

PONCA TRIBE OF OKLAHOMA
Tribal Headquarters: Ponca City, OK



A brief history

The Ponca are one of the tribes of the Dhegiha group of Souian Indians, along with the Omaha, Osage and Kansa. The tribes share similar cultural and social characteristics. "Ponca" means "Sacred Head." Their first known contact with Europeans was in 1789 on Ponca Creek at the mouth of the Niobrara River in northern Nebraska.

Like several other tribes, the Ponca encountered Lewis and Clark in 1804. Their first treaty, one of "Peace and Friendship" with the United States, was signed in 1817. They signed a second treaty in 1825 to increase trade and reduce conflict with neighboring tribes. The third and final treaty in 1858 ceded their western hunting lands to the U.S., mostly due to the loss of buffalo, non-Indian settlements, and conflict with northern plains tribes.

From this treaty the Ponca retained a reservation on the Niobrara River. A mistake by the U.S. government in 1877 led to the removal of the Ponca to a reservation in Indian Territory (Oklahoma). Only 681 people survived the forced march. Upon the death of the great Chief Standing Bears' son, he and 65 followers traveled back to Nebraska where he was arrested for leaving the reservation without permission.

The trial which followed resulted in a landmark court decision granting individual rights to Indians and deeming them "people." Upon hearing of the situation President Hayes visited the tribe and granted their traditional lands on the Niobrara River back to them. The Ponca

Tribe then became officially divided into two separate recognized tribes – the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska and the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma.

About the flag

The flag has the tribal seal centered on a golden buff-yellow field. The seal is a white disk with the words “GREAT SEAL OF THE PONCA TRIBE” at the top, and “OKLAHOMA” spelled across the bottom. In the center is the image of three clustered tipis designed to represent two buffalo hunts the tribe went on each year. Above the three tipis is a golden circle representing the sun. In front of the tipis is a red pipe representing the pipestone quarry which they lived near and used for trade.

Educational Activity

Bison were an important animal for the Ponca. Use your resources to research what the Ponca used bison for. Does our society rely on an animal for any of these things?