



Ho-Chunk Introduction

Photo: Kayree Funmaker



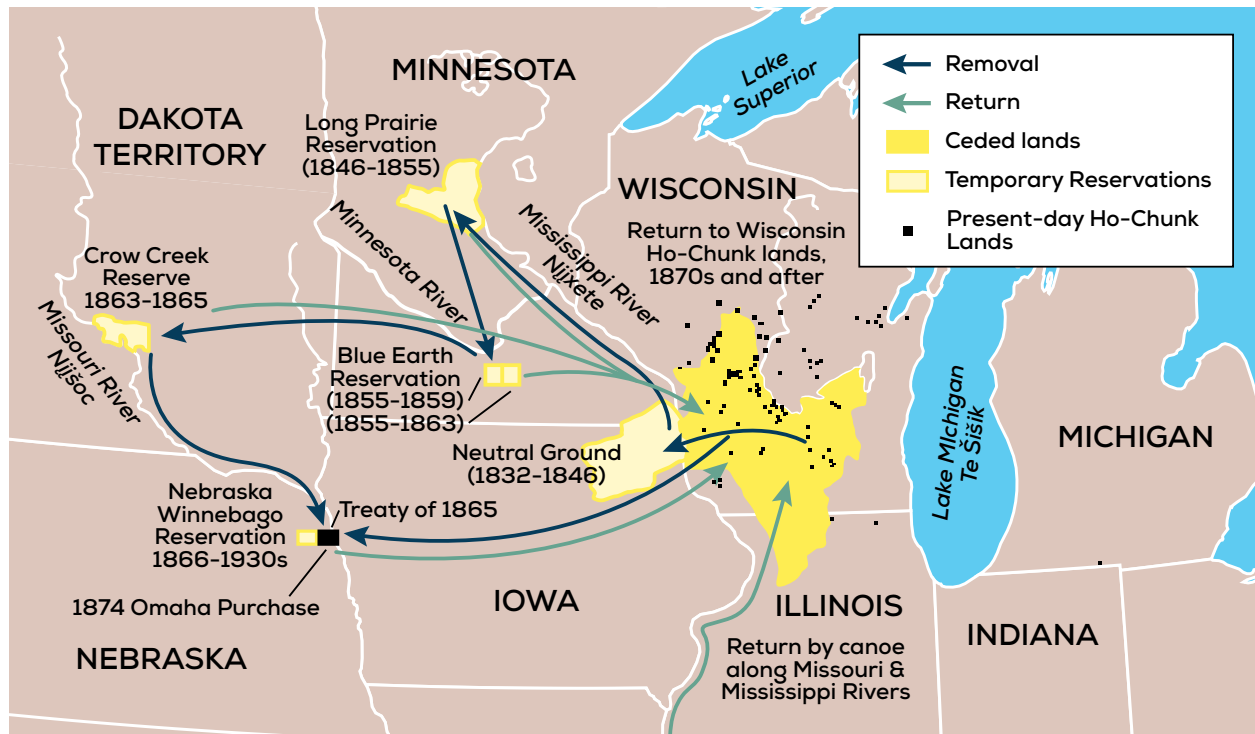
Early History

The ancient people of Wisconsin have always called themselves Ho-Chunk (Hochungra) meaning 'People of the Sacred Voice'. Oral history of the Ho-Chunk places them living in the region, now known as Madison, since the glaciers receded. The original name for the Madison area and lakes is Teejop (day jope) which translates to the Four Lakes. Generations of Ho-Chunk people had a homeostatic relationship with the bountiful lands and crystal-clear waters from which they lived. This enabled the women to be prolific and accomplished farmers while the men were able to hunt, fish and trap game with ease. They followed the advice of their elders to take only what they needed and never more, to create a thriving community.

Teejop was the center of the mound building culture which is a unique feature to North America. The Ho-Chunk people often built mounds on bluffs, hills, or near springs, and commonly aligned the mounds with celestial bodies or built them as burial mounds. The first mounds were built around 2,700 years ago and some estimations state that there were as many as 3,000 mounds in the area. However, early colonizers did not recognize the significance of the mounds and most were destroyed leaving only about 10% intact. Colonizers used many of the mounds to fill in the wetlands, tilled them under for farm fields and used them as infill when building Madison's downtown spaces. It was a common Sunday practice to dig through the mounds that remained to find the valuable artifacts hidden inside.

