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Shawnee Indian Cemetery in Johnson County, KS Returns to Shawnee Tribe

TOPEKA, KS – Kansas Governor Laura Kelley signed Senate Bill 405, authorizing the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS), to convey the Shawnee Indian Cemetery located in Johnson County, to the Shawnee Tribe. The 0.52 acre parcel of land is the final resting place of Shawnee personages such as Chief Joseph Parks and family members of famous general Chief Bluejacket.

“The Shawnee Tribe considers the cemetery a sacred place, a traditional cultural property,” said Chief Ben Barnes. “We are committed to protecting the gravesites of our ancestors and to the preservation and conservation of the historical, archeological character of the site.”

The Shawnee Indian Cemetery is located near Nieman Road and W 59th Terrace, in Shawnee, Kansas. Chief Barnes and Second Chief Baldrige previously met with the leadership of the City of Shawnee with plans to continue relationship-building between the Shawnee Tribe and the City of Shawnee.

“Besides being a sacred site for our people, it also signifies the general location of our last true home,” said Second Chief Roy Baldrige. “We are grateful to the Kansas Legislature and the Governor’s office for the conveyance of the cemetery. We also appreciate the assistance of the Kansas Historic Preservation Office.”

The Kansas Attorney General has reviewed and approved the deeds and conveyance. The bill states the Shawnee Tribe agrees to pay all costs related to the conveyance and grants the State a historic preservation easement that will reflect current federal preservation laws regarding properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

[EXPLORE](#) Kansas legislature’s history of SB 405.

[DOWNLOAD](#) Chief Barnes written testimony for SB 405.

[READ](#) “Kansas bill aims to return sacred land to Shawnee Tribe” (*Fox 4 Kansas City*, Feb 8, 2022)

[READ](#) “A Visit to the Shawnee Indian Cemetery” (*JoCoHistory*, Oct 14, 2018)

[READ](#) “Shawnee Indian Cemetery” (*KansasTravel.org*, 2008)

About the Shawnee Tribe

The Shawnee Tribe is a sovereign nation of more than 3,700 citizens living across North America and abroad. Tribal headquarters are located in Miami, Oklahoma. Chief Benjamin J. Barnes was elected in 2019, and Second Chief Roy Baldrige took office in 2020. The Shawnee Tribe’s Kansas reservation was significantly reduced in 1854 and became allotted to individual Shawnee Tribal citizens by 1858, with some lands being held in common by Shawnee Tribal citizens of the Black Bob Band. However, aggression and abuse from white settlers before, during, and after the Civil War forced most Shawnees to relocate to northeastern Oklahoma. For more information, visit shawnee-nsn.gov.

