

**Honoring Nations Award 2000  
Poeh Cultural Center and Museum  
Pueblo of Pojoaque**

**Program Narrative**

**1. CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF THE CONTRIBUTION**

This is a unique collaboration between two programs of the Pueblo of Pojoaque: the Poeh Cultural Center and Pojoaque Pueblo Construction Services Corporation (PPCSC). The Pueblo established the nonprofit Poeh Center in 1988 as a vehicle for Pueblo artistic expression and both Native American and public education. It began its arts training programs for American Indian artists, Poeh Arts, in 1990. In 1991, it opened the Poeh Museum in a 1,200 square foot temporary space where changing exhibits highlight works of students enrolled in its vocational arts program, which has been funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Indian Vocational Education Program since 1993.

This collaboration began in 1993 when the Tribal Council created and incorporated PPCSC as a for-profit business to specifically generate new revenues for, and to oversee the construction and maintenance of, the Poeh Center. Until then, the Center's programs, including its Museum, were offered in venues throughout the Pueblo. The driving concept for PPCSC, which began under an Administration for Native Americans (ANA) grant, was to work on a variety of commercial construction projects, throughout New Mexico, and to utilize the profit from these projects for construction and ongoing maintenance of the Poeh Center's facilities.

In its first five years, PPCSC completed 26 construction projects and earned \$8,361,556. It now has seven new projects, valued at \$3,324,827, under construction. PPCSC's profits have allowed it to complete Phase I of the Center: a 7,560 square foot facility, which houses Poeh Arts' classrooms, studios and workshops. In late 1999, PPCSC completed construction of Phase II: an 18,966 square foot structure that houses the Center's administrative offices and will host its new Museum, scheduled to open in early 2002.

PPCSC also initiated the Museum's endowment with a lead contribution of \$25,000. In keeping with the Center's focus on cultural continuity, PPCSC has made traditional Pueblo architecture and building techniques integral to the aesthetics and construction of the Poeh Center, which is built of adobe bricks and local wood products. It incorporates training programs in these construction methods. This complements the Center's training programs and internships in arts and museum administration and curatorial professions for young Pojoaque Tribal members. Finally, the funds provided by PPCSC serve as a matching resource for the Poeh Center. This has been crucial in allowing the Center to secure \$300,000 from public and private sources that require grantees to meet matching requirements of challenge grants.

**2. CONCERNS, PROBLEMS OR CHALLENGES MET BY CONTRIBUTION**

Tribal governments and entities have few resources available to be used in the development of cultural, museum or archival facilities. The majority of federal, state and private funding sources that provide support for the arts and humanities tend to offer funding for programs, rather than

for construction or renovation of arts and cultural facilities. Philanthropic foundations that award construction funds to arts and cultural organizations are likely to condition those grants on the prospective grantee's ability to raise matching funds from donors who are apt to contribute to a sizeable local capital campaign. Native American communities rarely have those potential donors within their constituencies, nor do they have the staff and/or board capacity to successfully plan or embark on capital campaigns.

This situation is further complicated by the scarcity of funds to maintain cultural facilities once they are constructed. Major cultural institutions address this issue by developing endowments, which usually generate income for maintenance of facilities and collections. Again, few governmental agencies or private funders provide resources for endowments or for ongoing repair and maintenance of facilities. From its inception, the plans for the Poeh Center/PPCSC collaborative have identified the need for the Center to be a sustainable facility and for the Construction Services Corporation to assist in these efforts through contributions of labor and materials, and as important, by serving as a catalyst and lead contributor to the Poeh Center Endowment Fund.

### **3. ACHIEVEMENTS/PROMOTIONS OF SELF-DETERMINATION**

This union of the Poeh Center and PPCSC benefits members of the Pueblo, other Tewa and Tiwa-speaking Pueblo communities and the general population. The financial resources provided by PPCSC have allowed the Poeh Center to develop appropriate facilities for its programs, including vocational education in traditional and contemporary Pueblo arts and concurrent business training to create expanded artistic, employment and economic opportunities for local Native American artists; and the programs of the Poeh Museum that are aimed at showcasing the work of these artists and which have acquired a collection of 1500 art objects and artifacts; documents, photographs and electronic archival resources to assist in furthering Tribal and public understanding and appreciation of the important contributions Pueblo People have made throughout history.

The Center is an important model for tribally-directed cultural revitalization and preservation, and economic development. PPCSC's success expands the Tribe's abilities in effective governance. As the Tribal Council created PPCSC, they were promised that a multimillion-dollar corporation could be built without having to borrow money, that the Corporation would always have Pueblo management, and that the Poeh Center would be built. These promises have been kept through acquisition of an ANA seed grant and judicious management, which has kept PPCSC solvent; by having Lori Gutierrez, a member of Pojoaque Pueblo, receive the training and certification, which prepared her to become PPCSC's Qualifying Contractor; and by building the first two Phases of the Poeh Center. The PPCSC is now preparing to oversee the finish work on the Museum, including installation of a 1,600 square foot permanent exhibition, an open collections area; a changing gallery, a demonstration space; a reception/orientation area and a gift shop.

The Pueblo takes pride in its history and in the collaboration that has brought the Poeh Center and its Museum to this exciting point. It views the Center as the focal point for continued cultural revitalization and a more positive social, economic and cultural environment for its members, members of nearby Pueblos and non-Native residents of the area. The educational components of the Center and PPCSC have added significantly to this climate. Every aspect of training -- construction, internships and arts instruction -- is presented in a context that stimulates

knowledge of Pueblo legacies and traditions. This knowledge, in turn, further empowers members of the Tribe and reinforces the perception that an excellent quality of life can be achieved through further Tribal self-determination.

#### **4. REASONS FOR SUCCESS/POTENTIAL FOR REPLICABILITY**

This collaboration works, in large part, because of the high level of community-based strategic planning used to create the Center. Much of this planning focused on phased and sustainable development. Planners and artists identified needs for the Center's programs; identified teaching of traditional building methods as a priority for the Center; and envisioned innovative economic development going hand-in-hand with cultural preservation.

The Center's long-range plan calls for traditional construction for its facilities, continuity in development without outside intervention, a high level of intergenerational involvement and positive sustainable impacts on cultural subsystems. PPCSC is the instrument to merge these objectives. While PPCSC is a for-profit business, with proven business success, its business plan is designed for community benefit and reinvestment by reinforcing traditional cultural ties. This is accomplished by the contributions PPCSC provides the Poeh Center: free consultation and design services and direct contributions of materials and labor.

The experience in Pojoaque can be replicated by other nonprofit organizations that are willing and able to bring together artists, scholars and builders to develop a shared vision of cultural preservation. To be successful, their economic development strategies must be guided by three factors:

- **Form**, which builds on traditional economies, and may be measured by quality of life rather than by dollar amounts;
- Manageable **Scale**, which might include networks of small enterprises or lead to a larger or more powerful end product; and
- **Timing**, that is phased-in development, which reduces risk and introduces ideas and innovation at an appropriate pace.