

PONCA TRIBE OF NEBRASKA

COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL PROFILE

PONCA TRIBAL GOVERNMENT:

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska was a terminated tribe in the 1960's and restored to full Federal Recognition on October 31, 1990. In the Ponca Constitution, Article I affirms "the territorial jurisdiction of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska under [their] Constitution shall extend to all trust or tribal lands and as described by metes and bounds in the Treaties heretofore ratified by the Congress of the United States of America and shall cover all future additions that are within or without said boundary lines that may be acquired by the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska... regardless if the eligible lands are under the control of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska at the time of the adoption of [their] Constitution.

The Tribe is governed by the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska (Tribal) Council consisting of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and five additional Council members all of whom are elected by the tribal membership.

The Tribal Council Chairman serves as the administrative head of the Tribe. The Tribal Chairman, Officers and Council serve a term of four years and terms are staggered every two years. Council elections are held every two years.

Tribal/Agency Headquarters:	Niobrara, Nebraska 68760
Service Area Counties:	Knox, Holt, Boyd, Douglas, Burt, Sarpy, Lancaster, Hall, Madison, Stanton, Wayne and Platte in Nebraska, Charles Mix in South Dakota and Woodbury and Pottawatomie in Iowa
Number of enrolled members:	3097
Website:	www.poncatribene.org
Reservation Population: (Service Area)	1231
Nation Wide	1867
Labor Force(as reported to BIA 2010) :	7463
Unemployment percentage rate:	Not available
Language:	Ponca and English

LAND:

Land Status:

Total Tribal Trust Land:	160.1 acres
Tribal Owned/Use:	536.34 acres
Individual Allotted:	Not applicable
Total Tribal/Allotted:	Not applicable
Non-Indian Owned:	Not available
Total Tribal Land: Trust and owned	696.44

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska holds properties for 4 field offices located in the Ponca Service Delivery Area: Omaha – an Indian Health Services funded clinic (Douglas County), Lincoln (Lancaster), Norfolk (Madison), and Sioux City (Woodbury County in Iowa)

The Tribal Headquarters are located in Niobrara, Nebraska, as well as a Cultural Office/Museum, Health Facilities and the Historical Site: The Ponca Community Building. The service area covers approximately 1,800 square miles. In addition to the Tribal Headquarters, the Ponca Tribe maintains the jurisdictional power and responsibility to provide environmental authority in compliance with Tribal and Federal law for protection of the land and resources within the boundaries of the Service Area through regulatory mechanisms. This includes all rights-of-way, waterways, watercourses and streams running through any part of the Service Areas counties and to such others lands as may hereafter be added to the land base within any of the Service Area counties under the laws of the United States. The maintenance and protection of the land is very important to the Ponca Tribe and our future generations.

Environmental Protection

STATE	COUNTIES	SERVICE AREA	SQ MI LAND	SQ MI WATER	TOTAL SQ MILE OF LAND AND WATER
Nebraska					
	Boyd *	1	540	5	546
	Burt	2	493	4	499
	Douglas	2	331	9	342
	Hall	3	546	6	555
	Holt	1	2413	5	2419
	Knox *	1	1108	32	1141
	Lancaster	3	839	8	850
	Madison	4	573	2	579
	Platte	4	678	11	693
	Sarpy	2	241	7	248
	Stanton	4	430	1	431
	Wayne	4	444	0	444
Iowa					
	Pottawattamie	2	954	6	960
	Woodbury	1	873	5	878
South Dakota					
	Charles Mix	1	1098	53	1151
TOTAL			11561	154	11736

Knox and Boyd Counties are the Original Homelands of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. Tribal Headquarters' are located in Knox County in the Village of Niobrara. Instead of a Reservation the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has 4 Service Area as noted in the chart. The square miles of both the land and water were taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org>.

Environmental Protection

HISTORY:

On their journey westward in 1804, Lewis and Clark came upon the Ponca Tribe. The Ponca were a small tribe, numbering approximately 700 during the 1800's. Lewis and Clark reported that the tribe, once a part of the Omaha Tribe, separated and lived along a branch of the Red River near- Lake Winnipeg. However, the Sioux forced the Ponca, as well as many of the smaller plains cultures, to relocate to the west bank of the Missouri River in the early 1700's.

Because of the Ponca's limited population, they were subject to both the Sioux and the advancing wave of white settlers. The Ponca's did not engage in any wars or other armed conflict after 1825. Nor do records exist showing that any member of the Ponca Tribe ever killed white settlers or soldiers.

