

Tribal nations may become pot industry's bankers

By Jennifer Kaplan, BloombergBusiness

Shaun Gindi brought a duffel bag stuffed with 1,000 twenty-dollar bills to open a checking account at his local Chase branch. He was successful. Until the branch closed the account a week later.

As the owner of two marijuana shops and a weed warehouse in Colorado, where the drug is legal, Gindi is a pariah to banks, which face expensive compliance hurdles and uncertain legal consequences because ganja still violates federal law. Of the more than 7,600 banks and credit unions in the U.S., only 220 accept cannabis cash, according to the U.S. Treasury Department.

Anthony Rivera says he has a solution: an American Indian banking system.

Rivera, a Harvard Business School graduate who led the 1,940 members of the Acjachemen Nation in Southern California for nearly a decade, says native governments could legalize marijuana. His organization, CannaNative, is trying to link tribal leaders from the 566 sovereign American Indian nations with finance professionals and legal-marijuana businesses to use the expertise gained from decades of managing casinos. That way, he said, they can go where big institutions such as JPMorgan Chase & Co. and Wells Fargo & Co. fear to tread — banking the legal-pot industry's estimated \$3 billion in annual revenue.

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