

## USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge Project MICA Group Final Report

**The Multi-Indigenous Collaborative for Action (MICA) Group**, a Native-led nonprofit ([www.micagroup.org](http://www.micagroup.org)), envisions a world in which Indigenous people have a voice, equitable resources, and the capacity to flourish, and where Indigenous knowledge systems are recognized as inherently valuable world resources. MICA partners with Native communities and supports them in dreaming big for their people and assists them, through funding, strategic partnerships, and technical assistance, in mobilizing resources to make their dreams achievable.

In September of 2021, MICA was selected by **USDA's Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC)** to sign a Cooperative Agreement to work with Native communities to facilitate a placemaking process with several tribes.

The two-year project supported extensive planning activities involving deep work with tribal community leaders and a careful and thoughtful community engagement process consisting of several layers of focused facilitation, technical assistance, and evaluation:

1. Engagement
2. Assessment
3. Identification of priority project
4. Building consensus
5. Visioning
6. Partnership development: Internal and External
7. Plan Development
8. Evaluation

**Phase I** of the project (October 2021–June 2022) was conducted during the height of covid restrictions. Despite this, MICA was able to engage six tribes in preliminary placemaking activities. We selected three tribes to complete the placemaking process: the Lower Sioux Indian Community (LSIC) of Minnesota, the Pawnee Nation of Oklahoma, and the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma. The LSIC and the Pawnee Nation both chose broadband acquisition as essential to making their community a better place to live, work, and play, and the Ponca Tribe chose a Cultural Resource Center and Tribal Library as its priority project. Due to the pandemic, MICA conducted our placemaking activities involving broadband with LSIC and Pawnee on Zoom. We provided technical assistance and facilitation in establishing community priorities for the creation and expansion of rural broadband networks. Each tribe's process included weekly meetings, with planned activities including discussion on location (residential? business? government?), speed (for the needs of artists, traditional businesses, schools, and home entrepreneurs), reliability, and cost for their dream network. In addition, we conducted a survey of the entire Pawnee community, resulting in extensive input above and beyond those who were able to participate in weekly Zoom meetings (as many lacked reliable connectivity to be able to participate). Despite covid, we were able to complete the process with detailed, extensive community plans for broadband needs, allowing both tribes to garner the necessary

resources reach their placemaking goals: **The Pawnee Nation was able to secure the largest grant in Pawnee history, \$25 million, to increase its community's connectivity, and the Lower Sioux Indian Community was able to secure \$2 million to complete their small community's broadband plan.** Neither of these successes would have been possible without the RPIC process.

In **Phase 2** of the RPIC project (July 2022 – August 2023) MICA engaged in a strategic, in-person partnership with the Ponca Tribal Nation of Oklahoma to facilitate a community-led planning process and formal placemaking plan. The project was hugely successful, resulting in community cohesion, numerous partnerships, and a plan that is both compelling and achievable. *Please see **Attachment 1: Ponca Tribal Nation's Placemaking Plan** and **Attachment 2: Presentation PowerPoint** which details the Ponca Nation's history, placemaking process, goals, and final outcomes of this effort.*

The **Evaluation Report**, presented in **Attachment 3 with corresponding Attachments 4, 5, 6, and 7**, provides further information and analysis of outcomes and lessons learned, as well as next steps for continued community engagement as the project moves toward implementation.

For all three projects, dedicated tribal leadership, a high-level of community engagement, a successful process, and MICA's expert facilitation and technical assistance resulted in viable and sustainable project plans and measurable successes that have greatly advanced the tribes' vision to bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to their Nations.

*The projects achieved the goals and outcomes of placemaking:*

- Blends creativity and infrastructure to build and promote a vibrant public space
- Enhances community identity
- Establishes a sense of place in areas that are part of the community's everyday experiences
- Improves public safety
- Improves environmental quality and accessibility
- Increases collaboration between a variety of stakeholders
- Provides a safe platform for discussion, community collaboration, addressing issues/challenges
- Promotes economic and community development

Challenges: We appreciate the support of USDA in working with us to overcome the most significant challenge to successful placemaking in Native communities: the inability in Year 1 to meet in person with the communities. An additional challenge was the lack of resources in the three Native communities we chose to work with, which made Pawnee Nation's and the Lower Sioux Indian Community's successful implementation of their placemaking plans all the more remarkable.

Guidance in Working in Native Communities: Please see below the **Guiding Principles**, which offer key principles for others working to provide support and assistance to tribal communities.

### **Placemaking in Tribal Communities**

Every community is unique, as are its dreams, opportunities, resources, solutions, and strategies. For American Indian Tribal Nations, Tribal sovereignty, with its legal basis in government-to-government relationships, is paramount in all planning. Tribes must have the opportunity to develop their own definition of what placemaking means to them while holding true to placemaking concepts.

The tremendous success of the MICA Group's RPIC project was made possible by holding true to the following principles and with the critical support of USDA to allow the MICA Group to establish a process specific to each Tribal Nation – in light of its readiness, leadership, and capacity. The following guiding principles can be successfully used as a guide for others working to provide support and assistance in tribal communities.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Respect and honor tribal sovereignty, cultural traditions, and diversity
- Be aware of the historical and intergenerational trauma specific to each tribe and its effects as one of the most critical factors in creating barriers in tribal communities
- Recognize and acknowledge the sacred and unique assets of each tribal community and respect Indigenous ways of knowing as world valuable resources
- Be aware of tribal protocols on approvals, conducting research, and representations
- Uphold *listening* as the core foundation of meaningful collaboration
- Respectful outreach efforts involve careful evaluation of community willingness, readiness, and capacity
- Select a project team with strong connections to the project's tribal and community leaders and with the expertise to manage communications and lead collaborative work
- Be responsive to needs and treasure diversity in community voices
- Understand that conditions in the environment can rapidly shift and be ready to work cooperatively to meet unanticipated challenges
- Adapt to conditions and needs through collaboration and innovative strategies
- Pay close attention to keeping communication channels open, honest, and respectful
- Ensure that project team is committed to being enthusiastic and positive

We can't think of anything we could have done differently. With Native projects, it is helpful to have a project manager who is familiar with working in Native communities. We're grateful for USDA's support and want to recognize our Year 2 project manager, Luke Knowles, who is knowledgeable, supportive, and a pleasure to work with.

Finally, we have received inquiries from a number of tribes asking if they can become an RPIC project. We hope that RPIC will receive future appropriations. Any of our three participating projects will tell you: their communities are more cohesive, livable, and attractive because of RPIC!



## **Placemaking Plan**

### **Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center**

USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge  
Facilitated by the MICA Group, a Native-led Nonprofit  
September 2022 – September 2023



*“Mother Earth’s health, her nature, and that of our Indigenous Peoples are intertwined, inseparable. As Indigenous Peoples, we are of the Earth and the Earth is of us. Mother Earth is life. This inseparable relationship must be respected through rights-based instruments for the sake of our future generations and for the well-being of the Earth herself, for all people, for all life.”*

*-Casey Camp-Horinek, Ponca Nation Elder,  
Emmy award winning actress, author, and internationally  
renowned Native and Human Rights and Environmental  
Justice Activist*

## INTRODUCTION

Ponca means *“Those Who Lead.”* Headquartered in White Eagle, five miles south of Ponca City, in Kay County, Oklahoma, the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma is a federally recognized and self-governed Tribe of 4200 Tribal members.

