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Completion of a preliminary membership roll of the Ponca Indian Tribe of Nebraska, a step toward withdrawal of special Federal services to tribal members, was announced today by Secretary of the Interior Stewart L. Udall.

Legislation to provide for property division had been requested by the Poncas at several tribal meetings, the first in early 1957. The door to Federal withdrawal was opened by Congressional action in 1962. The 1962 Act provided that enrolled members of the Ponca Tribe could determine, by majority vote, whether they wished to bring to an end the special relationship they enjoyed with the federal Government by virtue of their Indian status. Only enrolled adult members the tribe were made eligible to vote on the issue. Preparation of a membership roll was initiated two years ago.

Persons who are eligible for enrollment under the 1962 Act include: Poncas whose names were on the April 1, 1934 Tribal Census or the Supplementary Census of January 1, 1935 or who can clearly establish that they were inadvertently omitted therefrom; and descendants of the above who possess at least one-quarter Indian blood. In order to qualify, persons must have been living on September 5, 1962.

The proposed roll will be published in the Federal Register so that persons claiming membership rights in the tribe may file an appeal with the Secretary of the Interior contesting the omission of a name from the roll or its inclusion thereon. After all appeals have been decided, an election will take place, and if those voting choose to ratify the proposed property distribution, the roll will become final.

The tribal land of the Poncas now consists of about 690 acres valued at approximately $70,000. In addition, tribal trust funds totaling about $34,000 and Federal property worth approximately $7,400 would be included in the distribution.

In addition to the tribally owned land there are 13 tracts comprising about 2,180 acres on the reservation which were allotted years ago to individual tribal members. As a result of inheritance, 387 individuals now share the ownership of these tracts.