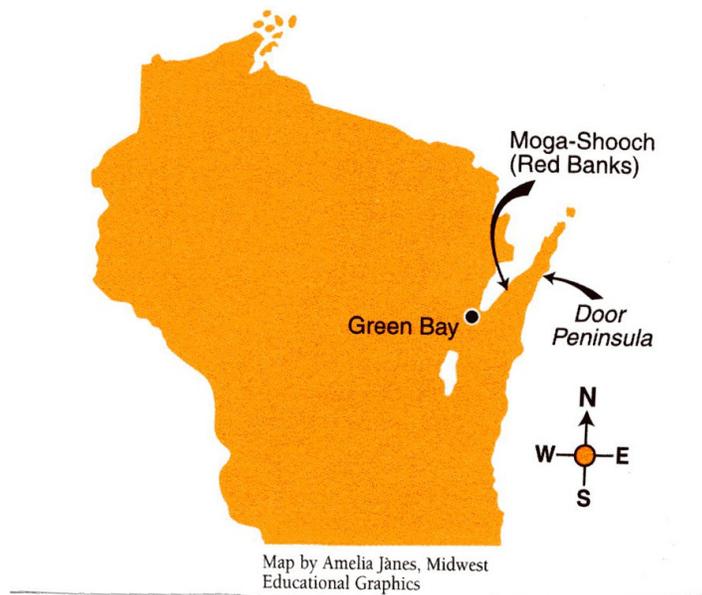


# **The Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin**

**Prepared by Ava L. McCall**

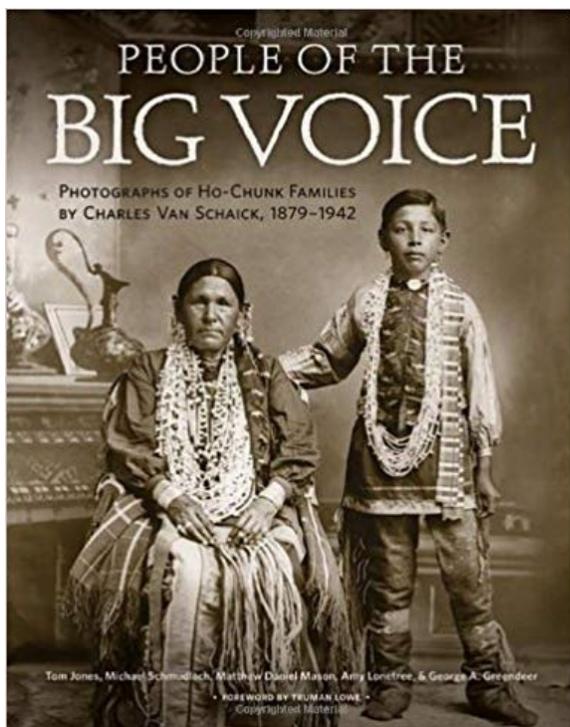
*Based on Native People of  
Wisconsin by Patti Loew*

# Ho-Chunk Tribal Traditions



The Ho-Chunk believe they were created at Red Banks.

The Ho-Chunk people believe they always lived in Wisconsin. They believe they were created at Red Banks, close to Green Bay.



The Ho-Chunk name means “People of the Big Voice.”



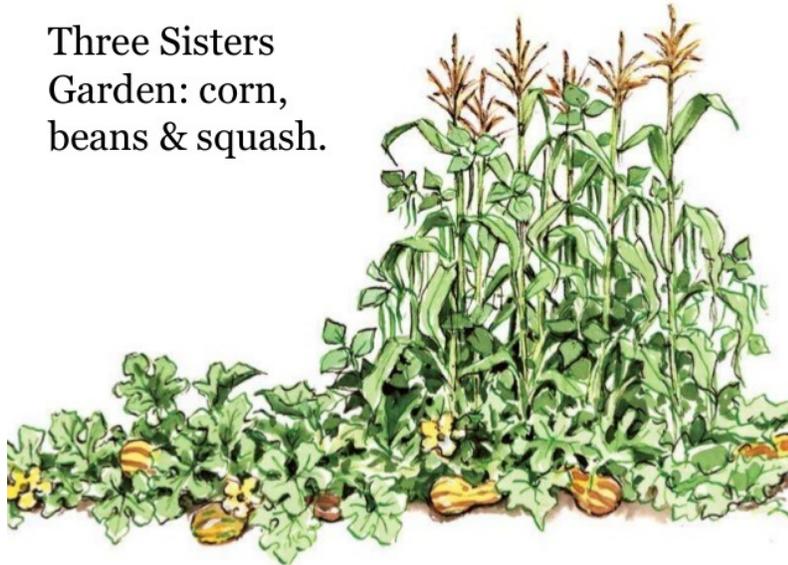
The Ho-Chunk have two major groups of clans: the thunderbird clan and the bear clan.