The Ponca Tribe entered into four treaties with the government of the United States. The Treaty of 1817 was a treaty of "peace and friendship" between the two nations. In the Treaty of 1825 the Ponca's acknowledged that they lived within the "territorial limits of the United States" thereby recognizing the supremacy of the government. The Ponca's also authorized the government to regulate all trade and commerce.

The third treaty, signed in 1858, nullified the Ponca's' title to all their lands occupied and claimed by them "except for a small portion on which to colonize or domesticate them." The fourth and final treaty signed in 1865 ceded an additional 30,000 acres of their reserved land. This final treaty provided for a reservation of 96,000 acres in the present day Nebraska counties of Knox and Boyd.

It was the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 that forever altered the course of Ponca history. Among other things, it established the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reservation which included 96,000 acres of land that was the Ponca Reservation. The Ponca became trespassers in their own aboriginal homeland, over the next eight years the Ponca repeatedly appealed to the government for assistance but received very little.

In 1876, the government formulated a policy to consolidate as many tribes as possible in Indian Territory in Oklahoma. The Ponca Tribe was approached by a government agent who offered to take the Ponca chiefs to Oklahoma to look over several alternative reservation sites. Prior to their departure, the agent promised the chiefs that if they didn't like the land they saw they could return to their Nebraska homeland. The Ponca chiefs made the journey to Indian Territory, visiting many different land reserves which were equally barren and unsuitable for agriculture.

The chiefs agreed not to exchange their land but instead return home. Upon informing the agent of their decision, the agent threatened to withdraw all money and support, including the interpreter. The chiefs stubbornly refused to relinquish their Nebraska homeland so the agent departed without the Ponca chiefs. The chiefs, some of whom were advance in years and ill, were forced to make the journey in the middle of winter without money, food, or an interpreter. Fifty days later, near starvation, the Ponca chief-, reached the Oto

Reservation along the Kansas-Nebraska border. The Oto provided them with enough food and ponies to make their way back to Niobrara.

When the chiefs returned home, they found their people already preparing for the move. Federal troops were called in to enforce the removal orders. The long march took a heavy toll on the tribe, over half of which were women and children. Storms, poor road and traveling conditions greatly impeded their journey; causing much suffering and death. Standing Bear's daughter was among those who died along the way.

In the summer of 1878 the Ponca arrived in Indian Territory. The Ponca were quartered in tents they had brought with them. No other provisions had been made by the government for their accommodation. Discouraged, homesick, and homeless, the Ponca found themselves in the land of strangers, in the middle of a hot summer, with no crops nor prospects for any. Having been on the move through the summer of 1877 and 1878 the Ponca had been unable to cultivate the soil for two years. In 1878 they suffered greatly from malaria. As the Ponca had come from their northern home where such ills were little known, the disease was particularly fatal to them. Many died of it after they reached the Indian Territory. In fact since the tribe had left Nebraska, one-third had died and nearly all the survivors were sick or disabled. Talk around the campfire was continually of the "old home" in the north.

Finally, the death of Chief Standing Bear's eldest son set in motion events which were to bring a measure of justice and worldwide fame to the chief and his tribe. Unwilling to bury his child in the strange country, Standing Bear gathered a few members of his tribe and started for the Ponca burial ground in the North.

Because Indians were not allowed to leave their reservation without permission, Standing Bear and his followers were labeled as a renegade band. The Army advanced and took them into custody and was prepared to escort them back to their reservation in Indian Territory. The Omaha Daily Herald publicized the plight of the Ponca and two prominent attorneys decided that a writ of *habeas corpus* could prevent the Ponca from being forcibly returned to their reservation in Indian Territory. The government disputed the right of Standing Bear to obtain a writ of *habeas corpus* on the grounds that an Indian was not a "person" under the meaning of the law.

The case of Standing Bear vs. Crook was brought before Judge Elmer S, Dundy in U. S. District Court on April 30, 1879. On May 12, 1879, the judge filed in favor of Standing Bear. The government appealed Dundy's decision, but on June 5, 1880 the Supreme Court of the United States dismissed the case leaving Standing Bear and his followers free and clear in the eyes of the law. Although Standing Bear and his followers were free they had no home to return to. In August of 1881, 26,236 acres of Knox County, Nebraska were returned to the Ponca.

