

# POLLOCK'S HARDWARE CO-OP LTD.

Meeting the community's needs as a  
successful hardware business



## Who is Pollock's Hardware Co-op?

### An interview with Luba Beresa

The Manitoba Cooperative Association had the pleasure of interviewing Luba Beresa, Chair of the Board of Pollock's Hardware who discussed the revival of the co-op and how members stood up for what they felt was an important institution within their community.

In 1922, Pollock's Hardware opened as a general hardware store. In 1994, Wayne and Lois Cain bought the store and wanted it used, wanting to repair, it was put on the market, unfortunately, they could not find a buyer so, in 1997, the store closed its doors. This could have been the end for Pollock's. But, local neighbourhood members who were dismayed that such a useful and long standing shop door were inspired to re-open it as a cooperative. The community held many meetings to discuss the opportunity of creating a cooperative of Pollock's and a board of directors was formed. On June 23rd, 2009 Pollock's Hardware Co-op re-opened! The Grand Opening was celebrated with community members, food, drinks and special guest appearances. In 2013, Pollock's rented 5000 square feet to use as a warehouse and to supply BUILD and Manitoba Green Builders, as well as other local contractors and the general public with commercial building supplies. This second location opened its doors in the spring of 2016 and operated for several years. A third location opened in the community of South Osborne in the fall of 2017 and operated for over 3 years. Today Pollock's Hardware Co-op proudly runs out of its flagship store location in the north end of 1587 Main Street.

# Co-op Background

## Revival for the Co-op

Pollock's has been in its location for almost 100 years and had always been held in private ownership. As explained by Luke, "The last owners wanted to retire but were unable to find a buyer hence the move to a cooperative model. Additionally, in February 2019, the co-op was at risk of closing, as the former board felt that they were no longer viable. There was a special meeting called and the membership overwhelmingly voted to keep the co-op open."

"In 2008, a group of citizens in the neighbourhood, led by John Looke, began the process of turning Pollock's into a co-operative. This initiative successfully purchased the hardware store from the owners as a retail co-op. One main goal of Pollock's Co-op has been to be a part of the local community rather than merely a retail location. It is seen as an institution and a core retail establishment in the St. John's and wider North End community. The store is part of the fabric of the North End and has been for almost 100 years. Having retail stores within established neighbourhoods is really important, especially within walking distance. Members love being able to walk with their families (and sometimes dogs) over to Pollock's."

"In February 2019 when the co-op was at risk of closing, the membership overwhelmingly voted to keep the co-op going. The value of Pollock's is not just monetary but also things like community, relationships and social capital. These are the foundations of Pollock's success."



## Support to Members

"In terms of supporting our members," explains Latta, "We do have a membership day every second Tuesday of the month, where we offer 10% off for members. The pandemic has been operationally difficult for the staff in store because you're dealing with something completely unknown, and having to navigate the changes constantly. Because we are designated as an essential service, we made it through that first lockdown back in March 2020. We provided to online and received support from a Manitoba Co-operative Association grant to help us launch our online work. We started doing curbside pickup orders and becoming more focused on what we could do during the pandemic. We put a survey out last year to our members to find out what it was they required from us. That informed a lot of our next steps."



## Democratic Functions

"If you're a member, you're invited to our annual general meeting (AGM) and having voting rights. Some of our members are very engaged. We have quite a few members who volunteer to help out with repairs of the store, doing some filming for communications content, helping out at events, etc. As much as IBM closure was terrible to go through, it revised the importance of Pollock's within the membership and renewed membership interest in the store. There is a heightened membership interest in Pollock's now. We started doing more events, so people can come out, meet other members, and interact with one another in the community. Our most recent AGM was last November 2020 and was very well attended. This past fiscal year, it looks as if we'll show a small profit, which is a massive achievement from almost having to close to bringing back profit within 3 years. That's evidence of the support that the community has for Pollock's."

"We're a hyper-local co-op. Being local is almost radical at this point, because everything has become so globalized. I think what's unique about our store is the different relationships that we form. We're supporting other businesses in the community who share like-minded values like ours. We're always trying to strive for something new and different. Right now we are working on trying to get a farmers market associated with the co-op. There is a lot of things our co-op has to look forward to."