Module 7 Talking Points

- Wisconsin has 72 counties.
- Sauk County was established in 1840 as the 20th county of Wisconsin. This was before Wisconsin was a state and the area was still known as the Wisconsin Territory.
- Sauk County is divided into 22 towns and also has villages and cities.
- Each town, village, or city has its own government. A government works to serve and protect the people.
- A government makes laws for the people and then makes sure people follow those laws.
- A town is a large area of land. A town is run by a group of 3 to five people called a town board. The Town Chair is the head of the town board.
- A village is run by a small group of people called the Village Board. The village president is the head of the village board.
- A city is run by a small group of people called the city council. The Mayor is the head of the city council.
- Sauk County was named after the Sauk Indians who once lived on the Sauk Prairie in the southeastern part of the county.
- The Sauk Indians had a large settlement, also called a village, of about ninety houses along the Wisconsin River.
- The houses were built of wood poles and covered with bark.
- The Sauk Indians grew corn, beans, melons and other crops near their village. They also hunted on the Sauk Prairie and in the Baraboo bluffs.
- The Sauk Indians left the Sauk Prairie before European settlers started to arrive, but people still called the prairie where they lived, the Sauk Prairie, or in French "Prairie du Sac."
- When European settlers began coming to Sauk County the first place that they started to settle was the Sauk Prairie area.
- Two communities started along the Wisconsin River which today we know as the villages of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac.
- In 1844, when there were enough people in Sauk County to start a county government, people had to decide where the county seat should be.
- The territorial government of Wisconsin sent a committee of three men to Sauk County to decide where the county seat should be.
- They decided that since most of the people of Sauk County at that time lived in the two settlements of Prairie du Sac and Sauk City, that a contest should be held to see which settlement would offer the most land to the county.
- Prairie du Sac won the contest with an offer of several village lots on which to build a courthouse and other buildings for county use.

- So, in 1844 Prairie du Sac became the first county seat of Sauk County. A small wooden courthouse was built there.
- Some people living in Sauk City and the Baraboo valley were not happy about the decision to make Prairie du Sac the county seat.
- Later it was discovered that if the county seat ever moved, the land given by Prairie du Sac to the county would have to be given back to the people who had donated the land.
- Many people did not think this was a good idea.
- So a petition was signed by many people asking to have a vote on whether to move the county seat to the Baraboo valley.
- In 1846 it was decided to move the county seat to the Baraboo valley.
- There was no village there yet so the county government purchased land and laid out a village and named it Adams.
- The village was designed with a public square and all of the land around it was put up for sale. People purchased lots around the square and elsewhere in Adams.
- The county used the money to build a courthouse and a jail.
- At the same time that the county laid out the village of Adams, a man named George Brown laid out a village he named Baraboo after the river.
- George Brown owned one of the dams along the Baraboo River.
- He also owned a saw mill and a grist mill near the dam.
- The land laid out for the village of Adams was right next to the land laid out by George Brown for the village of Baraboo.
- Eventually both villages were combined and called Baraboo. Since then, Baraboo has been the county seat for Sauk County.