



Module 4 Talking Points

- Place names come from many sources. Some places are named after the person or family who started it. Some places are named because of their location.
- The city of Baraboo was named because of the Baraboo River. The river was named Baraboo long before there was a city named Baraboo.
- Barbeau Baribeu was born in 1698.
- Sometimes his last name was spelled in other ways like Barbeau, Baribault, Baribau and Bariboux.
- Barbeau was born on November 4, 1698, in Boucherville, which was a farming village across the St. Lawrence River from Quebec in Canada or New France, as it was called at the time.
- When Francois Barbeau was growing up the St. Lawrence River was a busy place with ships coming and going from Quebec City. Water travel was a way of life for Barbeau.
- There were no bridges across the river so to get to Quebec he would have to travel by a boat or ship.
- As an adult Barbeau served as a soldier with the French forces in Canada. By 1747 he was living far away from where he grew up near Quebec at a fort called Fort Michilimackinac.
- This was a French fort built on an island where two of the great lakes, Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, meet.
- The waterways were the highways at that time.
- Fort Michilimackinac was built to help the French control trading with the Indians of the area and as a place from where traders could be sent out to trade with the Indians to the north and west.
- In 1749 Francois Barbeau received official permission to become a "voyageur", or official trader, and trade with the Indians.
- He would travel further to the west and set up a post where he could meet the Indians.
- He could not do this alone however so he hired six men to go with him and work for him. They would help with transportation, haul goods, build the trading post and get the whole crew back to the fort.
- Barbeau and his men would make the journey from Fort Michilimackinac in a canoe.



- It was about 20 feet long and had to hold all seven men and all of their supplies.
- The canoe was made of wood and birch bark. It was fragile and had to be treated with respect.
- Besides holding the men, the canoe also had to hold their supplies. Barbeau and his men took the following supplies:
 - 800 pounds of hardtack (hard crackers)
 - 250 pounds of bacon
 - 5 bushels of peas (dried)
 - 4 pieces of bark for shelter
 - 2 five-foot lengths of canoe bark (for repairs)
 - 20 pounds of gum (natural resin to coat seams and make the canoe watertight)
 - root to sew canoe (for repairs)
 - 4 big canoe poles (to push the canoe instead of paddle)
 - 12 yards of cloth sail (sometimes the canoe could use a sail and become a sailboat)
 - 1 covered metal kettle
 - 4 ½ pounds of gunpowder
 - 8 pounds of lead bullets
 - 1 sponge
- The men left Fort Michilimackinac in the early fall of 1749 and began paddling for Lake Michigan.
- Once in Lake Michigan they followed the shoreline and headed for what we now call Green Bay.
- When Barbeau and his men had reached what is now Wisconsin they traveled up the Fox River.
- This was even harder than paddling on Lake Michigan because there were dangerous currents and rapids.
- When the canoe could not safely travel on the river everything had to be unloaded and carried on land, including the canoe, until the river was safe enough to travel on.
- When the men had to carry everything this was called “portaging.”
- Finally Barbeau and his men reached a place where the Fox River was very close to the much larger Wisconsin River and it was possible to carry the supplies and the canoe from one river to the other.



- This place was called the “portage” or “the carrying of a boat from one place to another.”
- The city of Portage was named because this is the place where Indigenous People, traders and other people could get from one river to another.
- After finally reaching the Wisconsin River at Portage, Barbeau and his men only traveled a short distance until they found a small river entering the Wisconsin River.
- They may have been told about the place or found it themselves but it is the spot that Barbeau chose to set up a trading post with the Indigenous Peoples.
- High on a hill above the river, Barbeau and his men worked quickly to build a small trading post consisting of a small house surrounded by a palisade, or fence of upright logs.
- The men also had to cut an enormous supply of firewood in order to make it through the winter.
- Another task that had to be completed before winter set in was to bury the canoe.
- Since the canoe was made out of bark, if it was left out in the harsh winter wind it would dry out and crack, making it useless and stranding the men.
- The purpose of all of the hard work and travel was to trade with the Indigenous People.
- Barbeau and his men brought hundreds of pounds of “trade goods” to give to the Indigenous Peoples in exchange for animal pelts or furs. The trade goods that Barbeau brought consisted of many items – mostly useful items but also some decorative and some very useful items. Useful items included axes, knives, guns, fire starters, blankets and pipes. Decorative items included paint, trade beads, mirrors and pieces of copper. Consumption items included tobacco for smoking and brandy and rum.
- One particular trade good item that was highly prized was the trade kettle.
- People made kettles out of clay or bark.
- Water was placed in the kettle and heated by dropping stones from a fire into the water.
- A metal kettle allowed water to be heated right over the fire.
- In exchange for trade goods the Indigenous People would bring animal furs to Barbeau.
- These were highly sought after in Europe.



- Furs were used for clothing but the greatest use for animal fur was for making hats.
- The most sought after animal fur was that of the beaver.
- Beaver fur was turned into a felt that was used to make hats.
- From long before the time of George Washington's tri-cornered hat to Abraham Lincoln's top hat, beaver fur was highly prized.
- After spending the winter of 1749-50 at his trading post, Barbeau and his men returned to Fort Michilimackinac in the spring.
- Their canoe was loaded down with bundles of furs to be sold and sent off to Europe.
- Francois Barbeau acquired another permit to trade furs three years after his first trip.
- He may have returned to his original post next to the river. His post became known to the local people of the area, especially those at the portage.
- In 1766, fifteen years after Baribeau's first trip to the area, an expedition of British soldiers and explorers came through the area.
- One of the explorers' names was James Stanley Goddard.
- Goddard wrote about the trip in his journal. The earliest mention of the river being named after Francois Barbeau is found in Goddard's journal.
- We are not sure what happened to Francois Barbeau after he came to our area.
- Local people remembered him however and named the river after him.
- Over time the spelling of Barbeau's last name was changed and finally "Baraboo" became the official spelling.
- The river was named Baraboo first and many years later a village was laid out and given the same name.
- The village grew and eventually became the City of Baraboo.