



# THE AMERICAN LEGION

## DEPARTMENT OF WISCONSIN



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Join the Ho-Chunk Nation at Veterans Memorial Field for the Celebration of Freedom Opening and Closing Ceremonies**

*Event includes American Vietnam Traveling Tribute Wall, Eagle Staff and Flag raising, blessing and smudging ceremony, Pow-Wow etiquette demonstration and more in Portage*

**Portage, WI** - The Ho-Chunk Nation proudly invites all veterans, families and friends to the Celebration of Freedom September 4 – 8, at Veterans Memorial Field (Columbia County Fairgrounds) in Portage, Wisconsin. The American Legion Headquarters has asked the Ho-Chunk Nation to assist with the arrival of the American Vietnam Traveling Tribute Wall and the opening and closing ceremonies.

According to the U.S. Department of Defense, American Indians serve in the armed forces in greater numbers per capita than any other ethnic group, and they have served with distinction in every major conflict for over 200 years. Many Ho-Chunks have died in combat overseas, defending a country their ancestors once warred against.

On Wednesday, Sept. 4, at 3 p.m., The American Legion Posts 129, 442 and 556, (primarily Ho-Chunk Nation veterans with other Wisconsin Tribal Nations invited) along with the Legion Riders, will escort the American Vietnam Traveling Tribute Wall to Veterans Memorial Field. Vietnam veterans, military veterans and families are welcome to join the greeting of the procession. At the entry point, Eagle Staffs and Flags will present a pathway as they enter into the fairgrounds. After the wall is set up, there will be a blessing ceremony in honor of all those who have made the ultimate sacrifice. Tobacco will be placed to the east of the wall along with smudging of the wall. Tobacco is a sacred object in the spiritual world of American Indians. Most Ho-Chunks carry it with them, or keep it near them, in small pouches. When they join the military, their sacred tobacco goes with them.

For the opening ceremony on Thursday, Sept. 5, at 3:00 p.m., Ho-Chunk Nation will bring in and Post the Colors. There will be a Native pow-wow style dance presentation with an explanation of each dance style.

On Sunday, Sept. 8, at 1 p.m., military service and honor songs will be sung to honor the Wall at the closing ceremony. Tobacco will be placed on the drum for those who are alive and in recognition of the veterans who have left us and for those who will go on into the future. The songs, which come from the Ho-Chunk ancestors, will tell a story of each branch and symbolize the respectful nature of the Ho-Chunk people.

*“The wall is symbolic of the warriors that have passed into the spirit world. Their presence and their spirits will be in our hearts during this time. When you look at the wall and you hear the beat of the drum, their spirits will be with us. It will be an emotional day. The circle and the drum encourage and uplift our warriors. It lets them express themselves. Not only were veterans impacted by their sacrifices, but their families were as well. The songs and dances will connect us with the Creator and heal our souls. They will help the people feel good about their sacrifices. This is truly a blessing to participate and assist with this event.” – Ho-Chunk Nation Veterans.*

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*The Wisconsin American Legion is the state's largest veterans' service organization with over 53,000 members and 506 posts in communities across Wisconsin serving troops, veterans and youth since 1919. For more information on the Legion's programs and membership, please visit [www.wilegion.org](http://www.wilegion.org).*