



The Indian Bowl Pow Wow at Lac du Flambeau features traditional dancing and singing. The George W. Brown Jr. Ojibwe Museum & Cultural Center is in town.



A guide welcomes visitors to a reconstructed British trading post at the Forts Folle Avoine Historical Park.



A signpost helps guide visitors to activities at Forts Folle park, between Danbury and Webster.

If you go

The attractions
Oneida Nation Museum. W892 County Road EE, De Pere. 920-869-2768, onelandation.org/museum. Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday. Admission: \$2 adults, \$1 children and 55 and over. Three-hour Oneida Nation tours are conducted Monday through Friday. Including a sweat lodge, buffalo herds, the tribe's organic farm and more. Call two weeks ahead, 920-496-5025 or 920-496-5020. Tours are \$15 for adults.
The Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library Museum of the Mohican Nation. N8510 Moh-He-Con-Nuck Road, Bowler, 715-793-4270, mohican-nsn.gov. Open 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Monday-Friday year-round. Donations accepted.
Lac du Flambeau Indian Bowl Pow Wows. 603 Peace Pipe Road, (Just off Highway 47), Lac du Flambeau. Tribal Council 715-588-3303, lacduflambeau.org. Grand Entry about 7 p.m. Thursdays June 25 to Aug. 25. Admission: \$7 adults, \$3 children.
Forts Folle Avoine Historical Park. 8500 County Road U (three miles west of Highway 35 between Danbury and Webster, 715-866-8890, forts.org). Narrated one- or two-hour tours start 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday May 28 through Labor Day; weekends in September. Tour fee: \$7 ages 13 and older, \$5 ages 6 to 12, free for children under 5, \$20 for families of four (two adults, two children).
Where to stay
Konkapot Lodge. W12635 County Road A, Bowler, 715-787-4747, konkapot.com. This was the most unusual place we stayed. The logs used to build the Konkapot were salvaged from the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation after a 1997 "blow down" from high winds. The handcrafted log work was done by Arrowhead Log Homes, owned and operated by the tribal members. Rates range from \$79 to \$135, and seniors get 10 percent off on Thursdays.
Mole Lake Casino, Lodge and Conference Center. 3084 Highway 55, Crandon, 877-478-5772, molelake.com. Nice accommodations operated by the Sokaogon Mole Lake Band of the Lake Superior Chippewa. Standard, nonpromotional rates range from \$75 to \$162.
Lake of the Torches Resort and Casino. 512 Old Abe Road, Lac du Flambeau, 888-599-9200, lakeofthetorches.com. A handsome hotel, with a kid-friendly pool and the Dancing Waters Lounge for grown-ups, this is operated by the Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa. Rates range from \$105 to \$190.
General information
 Most helpful was travelwisconsin.com, the official site of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism in Madison. Click on Arts & Culture, then Native Culture. Phone 800-432-8747. Native American Tourism of Wisconsin, natow.org. Or call Kirby Metoxen of the Oneida Nation, 920-496-5025.

Wisconsin's first people open their doors

By Cliff Terry
 SPECIAL TO TRIBUNE NEWSPAPERS

Gambling may be what comes to mind when considering a visit to American Indian reservations. And casinos do play a key role, generating money for schools, health clinics, day care and other social services. But there is so much more to see among Wisconsin's first people.

Last summer my wife, Pat, and I set out on a six-day trip to Wisconsin, which boasts 11 sovereign tribal nations, to visit museums, cultural centers and powwows. Further, by talking to tribal members, we learned about their culture, traditions and history.

Of the 11 tribal nations, encompassing more than 500,000 acres of forests, lakes and wild-rice beds, we visited parts of six. Along the way, we often stayed in tribe-owned hotels near casinos, though we don't gamble.

