

Ponca Tribe People's Historical Account

Posted on August 31, 2019

The Ponca people are part of the Dhegihan tribe, which belongs to the Siouan language, and they are Natives of Midwestern America. The name Ponca belongs to the Kansa, Ouapaws, and Osage clan, meaning 'Cut Throat.' The Ponca people are subdivided into two major tribes, namely the Nebraska Ponca tribe and the Indian tribe of Oklahoma (Isenberg et al., p. 18). Ideally, the Ponca people's historical accounts show that they originated from east of the Mississippi River, then went to the Ohio Valley and, after that, migrated to the western side after the commencement of the Iroquois war. It is said that the Ponca tribes first lived north of Nebraska near the Niobrara River, having migrated from east of Mississippi to the settlement of the Columbus people in America. Later, they migrated out of Ohio River settlements together with the Osage, Omaha, and the Quapaw tribes as a result of the Iroquois War. The Iroquois people gained control of the Ohio River area, where they made the ground their hunting area (Isenberg et al., p. 18).

According to Pierre Charles Le Sueur, the Ponca tribe appears to have been present since it had already been placed in the upper part of the Missouri area. Around 1789, Juan Baptiste Munier got the license that allowed him to trade with the Ponca people. The Ponca people at the time were about 800 but later were hit by smallpox a deadly epidemic disease leaving on about 200 people by the time Clark Expedition and Lewis were visiting the place in 1804. However, in the 19th century, the population of the Ponca tribe increased from 200 to 700. Their enemies constantly attacked the Ponca people, and around 1924, the Lakotas tribe, who were very hostile, attacked a large number of Ponca ranking leaders, including the famous smoke maker leader and only a few survived. The leaders were coming from a friendly Oglala Lakota camp at the time of the attack. Many Plain Indians were hunters, but the Ponca people mainly grew vegetables and maize, and their only known hunting time was way back in 1855 when they successfully hunted buffalo.

The Ponca people agreed to sign a treaty in 1817 and 1825 with the United States to help regulate trade and settle inter-tribal clashes. Later, the Ponca people signed another treaty giving up a part of their land to the United States, which would help them get a permanent residence in Niobrara and be protected against hostile tribes that were regularly attacking them (Green Jess, 149). The Ponca last signed another treaty known as the Fort Laramie of the Great Sioux Reservation with the United States in 1868, which the US mistakenly included in the United Reservation of the Sioux Lakota. They claimed all of the land, leaving Ponca without any land, thus forcing the US to force the Ponca people out of their ancestral land. The US offered another reservation, but the Ponca leaders found the land unfit to support agriculture, their primary source of livelihood, so they moved to the Indian territories (Thomas). However, the government later came to force the Ponca people out, whereby the Ponca cited their treaty, which was revoked and forced out of the region.

Problems Faced by Ponca People Tribe

The Ponca is an Indian tribe that is located in villages and was formed after it divided from the Ohama tribe. It's situated near Niobrara River and Ponca Creek and is part of Dakota. The tribe was doing horticulture farming and hunting for their food supply purposes. The Ponca tribes faced a lot of problems, including the US government's failure to honour their signed treaties dating back from 1817 to 1865.

The Ponca tribe, just like other Nebraska tribes, were forcefully moved out of their land, witnessing their ancestral land shrinking down, and thus moved to the present US Oklahoma state. The US government signed four different treaties with the Ponca people, in which the Ponca gave the government a large chunk of land (McKenzie-Jones, p. 224). Later, after being moved to the Indian territories, present Oklahoma state, they were only given a small piece of land as the residence with limited facilities, resulting in a significant number of deaths after the move to the Indian territories. Later a report by Indian commissioner would reveal that the objective for revoking the signed tries mainly was because there was a plan to colonize and take away Ponca people's land. Also, The Sioux tribe was very hostile towards the Ponca tribe, and they repeatedly attacked them from the western side of Niobrara. In 1950, the Sioux came into the territories, and this led to the expansion of the boundaries of the Missouri River and the Black Hills.

The Ponca tribe also suffered from various diseases like smallpox due to the large population. The Ponca people died from malaria. These diseases reduced with time when the Sioux tribe left the area. This led to a reduction in the population, hence decreasing the infection rate due to the reduced population (McKenzie-Jones, p. 224). The tribes experienced food shortages, especially during summer, because they were not able to farm in hot conditions, which couldn't favour crops. The tribes were considered US citizens, so they had to obey the American government's laws. Some of the tribes found it hard to follow because they already had established their own rules. The Poncas believed that the land belonged to them and that they had full control of it. They found it difficult to have other rules above them since they had their council. The Ponca tribe had their leaders who led them and were chosen by the community.

Currently, the Ponca language is endangered since the new generation isn't learning it, but the elders are trying hard to see it survive. Between 1880 and 1990, the Ponca's culture came under attack from the missionaries who tried to abolish their way of performing cultural activities such as weddings, religious practices, and cultural dances and imposed policies from the government that resulted in landing alienations. Also, in 1911, the people of Ponca faced another major attack when oil was discovered on their land, and this led to environmental problems and later forced them out of their homes, making them form individual allotments (Howe, p. 95).

Moreover, a bill was signed by President Bush to recognize North Ponca as part of the US. Since the passage of the bill, North Ponca has been known as an integral part of the United States. Also, in the

recently conducted US census, the number of Ponca people was identified to be 4,858 (Brookshire et al., 1506).

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