During the 1860s and 1870s, droughts, failed bison hunts, and an incessant Sioux threat brought the Ponca to the brink of starvation. The Ponca removal was grossly mishandled. Rather than honor its treaty obligations to Ponca, which would have required renegotiating the U.S. government’s treaty with the Sioux, the United States ceded Ponca land to the Sioux in 1868 and removed the Ponca to Indian Territory in 1877. The United States not only failed to obtain the Ponca chiefs’ consent, it neglected to provide the reservation with adequate facilities. Nearly a third of the Tribe perished during the first years in Oklahoma.

After the death of his son in 1878, Ponca subchief Standing Bear and a group of followers returned to Nebraska. His arrest and trial led to a landmark decision in federal Indian jurisprudence. The court ruled in *Standing Bear v. Crook* (1879) that Indians were recognized as persons under the Fourteenth Amendment and therefore could sue for their rights. The decision split the Tribe into northern and southern bands. The southern Ponca under principal chief White Eagle settled on a 101,000-acre reservation near the confluence of the Salt Fork and Arkansas rivers in the Cherokee Outlet (present Kay and Noble counties in Oklahoma).

Ponca culture came under pressure in the 1880s and 1890s. Agents and missionaries sought to abolish traditional dances, marriage practices, and religious customs. Despite tribal opposition,

in 1892 the government imposed its allotment policy on them. This resulted in the eventual alienation of much of their land. In 1911, Ponca people came under pressure once again, after the discovery of oil on and near their reservation. The development of the Ponca and Tonkawa oil fields caused environmental problems, forcing the Tribe to abandon their winter camps and move onto individual allotments.

Despite Ponca's tragic history the Tribe miraculously survived with resiliency. Ponca's culture is their identity and the most important sacred asset of their people.

Dancing has remained an important expression of traditional Ponca culture. Throughout Oklahoma, Ponca is known for their knowledge of songs and dances. They have made important contributions to the development of powwow culture on the southern Plains. In 1926, Gus McDonald was crowned the first world champion fancy dancer, earning the Ponca Tribal Nation the honor of hosting the fancy dance world championships each year. The annual Ponca powwow, the oldest powwow in the United States, is held every August.

However, historical, low socio-economic status, among the lowest in the United States, has plagued the Tribe. One of the greatest challenges facing Ponca's tribal community is the retention of their language and preservation of cultural knowledge, history, and traditions.

In recent years, Tribal leadership has been credited with making important improvements and progress. With a renewed and inspired commitment to bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal, Ponca is realizing much success as they embark on several new initiatives, including the USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge project. Through extensive planning and facilitation, Tribal leadership and the dedicated efforts of a broad community-based planning committee have identified and embraced an expanded **Tribal Library and new Cultural Resource Center** as one of Ponca's most urgent needs. Central to the development of the new facility will be complementary joint programming with other major economic initiatives currently underway and innovative collaborations with existing Tribal programs and services.

Over the course of a year-long planning effort, the MICA Group worked closely with the Ponca Tribal Nation in a process to assess, identify, plan, and develop a placemaking plan, which when implemented, holds great promise to bring much needed benefits to the Ponca community.

## **PLACEMAKING and the PLACEMAKING PROCESS**

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to creating quality places to live, work, play and learn. It includes a collaborative engagement process that helps leaders shape public spaces and lead community-led change for the benefit of their communities. The four bases of placemaking include: people, place, engagement, and opportunity.

Every community is unique, as are its dreams, opportunities, resources, solutions, and strategies. For American Indian Tribal Nations, Tribal sovereignty, with its legal basis in government-to-government relationships, is paramount in all planning. Tribes must have the opportunity to develop their own definition of what placemaking means to them while holding true to placemaking concepts.

In September 2022, the MICA Group, in partnership with the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma and USDA's Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge, began a facilitated placemaking process with strong Tribal leadership and high-level community engagement.

**The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge (RPIC)** Cooperative Agreement with the MICA Group supported funding for planning, facilitation, technical assistance, and training to foster placemaking activities with the Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma.

**The MICA Group**, a Native-led nonprofit ([www.micagroup.org](http://www.micagroup.org)), is a strategic partner with the Ponca Tribal Nation. MICA brings substantial expertise in national, state, and local government relations, fundraising, technical assistance, and managing funds from federal and nonfederal sources for Native projects and programs. MICA's working relationships with over 300 Tribal Nations, federal agencies, NGOs, mission-aligned corporations, and private philanthropy, encourages Tribes and Tribal communities to dream big for their people and to support them in mobilizing resources to make their dreams achievable.

The organization has successfully worked in cooperation with the Federal Communications Commission to manage a \$10 million Cultural Resource Fund on behalf of 140 federally recognized Tribes. MICA leveraged an additional \$19.5 million to enhance the managed portfolio of these tribal projects. MICA has also been highly successful in working with USDA and has leveraged the USDA RPIC Cooperative Agreement by \$25 million for the Pawnee Nation and Otoe Missouria Tribes, \$9 million for Tohono O'odham Nation, and \$2 million for Lower Sioux Indian Community (MN).

## Ponca Nation Placemaking Process & Timeline

PLACEMAKING PROCESS														
		2022						2023						
Phase		Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep
Project Initiation / Assessment	Lead a briefing of placemaking process with Ponca Tribal Leadership													
	Identify key leadership; form Project Leadership Work Committee and Community Planning Group													
	Clarify roles and responsibilities of work group													
	Gather, review, and assess state of the Tribe, services, government structure													
	Identify and assess internal and external resources													
Define Needs and Determine Placemaking Project	Schedule workshop sessions to identify community needs													
	Facilitate Leadership and Community Work Sessions													
	Determine project, sustainability and viability													
Placemaking Sessions: Visioning, Planning, and Partnership Development	Engage Tribal Leadership in all planning sessions													
	Research and cultivate internal and external partnerships; administer two surveys													
	Develop Placemaking Plan													
	Formulate Strategic Implementation Plan													
Final Session and Wrap-Up	Review draft Placemaking Plan with all appropriate groups / stakeholders													
	Provide guidance on Action Steps													
Evaluation	Conduct internal evaluation of process, lessons learned, achievement, outcomes													
	Assess quality of services by MICA team via survey													
Final Program Report	Complete narratives and final reports													
	Disseminate final reports to appropriate entities													

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Placemaking Leadership Committee.** Established under the Constitution of the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, the Ponca Tribal Economic Development Authority Corporation (PTC), which includes Tribal Chairman Oliver Littlecook, was designated by the Chairman to help lead the placemaking process, provide guidance in decision making, and maintain a focus on sustainability and economic development. The leadership of Chairman Littlecook and the PTC was imperative in encouraging community participation, aligning the placemaking project with Tribal priorities, and in developing an Implementation Framework.



