



ANDREW MORRISON INDIAN HERITAGE MURALS

Progress Report

October, 2013

Prepared by Andrew Morrison and
Jones & Jones Architects + Landscape Architects + Planners

“This We Know.
All Things Are Connected.”

— Chief Sealth, Duwamish



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at the former Willson/Pacific school

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"I believe much trouble would be saved
if we opened our hearts more."

— Chief Joseph, Nez Perce

INTRODUCTION

by Johnpaul Jones, FAIA

The Andrew Morrison murals located at the old Wilson/Pacific school in north Seattle are unique. They need to be saved, documented, protected and relocated not just because they are Northwest Native American art, but because of their relevant Indigenous stories dealing with their location and creation are worth preserving and retelling.

Northwest Native Americans have used the "Licton Springs" area for thousands of years for the healing quality of its mineral springs. The eight modern Native American murals created by Andrew Morrison and his many friends at the old Wilson/Pacific school deal with a similar "healing issue"—healing for marginalized Northwest Native American youth. Read Andrew's narrative about the creation of these eight murals and you will understand the significance of their story and why it is so important to preserve them.

The murals are wonderful art. Read Barbara Brotherton's letter. She is the curator of Native American Art at SAM. The murals are valuable public art that need to be saved. We have the knowledge and engineering ability to save all of them. We can save, relocate and preserve them in the new school design. We can also tell their story through simple interpretive panels located at each mural. This is possible and reasonable.

Andrew and the many friends of his murals hope this report gives you enough information to justify their importance and their preservation for the future.

The deep Indigenous history of this place, and the murals connection to healing are current, and relevant.

October 18, 2013

Seattle Public Schools
John Stanford Center for Educational Excellence
2445 3rd Ave. S.
Seattle, WA 98134

Dear School Board, Administrators and Committee Members,

I would like to express my sincere wish that the murals located at the old Wilson/Pacific school in north Seattle be preserved and relocated on the site under the supervision of artist Andrew Morrison. I know that you have received much feedback from students, educators, parents and neighbors of the school about saving these monumental works; I would like to offer some additional thoughts as an art historian, Native specialist and museum professional. I might also add that while Licton Springs is not my neighborhood, I live close by, and have attended many events at the school over the years. I consider it to be part of "my community" in north Seattle.

As you know, Coast Salish culture was systematically dismantled beginning in the nineteenth century in order to assimilate and Christianize Seattle's indigenous peoples. The growth of the city and its environs further marginalized native peoples and deprived them of social, political and economic opportunities. Because of this history, Coast Salish people have had to study museum and library collections in order to learn about their artistic achievements and long history in this region. In 2008, the Seattle Art Museum in conjunction with fifty native advisors, created an exhibition and publication focused on Coast Salish art and culture, entitled *S'abadeb (The Gifts): Pacific Coast Salish Art and Artists*. For the first time, a comprehensive presentation of art works from thirty-five international collections was brought together to show the richness and diversity of Salish heritage. While it was a time of great celebration and acknowledgment, there was also recognition that Salish people themselves were not in possession of their own artistic heritage. The tragedy that priceless masterpieces are no longer in native communities strikes a sad note and is but one element in the current ongoing trauma of native youth. The exhibition elicited numerous queries from educators who were hungry for materials about Seattle's First

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People, and all the school tours of the exhibition were sold out before the exhibition opened. I recount this because I still hear regularly from educators that there is a dearth of resources for teaching about local native culture. By far the best way to do this is to have visible important examples of native art from which to learn about the intersecting histories of the peoples of our region, and the creative ways they have adapted to change.

Andrew Morrison, as a contemporary artist, is an admirable example of the continuity of native expression but one that folds in the themes that are of interest to today's youth, native and non-native. The Wilson/Pacific murals were created by this gifted artist at a time of hopefulness about native education and lessening the achievement gap for native students. Even though Morrison instigated the commission and paid for the materials, Seattle Public Schools at least recognized the kind of pride that such images could instill in its students. It appears that with the current decision to tear down the school, we are once again at a crossroads and asking the question "is it important to preserve these works of art." My letter to you is to say an emphatic "yes, it is." We, as a community of diverse people, must find a way to erase the generational trauma felt by native students whose great-grandparents were sent to residential schools, forbidden to speak their language and to express themselves with the oral and visual traditions that reached back many millennia. The images Morrison has created are positive affirmations of the resilience and strength of native people and send a message that students can create art that honors the past while being contemporary. Seattle Public Schools, as a partner in ensuring the success and positive acknowledgment of all of our students, should support the preservation of the murals which are visual reminders of the history that we all share, and of the heritage of the First Peoples. The conservation and physical relocation of these works can be easily achieved. Please take the step to preserve the important messages that they send.

With best regards,

Dr. Barbara Brotherton
Curator of Native American Art
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“The goal of my painting is
to better myself, my family
and my community.”

— Andrew Morrison, Apache/Haida

The Story of the GREAT WALLS OF HERITAGE

by Andrew Morrison

I grew up being a part of Indian Heritage High School. Bob Eaglestaff was a family friend and my father, Gary Morrison was his basketball teammate. I was born and raised in Seattle and my roots in the community are deeper than any ocean. I have a great compassion for all living creatures and especially those who hold Indian Heritage High School in a high regard.



*Andrew with his father, Gary Morrison
and his nephew, Sage Morrison*

In 2001, after finishing my freshman year of college at the Rhode Island School of Design in Providence, Rhode Island, I came back to Seattle and went straight to Indian Heritage High School and began volunteering in the Art Department. I worked with Polly Olsen and critiqued the student's artwork, displayed time-saving techniques, explained the importance of art history, and explained the importance of their own history and Native American students. I worked hands-on with all of the students and immersed myself into their world. I saw the students as friends and I could see their potential shining bright. One of my salvations as a high school student was my art classes and I was privileged to have great teachers guiding my hands of creation. I felt this great compassion that was bestowed upon me should be passed on and I felt the need to pay this kindness forward, I did pay it forward and to this day I am still friends with the students that I worked with back in 2001.