The Ho-Chunk name means “people of the big voice” or “people of the sacred language.” They organized themselves into clans with each clan having a specific responsibility. Bear clan members might become a war chief or decide what to do with their land. Thunderbird clan members might become a chief during times of peace.



Ho-Chunk men hunted bison and other animals for food and clothing.

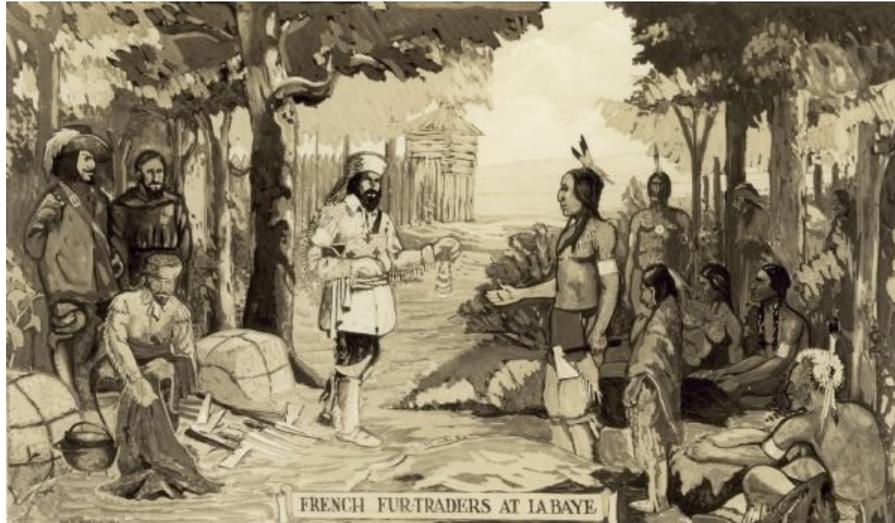
Three Sisters  
Garden: corn,  
beans & squash.



Ho-Chunk women gathered plants for food and medicines and grew corn, beans, and squash to eat.

For many, many years Ho-Chunk men hunted animals for meat to eat and hides to use in clothing and bedding. Sometimes they hunted for bison across the Mississippi River. Ho-Chunk women gathered plants to eat and to use as medicine when they were sick. They also grew corn, beans, and squash.