**Community Planning Committee.** A broad planning group of Tribal government division and program directors, Tribal elders, community leaders, and experts from diverse fields was selected to participate in the placemaking process. The highly engaged group included 45-50 committed representatives who regularly attended the facilitated planning sessions and provided invaluable community vision and input. The group brought together diverse voices and created new opportunities for innovative collaboration and coordination of cross-sector leadership, programming, and partnerships.

**Leadership and Community Planning.** Over the course of the planning process, MICA conducted seven working sessions with the Placemaking Leadership Committee, the PTC, and four planning and visioning sessions with the broader community, including administering two surveys. These sessions and surveys focused on the following key elements of Ponca's placemaking:

- Assessing current conditions: Tribal government services and structure, environmental factors, opportunities, and challenges
- Identifying community needs and highest priorities
- Building consensus around selection of one priority project
- Bringing vision and purpose to the project
- Identifying elements, functions, and programs for the new space
- Creating opportunities for cross-sector partnerships and innovative collaboration
- Developing a Strategic Implementation Framework

## **OUTCOMES**

Several planning meetings over an 11-month period resulted in substantial outcomes. In addition, two surveys were administered that helped identify opportunities for collaborations that will bring new energy and hope to the community.

- **Assessment Phase:** Racism in surrounding area schools, alarming levels of poverty, a lack of sustainable cultural programs, and health and safety issues are very serious on Ponca lands. With one fluent speaker remaining, the Tribe is also in grave danger of losing its language. Ponca suffers from alarmingly high rates of crime, teen suicide, delinquency, truancy, school drop-out, alcohol and drug abuse, and family violence. There are serious environmental health concerns regarding water quality.

The community shared that access to services is difficult because naturally-linked departments and programs are housed in different locations. A higher level of collaboration between departments would improve user benefits and maximize resources and efficiencies. This would require a reexamination of service delivery locations. The Tribe is focused on addressing these issues.

- **Identifying Community Needs and Highest Priorities:** MICA's facilitation focused on engaging multi-sector leadership to give voice to their specific areas of expertise and

concerns. Through open dialog, respect, and encouragement, several needs and priorities emerged:

- ◆ A New Cultural Resource Center
- ◆ Expansion of the Ponca Tribal Library
- ◆ Securing a location that is safe and builds pride
- ◆ Building a healthy community
- ◆ Focusing on youth
- ◆ Breaking negative generational cycles; prevention; parenting; healing
- ◆ Early childhood immersion programs
- ◆ Education classrooms
- ◆ Life-long learning
- ◆ Programs and curriculum: culture, language, arts, literacy and financial literacy, life skills, teacher training
- ◆ Capacity building – training, hiring, and retaining expertise
- ◆ Accountability for operational management, policies and procedures, and content-rich programming
- ◆ Staying true to cultural beliefs and core values; honoring ways of knowing; promoting good cultural practices
- ◆ Capturing the stories and wisdom of the Ponca Nation
- ◆ Creating a space large enough for cultural celebrations, dances, ceremonies, etc.
- ◆ Incorporating history, research, counseling, vocational rehabilitation, and tutoring
- ◆ Building systems for food sustainability/gardens/expertise in farming, land development, and management

*“The land is a wealth source for economic development and self-sufficiency.” Dr. Louis Headman, Ponca Tribal elder and spiritual leader*



- **Consensus Around Highest Priority:** Through a consensus building process, the Community Planning Group identified and recognized the enormous benefit a new Cultural Resource Center and the expansion of the Ponca Tribal Library would bring to the community in addressing some the highest priorities of the Ponca Nation. **Expansion of the Ponca Tribal Library was identified as central to the development of the new Cultural Resource Center with expanded educational, economic, and community services to broaden impacts.** As a result of this process and the community’s recommendations, strong community and Tribal leadership commitments were solidified for the placemaking project.

Final planning sessions culminated in a *community*-driven Placemaking Plan with additional outcomes as detailed in the following sections.

## **RENEWING OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE PONCA TRIBAL NATION Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center**



*“We, who have always been here, whose bones of untold generations of our ancestors enrich the soil, are the stewards, the caretakers of this land. Joining hands with all kindred spirits, native, and non-native, we can give future generations a place in the sun. Our children must learn how imperative is this truth as we teach continuity of culture, tradition, and our true history.”*

*-Dwain Camp, Ponca Nation Elder*

### **Project. The Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center**

**Vision.** With a renewed and inspired commitment to making the Ponca community a high-quality place to live, work, play and learn, the development of an expanded library and new cultural resource center emerged as Ponca’s highest priority. The vision for this project is to bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to the Ponca Tribal Nation, addressing some of the community’s most urgent needs.

**Why the Project is Needed.** Although the Tribe has experienced some economic improvements, the community still faces severe economic and social disadvantages, with a relatively low number of high school and college graduates. Few employment opportunities exist. Only 50% of White Eagle residents have automobiles; many rely on a small van that transports residents for medical care and grocery shopping. The proposed Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center’s multi-generational, culturally-based programming will increase accessibility, student academic success, employability, health, and well-being.

The Ponca Tribe has an urgent and critical need for their Tribal library to be restored, collections safeguarded, and its critical services expanded. The building in which the Library was previously housed had a major water leak, which destroyed one of the Tribe's most important collections of Tribal history, culture, and language. Currently housed in temporary quarters, much of their remaining collections are stored in boxes. The new Library and adjoining Cultural Resource Center will provide expanded educational, economic, and community development services, broadening the important benefits the Tribal Library previously brought to the community's 4200 enrolled members and to residents in surrounding areas.

### **Project Goals**

- Create a state-of-the-art, safe, beautiful, and welcoming space that builds pride and brings economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to the Ponca Tribal Nation
- Expand the Ponca Tribal Library and collections and develop a new Cultural Resource Center that will offer education, wellness, economic development, and culturally based programs and services to address the most pressing community needs, including the urgency to sustain and perpetuate Ponca's Tribal language, culture, and history
- Create an archival room for preservation, research, and study of tribal histories (oral, written, video, and film), culture, stories, dance, songs, language, documents, and photographs
- Collaborate with other Tribal departments to offer programs and services beyond the limits of the current Library's space and budget and external partners to maximize impact and benefits to the community
- Build and elevate knowledge base, life skills, and sector expertise through collaborations and partnerships

**Site Selection.** After careful consideration, Tribal leadership selected a highly valued cultural site for the construction of the project. The beautiful site is located at the tip of the Tribe's cultural camping, powwow and ceremonial grounds, an area widely used by the community. Easily accessed from Highway 177, the five-acre parcel would be dedicated by the Ponca Tribe for the new building. Its location is one of the Tribe's most significant, honored, and utilized cultural assets.

