

The Dwindling of Native American lands in Wisconsin

Prior to the 1800s, the Brothertown, Mohican and Oneida nations lost their original lands in New York due to cession treaties and illegal leases. Following a series of removals and treaties, these groups eventually relocated to Wisconsin in the 1820s. In 1831, the Menominee were actually forced to cede 3 million acres "for the benefit of the New York Indians."

With plans to begin lumbering, the U.S. forced the Ojibwe nation to cede their northern lands in the 1837 Pine Tree treaty. In 1842, when copper deposits were reported along Wisconsin's northern border, the U.S. forced the Ojibwe into another treaty that assigned ownership of the land to the government.

In the 1850s, the government's attempts to remove the Ojibwe and Menominee nations were unsuccessful. Both tribes negotiated treaties in 1854, which established their current reservations.

Ultimately, the native tribes of Wisconsin have been dispossessed of their ancestral lands due to the government's greed for resources and settlement land.

Native American tribes in Wisconsin began facing pressure from Western -moving settlers around the 1820's, when the Americans gained possession of the area after the War of 1812. The U.S. government reverted to land grabbing and forced Indian removal to secure land for settlers.

The Treaty of Prairie du Chien in 1825 initiated the process of land loss in Indian territory. This treaty forced native nations, who enjoy a communal property lifestyle, to define and draw rigid boundaries for their tribal lands. These legally established boundaries then made it easier for the U.S. government to identify which tribes lived on the lands they wished to acquire, and thus, Indian removal began.

In the 1830s, the U.S. pressured many of the Indian nations in Wisconsin to sign cession treaties. At the time, Native peoples did not understand the concept of private property. Tribes thought the treaties they signed were just letting the U.S. use the land and what was in it; they did not think they were selling the actual land.

The 1833 Treaty of Chicago granted the U.S. all land west of Lake Michigan to Lake Winnebago in modern-day Wisconsin. The Potawatomi were removed from the area and, being landless, were nicknamed the "Strolling Band." It was not until 1913 when the nation was allowed to purchase cutover land in northern Wisconsin.

*The Ho-Chunk Nation has such scattered lands due to several treaties, including the Treaty of 1837, which forced their removal. After southern lands were claimed, many tribal members fled, but ultimately returned to Wisconsin and established small and separate communities.

**There are 12 tribes in Wisconsin today, including the Brothertown Nation, which is not federally recognized as a tribe. This Indian nation accepted United States Citizenship in 1839 to prevent forced removal.

