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## Brothertown Indian Nation: Wisconsin's 12th Tribe

*The Brothertown Indian Nation, which is present in Fond du Lac and Calumet counties, is seeking federal recognition as an Indian tribe.*



**By Jessica Ryan**

The Brothertown Indian Nation is one of 12 tribes located in what is now Wisconsin. We are an amalgamated tribe, bound by the coming together of seven Algonkian tribes to survive and thrive against the odds of the colonizers and all that foreign governments brought to the eastern shores of the U.S.

Our trail of tears is like that of many tribes on the eastern shores who were forcibly moved west by weapon and pen. We were removed from Long Island and other parts of New York, Rhode Island, and Connecticut. We resided with the Oneida and Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans on what became the Oneida Reservation in New York. In the early 1800s, "the New York Indians" (Brothertown, Oneida, and Stockbridge-Munsee) were removed to the Northwest Territory (now Wisconsin), to lands of the Menominee, along the eastern shores of Lake Winnebago. Thereafter, Congress sought another relocation, to "Indian Territory" in Kansas and Indiana. Our sachems (leaders) paddled a dugout canoe to this area and discovered there was no land set aside. Desperate and without options, it was determined that Brothertown members would become U.S. citizens and could then become individual landowners, thereby avoiding yet another forced relocation.

Brothertown history, culture, and tradition are interwoven with our parent tribes – our ancestors, including the Eastern Pequot, Mashantucket Pequot, Mohegan, Narragansett, Montauk, Niantic, and Tunxis; and with our relative tribes – the Oneida and the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans, with whom we have shared land, treaties, and relocation trails. Although we have much in common with these tribes, each tribe is unique and has its own inherent sovereignty.

Brothertown Indian Nation has an elected nine-member tribal government and is recognized as an independent tribal nation by the tribes in Wisconsin, our parent tribes, and tribes elsewhere. Wisconsin recognizes the Brothertown Indian Nation as a tribe in the state. We continue to fight to restore our status to a federally recognized tribe.

While remaining engaged in restoration efforts, we maintain a strong and vibrant tribal community. We gather as a Tribe at our community center in Fond du Lac and at our cultural center in Brothertown, in Calumet County, to keep our relationships, our history, and our culture strong. We are committed to caring for the water and land and those things that depend on them through internal tribal efforts, as well as co-leading intertribal, intergovernmental, and interagency efforts looking after the Lake Winnebago waterways and the wild rice located therein.

Our federal trust relationship with the U.S. government was terminated, just like the Menominee, Pequot, Narragansett, and hundreds of other tribes. That federal-tribal trust relationship was restored for the Menominee, Pequot, Narragansett, and many other tribes. It is the hope of Brothertown that we will soon be restored to the status of a federally recognized tribe, as our relative tribes have been.

If you are interested in learning more about the restoration process, please contact the Brothertown Indian Nation at (920) 929-9964, Tribal Chair Phyllis Tousey at [brothertownchair@brothertownindians.org](mailto:brothertownchair@brothertownindians.org), or Vice Chair Jessica Ryan at [vicechair@brothertownindians.org](mailto:vicechair@brothertownindians.org).

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