

## **Convening of the Four Winds Autumnal Equinox Gathering held over Sept. 21 to 22**



**The Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and Movement Rights held the Convening of the Four Winds Autumnal Equinox Gathering from Wednesday, Sept. 21 to Thursday, Sept. 22. Pictured is a group marching from Dan Moran Park to Conoco Philips. The organizers of the event cite that they wish to raise awareness about water rights. (Photo by Calley Lamar)**

On Wed., Sept. 21 the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma hosted their Convening of the Four Winds Autumnal Equinox Gathering at the Ponca Powwow grounds. During this event they had a prayer song, speeches from members of the community, a celebration of Water and the Rights of Rivers, ceremonial joining of waters, and more. Ponca Tribe is holding this protest to speak about their beliefs on the pollution of waters by oil and fracking companies and to pay respect to the waters, which grant all life. (Photos by Dailyn Emery).

The Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma and Movement Rights held the Convening of the Four Winds Autumnal Equinox Gathering from Wednesday, Sept. 21 to Thursday, Sept. 22. Organizers of the event cite that it is to raise awareness about water rights and to hold fossil fuel and extractive agencies accountable for their effects on the environment.

“This Convening of the Four Winds is going to be four different equinoxes that will be honored in four sections of Oklahoma,” said Casey Camp-Horinek, an environmental ambassador for the Ponca Tribe and also a traditional drum keeper for the Women’s Society. “What affects the water, the air and the earth affects all humankind and all of the living things on mother earth.”

This event traces itself back to Mother’s Day in 2021. The Pa’thata Women’s Society of the Ponca tribe of OK held a Water Ceremony on Ponca powwow grounds to recognize the Rights of Rivers that flow from upstream from Nebraska, through Ponca lands, and down through the state and beyond.

“In order to protect nature and rivers we have to stop treating them in the law and the culture as property to be abused. We can’t live without the water, the water is what sustains us. And we also have to ensure the rivers have rights in law to stop harms from happening to the waters,” said Shannon Biggs, a co-founder of Movement Rights.

“No one is saying that development can’t happen. Nobody is saying that we can’t use the water. But we have to make sure that the water is able to live and sustain its natural cycles. Because if we don’t have water, we don’t have life.”

“On July 6 of this year, the Ponca Business Council unanimously adopted a new statute that recognized the “immutable Rights of Rivers” for two rivers in their territory: Ni’skà (the Arkansas River) and Nižídè (the Salt Fork River).. The Ponca Tribe is the only tribe in the United States that is leading a worldwide movement recognizing all nature has its own rights as it shows us here in Oklahoma with massive tornados, and floods, and droughts that nature has her ways and that we have to respect those and live within the natural laws and boundaries of those or we’re going to cease to exist as a species,” said Camp-Horinek. “It’s really that simple these days. We need to be able to depend on one another as neighbors to help our whole city move forward.”

The first day began with a procession led by Pa’thata Women’s Society and intertribal women. Following this, the Celebration of Water and the Rights of Rivers was held at the Ponca powwow grounds and the ceremonial joining of waters, where people would bring water from their territory.

The second day of the event saw a gathering of people in the rain from different parts of Oklahoma and out of state at Dan Moran Park for the Equinox Prayer March to Conoco Philips led by the Indigenous Women of Americas Defending Mother Earth Treaty.



“The Ponca are leading the way in this and we’re bringing together not only citizens in this area, but Tribal and non-Tribal people that will be able to help join each other in how the rights of nature and the rights of rivers can be a protected thing,” said Camp-Horinek. “So this Convening of the Four Winds is not only about these particular statutes with the Poncas, but is also bringing other people together to talk about the problems in their territories and how can we build a network where we are all in this together.”

More information about Movement Rights and the Four Winds can be found at their website at [www.movementrights.org/4winds](http://www.movementrights.org/4winds).

The Ponca City News reached out to Phillips 66 and received the following statement: “Phillips 66 respects the right of individuals to express their viewpoints. The company has a responsibility to protect the safety and security of its employees and facility. Phillips 66 will continue to work with local authorities to ensure people have an opportunity to exercise their rights without endangering their safety or that of its employees.”