



TRADITIONAL NET FISHING PLATFORMS ALONG THE COLUMBIA RIVER AT THE DALLES DAM IN OREGON.

FOCUS: Murals Facing Destruction

Many Indian Affairs schools feature murals by local artists. The time to arrange for the preservation of such artwork should be well before the building is ready to be demolished.

Advances in graphics technology has changed the manner of preserving Native artwork, especially murals, that are painted inside Indian Affairs schools. For instance, murals in the common areas of the old Wingate High School and Elementary School in New Mexico were photographed and reproduced onto the walls of the cafeteria in each new building, as part of the Wingate Replacement School project.

At Riverside Indian School in Oklahoma, efforts are being made to preserve two murals painted inside a high school building scheduled for demolition as part of the Replacement School project now underway there.

Meanwhile, a recent article in The Turtle Mountain Times, the official newspaper of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians, discussed the status of murals that once were on the walls of the old school building there. Many were preserved and stored in the records storage building of the Turtle Mountain Agency in North Dakota. As demolition proceeded on the old school building, however, another mural painted on cement inside the building, which features an American Indian warrior facing the sun, has received community attention. The artwork is "valued by a group for traditional cultural reasons," which is a National Register of Historic Places phrase that can be applied to the Turtle Mountain community's view of the significance of this mural, according to a study conducted for the BIA. The report said over time, the murals "have been viewed on a daily basis by almost every member of the Turtle Mountain tribe, and their depiction of tribal customs and environs have formed the basis for a tribal artistic tradition."

Similar concern was voiced in 2002 in Pine Ridge, S.D., over a New Deal Public Works Authority-funded mural depicting Oglala Sioux tribal history by Lakota artist Andrew Standing Solider. He painted the mural in mixed mortar and paint in the old school auditorium, which was to be destroyed in the building's demolition. Local artist Del Iron Cloud was funded through a Pub. L. 93-638 contract with the tribe to re-create the mural on the walls of the new gymnasium. Also, a section of the original mural was preserved by the Pine Ridge Agency.

National Park Services Guidelines for Evaluating and Documenting Traditional Cultural Properties as part of the National Register of Historic Places focus on "culture." In the National Register programs, the word "culture" is understood to mean the traditions, beliefs, practices, lifeways, arts, crafts, and social institutions of any community, be it an Indian tribe, a local ethnic group, or the people of the nation as a whole.

When OFMC evaluates a BIA-funded building for possible demolition, the above Guidelines are applied in its review of the building to discern any possible items of cultural significance that should be noted and discussed with local Government and tribal officials with a view to preservation.



This mural in the Wingate High School cafeteria is a photographic reproduction of the original painted mural that was in the now-demolished high school building. Enjoying the mural are Miss Wingate High School LaToya Johnson, OFMC Deputy Director Emerson Eskeets and OFMC's Branch of Pre-Planning Chief Barbara Borgeson.



Above Center: This mural dating from 1939 is painted on the wall inside the Riverside Indian High School building which is scheduled for demolition.

Below: A Pine Ridge Agency worker stores a section of the original Andrew Standing Soldier mural (depicting the history of the Oglala Sioux tribe) in an Agency storage building.



Left: Iron Cloud uses a photograph of the original mural to guide his re-creation of it on the wall of the school's new gymnasium.

Right: Contemporary Lakota artist Del Iron Cloud examines the original mural before it is destroyed in the 2003 demolition of the Pine Ridge School auditorium.

