

December 28, 2005

Mr. Gary Porter
Regional Historic Preservation Officer
301 7th St., SW.
Room 7600
Washington, DC. 20407

Dear Mr. Porter,

SUBJECT: MURALS IN ARIEL RIOS BUILDING

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) was established in 1944 and is the oldest and largest national organization of American Indian and Alaska Native tribal governments. At the recent 61st Annual Session for our organization, a resolution was adopted opposing depictions offensive to American Indians that are located in federal buildings. The resolution also supports a consultation meeting for the parties involved.

Depictions offensive to American Indians should not be present in buildings owned by the federal government. Currently, American Indian federal employees are forced to endure depictions of American Indians as savages, murderers and sexual predators within their workplace. The Ariel Rios Building, which houses the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), serves as a prime example. Several American Indian employees of the EPA in Washington, D.C. are forced to endure paintings implying savagery toward Caucasian settlers as well as rape and violence toward women. These offensive depictions reinforce the historical stereotypes of American Indians and create an environment of racial harassment. All such racially insensitive depictions of American Indians must be removed from buildings owned by the federal government to prevent the further oppression of American Indians in the workplace.

Not only must EPA employees suffer through such objectionable material in their workplace, but the images are also in the area where Tribal leaders must enter to conduct business. The stereotypes that the mural depicts -- of subhuman savages -- impede a healthy government-to-government relationship between the United States and Tribal governments. These offensive depictions disrupt institutions and processes designed to support meaningful and respectful government-to-government dialogue and consultation processes.

American Indian federal employees have the right to work in a harassment-free work environment and there must be a cessation of discriminatory and derogatory practices against all people. Resolution FTL 04-057 affirms the opposition of NCAI to the presence of depictions offensive to American Indians in buildings owned by the federal government. NCAI also requests a consultation meeting with the EPA Administrator and the Administrator of the General Services Administration to discuss options for resolving the matter.

Respectfully,



Ms. Jacqueline Johnson
Executive Director
National Congress of American Indians

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