

Ada Deer Home
August 7, 1935 - August 15, 2023

Ada Deer was born on the Menominee Reservation. Her mother, Constance Wood Deer, was a nurse from a Philadelphia Quaker family. Her father, Joe Deer, a Menominee, worked in the tribe's lumber mill. In the 1950s, Ada's mother vigilantly fought federal efforts to terminate the Menominee's sovereign status. Nevertheless, Congress passed legislation in 1957 to terminate the tribe's sovereignty.

In 1970, Ada helped organize "DRUMS" (Determination of Rights and Unity for Menominee Shareholders). As a lobbyist, she secured the support of Wisconsin Senators Gaylord Nelson and William Proxmire. In 1973, the Menominee, the first tribe terminated, became the first restored, thus ending the termination era.

In 1974, Deer became the first woman to chair the Menominee Nation, and in 1993, she became the first Native American to head the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

2026

Dane County Heritage Preservation Commission