**Identifying Functions and Programs.** In a facilitated process and through visioning sessions, the Community Planning Committee defined the following functions and programs (existing, to be expanded, and new):

Ponca Tribal Library, Arts, Culture, Language, and Education

- Special Collections/Archives – open by appointment
- Genealogy
- Computer Lab
- New Media Center and Recording studio and/or booths
- Recordings and preservation of oral histories
- Tutoring

- GED
- Job Placement
- Cultural
- Arts (including exhibitions)
- Language
- Garden – traditional foods, tobacco, medicine
- Financial literacy
- Teacher training
- After school programs
- Mentoring/Leadership
- Head Start
- Early childhood
- Lifelong learning
- Parenting
- Promote clan-building
- Food Sovereignty
- Culinary Arts (partnerships)

#### Health

- Counseling
- Life skills
- Rehabilitation

#### Economic Development

- Agriculture
- Creative arts/businesses
- Snack/Café (with farm-to-table traditional foods)
- Gift shop, restaurant, culinary arts opportunities

**A Tiered Approach to Programming.** The Leadership Committee identified program status as new, existing, to be expanded, and assigned a priority level and clarified where the program/services will be housed. There will also be a focused effort to connect and complement current economic and community development initiatives with culturally-based program development, such as the Meat Processing and Trading Post economic development initiatives.

## Placemaking Program Study Tiered Priorities

Programmatic Functions	Current, New, or Expanding Program		Location		Priority	Notes
	Existing Function	New or Expanding	Part of Library/CRC	Remain at current location	Tiered Priority	
<b>Living Culture</b>						
Language Classes	Yes	Yes	Yes		1	Some language classes being offered, to be expanded
Language: Teacher Training & Curriculum Development	No	Yes	Yes		1	
Recording oral histories	No	Yes	Yes		1	Critical to obtain oral histories before elders pass
Dances, feasts, namings, handgames, etc.	Yes		Yes		1	Funeral feasts and Bereavement will not be held in the new CRC
Cultural gatherings & programs	Yes	Yes	Yes		1	
Bereavement Center	Yes		No	Yes	1	Bereavement centers will be housed elsewhere; not in CRC
<b>Ponca Tribal Library</b>						
Special Collections/Archives – open by appointment for research	No	Yes	Yes		1	Need digitization lab included
High Speed Computer Lab	No	Yes	Yes		1	Will need to be staffed
State of the Art Media Center and High Quality Recording Studio	No	Yes	Yes		1	Every type of equipment is needed for media center, incl video, screening, recording studio equip, shelving,
Genealogy	(some)	Yes	Yes		1	Enrollment office has tribal rolls, both on paper and computer
Tutoring	(some)	Yes	Yes	Yes	1	Tutoring services will be coordinated with Education and After-school programs
<b>Education &amp; Life-Skills *will be coordinated w Tribal Library programming</b>						
Cultural classes	Yes	Yes	Yes		2	Tailored to culturally-related functions
Exhibitions/Performances	No	Yes	Yes		2	Visual and performing arts/dances
Arts education (including demonstrations, classes, etc.)	No	Yes	Yes		2	Visual and performance, contemporary and traditional, dance, stage, media arts, crafts, fine arts
Financial Literacy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2	Coordinate with Housing Program
Mentorships/Leadership	Yes	Yes	Yes		2	community and culture leaders, tribal government, rolemodel & mentorship opportunities,
After-school programs	Yes	Yes	No		2	
Tutoring	Yes		Yes	Yes	2	Tutoring services will also take place in Tribal Library
Headstart	Yes		No	Yes	2	
Early Childhood	Yes		No	Yes	2	
Parenting classes	Yes	Yes	Yes		2	Work with courts, ICW to require cultural parenting classes.
Garden - traditional foods, tobacco, medicine	No		Yes		2	Could be housed elsewhere if not in CRC
Food Sovereignty	No	Yes	Yes		2	
Culinary Arts	No	Yes	Yes		2	
<b>Economic Development</b>						
GED classes	Yes		Yes		1	
Job Placement	(some)	Yes	Yes		1	
Agriculture/Agribusiness	(some)	Yes	No	Yes	3	will be expanded and joint programming coordinated w CRC
Snack/Café (with traditional foods and farm/table)	No	Yes	Yes		3	
Gift shop	No	Yes	Yes		3	

**Operations.** Policies and dedicated funding that support staff development, training, retention of expertise, and accountability are recommended considerations from the Community Planning Committee. MICA further recommends that a **comprehensive business plan, including a staffing plan (with existing and new positions) and operational budget**, be developed as part of *Next Steps* in the development of the project. New staffing should be brought on in phases, in line with priorities and available funding.

Considerations should also be given to the governance structure of the new facility. Questions need to be considered -- such as whether it will be solely a Tribal-run entity or if separate individual businesses, nonprofits, or Tribally-owned businesses will be a part of it, to complement programs and services and increase funding opportunities.

**Staffing.** The following considerations are *preliminary* recommendations for a **staffing plan**:

- Education Director
- Language – curriculum development and expertise/immersion school
- Youth Programs Coordinator
- Business Office/Financial Manager
- Cultural preservation director/officer (existing)
- Development Officer
- Collections Manager
- General Manager
- Librarian (existing) – add staff for expanded operations and special collections archivist
- Gardens/Greenhouse – management and programs
- Food Service Coordinator/Culinary Arts
- Environmental management (existing)
- Financial literacy (Housing collaboration)
- Higher education support (GED, tutoring) (existing)
- Job placement/Workforce
- Behavioral Health collaboration (existing)
- Transportation Services
- Maintenance
- Janitorial

**Space and Function Considerations.** Through visioning and planning sessions, the Community Planning Committee put forward the following recommendations:

- Incorporate and expand Ponca Tribal Library as central component to a new Cultural Resource Center
- Archival room for preservation, research, and study of tribal histories (oral, written, and film), culture, stories, dance, songs, language, documents, and photographs
- Large gathering space for cultural gatherings, dances, and celebrations
- Space for group activities – youth, elders, multigenerational activities, exercise, healing
- Multi-purpose room
- Moveable walls
- Classrooms

- Makerspace
- Garden/Greenhouse
- Exhibition walls and space
- Commercial kitchen
- Outdoor Kitchen/Grilling area
- Environmental considerations (promoting good practices that honor the land, air, sky, water) in building design and development, management, and garden
- Security and safety for the facility, including locked storage and lockers, generators, fire hydrants, fire system.

**Cross-Sector Collaborations and Strategic Partnerships.** Planning sessions, surveys, and outreach helped identify, cultivate, and engage potential allies and partners with a focus on a cross sector collaborations. Two survey instruments were developed and administered to identify strategic partnerships among existing community programs aligned with the Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center. Surveys were disseminated to all participants with a 60% return rate, an excellent response as compared to the average survey response rate of 5-35%.

As a result, the following collaborations and partnerships were identified for innovation cross sector programming and services. The process identified existing collaborations and partnerships with Tribal programs and explored and identified potential new partnerships within the community and externally.

