

Native American Place Names

Many counties, rivers and streams, and towns in Kansas are named for Native American peoples. For example, a town in Labette County, three townships in Montgomery, Neosho, and Wilson counties, and a creek in Montgomery County share the name Chetopa. They are named for the Osage chief Tzi-Topah. Among the Osage, warriors earned their names. Tzi-Topah's name means "Four Lodges." He earned that name when he captured and burned four houses in a Pawnee village during a raid.

Tzi-Topah was a respected tribal leader of the Little Osage branch of the Osage tribe. He knew his reputation would last only as long as his people's memories. Before he died, Tzi-Topah made one last parade through his village. He wore his warrior clothes so people would talk about him. Tzi-Topah knew the Osage would tell stories of his brave deeds for many years. He wanted to be remembered by his people.

The following counties in Kansas have names that come from Native American people or languages:

Chautauqua (a Seneca word for a lake in New York that may have come from the phrase "where the fish was taken out")

Cherokee (a Native American tribe that was moved to Kansas from Georgia)

Cheyenne (a Native American tribe that lived in western Kansas on the High Plains)

Comanche (a Native American tribe that lived in western Kansas on the High Plains)

Kiowa (a Native American tribe that lived in western Kansas on the High Plains)

Miami (a Native American tribe that came to Kansas from the Great Lakes area)

Nemaha (a Siouan name from the Omaha or Oto tribes that may mean "stream of the Omahas")

Neosho (an Osage word for a river that may have come from the phrase "water made muddy or dirty")

Osage (a Native American tribe that lived in eastern Kansas)

Ottawa (a Native American tribe that came to Kansas from the Great Lakes area)

Pawnee (a Native American tribe that lived in eastern Kansas)

Pottawatomie (a Native American tribe that came to Kansas from the Great Lakes area)

Republic (a French word for the Kitkehahki band of the Pawnee who lived in eastern Kansas)

Shawnee (a Native American tribe that came to Kansas from the Ohio River valley)

Wabaunsee (a Potawatomi name for a tribal leader that may have come from the phrase "dawn of day")

Wichita (a Native American tribe that lived in central and southern Kansas)

Wyandotte (a Native American tribe that came to Kansas from the Great Lakes area)

