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City to Fly Ho-Chunk Nation Flag at Madison Municipal Building

Starting Wednesday, November 25th, the City of Madison will fly the flag of the Ho-Chunk Nation in front of the Madison Municipal Building on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.

Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway signed a proclamation today causing the flag to be flown “in honor of Ho-Chunk Day and in recognition of the fact that the City of Madison is located on the Nation’s ancestral land.”

“I hope that flying the Nation’s flag will be a reminder to us all that our city exists on land that belonged to the Ho-Chunk,” said Mayor Rhodes-Conway, “This is a way to honor that history, and to strengthen the ties between the City and the Nation.”

In 2018, the Madison Common Council declared the day after Thanksgiving to be Ho-Chunk Nation Day in the City of Madison. Alder Arvina Martin, A member of the Ho-Chunk Nation was instrumental in the declaration of Ho-Chunk Nation Day.

“I am excited to see the Ho-Chunk Nation flag flying at Madison Municipal Building today,” said Alder Arvina Martin, “The acknowledgement of this area's history, present, and future as intertwined with the City's sets us up for more successful partnerships as we go forward, and recognizes the importance of the Ho-Chunk contribution to the Dejope area. I look forward to working with together to build more innovative solutions to the issues we both face.”

The flag that will fly was presented to Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway in a flag exchange ceremony in 2019 between the Mayor and Ho-Chunk nation president Marlon WhiteEagle.

“The People of the Ho-Chunk Nation appreciate this momentous occasion by the City of Madison. The flying of the Ho-Chunk flag affirms the Ho-Chunk people’s rightful place in history, in this place from the Ice Age until now and well into the future,” said President WhiteEagle, “The Ho-Chunk people are grateful for this recognition and hopeful we can continue to live and work together, making each day better than the last. May the Ho-Chunk flag fly above the City of Madison with pride and dignity.”

About the Ho-Chunk Flag

The Ho-Chunk flag was adopted in 1992. It is white with a green border and bears an ornate applique design across the middle and the tribal seal in the center. The flag's five basic colors - red, white, green, blue, and black - represent specific animals in the kinship system in which each clan is associated with a particular animal and hopes to gain the admirable qualities of that animal. Each color also has special meanings in sacred tribal stories which are recalled by their use in the flag.

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The seal, adopted in 1984, is white with black edges. It includes two of the most important animals in Native American beliefs, the thunderbird, and the bear. The thunderbird, depicted as a bald eagle, represents the four upper clans Thunder, Eagle, Pigeon, Warrior; it carries a pipe for the peace enforced by the Thunder clan - the pipe has yellow feathers and a red pipe head. Below it is the bear, in black, representing the eight lower clans Bear, Wolf, Deer, Elk, Buffalo, Water Spirit, Snake and Fish, and the Bear Clan being the "Chief of the Earth" in Ho-Chunk belief. In the Ho-Chunk society, the members of the Bear clan maintain order, providing the soldiers and the police. A brown war club separates the thunderbird from the bear. This design was common among the many Tribes in the western reaches of the Great Lakes.