**Community Partners**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ponca Tribal Council</li> <li>● Ponca Housing Authority</li> <li>● Ponca Indian Health Service Clinic</li> <li>● Ponca Environmental Management</li> <li>● Ponca Water Department</li> <li>● Ponca Emergency Preparedness</li> <li>● Ponca Tribal Library</li> <li>● Tribal Transportation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● White Eagle Cultural Center</li> <li>● Ponca Childcare Development</li> <li>● Ponca Historic Preservation</li> <li>● Ponca Head Start Education</li> <li>● Ponca Tribal Youth Program</li> <li>● Ponca Wellness Center</li> <li>● Native Connections</li> <li>● Tribal Daycare</li> </ul>
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**External Strategic Partnership Development (underway)**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● USDA-Oklahoma – Economic and Rural Programs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amy Cowley, Business and Development</li> <li>- Pamela Bensley, Rural Community Facilities</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Congressional Delegation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- MICA Facilitated AN introduction to Congressman Frank Lucas’s office (District Representative) and is working to inform and engage Rep. Lucas’ office in understanding Ponca’s community needs. A site visit is currently being planned.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Congressman Tom Cole (outreach by Chairman Littlecook)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Ponca City Development Authority</li> <li>● Chickasaw Nation: Identified as a potential major stakeholder; Outreach by Chairman Littlecook</li> <li>● Pawnee Tribal Nation: potential model and partner for Ponca’s proposed gardening program</li> <li>● Kaw Nation: identified as potential model for proposed outdoor classrooms</li> <li>● Economic Development Administration (SW Region)</li> <li>● Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS)</li> <li>● The MICA Group, a Native-led nonprofit, committed partner in providing support and assistance</li> </ul>
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**Sustainability.** The project’s viability and sustainability depend on community leadership and commitment. Careful consideration was given to the selection of the project and its future development and sustainability. The PTC made the following commitments:

- The Ponca Tribal Economic Corporation (PTC) will promote, develop, and oversee the economic development aspects of the project, as well as provide overall leadership in moving the project forward.
- The Ponca Tribe will dedicate significant staff time, leadership, and funding.
- A portion of revenues from existing businesses and ventures will be directed (ongoing) to the Library and Cultural Resource Center to help offset operations.
- A Tribal Resolution will be secured from the Ponca Nation Tribal Council to support the development and long-term sustainability and operations of the Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center.
- Through strategic collaborations and partnerships, programmatic and financial commitments will continue to be secured by the PTC and community partners.

**Next Steps.**

- Tribal Resolution to support development and operations of the Project
- Determine Governance Structure
- Fundraising Plan: Use Implementation Framework as a guide for fundraising
- Business Plan with Staffing Plan
- Architectural Planning and Design/Construction Docs
- Program Development and Coordination
- Continued Partnership Cultivation
- Continued Community Engagement in the advancement and future planning of the project.

**Conclusion.** The dedicated leadership, high level of community engagement, and successful process and facilitation of the placemaking planning has resulted in a proposed project that is viable, sustainable, and will greatly advance the Tribe’s vision to bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to the Ponca Tribal Nation.

*The project achieves the following valued goals and outcomes of placemaking:*

- Blends creativity and infrastructure to build and promote a vibrant public space
- Enhances community identity
- Establishes a sense of place in areas that are part of the community’s everyday experiences
- Improves public safety
- Improves environmental quality and accessibility
- Increases collaboration between a variety of stakeholders
- Provides a safe platform for discussion, community collaboration, addressing issues/challenges
- Promotes economic and community development

It has been an honor and privilege for the MICA Group to work closely with the Ponca Tribal Nation in this important effort. We very much appreciate the support of USDA as a valued partner in our committed effort to assist the Tribe in the planning and implementation of the project for the benefit of the Ponca Tribal Nation and its citizens.

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*"Our old people told us that Poncas are a sacred people who have strong beliefs that are tied to our lands and our sacred ceremonies. Because of who we are, there are some responsibilities that we owe to ourselves and to God the Creator."*

*-Oliver Littlecook  
Ponca Nation Tribal Chairman and Elder*



## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The MICA Group and our project team respectfully thanks and acknowledges the following individuals for their dedicated work and invaluable contributions to the USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge Project, Placemaking Plan, and Implementation Framework.

### **Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma Tribal Council**

Oliver Littlecook, Chairman  
Carla Carney, MS, Treasurer  
Deborah Margerum, Member  
Earl "Tre" Howe, Member  
Leota Judi White, Member  
Matilda "Bea" De La Garza, Member  
Robert Collins, Vice Chairman

### **Placemaking Tribal Leadership and Members of the Ponca Tribal Economic Authority Corporation (PTC)**

Tribal Chairman Oliver Littlecook

Chris Littlecook, PTC Chair  
Dan Jones  
Diana Fitzpatrick  
Hauli Gray

**Tribal Administrator**

Anthony Burris

**Self-Governance Coordinator**

Jevin Dirks

**Grant Writer**

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**Community Placemaking Planning Committee**

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Dr. Julie Clark  
Dr. Louis Headman  
Dwight Buffalohead  
Emily Smith  
Georgianna Warrior  
James Kemble  
Jevin Dirks  
Jim Littleton  
Jocelyn Parker  
Judy Wilson  
Lyndsey Warrior  
Martha Brown  
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Amy Crowley, Loan & Grant Specialist  
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Kelli Chapman Bonds, Loan Specialist  
Community Programs  
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**Ponca City Development Authority**

David Myers, CEcD, Executive Director

**Northern Oklahoma Development Authority**

**Oklahoma Economic Development Authority**

Jennifer Firgard, NODA & OEDA/CDBG and REAP Administrator  
Vicki Eggers, NODA Economic Development Director

**EDA**

Stacy Webb, Economic Development Representative  
Oklahoma & North Central Texas

**The MICA Group Project Team**

Della Warrior, CEO and President  
Peggy Mainor, Executive Director  
Lisa Sutton, Financial Manager  
Erin Bishop, MICA Consultant  
Veronica Gonzales, Project Lead  
Gwen Shunatona, Facilitator and Evaluator  
Veronica Pipestem, Technical Assistance and Co-Facilitator

# Ponca Tribal Nation of Oklahoma Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center Placemaking Plan

Presented to Ponca Tribal Leadership and  
Community Planning Committees  
August 2023



# Purpose of Gathering Today

- ❖ Review Draft Placemaking Plan
- ❖ Dialogue and Feedback
- ❖ USDA and NODA Opportunities
- ❖ Discuss Next Steps
- ❖ Evaluation Survey
- ❖ Celebrate Outcomes

# Introduction

## Ponca Tribal Nation

- **Federal recognition 1950; Self-Governed since 1999**
- **4200 Enrolled Members**
- **Challenges: Enduring threats to Ponca Language and Culture; Socio-Economics**
- **Landmark case: *Standing Bear v. Crook* (1879) recognized Native Americans as persons under the Fourteenth Amendment**
- **Clyde Warrior: National Indian Youth Council and call for Self-Determination**
- **Renowned for creating the Fancy Dance and Powwow Culture**

# Placemaking Principles

## People, Place, Engagement, and Opportunity

- 1. People-centered approach to creating quality places to live, work, play and learn**
- 2. A collaborative, engaged process**
- 3. Helps leaders shape public spaces**
- 4. Brings community-led change**