The Oneida

We left Chicago on a Monday, following Interstate Highway 94 to Milwaukee, then Interstate Highway 43 farther north. Our first stop was the Oneida Nation Museum in De Pere, about eight miles west of Green Bay. The museum welcomes visitors from several countries, so brochures explain the tribe's "creation" story in French, German, Spanish, Japanese and English.

Rita Lara, museum director, described the Oneida — one of two Wisconsin tribes forcibly relocated from the East multiple times — as matrilineal: Children are born into a Bear, Wolf or Turtle clan, and every clan has three clan mothers, who pick the chief.

Exhibits and handouts explained these bits of Oneida history: ■ The Oneida are part of the six-

nation Iroquois Confederacy.

■ Rather than powwows, they hold social dances.
 ■ They assisted George Washington's starving army at Valley Forge.

■ At one point their children were forced to attend federal boarding schools intent on abolishing the Oneida language and culture.

"We get a lot of grade-school children, and they're generally surprised that we don't live in teepees and dress in traditional tribal clothing," Lara said with a laugh.

The Mohicans

That night we headed 63 miles northwest to Bowler and the rustic Konkapot Lodge in a lovely wooded area near North Star Casino, operated by the Stockbridge-Munsee band of the Mohican Nation. The Mohicans and the Munsee formerly lived along the Hudson River. The tribe was forcibly moved so often that its tribal symbol is "Many Trails."

On Tuesday, we visited the nearby Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library Museum of the Mohican Nation, honoring a tribal chief of 26 years who saved many historical documents.

An introductory DVD, "Mohicans of Wisconsin Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation," informs visitors that the Mohicans lost their homeland and more than 95 percent of their members. In return, it explains, the Europeans introduced everything from diseases and rum to words such as "coveit," "mortgage" and "debt."

Our tour guide, Leah Miller, daughter of the late chief, noted that despite the wrongs done to the tribe, the Mohicans have a history of contact with nontribal people and work well with the neighboring community. Mohican businesses, including an 18-hole golf



Bob Hudack, a guide at the Waswagoning Indian village on the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation, talks to visitors about the origins of lacrosse in a traditional Ojibwe village setting.

course, are growing, and the tribe provides a modern health clinic, housing, day care and education. The casino bankrolls all of this, though even that raises some concern. (One tribal member on the DVD says, "I hope we don't get hung up on the casino and money" but focus instead "on spiritual development.")

The Menominee

We then drove 20 miles east to Keshena, near Crandon, to check out the Menominee Logging Camp

Museum. Bordering the Wolf River, the museum has seven replica buildings made of logs that house more than 20,000 artifacts. Our dedicated and loquacious native guide was Stan Latender, the grandson of a logging-camp boss who dynamited stumps. Latender said the Menominee reservation is so densely forested that it can be seen from outer space and that NASA has used it as a reference point in satellite photos. Logging has been a way of life for the Menominee since the late

1800s, though now the duty is contracted out. The last of the 33 logging camps closed in the 1950s. One replicated building contains authentic bunk beds, snuff jars and a formidable bear trap. Another building houses musical instruments (accordion, cigar-box violin) and a shoe-repair corner, and in the "chow hall" we saw circus posters used for teaching loggers to read.

We also got a sneak peek at the new Menominee Cultural Center, opening in May or June but still

awaiting "repatriation" of tribal artifacts from museums in Green Bay and Washington, D.C.

The Sokaogon Chippewa

On Tuesday night we checked in at the Mole Lake Casino and Lodge, seven miles south of Crandon, operated by the Sokaogon Mole Lake band of Lake Superior Chippewa, a small tribe active in wild-rice harvesting and spear-fishing. (Chippewa and Ojibwe are interchangeable terms, though certain tribes use one or the other.)

On Wednesday, a change of pace: the close-by Dinesen Log House, owned by the Sokaogon and listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Richard Ackley, related to the tribe's last chief, took us inside this attractive, restored cabin.

