls us to honor Native presence and sovereignty in meaningful ways.

Today, a Detroiter will share a land acknowledgement in their own words, grounding us in the truth of where we are and the responsibility that comes with that awareness.

Ancestral Libation Ceremony

Presenter: Baba Kefentse Chike

The libation is a sacred ritual in many African and African-diasporic traditions, honoring the ancestors, spirits, and forces of nature that guide, protect, and inspire us. This ceremonial act connects us to the wisdom, resilience, and sacrifices of those who came before us. It is a moment of reverence, reflection, and spiritual grounding.

During this ritual, water is poured onto the earth as names are called or prayers are spoken. Each drop symbolizes life, continuity, and respect. We give thanks to our ancestors—known and unknown—whose blood, love, and labor make our lives and work possible.

The libation grounds our gathering in purpose and spirit. It reminds us that we are never alone—we stand on the shoulders of generations, and our actions today become the legacy for those yet to come.

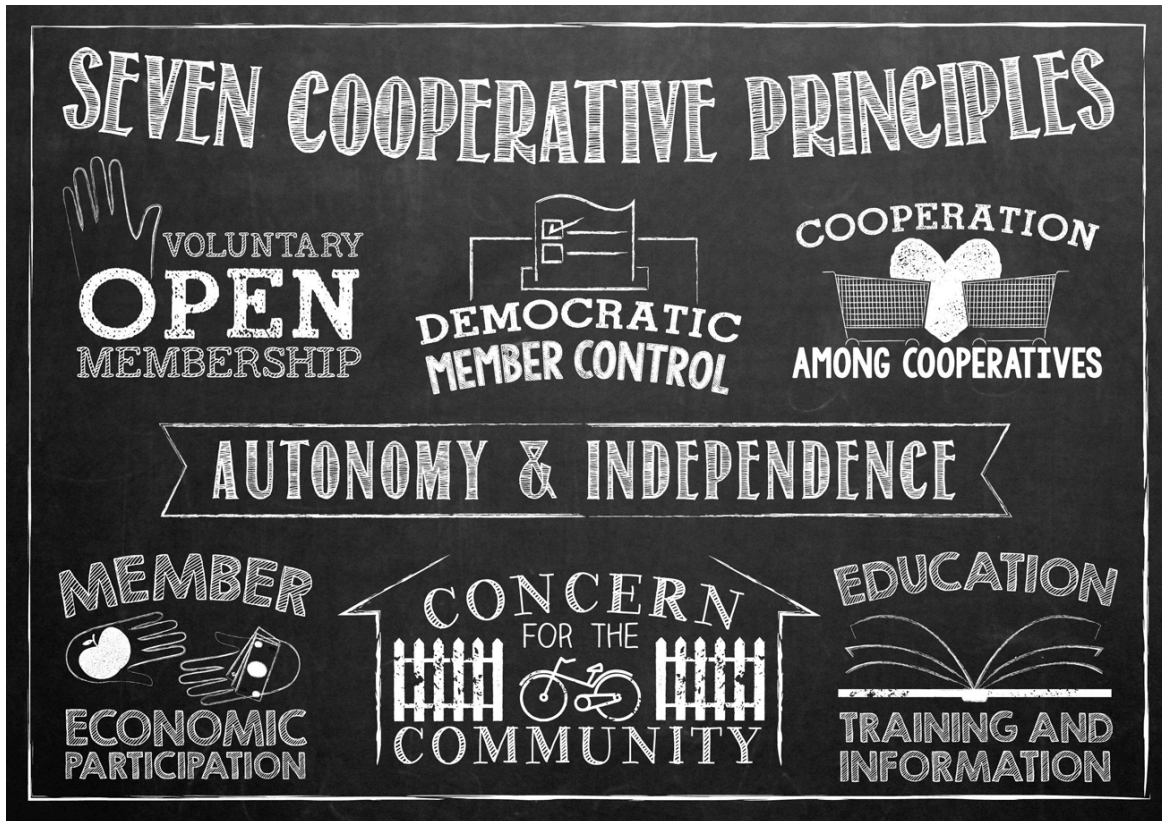
“We call upon you, our ancestors. Be with us. Guide us. Strengthen us.”

Land Acknowledgment Resources:

- <https://native-land.ca/>
- <https://indigenousoh.com/land-acknowledgement/>
- <https://landback.org/manifesto/>
- <https://resourcegeneration.org/land-reparations-indigenous-solidarity-action-guide/>

"If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together."