# Recognition

- ❖ **Tribal Sovereignty is paramount**
- ❖ **Every community is unique: dreams, opportunities, resources, solutions, strategies**

# Placemaking Process

- **Assessment**
- **Placemaking Planning Sessions**
- **Plan Development and Review**
- **Evaluation**
- **Implementation Framework**

# **Community Engagement Visioning and Planning**

## **Placemaking Leadership Committee**

Chairman Oliver Littlecook, Chris Littlecook, Dan Jones,  
Diana Fitzpatrick, Hauli Gray

## **Community Planning Committee**

Division & Program Directors, Elders, Spiritual Leaders,  
and Community Members

❖ Diverse Fields of Expertise

# Community Selected Placemaking Project and Highest Priority

Consensus was reached for the **Ponca Tribal Library  
expansion as central to a new Cultural Resource Center**



**Ponca Tribal Library and  
Cultural Resource Center**

# Vision

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To bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to the Ponca Tribal Nation

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# Project Goals

- **Expand Tribal Library and develop Cultural Resource Center**
- **Create a state-of-the-art, safe, and welcoming space**
- **Provide education, wellness, economic development programs and services**
- **Preserve, sustain and perpetuate Ponca language and culture, including history, stories, dances, songs, photographs, documents**

# Functions and Programs

**Arts, Culture,  
Language and  
Education**

## Examples

- Language
- Expanded Education/Youth
- Special Collections/Archives
- Media Center and Recording Studio
- Garden – Traditional Foods, Tobacco, Medicine
- Traditional Arts, Songs, Dance, Cultural traditions



# Functions and Programs

**Health  
and  
Wellness**

## Examples

- Life-skills/Financial Literacy/Parenting
- Clan-building
- Counseling/Healing
- Rehabilitation

# Functions and Programs

## Economic Development

### Examples

- Food Sovereignty
- Agriculture/Agribusiness
- Creative Arts/Businesses
- Cafe
- Gift shop

# Considerations

Promoting environmental and cultural practices that honor the land, air, sky, water in building and program design, management, and garden



## Functions/Spaces

- Archival Room/Special Collections
- Large Space/Movable Walls
- Multipurpose Room, Classrooms, High-Speed Internet
- Commercial Kitchen/Outdoor Grilling
- Exhibition spaces
- Garden/Greenhouse
- State-of-the-Art Media Center/Theater/Recording
- Café and Gift Shop

# Cross-Sector Partnerships

- Ponca Tribal Council
- Ponca Authority
- Ponca Indian Health Service Clinic
- Ponca Environmental Management
- Ponca Water Department
- Ponca Emergency Preparedness
- Ponca Tribal Library
- Tribal Transportation
- White Eagle Cultural Center
- Ponca Childcare Development
- Ponca Historic Preservation
- Ponca Head Start Education
- Ponca Tribal Youth Program
- Ponca Wellness Center

# External Partnership Development

- USDA Oklahoma
- Economic Development Administration (SW Region)
- Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS)
- Oklahoma Congressional Delegation
- Ponca City Development Authority
- Chickasaw Nation
- Pawnee Tribal Nation
- Kaw Nation
- The MICA Group

# Next Steps

- **Governance Structure**
- **Fundraising**
- **Staffing Plan**
- **Business Plan**
- **Architectural Planning and Design/Construction Docs**
- **Program Development and Coordination**
- **Continued Partnership Cultivation**

# Conclusion

Through dedicated leadership and high-level community engagement, the placemaking process has resulted in a proposed project that is viable, sustainable, and will greatly advance your vision to bring economic prosperity, wellness, and cultural renewal to the Ponca Tribal Nation.

*“We, who have always been here, whose bones of untold generations of our ancestors enrich the soil, are the stewards, the caretakers of this land. Joining hands with all kindred spirits, native, and non-native, we can give future generations a place in the sun. Our children must learn how imperative is this truth as we teach continuity of culture, tradition, and our true history.”*

*-Dwain Camp, Ponca Nation Elder*







**Thank you from  
The MICA Group!**



## **I. INTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

### **PONCA TRIBAL LIBRARY AND CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER**

USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge  
Facilitated by the MICA Group, a Native-led Non-profit  
September 2022 – September 2023

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In partnership with the US Department of Agriculture, over a year-long effort, the MICA Group also partnered with the **Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma** in a process to assess, identify, plan, and develop a **Ponca Placemaking Plan**.

The evaluator reviewed MICA project files to verify completion of activities projected in the MICA Workplan and conducted personal observations of activities which confirmed effectiveness and completion of project activities.

A summary of the Evaluation **Findings** includes MICA'S ongoing work with a Ponca key leadership group and a larger planning group representing dozens of Ponca tribal families. The project objectives, identified by the evaluator, were met as described in the Findings section of this report. **Conclusions** found that MICA staffing members established trust with the participants and were able to maintain open communication throughout a process resulting in collectively developing a Ponca Placemaking Plan. Direct communication should be improved between tribal departments to identify needed services that should be conducted in a collaborative manner resulting in effective services for clients. **Recommendations** that can ensure successful establishment of a Ponca Library and Cultural Resource Center include the following: implementation of the Ponca Placemaking Plan guided with integrity by a broadly developed Ponca Tribal Mission Statement; continue discussions at Monthly Staff Meetings of how Tribal Departments are actively collaborating to serve their clients and how that collaboration is advancing Placemaking in the Ponca community; and, to ensure sustainability, conduct facilitated sessions with (a) the designated leadership group and the Tribal Division Directors of proposed actions in the 'Draft of Placemaking Plan for the Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center' and of the Implementation Guide and (b) expanded development of external, regional partnerships for acquiring suitable resources and funding.

## INTRODUCTION

Ponca means "*Those Who Lead.*"

Headquartered in White Eagle, five miles south of Ponca City, in Kay County, Oklahoma, the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma is a federally recognized and self-governed Tribe of 4200 Tribal members.<sup>1</sup>

Over the course of a year-long planning effort, the MICA Group worked closely with the Ponca Tribal Nation in a process to assess, identify, plan, and develop a placemaking plan ... <sup>1, Page 2</sup>

This Evaluation is intended to be read in tandem with the Ponca Tribe's Placemaking Plan, in that, the paragraph above is taken from the Ponca Tribe's draft *Placemaking Plan*, directly connecting that Plan and this *Evaluation Report* in an organic, culture-based circular manner.

This represents the continuous pattern of *the project end influencing the beginning of a new or continuing effort, in this case, the actions contained in the Ponca Placemaking Plan.*

**Type of Evaluation:** Project Summative Evaluation

**Type of Summative Evaluation:** Goals Based, applied to this project, examining outcomes to determine overall project effectiveness.

**Context:** Needs Assessment of problems, assets, and opportunities<sup>2</sup> for Placemaking in a tribal community with features of low income and isolation from Ponca City, Oklahoma. [Evaluator’s note: Ironically, this neighboring, small city is named after the Ponca tribal nation.]

