

The McAuley Country Grocery Co-op Story

In 1998, the only store in McAuley, Manitoba was about to close. This presented a problem for the 100 residents, half of them of retirement age, who faced a 20 minute drive to Elkhorn or Moosmin to do their shopping.

The town's leaders agreed that their community needed a store and started to investigate their options. Following a public meeting, where a number of alternatives were considered, McAuley residents opted for a cooperative.

With support from the previous store owner, the community had access to the "real costs" of what it would cost to operate a cooperative store. This information was helpful in allowing the community to put together a solid business plan for their new store. Raising \$25,000 was a critical factor in starting the cooperative. Community residents were asked to purchase membership shares for \$500 each. Shares were purchased by 77 members, which, along with several donations, raised \$40,000.

Funds were placed in a trust account, which was managed by the municipality, until the new cooperative store was incorporated. The McAuley cooperative store opened in the summer of 1999 in the previous store location thanks to the support of the local credit union, which owned the building. Meanwhile, cooperative members contributed over 400 hours of volunteer labour to set up their new store.

With the ongoing commitment and support from its members, the McAuley Country Store continues to thrive. In 2002, the store moved into the McAuley School, which was no longer in use, with the support of the local municipality.

In its new location, the store has more space and has added a small café. The expansion has been financed with a second member share offering.

For more information on the McAuley Country Grocery Co-op, or any other type of cooperative, please contact Cooperative Development Services at 1-866-MANITOBA; (1-866-626-4862) or visit the website at www.co-ops.mb.ca or email co-ops@gov.mb.ca.