Although a portion of their Nebraska homeland was reinstated, only half of the tribe returned to their previous home. Poverty and disease would continue to take their toll over the years. In 1945 the government formulated a policy which called for termination

of Indian Tribes. This policy effected some 109 tribes and bands, including 13,263 Native Americans and 1,365,801 acres of trust land. In 1962, the Congress of the United States decided that the Northern Ponca Tribe should be terminated. In 1966 the Northern Ponca were completely terminated and all of their land and tribal holdings were dissolved. This termination removed 442 Ponca from the tribal rolls and dispossessing them of 834 acres.

During the 1970's members of the Ponca Tribe, unwilling to accept their status as a terminated tribe, initiated the process of restoration to federal recognition. In 1986 representatives from the Native American Community Development Corporation of Omaha, Inc., Lincoln Indian Center, Sequoyah Inc., National Indian Lutheran Board and Ponca Tribe met to discuss what they needed to do to once again to become a federally recognized tribe. In the spring of 1987, the Northern Ponca Restoration Committee Inc. was incorporated as a non-profit organization in Nebraska and was the base for the federal recognition effort.

In April of 1988 the Nebraska Unicameral passed Legislative Resolution #128 giving state recognition to the Ponca Tribe and their members. This was an important step in the restoration efforts. The Ponca Restoration Bill was introduced in the United States Senate on October 11, 1989 by Senators James J. Exon and J. Robert Kerry. The Senate passed the Ponca Restoration Act by unanimous consent on July 18, 1990. The bill was signed into law on October 31, 1990 by President Bush.

Today the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska headquarters is located in Niobrara Nebraska. The Ponca Tribe, which was dissolved by an act of Congress over 30 years ago, is once again rebuilding its traditional culture. The Ponca are now rebuilding their land base, on their aboriginal homeland.

CULTURE:

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska was terminated in 1962 by an act of Congress, Since that time, many of the cultural aspects of the Ponca people have disappeared. In October 1990, the Ponca Restoration Act was signed and the Ponca have once again become a federally recognized Tribe. The Department of Cultural Affairs organizes programs to reintroduce and strengthen the culture and language of the Ponca People to Tribal members.

The Department of Cultural Affairs is in place to help tribal members research their families and tribal history, provide language restoration, and help tribal members become involved in the Ponca culture.

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990 will enable the Ponca Tribe to once again have in their possession artifacts that are now housed in museums across the country. The return of these artifacts will add a wealth of information to the history and culture of the Tribe.

Information on tribal history is contained in books that have been purchased for the tribal library as well as copies of articles that have been written and published about the Ponca are being collected and organized for the tribal archives. This historical information is available for tribal members to utilize.

Regaining the Ponca language is a responsibility of the Department of Cultural Affairs. The reintroduction of the language to Ponca members will be a major step towards the Ponca people regaining their culture.

The Department of Cultural Affairs assists in planning the annual Pow-Wow which includes the reintroduction of Ponca songs; Ponca drum groups, and Ponca dancers.

Oral histories of the Elders and history as it unfolds today are being recorded.

The Homeland of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska is located around Niobrara, Nebraska and has sites that are of significant importance to the history of the Tribe. The Department of Cultural Affairs is documenting these sites and is in the process of locating related research materials from various universities and governmental departments. This information is being added to the tribal library.

The Department of Cultural Affairs is responsible for working with all cultural-related committees including the Cultural Committee, Pow-Wow Committee, and Cemetery Committee; has restored the Old Ponca Community Building and gained its designation on the National Register of Historical Places; obtaining grants for the enhancement of Ponca culture; administering the tribal museum and working with other museums in the area to create exhibits relating to the Ponca people.

DEMOGRAPHICS:

Based on the records kept by the Enrollment Department for the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska total enrollment is 3,097 as of October 31, 2010. Major cities within the service areas are Omaha population 390,007, Lincoln 225,581, Norfolk with 23,516 and Sioux City with 85,013 based on the 2000 U.S. Census.

CLIMATE:

The Ponca Service Area is comprised of 12 noncontiguous counties in Nebraska and 2 noncontiguous counties in Iowa each having unique topographical and climatic features. District I includes offices such as the Tribal Headquarters, Ponca Agency, East Pen, Culture/Museum building in or near Niobrara. It is the location of the Traditional Homelands of the Ponca Nation. Niobrara is located at the mouth of the Niobrara River and on the south banks of the Missouri River situated in Knox County. The terrain is rolling hills with highly erodible lands. The area's precipitation is moderate and the temperatures can change very rapidly which the interchanging of warm south to southwest winds with cold air from the north to northwest. This land experiences climates related to all seasons with hot summers (90 degrees or higher) to frigid cold

winters with wind chill temperatures below 0 degrees. We currently own Tribal lands that are home to the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska's buffalo herd numbering around 100 animals. Sioux City, Iowa houses a field office providing various services and is also part of District 1. This office is situated in Woodbury County and has a similar climate to that of Knox County.