**Scope:**

Outputs	Outcomes	Benefits
Facilitated sessions of tribal leadership group and tribal division directors regarding Placemaking	Thorough understanding of Placemaking and its benefits for the Ponca community	Utilize Placemaking processes for increased productivity
Materials outlining and explaining Placemaking concepts and processes	Solid understanding of what Placemaking is and why it is valuable	Comprehensive grasp of Placemaking elements to use for community building
Compiling and displaying participants’ ideas within the working sessions	Comprehension of relationship of individual ideas and details to big picture of Placemaking project effectiveness	Collaboration among project partners – USDA, Ponca leadership and Division Directors, and MICA – and among Ponca participants strengthening services to clients
Interactive feedback between MICA staff and Ponca Tribal participants	“Outstanding” amount and intensity of participation by Ponca Tribal Leadership and Division Directors	Purpose of a Placemaking Plan that demonstrates participant and community inclusivity
Step by step progression of basic Placemaking concepts leading to design and development of Ponca Placemaking Plan	Voluntary in-depth contributions by Ponca Division Directors in the design and development of their Ponca Placemaking Plan	Commitment to “highly” workable Ponca Placemaking Plan supported by a supportive Implementation Plan resulting in attracting resources/funding for sustainability

**Purpose:** To determine if the intended goal was achieved.

**Methodology:** Qualitative description strengthened by Quantitative survey data.

## BACKGROUND

*Source of the information in this section is from the 'Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center' as listed below under Reference, Item 1.*

Placemaking is a people-centered approach to creating quality places to live, work, play and learn. It includes a collaborative engagement process that helps leaders shape public spaces and lead community-led change for the benefit of their communities. The four bases of placemaking include: people, place, engagement, and opportunity. A key characteristic of USDA'S Placemaking approach is the partnership nature with a community, in this case, a sovereign tribal community and, further, with the Native-led MICA Group facilitating the process.

**MICA Project Goal:** in partnership with the Ponca Tribe, to develop a Ponca Placemaking Plan.

**Activities:** Over the course of a year-long effort, as a partner with the US Department of Agriculture, the MICA Group worked closely with the Ponca Tribal Nation in a process to *assess, identify, plan, and develop a placemaking plan, ...*

**MICA gathered qualitative data** from a Ponca tribal leadership group and community representatives by facilitating large and small group processes.

**Quantitative data was collected via surveys** administered to those participating groups. <sup>1, Page 5</sup>

**Intended Report Audience:** Primary partners of the project – US Department of Agriculture, Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma, and MICA; also, funders and other tribal communities that can learn from the project experience.

## EVALUATION QUESTIONS

**Were the project objectives met?**

**Were the project objectives met with the appropriate integration of the Ponca tribal leadership and community representation?**

**Did the project process honor cultural values?**

**What is the overall impact of the project?**

## METHODOLOGY

**Qualitative information** was gathered from a facilitated small group of tribal planning leadership individuals along with large and small groups of tribal representatives. That information is included, referenced, or expounded upon throughout this document.

**Quantitative data** was collected via three Surveys.

The final survey provided external evaluation data regarding participant satisfaction with the project process and MICA's provision of services. Description and analysis are included in the second part of this document: II. EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT Quality of MICA Service Assessment for Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center.

## FINDINGS

### **\*Were the project objectives met?**

Yes. The Work Plan for this project does not cite project objectives, per se; rather, it identifies the project process from which the evaluator extracted four objectives highlighted here in bold font:

**1. Assess overall resources.** Evidence: Initial briefing of placemaking with Ponca Tribal leadership in September 2023 and in following weeks identified key leadership group [Ponca Tribe Economic Development Corporation] and planning group [Ponca Tribe Division Directors] representing dozens of Ponca tribal families. *Source: Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center', 1, Page 5,*

**2. Identify needs to determine Placemaking Project.** Evidence: Work sessions to clarify roles and responsibilities of work group. Gather, review, and assess the state of the Tribe, services and government structure from Tribal documents and individual interviews. Identify and assess internal and external resources from Tribal documents and participant information sharing. *Source: Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center', 1, Page 5 and Minutes of Work Sessions archived with MICA.*

**3. Plan elements of Placemaking Project.** Evidence: Schedule workshop sessions to identify community needs. Facilitate Leadership and Community Work Sessions. Determine project, sustainability and viability. *Source: Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center', 1, Pages 5 and 7 and Minutes of Work Sessions archived with MICA detailing Placemaking Sessions of Visioning, Planning and Partnership Development.*

**4. Develop Placemaking Plan.** Evidence: August 30, 2023, MICA'S final session with Ponca leadership group and community representatives for presentation of 'Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center'. The Ponca Tribe Economic Corporation leadership group and the planning participants agreed with the Plan. *Source: Email of September 1, 2023 from Veronica Gonzales to MICA consultants.*

**\*Were the project objectives met with the appropriate integration of the Ponca tribal leadership and community representation?**

Yes. Evidence: Ponca tribal leadership and community representation is documented with Sign In Sheets (sample in Appendices) for each planning and work session. Signatures are of the Ponca Tribe Economic Corporation board members, Ponca Tribal Council members, and Ponca Tribe Division Directors representing dozens of tribal families, and other participants. *Source: Draft of Placemaking Plan<sup>1</sup>, Pages 7-13*

**\*Did the project process honor cultural values?**

Yes. Evidence: The honoring of cultural values is documented on the Agenda for each planning and work session and confirmed by the evaluator's personal observation in the planning and working sessions of, for example: respectful request to a Ponca elder to serve as spiritual-cultural advisor to the project; recognition of participating Ponca elders; a Ponca tribal elder offering invocations; MICA tribal and land recognition of the Ponca Tribe; structured group facilitation and seating arrangements to assure inclusion of all participants; participants being given the opportunity to provide hand-written, summary notes of small group working sessions; encouragement for participants to openly provide ideas, comments and questions; MICA commending participants' verbal contributions and acceptance of engaging in collaborative efforts for increased service effectiveness to clients; MICA generously expressing gratitude to the tribal leadership group and all participants; MICA providing meals, as is customary in tribal settings; wrapping up each session with statements summarizing productive work; and, sending participants away with thoughtful ways to use session information in their work.

**\*What is the overall impact of the project?**

Placemaking Plan and Implementation Guide for a Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource

## CONCLUSIONS

**Summary of the findings of the evaluation. What works well.**

MICA staffing members established trust with the participants and were able to maintain open communication throughout the process of assessing the current situation, identifying community needs, as well as planning and successfully developing a Ponca Placemaking Plan.

**What should be improved.**

Direct communication between tribal departments to identify needed services should be conducted in a collaborative manner that results in effective services for clients. Direct communication between tribal division/department representatives resulted in efficiently concluding the project early and resulted in a viable Ponca Placemaking Plan with a focus on collaboration.

**Highlights of key overall insights, shortcomings and successes of the project.**

Highlights of key overall insights include building on the bringing together of Division Directors for open discussions of identifying patterns of client needs from various departments; and, how to collaborate in delivering staff support required to provide effective client services.