Co-op Principles



Original art by Hallie Zillman, courtesy of Willy St. Co-op

The Seven Cooperative Principles

Seven Principles guide cooperative businesses all over the world. Learn more at the [International Cooperative Association](https://www.ica.coop/) website.

1. Voluntary and open membership
2. Democratic member control
3. Member economic participation
- 4. Autonomy and independence**
5. Education, training, and information
- 6. Cooperation among cooperatives**
7. Concern for community

This year's theme, Stronger Together: Balancing Autonomy and Collective Power, inspires us to delve into principles 4 and 6, and consider how these principles can both challenge and strengthen our co-ops..

Principle 4: Autonomy and Independence

“Cooperatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their cooperative autonomy” – International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

Until the 1990s, this principle was implied rather than explicitly stated as a core aspect of the cooperative identity. Not surprisingly, it has been understood or interpreted in a variety of ways.

The ICA's guidance acknowledges the necessity for businesses to enter into agreements with other entities, but warns co-ops to preserve democratic control when establishing agreements with government, providers of financing, and other organizations.

Principle 6: Cooperation Among Cooperatives

“Cooperatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the cooperative movement by working together through local, national, regional and international structures” – International Cooperative Alliance (ICA).

The guidance notes for this principle go on to say that the 6th Principle is both a show of solidarity and an active way to develop the overall co-op movement: “by working together, co-operatives gain the expertise, scale, and support necessary to heighten awareness, sustainability, and impact, especially where fixed costs and resources can be shared.”

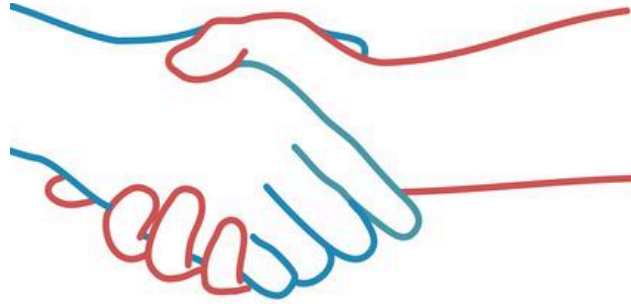
The ICA sees federations of cooperatives (like NCG) as being both directly beneficial to co-ops (helping to represent and advance co-op needs) and as a useful structure for cooperating with other co-ops.

Tension between Cooperative Principles

Whether Principle 4 and Principle 6 complement one another or conflict with each other is often left to individual interpretation. Many cooperators have struggled with the tension that exists between the two principles, and because both co-ops and the markets in which they operate change and evolve over time, how co-op stakeholders understand and embody these principles also evolves. As a result, co-op stakeholders periodically return to this topic to try to build alignment around a shared interpretation.

Pair Share about autonomy

What is the relationship between cooperation and autonomy?



Community agreements

A way to help everyone in the group feel like they can contribute and be a part of courageous conversations

- **Be Curious, Open, and Respectful** - call in, not out. We're trying to throw sunshine, not shade.
- **No one knows everything - together we know a lot**
- **Confidentiality** - don't speak for others without explicit permission, don't share something communicated in a private or safe space.
- **One mic** - one voice at a time
- **Take Space/Make Space** - if you are usually quiet, challenge yourself to take more space, and if you usually talk a lot, be mindful to leave room for quieter voices.
- **Expect unfinished business** - There are always more conversations to have and more work to do.
- **Take space and time** - to take care of yourself.
-
-
-



**Thanks to our sponsor
the National Cooperative Grocers!**

What is NCG?

National Co+op Grocers (NCG) is a business services cooperative representing 166 retail food co-ops (our members) with combined annual sales of \$2.8 billion and serving over 1.3 million consumer – owners. Our members operate 240 stores in 39 states across the country. NCG helps

co-ops realize many of the benefits of a chain while maintaining the autonomy of an independent community-owned grocer. We help unify co-ops to optimize operational and marketing resources, strengthen purchasing power, and, ultimately, offer more value to food co-op owners and shoppers. Our ability to deliver value derives from aggregating the purchasing power of NCG's members. The NCG system's success is a function of the interdependence between NCG and its members — each holding the other accountable to perform, while fully accepting responsibility for the growth and prosperity of the whole.



