

First Nations Walking Tour

Tour Explores American Indian Landmarks

Humans have lived on the shores of Waaksikhomik (Lake Mendota) for thousands of years. In fact, the University of Wisconsin-Madison resides on ancestral Ho-Chunk Nation land. Eleven architectural earth-work mound sites dating back 2,500 years and at least 25 human habitation sites dating back 12,000 years are part of the campus landscape.

A First Nations Cultural Landscape Walking Tour was held in conjunction with the 2019 Arbuthnot Honor Lecture. Tour participants visited numerous campus locations, learning about the cultural

significance and Native history of those spaces. The tour was led by Omar Poler, associate outreach specialist, School of Library and Information Studies, UW-Madison.

In June of this year, a heritage marker was dedicated on Bascom Hill on the Madison campus. The “Our Shared Future” monument recognizes the land as the ancestral home of the Ho-Chunk, acknowledges the circumstances that led to their forced removal, and honors the Ho-Chunk Nation’s history of resistance and resilience. To learn more, visit the University’s website. &



Tour participants gather around a tree to learn its history from guide, Omar Poler. The inscription on the marker reads: For those people of the earth who search for the past, to healing power, wisdom and security. The tree will never die. As long as the tree lives, people live. Planted April 9, 1988. (Photo by Alena Rivers)



Dr. Reese (right) and Hinu Helgesen Smith (left), Ho-Chunk legislator, who kicked off the lecture with official greetings from the Ho-Chunk Nation. (Photo by Durango Mendoza)



The Wisconsin Dells Singers: A Ho-Chunk Nation Dance and Drum Group performed before the lecture. (Photo by Durango Mendoza)