

# Black Hawk

1767–1838



**WHY HE MADE HISTORY** Black Hawk was a fierce and powerful leader of the Sauk Nation. His efforts to save his land resulted in the Black Hawk War.



*As you read the biography below, think about how Black Hawk's determination helped him lead his people.*

Black Hawk was born in Illinois near the Mississippi River. He was a member of the Sauk Nation, a tribe of American Indians who had come to know and trade with French, Spanish, and British settlers. When Black Hawk became chief of the Sauk, his people were facing aggression from American settlers who wanted to expand westward.

The settlers irritated Black Hawk. He believed the Sauk had a right to remain on their own land, the land where they were born. In 1804 the United States drew up a treaty that called for the removal of the Sauk and another nearby American Indian tribe, the Fox. Black Hawk was furious over this treaty and declared it invalid. He believed a treaty should involve both parties, but the Sauk had had no say in this matter.

Relations between the Sauk and the United States worsened. When the War of 1812 came about, Black Hawk and his warriors fought on the side of the British. The Indians hoped that if the British won, the Americans would end their push westward into their lands. By 1814 Black Hawk had defeated U.S. troops in many battles, although the Americans eventually won the war. A brief but awkward peace followed between the Sauk and the United States.

In 1832 the Black Hawk War began. The Sauk and other American Indians refused to be pushed



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## VOCABULARY

**massacre** killing a large number of people

westward by American settlers. Black Hawk was fairly successful in his battles against U.S. troops until the battle at Bad Axe River. Black Hawk realized his troops were outnumbered so he tried to surrender, but his white flag was ignored. Almost all of his people were **massacred**. Black Hawk was captured and imprisoned.

President Andrew Jackson sent the captured Sauk leader and his son, Whirling Thunder, on a tour as “war trophies.” Black Hawk told Jackson, “I am a man and you are another.” Black Hawk showed such dignity that many people began to sympathize with the Indians’ plight.

Despite the sympathy some people displayed for the Indians’ cause, westward expansion continued. Black Hawk was released in 1833. He returned to his people, now living in Iowa. Before his death in 1838, Black Hawk wrote his autobiography, *I Am a Man: The Indian Black Hawk*.

### WHAT DID YOU LEARN?

- 1. Draw Conclusions** Why did President Andrew Jackson and other Americans think that it was necessary to remove the American Indians from their land?

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- 2. Expressing and Supporting a Point of View** Think about Black Hawk’s statement, “I am a man and you are another.” What do you think Black Hawk meant when he said this to President Jackson?

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### ACTIVITY

Work with a partner to research one of the many American Indian nations that existed during Jackson’s time. Create a poster that tells about traditions and other important facts about the people you chose. Share your information with the class.