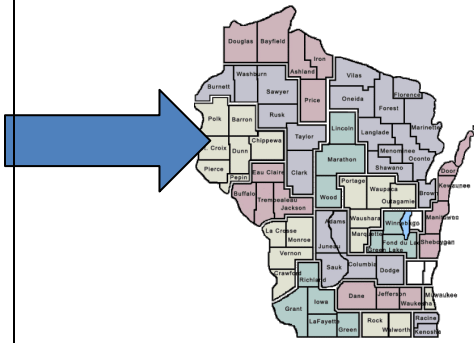


# West CAP Story: 1965 – 2019

Peter Kilde 11/7/2019



**Our Mission: *To take action against poverty by developing the social and economic assets of low-income families and their communities and by working to create a more just and sustainable society.***

West CAP is one of approximately 1000 Community Action Agencies providing poverty alleviation services in 99% of America's counties.

At West CAP, we believe that in order to help our communities develop the resilience they will need to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, we must help our low-income households and our entire communities do four things:

- Dramatically reduce our consumption of fossil fuels and non-renewable resources.
- Build the capacity of our local and regional economies to meet their own needs using their own resource base.
- Foster local community development based on mutual assistance and cooperation.
- Build Authentic Communities

What we are up against:

- The collapse of small midsize family farms and of employment in the retail sector
- Automation: Up to 75,000,000 jobs to be automated in 10-15 years (of about 160,000,000 total)
  - Equivalent of paying an employee 2 cents/hr.
  - Basically, replacing human labor by burning fossil fuel
  - Microsoft \$10,000,000 investment in high tech MN farm – goal of fully automated farm in 5 years (Don't most industries boast of how many jobs they will create, not destroy?)
- Almost without exception, every time we develop a new energy source, we don't replace anything, we just use more energy. (Bitcoin: David Wallace-Wells; The Uninhabitable Earth)

# Great Hope Emerges from a Great Tragedy: A Tale of Two Continents 1491 - 1700



Pre-Columbian Mexico City (Tenochtitlan)



Hunters in the Snow by Pieter Bruegel the Elder 1565

Our best hope of averting catastrophic climate change, an extended period of deprivation and die-off that would surely be the greatest catastrophe in human history, may be found in a centuries-long event that ranks as the greatest catastrophe in human history to date.

There are two chapters to what some have called; "the Great Dying:" It began with the mostly unintended genocide of around 54 million inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere when Columbus and his successors introduced European pathogens against which these people had no immunity, wiping out 90 % of the population by 1590 and largely obliterating a highly advanced, interconnected agricultural civilization. This civilization is estimated to have had about 140 million acres under intense agricultural use. When this agricultural land was abandoned, the massive re-growth of forest pulled so much CO2 out the atmosphere that Europe entered the deepest phase of an era known as the Little Ice Age which in turn is estimated to have killed 30 – 60 % of the population, up to 75 million people, through starvation and disease. (one Source: University College in London, February 2019:

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2019/feb/great-dying-americas-disturbed-earths-climate> )

The great hope from this tragic history lies in the ability of natural carbon storage to dramatically and relatively quickly mitigate and potentially reverse catastrophic climate change. America currently has over 408 million acres in tilled cropland, excluding grazed land and forest, and there are numerous ag practices which can enhance this land's ability to capture and store carbon in the soil. Monetized at even a fraction of its value in averted fire, flood, wind and drought damage, this agricultural revolution could be a tremendous economic boon to rural America. Worldwide, there are up to 2.2 billion acres of depleted and damaged ag land that could be restored to enhance its ability to capture and store carbon: enough to actually halt and reverse climate change. (Source: <https://time.com/5709100/halt-climate-change-300-billion/> ).