# Ho-Chunk Tribal History

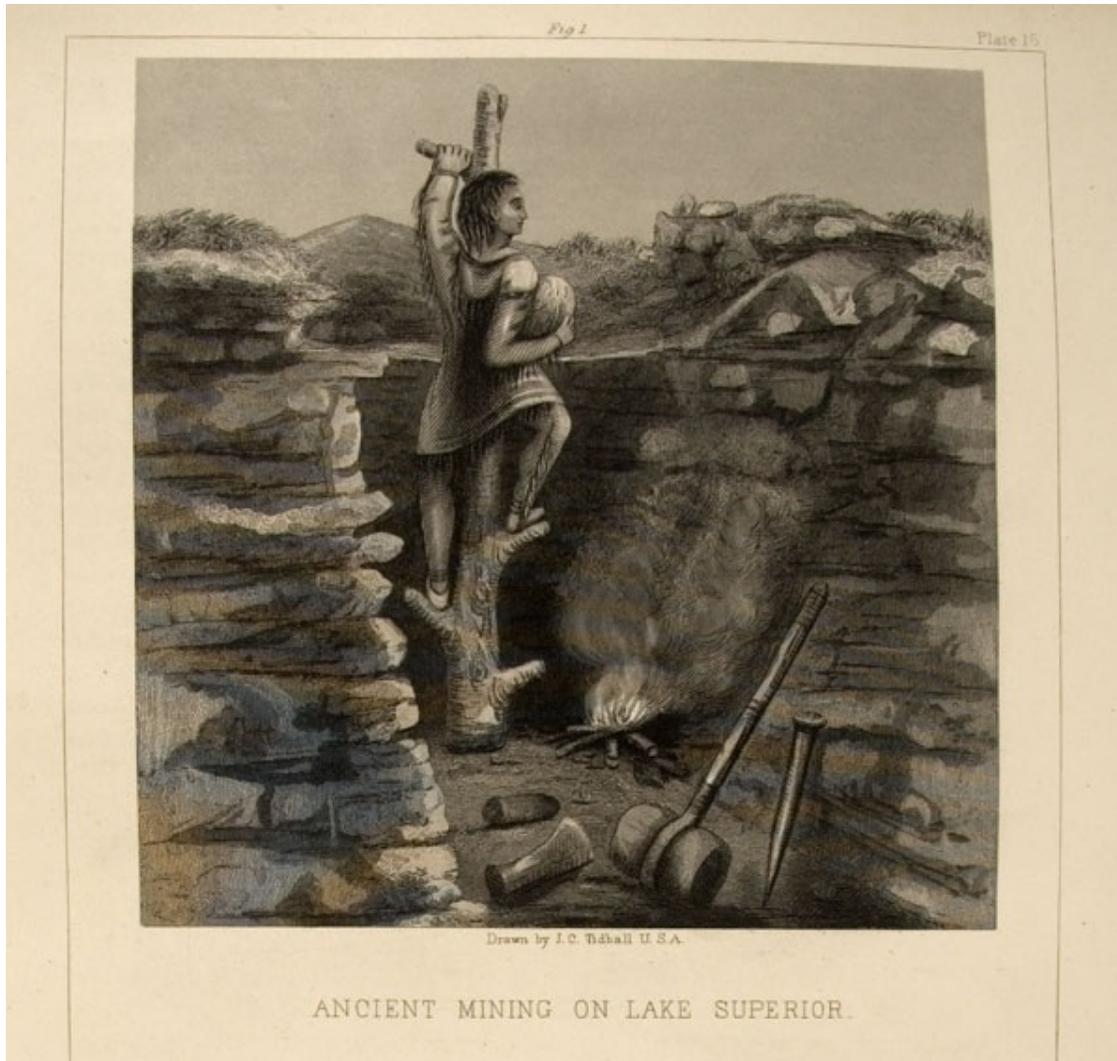


The Ho-Chunk received metal pots, knives, blankets, cloth and guns from the French fur traders and gave them beaver pelts.



After years of trapping beavers for the fur trade, there were few beavers left.

The Ho-Chunk traded furs and got metal pots, knives, blankets, cloth, and guns from the European fur traders. They also got diseases from the fur traders, which killed many Ho-Chunk. The Ho-Chunk people liked using the European trade goods, but after years of trapping animals for the fur trade, hunters found fewer animals to trap.

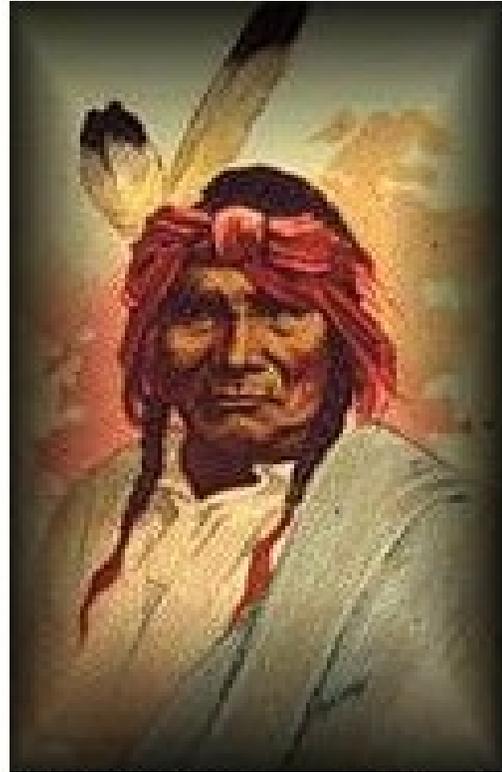


Ho-Chunk women mined galena or lead for thousands of years.

