

Tribe's grocery store seeks a fresh start

Financial woes listed for Menominee business



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TOP: Located near the center of Keshena, the Menominee tribe's Save-A-Lot grocery is the St. Louis-based chain's only outlet on a native American reservation.

ABOVE: Shift manager Shannon Warrington stocks fresh inventory in the produce section at the Save-A-Lot store on the Menominee reservation.

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Four years after the Menominee Indian Tribe opened a full-service grocery store, new management is stepping in to rescue the operation from financial struggles.

Tribal officials say the Save-A-Lot grocery store has encountered troubles so significant that unpaid vendors stopped delivering inventory, and shoppers found empty shelves.

The business faced an uncertain future until the tribal ownership group, Wolf River Development Co., installed new management and issued a loan to pay the store's bills.

Gerald Warrington, general

manager of Wolf River Development, said the Save-A-Lot now is in experienced hands and is not in danger of shutting down.

"Things have turned around," Warrington said. "We're back to where we're supposed to be."

The grocery store's precarious situation has not gone unnoticed by shoppers on the Menominee reservation.

Alison Corn, a regular customer since the Save-A-Lot opened, said name-brand products lately have vanished from the shelves, and the store sometimes lacks a good variety of fresh meat. On many occasions, Corn travels to stores in

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Scanning the shelves at the Save-A-Lot grocery store is Pat Kmecheck, who travels from Gillett to shop at the Menominee tribal store in Keshena.