UW-Marathon County Library Restroom Reader



Volume 4, No. 4 November 2010

Ever wonder where your town's name came from?

Below are a few localities and the origins of their name based on Native American languages.

Wausau—Before 1839 Wausau was known as Big Bull Falls due to the cataracts and rapids in the Wisconsin River. Then W.D. McIndoe proposed the adoption of the Ojibwa name **Wausau** to the

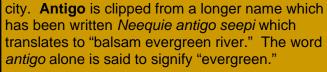
settlement which grew up there. This translated to "far, afar off, a great way off, distant." This could refer to either the



distance and time it took to travel to the settlement or it could refer to the far-off view from atop of Rib Mountain.

Minocqua– The lake, town, and village, all in Oneida County, appear to be named from the Ojibwa term *minakwa*, "a number of trees standing together."

Antigo— The city and town are reputedly named from the Ojibwa name of the Spring River which runs through the



Keshena—A son of a Menominee chief was fasting and in a vision thought he saw a multitude of hawks flying swiftly by. From this incident his son became known as Ke shi ene, "swift flying,"

written as Keshena. **Keshena** is now the principal town of the Menominee reservation.

Tomahawk—The word "Tomahawk" has no close resemblance to any Wisconsin Indian term. This term first appeared in tribes found in the eastern portion of the United States as "Tamahake." This term was quickly adopted into English and applied to both clubs and cutting tools. Most often, towns, cities, and rivers derive the name Tomahawk from a nearby lake which acquires this name because of its shape.

Mosinee— This city was originally known as Little Bull Falls. However, according to one account, the postmaster at this location thought the name sounded vulgar. So when a trapper came along and asked for the Indian name, he suggested Mosinee to honor Chief Mon-so-ne (Chippewa for "Moose Tail") who was a chief at Lac Courte Oreilles in the early 19th century. The citizens of the area approved this name.



American Indian History
Online is a database the
UWMC Library subscribes to
and can be accessed from our
list of article databases. This
resource contains more than
15,000 years of culture and

history through event and topic

entries, biographies, images, maps and charts, primary sources, and timeline entries.

Please ask a librarian if you have any questions about this resource!

This information was taken from the book Indian Names on Wisconsin's Map by Virgil J. Vogel.