Ho-Chunk women mined lead or galena for thousands of years. They melted galena to use as body paint, made ornaments out of lead, and buried their dead with pieces of lead. After they got hunting rifles from the fur trade, the Ho-Chunk made musket balls for themselves and to sell.



European Americans mined and took away lead on Ho-Chunk land.



## Chief Red Bird

Chief Red Bird attacked a boat of European American lead miners because they took lead from his people's land.

When European Americans heard about the galena on Ho-Chunk land, they went onto Ho-Chunk land and took away any galena they dug up. The Ho-Chunk were not happy about European Americans taking galena from their land. Red Bird, a Ho-Chunk war chief, attacked a barge or boat of European American lead miners. Red Bird died in jail after he gave himself up to the United States government.



The gray area shows where lead was found in Wisconsin. This area belonged to the Ho-Chunk when European and American lead mining began in the 1820s.

The United States government wanted all the Ho-Chunk lands that contained lead. The Ho-Chunk did not want to give up this land. After the Black Hawk War, the United States government forced the Ho-Chunk to give up lands in the southwestern part of Wisconsin, where much of the lead was.

## Ho-Chunk Removals



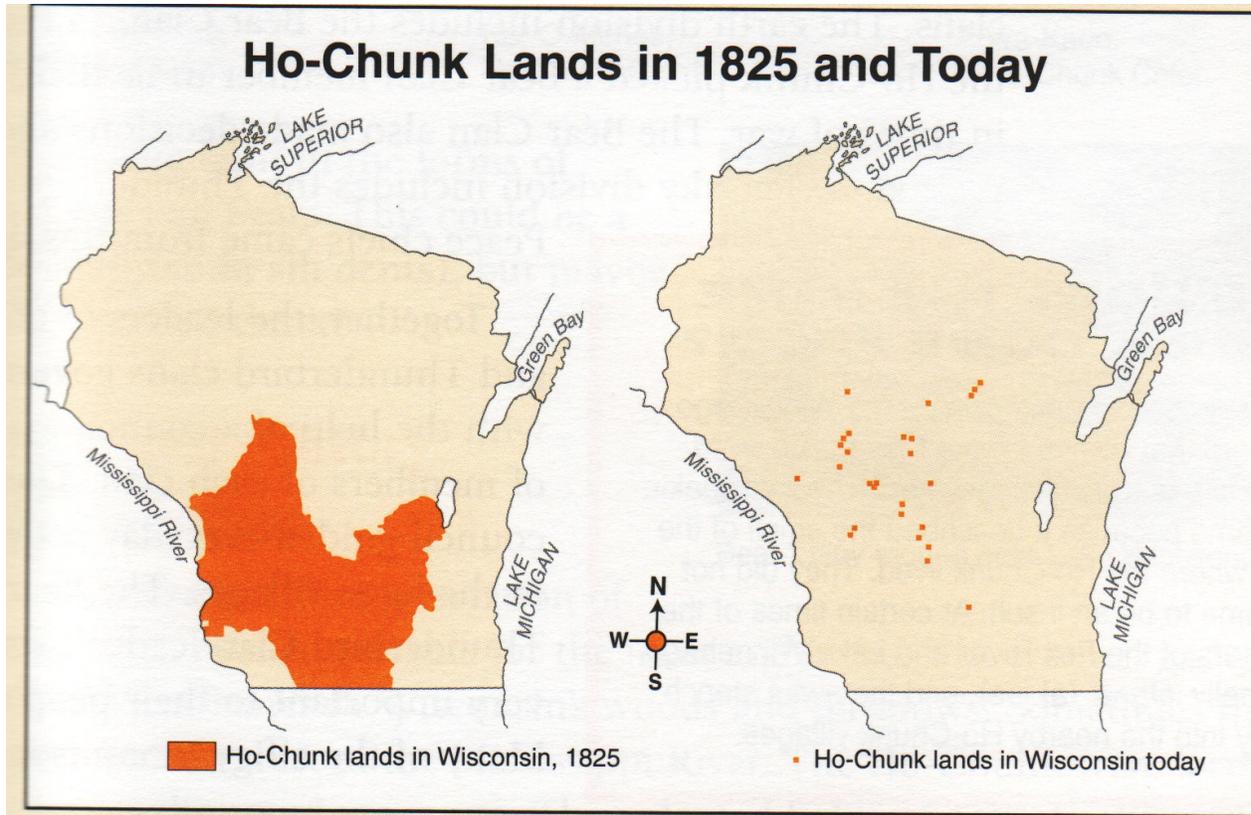
*Native People of Wisconsin* by Patty Loew  
New Badger History series  
printed with permission by The Wisconsin State Historical Society, September 2003

