USDA Rural Development Assists in Historic Tribal Building Restoration For Use As Tribal Cultural Center

Outline of Need:

The Ponca Agency Building located southwest of Niobrara, Nebraska, has historic significance to the Ponca Tribe as in the past it was used for Tribal cultural and social events. In fact, the building is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Listed, as one of the Tribe members' priority projects was the restoration of the Ponca Agency Building. Once restored, the building could once again be used for events, as well as a resource center for the preservation of their Tribal heritage.

The Ponca Tribe acquired the Ponca Agency Building, constructed in the 1930's, along with the site in 1993. Having been left vacant since 1962, the building was in a state of disrepair. In 1995 the Tribe hired the services of an architectural firm to prepare a restoration and reuse study to determine the feasibility of renovation. Due to lack of funding, the renovation plan could not be implemented until 1999. Indian Community Development Block Grant funds were secured by the Tribe to complete renovation of the exterior of the building. Now, with only the interior renovations remaining, the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska was faced with finding the dollars to finance the completion of this project.

How Rural Development Helped:

The Tribe contacted USDA Rural Development who assisted with a \$61,700 loan and \$99,000 grant, leveraged with \$79,300 Indian Community Development Block Grant funds remaining from the original exterior renovation project. These monies completed the restoration and renovation of the Ponca Agency Building.

The Results:

The Ponca Agency Building stands proud today as it services its community as a useful, appealing cultural center. Interior renovations were completed in January of 2003, which included installation of modern heating and cooling systems along with handicap accessibility features and updates to the electrical system. Also, the wooden floors and walls were refinished to the original architecture, bringing back the cultural history of the building.

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Handicap Accessible Bathroom



Entrance of Ponca Agency Building



Great Room of Ponca Agency Building