Indian Affairs - Office of Public Affairs

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The Department of the Interior's Bureau of Indian Affairs today announced completion of the membership roll of the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska, making possible a tribal referendum which will determine the future course of tribal affairs. The roll includes 442 persons.

Adult Poncas will shortly receive ballots on which to indicate whether or not they wish to divide their tribal assets and end the special relationship they now hold with the Federal Government by virtue of their Indian status.

The Ponca Indians requested legislation for the division of their assets in 1957. In 1962, Congress directed that the tribal roll be brought up to date and the referendum be held.

If the majority of those voting favor division of assets, notice will be published by the Department of the Interior in the Federal Register and the recently completed tribal membership roll will then become final. Tribal assets, except certain tracts of land reserved for church lots, parks, playgrounds or cemetery purposes, will then be sold and the proceeds divided among the tribal members.

It is estimated that 1,959 acres of allotted land, 671 acres of tribally owned land and 152.5 acres of Federal land in northeastern Nebraska are involved. If the referendum favors division of the tribal assets, Ponca tribal members who are owners of 25 percent or more of the full interest in any allotment may request the Secretary of the Interior to partition or sell the complete interest in that allotment.