District 2 includes an office in Omaha, NE, situated in Douglas County, and is on the west bank of the Missouri River. The climate is typically continental with relatively warm summers and cold, dry winters. It is situated midway between two distinctive climatic zones, the humid east and the dry west. Rapid weather changes, especially during the winter months, can be contributed to low pressure systems that cross the country. The Tribe also has a tribal trust land site in Carter Lake, Iowa situated in Pottawatomie County. Its climate is similar to the climate in Omaha as it is less than 2 miles from Omaha's boundaries. District 3 holds an office (in trust) in Lincoln. It is near the center of Lancaster County in southeastern Nebraska. The western edge of the city is in the flat valley of Salt Creek, which receives a number of tributaries in or near the city and flows northeast to the Lower Platte. The Chinook effect often produces rapid rises in temperature during the winter, although the temperature has remained below zero degrees for more than 8 consecutive days. Annual snowfall is about 25 inches and has exceeded 59 inches. The maximum temperature has exceeded 110 degrees. Hot winds, combined with unusual wind force occasionally causes serious injury to crops. Normally the crop season, April through September, receives over three-fourths of the annual precipitation.

District 4 has the Tribe's largest facility space in Norfolk on a former College Campus, situated in Madison County. It is located in northeastern Nebraska in the valley of the Elkhorn River. The surrounding country is moderately rolling hills. The terrain becomes more level to the south and southwest. Norfolk is situated near the western limit of the Corn Belt. To the east, the climate and soils are favorable for diversified farming and dairying. To the west, precipitation becomes lighter and the farming country gives way to the grazing lands of the Great Plains. The rainfall is moderate, summers are hot and winters cold, with great variations in temperature and precipitation. The rapid changes in temperature are caused by the interchange of warm air from the south and southwest with cold air from the north. The rapid day to day changes in weather conditions produce an invigorating and healthful climate in northeast Nebraska. Norfolk is subject to the strong and persistent winds which prevail over the Great Plains states. Winds of 40 to 50 mph are not uncommon in this area, and gusts up to 100 mph have been recorded at Norfolk.

TRANSPORTATION:

Interstates include Interstate 29 which runs north and south; Interstate 80 which runs east and west; and major highways include Highway 81, north and south and Highway 12 (east and west). Most highway systems are well maintained; however, driving conditions often become hazardous during winter snowstorms which produce blowing, drifting snow and icy road conditions.

Ponca Tribe of Nebraska has been implementing a Federal Transit Administration funded Transit system in Madison and Knox Counties. Bus service, passenger and air freight services are available in the service delivery area. In the Urbanized parts of the PTN service delivery area, City bus services are available including Omaha, Lincoln, and Sioux City, as well as taxi services in most of the service delivery area. However, with the large metropolitan areas involved, city bus and taxi services are not accessible to all of our clientele. Consequently, transportation is a barrier to accessing health care and other needs in the service area.

PUBLIC UTILITIES:

The Tribe is serviced by various utility companies. Niobrara is serviced by the North Central Public Power District and Niobrara Valley Electric. Sioux City is serviced by Mid American Energy; Norfolk by Nebraska Public Power District, Black Hills Energy, and Norfolk Water Division; Lincoln's utilities are provided by Lincoln Water System, Black Hills Energy and Lincoln Electric Systems; and Omaha and Carter Lake by Omaha Public Power District, Metropolitan Utilities District.

COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Since the Tribe regained federal recognition 20 years ago, tribal services have expanded greatly. The Tribe currently utilizes BIA 638 contracting to provide Social Services, cultural programming, tribal court and educational services. The Tribe also maintains a contract to provide health (behavioral and medical) services with State and Indian Health Services in our Service Delivery Area. The Tribe has restored a traditionally significant resource, the buffalo herd. We have acquired grant funding to establish various youth and community programs totaling over 8 million dollars in the last 3 years that predominantly serve all Native Americans in the Ponca Service Delivery Area. The Tribe continues to expand the capacity of the administration of tribal services at our Field Offices in Lincoln, Omaha, Norfolk and Sioux City. We have also begun to offer transportation, social and health services out of a modular in Niobrara.

