



SEP 11 2009

Mr. Dan Garceau
Chairman, Board of Directors
Society of American Indian Government Employees
P.O. Box 7715
Washington, DC 20044

Dear Mr. Garceau:

Thank you for your letter, which was received by email on August 13, 2009, regarding your organization's opposition to the Frank Mecha: Murals located in the Ariel Rios Building. Your letter will be added to the public record for the ongoing consultation the US General Services Administration (GSA) is conducting for the development of an interpretative program for the Ariel Rios murals.

GSA's decision making process for treating the murals at the Environmental Protection Agency Headquarters building began with the initiation of the Section 106 consultation. Our National Capital Region's Historic Preservation Officer went to great lengths to gather and understand the perspectives of all interested parties. His efforts are evidenced by the number of public comments received, and by the public forum and consulting party meetings that were held over the course of the consultation. By going through this effort, it facilitated and informed our decision making process allowing us to fully consider the historical, cultural and civil rights issues related to the murals.

As a result of the consultation and the input received, GSA fully recognizes and appreciates the sensitive and complex issues and solutions that have been raised over these six murals. On one hand, GSA is responsible for protecting, interpreting and making works of art commissioned by the Federal Government accessible to the general public. The murals in question are even more significant in that they are historic resources protected under the NHPA and were specifically commissioned to enhance the architecture of the Ariel Rios Building. Artwork should not be removed simply because it is controversial or unpopular. On the other hand, GSA believes that it should be sensitive to and respectful of individuals who may be offended by the murals.

GSA believes, after its Section 106 consultation, that it is a reasonable compromise to provide appropriate screening for the mural *Dangers of the Mail* given the exceptional circumstances surrounding this work. GSA is taking this step in an effort of this mural, while at the same time fulfilling its historic preservation and fine arts stewardship responsibilities.

Through the public comment process GSA is fully aware and sensitive to the objections the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) and others have raised over the negative imagery of the six murals depicting Native Americans. In an effort to address your concerns and to meet GSA's stewardship obligations for the fine arts collection that is under its care, we chose to instead retain the murals in place and develop an interpretive program.

GSA remains committed to this effort and is currently conducting research on the history of the mural program and the history of depictions of Native Americans to inform the interpretive program. We look forward to your continued participation in the consultation process and the successful completion of the interpretive program.

If you have any questions regarding the consultation please contact Gary Porter at (202) 205-7766.

Sincerely,



Sharon J. Banks
Acting Regional Administrator