Agenda

1. **Welcome & Introductions**
2. **Land Acknowledgement**
3. **Ancestral Libation Ceremony**
4. **Wagon Wheel – get to know people in the room**
5. **Community Agreements**
6. **Principle 4 – Autonomy and Independence**
7. **Speakers**
 - **Dave Olson, NCG**
 - **Karen Tyler-Ruiz – C2BE**
8. **Continuums of Perspective**
9. **Intro to World Cafe**
10. **Lunch**
11. **Small Group Discussions – about today's theme**
12. **Large Group Takeaways and Learnings**
13. **Break**
14. **World Cafe Small Group Discussions**
 - **Topics generated by YOU!**
15. **Takeaways and Learnings**
16. **Evaluations**
17. **Closing**

Speakers

Dave Olson

Dave Olson is the Chief Membership Officer at NCG and leads NCG's new Strategic Development team. The Strategic Development team collaborates with General Managers (GMs) and other senior leaders at co-ops to help them maximize the benefits of their membership with NCG and its programs and services. The team also provides leaders with coaching and guidance and vetted resources to assist with core leadership functions like strategic planning, market positioning, organizational development, and change management. Before coming to NCG, Dave worked at New Pioneer Co-op in Iowa City, IA and then Mississippi Market in Saint Paul, MN, where he resides today.



Karen Tyler-Ruiz

Karen Tyler-Ruiz, serves as the Executive Director of the Center for Community-Based Enterprise, Inc, in Detroit Michigan. C2BE supports the creation of people-centered businesses, cooperatives, community, and worker-owned enterprises where worker-owners and members have a say in all financial and strategic decisions.

Tyler-Ruiz has spent the last 20 years of her career catalyzing community wealth-building collaborations, programs, and strategies in support of Detroiters and Metro Detroiters. Her goal is for all individuals and families to be able to work, earn, and be housed with dignity, while enjoying a good and sustainable quality of life within their local communities.



Notes on Speakers

[illegible]

Pair Share after speakers

Talk to your partner about your takeaways from what the speakers shared. What did you find interesting? What questions do you have?

Continuums of Perspective

Many things are not just simply yes or no, black or white - our ideas are likely to exist somewhere on a continuum. For this exercise, we will ask a question, and ask you to physically stand on the line to represent your response to the question.

Small Group Conversation Guide

Round 1 – 10 min

- What is something your co-op is working through that others might relate to or learn from?
- What happens if you don't address it?

Round 2 – 10 min

- Under what circumstances would you want to work through challenges as a group of co-ops, rather than a single co-op?

Round 3 – 15 min

- What makes your co-op feel rooted in your community?
- What parts of your co-op's identity feel essential to protect or preserve?