HOUSING:

Most of the Tribal members own their own homes or rent privately. The Ponca Tribe's Housing activities are managed by the Northern Ponca Housing Authority, located in Norfolk, Nebraska. The Northern Ponca Housing Authority is governed by a nine member Board of Commissioners. The Board of Commissioners consists of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and five additional commissioners all of whom are appointed by the Tribal Council.

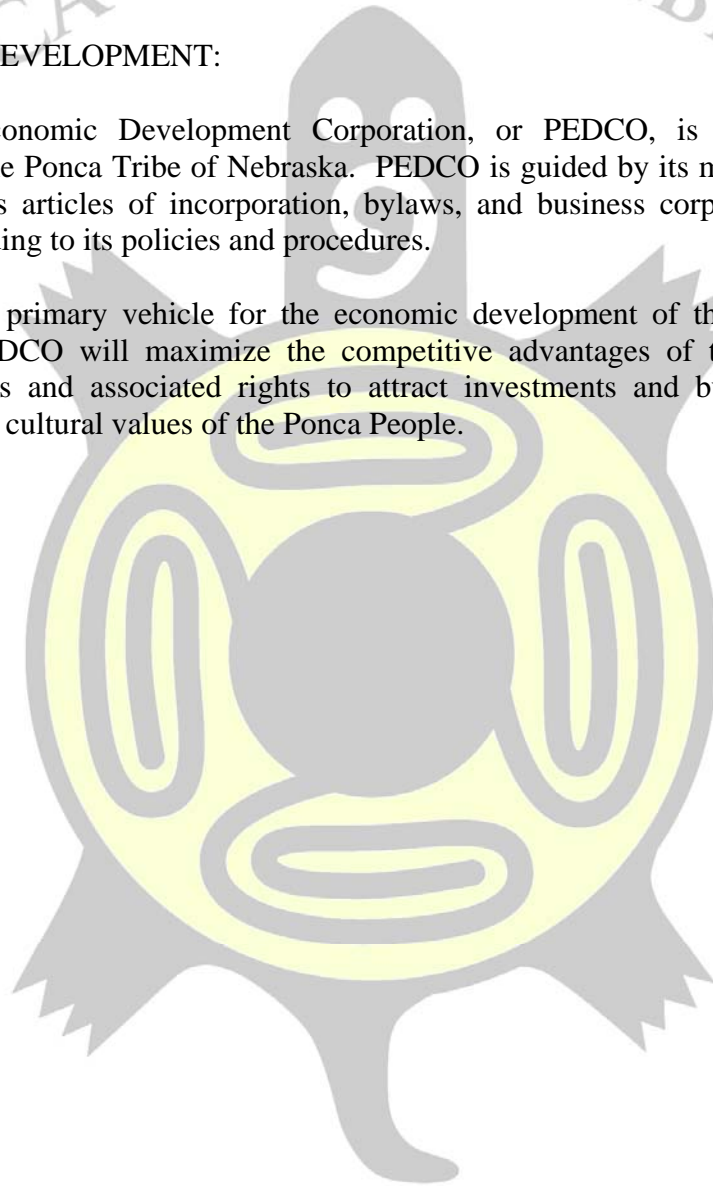
Currently, the NPHA owns and rents homes in Lincoln, Norfolk, Niobrara, Sioux City and Omaha. NPHA also provides home ownership programs, credit/finance counseling, and rehabilitation/ maintenance services. The Northern Ponca Housing Authority may be contacted at (402) 379-8224, or at www.poncahousing.org.

As of 2006, tribal environmental staff identified groundwater and surface water at Ponca Agency and the East Pen may be impacted by agricultural runoff from croplands surrounding Tribal lands as the major environmental problem on the Trust Lands of the Tribe. The Tribe also acquired property in Norfolk that has potential wetland project implications.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The Ponca Economic Development Corporation, or PEDCO, is a wholly owned subsidiary of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. PEDCO is guided by its mission and vision, governed by its articles of incorporation, bylaws, and business corporation code, and operated according to its policies and procedures.

PEDCO is the primary vehicle for the economic development of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska. PEDCO will maximize the competitive advantages of the Ponca Tribe's sovereign status and associated rights to attract investments and build capital while maintaining the cultural values of the Ponca People.



Environmental Protection