Built along an Indian trail in the 1860s to shelter road-building soldiers, the house was acquired in 1873 by Danish adventurer Wilhelm Dinesen, who lived there with a Chippewa housekeeper named Catherine. Wilhelm left Catherine, returned home and fathered Karen Blixen, who later wrote "Out of Africa" under the pen name Isak Dinesen (1937). It became a film with Meryl Streep and Robert Redford.

The Potawatomi

Next stop, the striking Forest County Potawatomi Cultural Center, Library and Museum in Crandon. Unfortunately, the museum is closed until fall while mounting a new exhibit, but the library boasts huge, spectacular murals created by tribal youth and community members. The panels depict day-to-day life, culture and significant events over the years, including today's warriors — Potawatomi soldiers or veterans of the U.S. military. (Native Americans, according to tribal information, have enlisted at three times the rate of

any other racial or ethnic group, relative to population.)

Lac du Flambeau Ojibwe

Then it was 63 miles northwest to Lac du Flambeau, "Torch Lake," named by French fur traders who had seen torches dotting the lake at night as the Ojibwe (the term they use) speared walleye. We checked in for three nights at the tribe's lovely Lake of the Torches Resort (with casino).

On Thursday morning, we took a family-friendly tour at nearby Waswagoning ("The Place Where They Spear by Torchlight"), a recreated traditional Indian village along the shore of Moving Cloud Lake on the Lac du Flambeau Indian Reservation.

Our irrepressible guide, Bob Hudack, whose "spirit" name is Mash-Koway ("One Who Stands Strong"), pepped an informative, humorous two hours with hands-on demonstrations. He explained that the Ojibwe were a patriarchal society but that, interestingly, the women elect the chiefs. He showed us a teepee-style lodge used by people traveling through the territory and noted that the tribe stored birch-bark canoes over winter by sinking them in deep water to protect them against weather and hungry porcupines. He also taught us Ojibwe words, such as "booz-hoo" (hello).

That night, we attended the Indian Bowl Pow Wow near our hotel. (The powwow is a way of meeting to join in dancing, singing, renewing old friendships and making new ones.) We watched dancers in beautiful regalia demonstrate, among others, "Jingle Dress Medicine Dance," "Fancy Shawl Dance" and "Men's Feather Dance." On Friday, in tiny "downtown" Lac du Flambeau, we visited the George W. Brown Jr. Ojibwe Museum & Cultural Center. Exhibits

include dioramas of a maple sugaring camp, spear-fishing camp, wild-rice harvest and ice spear-fishing. There also is a 24-foot dug-out canoe — estimated between 180 and 280 years old — found preserved under 9 feet of water in Flambeau Lake in 1980.

Our final destination, Saturday morning, was Forts Folle Avoine Historical Park on the Yellow River between Danbury and Webster, about 150 miles west. Operated by the Burnett County Historical Society, "The Forts" includes a reconstructed 1802-1805 British fur trading post; an Indian village portraying the life and culture of early Woodland tribes, including the Ojibwe; and an excellent visitor center. (The Forts is near two bands of Lake Superior Chippewa: the St. Croix, and the Lac Courte Oreilles.)

Noteworthy are the Forts' one- or two-hour tours. Our guide, "Angelique," spoke and acted as a fictional "mixed-blood" character living in the 1700s and early 1800s. She filled a creative two hours — probably too much for younger children — with colorful information and a good deal of humor.

Walking us into a log replica of the North West Co.'s trading post, she displayed numerous items, particularly hides. "Beaver fur makes the big money," she noted. "It was used for beaver felt hats, and the taller the hat, the more important the person." "Angelique's" survival list for those days? "Liquor, tobacco and rice."

Saturday afternoon we headed down U.S. Highway 53 and I-94 back to Chicago, taking six days' worth of wonderful memories and a deeper insight into the journey and lives of these diverse, enduring first Americans.

As a Mohican quote in one museum read: "It's not moccasins, buckskins and beads but the thinking of how you value your life."