

Sointula Cooperative Association

Sointula is home to British Columbia's longest operating co-op. In the early 1900s, Sointula was an isolated town. The lack of ferry access from Port McNeill, along with winter storms and cold weather, often made it difficult for residents to obtain supplies. In 1909, a group of inspired Sointulans decided to open a co-operative store to provide themselves and their neighbours with access to food and hardware, while keeping profits in the community.



The Co-op served to bring community members together. It was a place to exchange news and discuss politics. There were even times when the store acted as an unofficial governing body. The general meetings, held twice a year, provided a forum to discuss not only every detail about the store – from hamburger to shoelaces – but also to debate community issues. The store helped develop Sointula by donating a portion of its profits to the library, the cemetery and local recreational projects.

The role the Sointula Co-op Association had in building its surrounding community is remarkable, but what is even more remarkable is that this store is still operating and remains one of the oldest and longest-running consumer co-ops in western Canada, and the longest running co-op in British Columbia.

Through providing current employment for twenty Sointulans and donating money every year to local causes such as the preschool, bursaries to Sointula High School graduates and supporting other co-ops, the Sointula Co-op remains a driving force in its community.

[Click here](#) to read *A Social Economy Showcase – BC Stories* in its entirety.