Although generalized, tribal cultural concepts were successfully incorporated in the process, a shortcoming of the project was lack of in-depth knowledge of Ponca culture in order to highlight phraseology of Ponca-specific values, etc. into the language of the project and Ponca Placemaking Plan. Success of the project included the oft mentioned open communication nurtured by MICA staff and participant responses with thoughtful and creative contributions. This led to comprehensive options for targeted elements of a potentially workable Ponca Placemaking Plan.

**PURPOSE OF PROJECT**

In partnership with the Ponca Tribe, to develop a Ponca Placemaking Plan.

**OUTCOMES**

**Note:** Outcomes aligned with Outputs under the **Scope** section of this evaluation report delineate steps leading to the Outcomes of the overall Placemaking project as described in this section.

**Assessment Phase:** The community shared that access to services is difficult because naturally linked departments and programs are housed in different locations. A higher level of collaboration between departments would improve user benefits and maximize resources and efficiencies. This would require a reexamination of service delivery locations. The Tribe is focused on addressing these issues.<sup>1, Page 5</sup>

**Identifying Community Needs and Highest Priorities:** MICA's facilitation focused on engaging multi-sector leadership to give voice to their specific areas of expertise and concerns. Through open dialog, respect, and encouragement, several needs and priorities emerged. [Listed in the Ponca Placemaking Plan were seventeen (17) such] priorities from a new Cultural Resource Center to building systems for food sustainability/gardens/expertise in farming, land development, and management.<sup>1, Page 5-6.</sup>

**Consensus Around Highest Priority:** Nearly a year consensus building process to final planning sessions culminated in a Ponca Placemaking Plan.<sup>1, Page 6-7.</sup>



## **SUSTAINABILITY**

Successful sustainability is predicted for specific design, development, and implementation of the Ponca Placemaking Plan due primarily to the commitments of the Ponca Tribal Economic Corporation, such as: promote, develop, and oversee the economic development aspects of the project, as well as provide overall leadership in moving the project forward; the Ponca Tribe will dedicate significant staff time, leadership, and funding; a portion of revenues from existing businesses and ventures will be directed (ongoing) to the Library and Cultural Resource Center to help offset operations; a Tribal Resolution will be secured from the Ponca Nation Tribal Council to support the development and long-term sustainability and operations of the Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center; through strategic collaborations and partnerships, programmatic and financial commitments will continue to be secured by the PTC and community partners.<sup>1, Page 13</sup>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Review and update, if needed, a written Ponca Tribe Mission Statement developed through open discussion of Ponca Tribal Council in conjunction with Ponca community members and employees. Implementation of the Ponca Placemaking Plan can be guided with integrity by a broadly developed Mission Statement.

Continue discussions at Monthly Staff Meetings of how Tribal Departments are actively collaborating to serve their clients and how that collaboration is advancing Placemaking in the Ponca community. Celebrate progress!

To ensure sustainability, facilitated sessions with (a) the designated leadership group and the Tribal Division Directors of proposed actions in the 'Draft of Placemaking Plan for the Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center' and of the Implementation Guide and (b) expanded development of external, regional partnerships for acquiring suitable resources and funding.

## **LESSONS LEARNED**

- The need to include tribal Information Technology (IT) personnel in all Tribal planning discussions for understanding of project operating needs by IT staff to provide appropriate equipment and corresponding connection locations, etc.
- The need for a comprehensive inventory of computer capabilities, for instance, of the total number of employees, how many have computers with cameras for videoconferencing. Uncertainty of that number created confusion about use of videoconferencing for this project.
- The need for consultants to maintain flexibility with the client to manage communication flow for preparing date changes for the planning and working sessions.

## LIMITATIONS

Due to an agreement between USDA and MICA to end the completed project early because of the efficiency of the MICA team and cooperative nature of the Ponca Tribe project participants, the time for preparing the evaluation was challenging. Two relevant aspects enabled this evaluation report to cover pertinent aspects of the project evaluation: (1) the evaluator having access to the 'Draft of Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribal Library and Cultural Resource Center' and (2) the evaluator's personal observation of project progress via participation in MICA's ongoing planning and having facilitated all but two of the various types of planning and working sessions.

---

The interactive manner of Ponca Tribe leadership and project participants exhibited their belief in the meaning of Ponca as *"Those Who Lead."*

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> Veronica Gonzales, Discussion Draft Placemaking Plan, Ponca Tribe Library and Cultural Resource Center, USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge, October 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Daniel L. Stuffelbeam, THE CIPP MODEL FOR EVALUATION; An Update, a Review of the Model's Development, a Checklist to Guide Implementation. Presented at the 2003 Annual Conference of the Oregon Program Evaluators Network (OPEN), Portland, OR 10/03/2003.

## APPENDICES

- A. Sample Sign In Sheet
- B. Sample Agenda demonstrates basing participants' sessions on cultural values
- C. MICA Survey Instruments
  - 1. Collaboration
  - 2. Satisfaction

## **II. EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT**

### **QUALITY OF MICA SERVICE ASSESSMENT FOR PONCA TRIBAL LIBRARY AND CULTURAL RESOURCE CENTER**

USDA Rural Placemaking Innovation Challenge  
Facilitated by the MICA Group, a Native-led Nonprofit  
September 2022 – September 2023

A final survey, developed specifically for this project, was to determine participant satisfaction with the project's process in terms of: participants' ideas being valued; effectiveness of facilitated planning and information presented in sessions; MICA staff knowledge; the Ponca Placemaking Plan reflecting participants' recommendations; resultant commitment of Tribal Division Directors to collaborate with the Ponca Library and the Cultural Resource Center, etc.; and, agreement that the recommendations and priorities in the Ponca Placemaking Plan are useful for future community and economic development.

Satisfaction Survey sample is in Appendix C.

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## Quantitative Evaluation Survey Results

**Total Collected Surveys: 13 of 15 participants (attending final session)**

**Per cent of respondents: 86.66**

**Types of respondents: 3 Ponca Tribe Development Corporation members  
12 Ponca Tribe Division Directors**

As the evaluator was not provided the completed surveys to review, the following analysis is taken from a September 7, 2023 email from Veronica Gonzales, MICA Senior Advisor.

- **9 Surveys reflect Participant "Fully Agrees" with each statement — score of "5" for all 7 questions.**

### Comments:

"It was excellent!"

"Continue to include representative in the placemaking plan."

"The session was great, very informative and everyone was very friendly."

"I feel the process was conducted in a way that promoted and encouraged engagement, leading to a successful plan moving forward."

- **2 Surveys reflect score of "Mostly Agree" with each statement — score of "4" for all 7 questions**

### Comments:

None were provided

- **1 Survey reflects score of "4" for Question I: "My ideas were listened to and valued" and score of "5" for all remaining Questions II - VII.**

### Comments:

"Maybe offer an online survey option for all employees/community members."

- **1 Survey reflects score of "3" for Question I: "My ideas were listened to and valued" and score of "5" for all remaining Questions II - VII.**

### Comments:

None were provided.

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In conclusion, as shown in the Survey Results Analysis, overall, participants' responses reflected belief that MICA'S project process will result in a workable Ponca Placemaking Plan.