

Society of American Indian
Government Employees

P.O. Box 7715, Washington, D.C. 20044



Honoring Our Ancestors
Through Government Service

www.saige.org

Sharon Banks
NCR Regional Administrator
General Services Administration
301 7th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20407

Greetings Ms. Banks;

I am writing regarding the issue of the Frank Mechau murals in the Ariel Rios Building in Washington, D.C. The murals are offensive to many and result in a hostile work environment for American Indian and Alaska Native employees working in that building, Tribal officials conducting business in our nation's capital, and many others.

The Historic Preservation Act 106 Process was initiated by the GSA to assist in its decision making regarding the relocation of these murals. SAIGE was named and has participated as a Consulting Party in this process. Over the past several years, the GSA has presented the images and the controversy to the public for their input, extending the comment period several times, and has held meetings of the Consulting Parties. The GSA compiled the public comments, which included letters and other documents from many organizations supporting the removal of the offensive murals, including our partners at the National Coalition for Equity in Public Service, Federally Employed Women and National Image, who represent hundreds of thousands of federal employees.

We understand that during the final Consulting Parties' meeting, a consensus was reached amongst the Mechau family, the National Congress of American Indians, the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE), and the potential litigants. The consensus was that the Mechau murals did not belong in the Ariel Rios Building, but more appropriately, in a museum where they could be viewed voluntarily and cared for properly. Further, more than one institution has expressed interest in receiving the murals on a permanent basis. Unfortunately, the GSA chose to ignore this resolution and instead decided to leave the murals in place.

While SAIGE has agreed to continue to work with you on the interpretive panels planned for the murals, we want to remind you that we disagree with the GSA decision to keep the murals in the building. The 106 process is supposed to help agencies decide if an intended federal action would harm an historic property, in this case the Ariel Rios building. The fact that the murals have been removed in the past for cleaning with no harm to the artwork or the building indicates this is not the case. We maintain that the continued display of these offensive images in the Ariel Rios building constitutes an actionable hostile work environment.

Therefore, we reiterate our previous position and again strongly urge you to remove these murals from the Ariel Rios Building, and give relief to the employees as well as the Tribal government officials who do business at the EPA.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dan Garceau', is written over a faint background of the SAIGE logo.

Dan Garceau
Chairman, Board of Directors
Society of American Indian Government Employees

cc: Mr. Gary Porter