

Kasabonika celebrates opening of new Northern

Lenny Carpenter
Wawaty News

Terry Stoney of Kasabonika Lake was on his third visit to the Northern Store on the evening of March 18.

"I'm still in awe," he remarked with a laugh.

Earlier that day, many community members flocked to the store to celebrate its grand opening, which had been anticipated for months.

For two years, the Northern Store had been set up in the community centre after the original store burned down in April 2011.

"It's something we really needed for a long time now."

-Terry Stoney

Abraham Simon, district manager for northern Ontario with Northwest Company Northern stores, said the community centre offered only half the space the original store had, which meant cramped spaces and long lines that extended down the aisles during peak business times of the month.

But the new store is 12,000 square feet, three times bigger than the community centre, and offers more space for more product brands and displays.



Photos by Lenny Carpenter/Wawaty News

Many residents of Kasabonika Lake First Nation flocked to the grand opening of the new Northern Store on March 18. The store replaces the one that burned down in April 2011. For the past two years the store had moved temporarily into the First Nation's community centre, which made for cramped spaces and little opportunity to offer a broader variety of products. The new store is three times bigger at 12,000 square feet, and offers products like fresh meat and services like hot deli that were available even at the old location that burned down.

"When I walked in, I thought it was something we really needed for our community," Stoney said. "It's much bigger and better."

Simon said the new store and the chance to design for more efficient space allowed the company to offer a variety of products and services that were never in Kasabonika.

"We never had fresh meat before," he said, noting that previously frozen meat was

sold. "Now we offer chicken, pork, and beef."

There is also a hot deli service along with a section where customers can serve themselves coffee, cappuccino and slush.

Additional space allowed for displays of the store's furniture, appliances and electronics.

"And at the last location, we only had two tills to service customers," Simon said.

"Now we have four, that means less lineup."

The new store also allowed the company to hire two full-time employees. Eighteen of the 20 employees are local.

The building is owned by the First Nation's development corporation and is leased to the Northwest Company.

To help celebrate the grand opening, the company offered a sale on selected items. It

also is having a daily draw for two weeks, with products such as a couch section, tent, dresser and BBQ up for grabs.

March 23 will offer the biggest prize only available to Kasabonika Lake members: an ATV valued at \$8,500.

Simon said most of the products in the store had to be flown in for the grand opening since the winter road had only opened a few days before. He said shipments of

dry goods are on the way to the community.

"We are still crossing our fingers the winter road will still be open in two days," he said.

Stoney is grateful to have a new store.

"I'm very thankful for new store and whoever made this possible," he said. "It's something we really needed for a long time now."

UN indigenous rapporteur unable to enter Canada

Lenny Carpenter
Wawaty News

A United Nations (UN) rapporteur on indigenous rights is still waiting for permission to enter Canada more than a year after sending the federal government a formal request.

James Anaya, the UN special rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous peoples, originally sent a request make an official

visit to Canada in February 2012 and, despite sending two more requests, has yet to get a response from the federal government.

In a letter sent to the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) obtained by APTN National News, Anaya wrote that the Canadian government has continued to ignore his year-old request to visit Canada to investigate the "human rights situa-

tion of Indigenous peoples."

"I have communicated with the government of Canada to request its consent for me to conduct an official visit to the country to examine and report on the human rights situation of Indigenous peoples there," Anaya wrote in the Feb. 20 letter to UBCIC. "I initially made the request in February of 2012 and am still awaiting a response from the government."

Anaya had written in

response to an invitation from Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the UBCIC.

Anaya had previously met with Canadian officials last summer where they discussed some issues related to his mandate.

If the federal government does not respond, Anaya wrote that he may have to meet with chiefs through unofficial channels.

"If I do not receive a posi-

tive response from the government in the coming months, I can explore ways of meeting with First Nations leaders from Canada outside the context of an official visit," Anaya wrote.

The prime minister's office has yet to reply to a Wawaty interview request. However, APTN reported that a Foreign Affairs spokesperson said in an e-mail that Anaya's request is "under active consideration."

Indigenous rights has been

an issue in Canada in recent years, especially over the winter when many protests and rallies took place in the name of Idle No More. The movement arose as the government introduced a number of bills affecting First Nations without consultation. The movement founders say the government is violating First Nations treaty rights.

Anaya's term ends in May 2014.

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