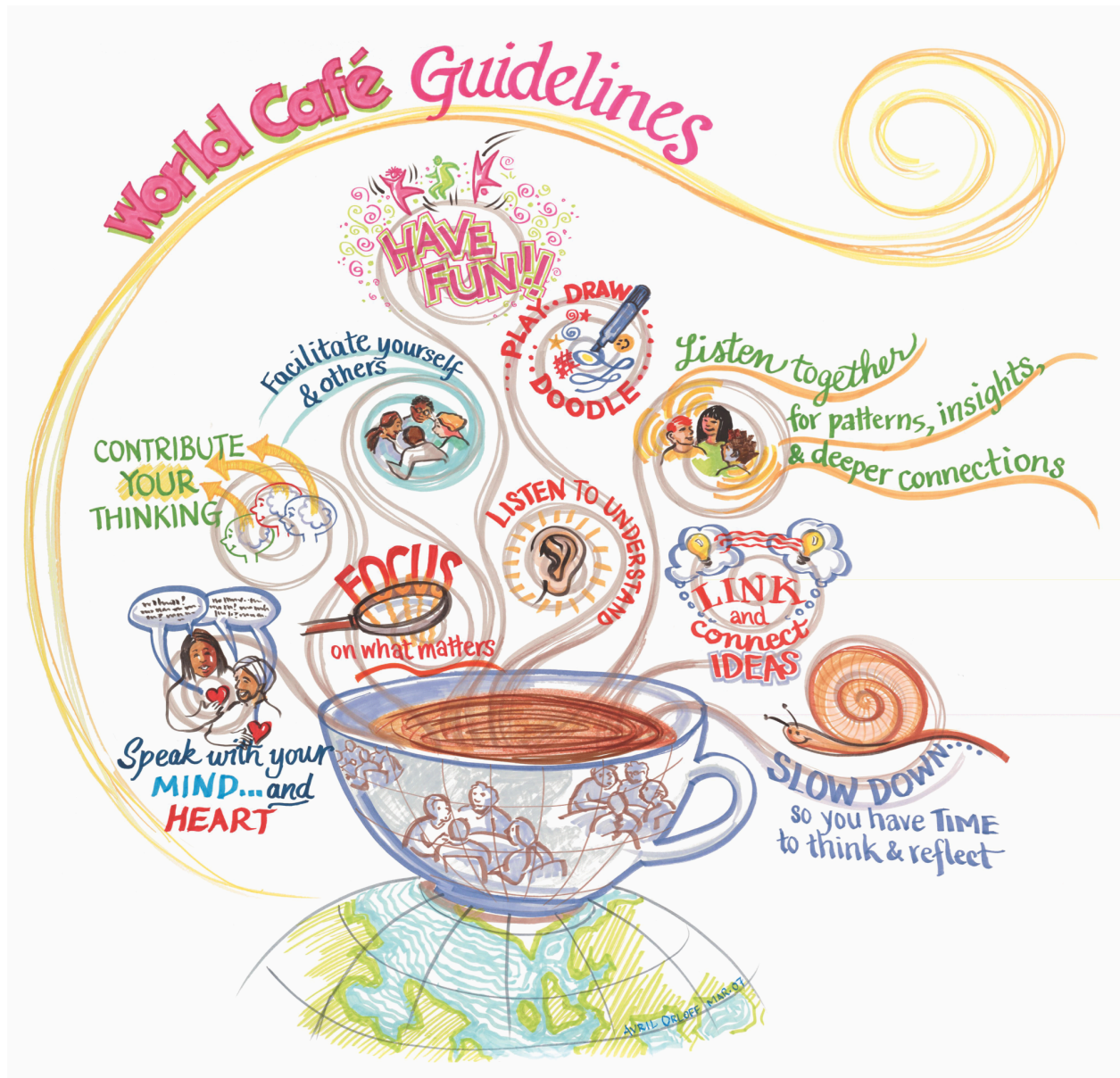
Round 4 – 5 min

- What are your group's takeaways?
- Choose someone in your group to share out.

Takeaways from Small Group Conversations

[illegible]

World Cafe





Resources

Autonomy and Independence: What's Up with Principle Four? By Ben Sandel | December 28, 2017

(<https://columinate.coop/autonomy-and-independence-whats-up-with-principle-four/>)

International Cooperative Alliance Cooperative Principles Guidance Notes

<https://ica.coop/en/media/library/research-and-reviews/guidance-notes-cooperative-principles>

National Cooperative Business Association (NCBA CLUSA) Principle 6 Initiative

<https://ncbaclusa.coop/p6/>



BIG thanks to NCG for sponsoring the Co-op Cafes!

Your Facilitators

Malik Yakini



Malik Yakini works to build Black Food Sovereignty, and a more just food system generally. He sees co-ops as important tools for galvanizing community wealth and pushing back against extractive economic practices. As a board member of the Detroit People's Food Co-op and the former Executive Director of the Detroit Black Community Food Sovereignty Network, he brings deep insight to discussions on cooperative economics and food sovereignty.

Malik Yakini - malikyakini@gmail.com

Hether Jonna



Hether Jonna is a seasoned facilitator, planner, and passionate co-op enthusiast who believes in the transformative power of people coming together around the cooperative principles and values. A member of Columinate, a shared services cooperative, Hether supports mission-driven organizations—nonprofits, co-ops, and social enterprises—through governance training, leadership development, board orientation, retreat facilitation, and equity work. She has been helping to shape conversations with cooperators all over the country as a member of Columinate's Co-op Cafe planning team for the past 5 years.

What energizes Hether most is creating welcoming spaces where real conversations happen, ideas flow, and learning is mutual. She believes the best solutions come not from a single voice, but from the collective wisdom in the room. Her approach invites curiosity, honors lived experience, and helps people build the trust needed to connect, reflect, inspire and learn from one another to spark positive change at their co-ops and in their communities.

Hether Jonna - hetherjonna@columinate.coop

Notes & Doodles

Co-op Cafe Feedback

Thanks for joining us today! We'd love to hear your thoughts.

Please rate each section below with 1 as not useful and 5 as very useful

Wagon Wheel - Introductions

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

Dave Olson, NCG

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

Karen Tyler-Ruiz,

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

Continuums of Perspective

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

Small Group Discussions

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

World Cafe

1 2 3 4 5

Comments

Overall

Would you recommend this Co-op Cafe to others?

1 = no way, 5 = definitely

1 2 3 4 5

What did you like? What went well?

What would you do differently?

What topics would you like to discuss at future Co-op Cafes?

General comments / other