Colonization

Through a series of mistranslations of Indigenous and European languages, the Ho-Chunk became widely referred to as the 'Winnebago'. The first major tragedy occurred shortly after Nicolet touched the shores of Green Bay and introduced foreign disease. Throughout the 1600s and 1700s, the tribe was able to remain generally autonomous as the French and then the British moved into the region. Later, the desire for their fertile and resource rich land led the United States federal government to begin a series of forced removals. In 1829, the first treaty signed included a major land cession of 2.5 million acres sold for 29 cents an acre, although the actual value was \$1.25 an acre (a conservative estimate). In 1830, the first official order to remove the Ho-Chunk Nation was given and close to 1,000 died as a result of the journey to Iowa and poor living conditions on the reservation in the summer and fall of 1840. In 1855, upon further guarantee by the U. S. covering payment under former treaties, the tribe ceded more lands in Wisconsin. The government moved members of the tribe to a reservation in Blue Earth, Minnesota. In 1862, Minnesota's ethnic-cleansing policy called for



▲ Ho-Chunk Forcible Removals and Return to Ancestral Land. Each removal and relocation required an arduous journey and resulted in tremendous hardship and many deaths.

removal of Dakotas and Ho-Chunks to Crow Creek in South Dakota. 2,000 made the journey and 550 died. In 1866, those who were still at Fort Thompson, South Dakota, were moved to a reservation in Nebraska. Throughout the removals, Ho-Chunks continued to return to Wisconsin, making the arduous journeys by foot or canoe. Eventually, the federal government gave up these efforts and by 1875 the government allowed those in Wisconsin to stay, though there was little left of their original lands. Today, the Ho-Chunk Nation is the only recognized tribe in Wisconsin without a reservation.

Through the Indian Homestead Act of 1884 many Ho-Chunks acquired homesteads. Shortly after, the federal government began the mission/boarding schools period and removed young children from their families to get the 'Indian' out ('Kill the Indian, Save the Man'). This forced assimilation stripped them of traditional clothing, cultural practices, and their language. The boarding schools cut the Ho-Chunk children's hair and dealt out harsh punishment if they spoke their language. Many are still dealing with the generational trauma of this destructive period today.

Revival

In 1962 the tribe voted to adopt a constitution to form the Wisconsin Winnebago Business Committee (WWBC) under the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934. This allowed the aboriginal people of these lands to be a federally recognized sovereign nation and to receive federal funding for economic and social development. In 1993 the constitution was ratified, and the former Wisconsin Winnebago Business Committee changed its name to become the Ho-Chunk Nation. The Nation built casinos in the early 1990s, which became the economic engines that drove social programs including housing, elder and veteran care, and language and cultural preservation. The revenue has also provided funding to purchase back the land taken by the government.

Today, Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison, one of six Ho-Chunk owned and operated casinos in Wisconsin, is mindful of traditional knowledge while constant evaluation and planning is taking place to ensure every effort is made to encourage employees to consider the environment. As we look to grow our campus, we seek the latest

- ▶ Ho-Chunk traditional dancers on the steps of the Wisconsin State Capitol. From L to R: Lillian White Eagle, Frankie Brandon, and Angel Logan.



- ▲ Ho-Chunk woman with black ash baskets. What began as an everyday object became functional decorative pieces sold to tourists and locals alike, starting in the late 1800s. Although the emerald ash borer invasion and intensive nature of processing black ash has led to a decline, professional Master Basket Weavers continue this fine artistry.





▲ Shown at the Dane County Landfill renewable natural gas station are Dane County Executive Joe Parisi (left) and Ho-Chunk Gaming Madison Executive Manager Daniel Brown (right).

technology to ensure sustainability is present in current and future practices while embracing the diversity of the changing world.

This region has seen vast changes and in the recent years even more so as we have experienced the effects of climate change alongside our neighbors. As we move forward, we're encouraged by our many partnerships, with Dane County and others, as we are all on the cusp of a momentous time in history and the opportunity to restore and heal has never been greater. We look forward to sharing the knowledge passed down and the role of stewardship with those who wholeheartedly take on the responsibility alongside us.