From 1830 through the 1860s, the United States government tried to move the Ho-Chunk out of Wisconsin. At first, they tried to move the Ho-Chunk to Iowa. Then they tried to move them to Minnesota. Finally, they tried to move them to South Dakota. Some Ho-Chunk were willing to move. They eventually signed a treaty giving them a reservation in Nebraska. Some did not leave their homelands in Wisconsin.



Ho-Chunk Chief Yellow Thunder bought land in Wisconsin for the Ho-Chunk to live.

The Ho-Chunk people in Wisconsin today are from the ancestors who refused to leave Wisconsin or moved to other places and returned to Wisconsin. Ho-Chunk Chief Yellow Thunder bought some land in Wisconsin for his people to live. The United States government allowed the Wisconsin Ho-Chunk 40-acre homesteads, but no reservation.



The Ho-Chunk today still have no reservation in Wisconsin. They live in many different parts of Wisconsin.

The Ho-Chunk are the only Native nation in Wisconsin who do not have a reservation. Today the Ho-Chunk people own more than 2,000 acres spread out over 12 different counties. However, they gave up almost seven million acres of land in treaties with the United States government.



Missionaries encouraged the Ho-Chunk to become Christian and give up their own beliefs.

European Americans wanted the Ho-Chunk to become more like them. They wanted the Ho-Chunk to become Christian rather than follow their own religious beliefs. Some Ho-Chunk chose to become Christian. Some held onto their own beliefs. Some Ho-Chunk followed both.



Ho-Chunk children were not allowed to speak their native language or dress in their traditional clothing at boarding schools. The U.S. government wanted the Ho-Chunk to become more like European Americans.

The United States government opened boarding schools to teach Ho-Chunk children how to live like European Americans. Ho-Chunk children lived at the school all year. Teachers discouraged Ho-Chunk children from speaking their native language and wearing traditional clothing. Often young children were taken from their homes, put in boarding school, and not allowed to return home until they finished high school!



Ho-Chunk singers and drummers performed for tourists at Wisconsin Dells to earn money.



Ho-Chunk women often made and sold baskets made from black ash trees to earn money.

The Ho-Chunk had to find ways to make a living after they were forced from their homelands. They hunted, fished, gathered plants, and gardened to get foods needed to live. They also sang traditional songs and danced traditional dances for people who visited Wisconsin Dells. The Ho-Chunk sold baskets and wood carvings made from black ash trees to earn money.

# Ho-Chunk Life Today



Ho-Chunk casinos earn money to provide health care and other things the people need.



The Ho-Chunk people can get health care at the Wellness Center.



The Ho-Chunk are raising bison to eat. Bison is a healthy food.

The Ho-Chunk continue their culture through traditional feasts with drumming, dancing, and singing. The Ho-Chunk have casinos to help pay for things their people need, such as health clinics, Head Start programs, and housing. They are also raising a small herd of bison on Ho-Chunk land. Long ago, the Ho-Chunk hunted bison for food.