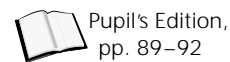




Miguel Pedraza, Sr. Governor of the Tiguas

Pupil's Edition,
pp. 89–92

Miguel Pedraza, Sr., (1904–1988) was the governor of Texas's Tigua nation. He helped the group obtain official federal recognition in the 1960s.

Esteemed Ancestry Pedraza was born on June 30, 1904, at Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, near El Paso. He was of mixed Tigua and Piro Indian ancestry. His father was Luz Pedraza, a Tigua who lost his life in a battle against the Texas Rangers.

Although he had little schooling, Pedraza became fluent in Spanish, English, and Tiwa, the Tigua language, which was rapidly disappearing. The Tiguas were Pueblo Indians from New Mexico. During the Pueblo revolt against the Spaniards in 1680, some Tiguas fled to the El Paso area with Franciscan friars. In 1682 they helped build the Socorro/Ysleta mission, which is today Texas's oldest building, on the Rio Grande. They were forced to give up their lands in the 1870s when El Paso was incorporated. Miguel Pedraza was raised by Benselado Granillo, who had served as a scout for the U.S. cavalry in the 1880s.

Lost Group? Scientists had assumed the Tiguas had died out. In reality many of them, like Pedraza, had simply carried on their government and customs while living in great poverty. They were not included in an 1864 federal government order that granted many Pueblo groups their own reservation lands, because Texas was a rebel Confederate state at the time.

Pedraza was a Tigua activist for much of his life. In the 1960s, he sought help from the Texas governor to gain the group official recognition from the state. The recognition was given in 1967, and later that year Pedraza went to Washington, D.C., to testify before the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee. He accompanied his cousins Jose and Trinidad Granillo, the Tigua chief and war chief, but Pedraza was the only one of the three who spoke English. "What I ask you is to give my people back their water. They have no water," Pedraza said that day. As a result, the Tiguas became one of the first so-called lost groups who successfully petitioned the federal government for

recognition in the later decades of the twentieth century. They were the first Native American group to win such status in more than 50 years, and the funds they received allowed many Tiguas to install indoor plumbing.

Symbol of Tigua Nation Pedraza spent much of his life working as a bus driver for the Ysleta Independent School District. When he retired in the late 1960s, students prepared a banquet in his honor. Pedraza then served on the Texas Indian Commission for several years. In 1973 he was named Marshall of the Sun Bowl parade, and the city of El Paso used the occasion to honor the Tiguas as the city's first inhabitants. A postcard was published that showed Pedraza in traditional dress holding his 300-year-old Piro drum. The highlight of Pedraza's achievements came a year before his death. In 1987 President Ronald Reagan signed the Ysleta del Sur Restoration Act, which allowed Tiguas various federal benefits. Pedraza died at his home in Ysleta del Sur Pueblo on April 24, 1988.

Review Questions

1. What did Pedraza accomplish by testifying before the House Indian Affairs Subcommittee?
2. Why didn't the Tiguas benefit from the 1864 federal government order?

Critical Thinking

3. **Drawing Conclusions** Why do you think the Tiguas "disappeared" and received little government support?
4. **Making Inferences** Why do you think the Ysleta del Sur Restoration Act was so significant to Pedraza?