The students and I were immersed in this creation process and Polly Olsen suggested that I work with a young man by the name of AJ to create a mural directly outside of the classroom for all the students to see as they were entering. AJ and I worked and completed the mural and this is where our Indian Heritage mural story begins.



North parking lot blank walls, site of first murals

The students used to have these tutorial breaks and they would all congregate in the north parking lot because there was no real place for them to relax. The north parking lot was surrounded by these giant blank walls. I would join the students on their breaks. They would smoke cigarettes, and we would stare at these great blank walls and pass the time. The small mural project that AJ and I had completed was still fresh in my mind, and during one of the breaks I had a vision-quest to paint a great mural on the south side of the cafeteria. I wanted to enrich this dormant land and give the students a brilliant landscape to immerse themselves in. I suggested the idea to Polly Olsen and she knew it was a

great idea. I explained that I would cover all the costs and provide all materials to ensure the mural project would get completed. Polly got permission to create the mural and I stage dived into it with an unyielding passion.

I made this mural my first and only priority and I knew that this mural was going to change my life. My first initial thoughts have come true and this initial dream has become a truthful manifestation that has now changed the creative chemistry of Seattle Public Schools, changed the City of Seattle, changed our view on Native American art history, this truthful manifestation has proven to outstrip man's idea of what is valuable.



I rented scaffolding, purchased all supplies, and my creation process began. I was completely single minded in my direction and where the imagery was going. I have always had an extreme passion for photography and prior to this mural, I had taken thousands of pictures with my 35mm camera. I took and still take great pride in my ability to photograph. I shuffled through thousands of printed photos looking for the image that was most striking and would make the biggest impact. I settled on an image of a friend of mine from the Blackfeet Nation. The photo was taken at a Pow Wow in Chilliwack, British Columbia in the spring of 2001. It was a photo of a teenage boy that was dressed in traditional regalia. I saw myself in him.



One of Andrew's graffiti walls created with lacquer spray paint

I grew up as a graffiti writer, writing my tag name on the walls of Seattle, Everett, and Providence, Rhode Island. One of the few tools a graffiti writer has to utilize is lacquer spray paint. The trusted brand of seasoned graffiti writers around 2001

was Krylon and Rustoleum. These are the two brands of paints used on the first Indian Heritage mural painted in 2001 and all murals to follow. As a graffiti artist, I learned to move very fast and create at a rapid rate. I also learned to make the best of what you have and to be resourceful beyond belief.

With spray paint in hand, I began this great mural project. The work was and still is very physical work. Mural painting is drastically different from creating on a small scale such as a canvas. One of many reasons is when creating outside on the exterior of a wall, you are open to the elements of the season. Rain, cold temperature, hot temperature, snow, wind, and daylight all are factors in your creation process as a mural artist. In the comfort of a studio, you have control of all of these elements and can personalize them to your specific needs.

When I began the first mural in June of 2001, it was very hot and I remember it like it was yesterday. The scaffolding was dropped off on the site and I put it together with the help of AJ. The first mural was 17 ft. tall and the scaffolding was constructed according to his height. I created a square footage grid on the wall and scaled this grid down to inches on the photo that was chosen to paint. I climbed the great scaffolding and began sketching away the details to what was to become a great legacy, a great journey, a great vision, a great movement, and great piece

of art work that would withstand the test of time.

The first mural took a total of five days to complete from start to finish. I began each work day at 8 a.m. and finished each day at 8 p.m. AJ was present during most of this creation process and helped break down and set up the scaffolding each day. For some reason we needed to break down the scaffolding after each day of use and I remember this task to be physically demanding. After 12 hours of spray painting and climbing up and down all day, I then had to dismantle the scaffolding each day for proper storage. I remember the scaffolding to be very heavy and I was exerting absolutely all of my energy at the end of each day to ensure the scaffolding was stored properly. This was the most strenuous part of the first mural making process.



Assembling and disassembling the scaffolding proved to be the most strenuous part of the first mural's creation

I used well over 30 cans of Krylon and Rustoleum spray paint on the first mural. As soon as the creation process began I could feel the chemistry of the community begin to change. Neighbors, who I had never met or see before, came out of their homes and stood watching. Teachers for the school brought their students outside to watch and ask question. Community people passing by began taking photos and watched for hours upon hours. Word of the mural began to spread quickly throughout the whole city and Seattle area. My Uncle Tommy Segundo who lives in Renton heard of the mural making progress and made the drive all the way from South Seattle to see me in action. He showed up with a great big smile, with food for me and he took picture. I could see the light in his eyes and I began to see the light in everyone's eyes as they witnessed this creation unfolding before them. Not only my Uncle Tommy but dozens of spectators and friend took photos of the mural process and many brought me gifts in the form of food or drinks.

After this 5 day adrenaline rush of photos, scaffolding, spray paint, fumes, smiles and food, the mural was completed. We dismantled the scaffolding for the last time and stood in awe of this creation that stood 17 feet tall. The feeling of wholeness and vitality was a natural high that breathed life into me and continues to breathe life into me to this very day. AJ, my family, my friend, teachers, spectators, students, neighbors and community members

watched in glory as this 17 foot tall giant Blackfeet young man stood watching over the neighborhood as a protector. He



Completed "Chiliwack" mural

stood and still stands as a watchman and a reminder of our Native American history.

At this point people began referring to the mural as "Andrew's" and I reminded people that the mural is "Ours". Polly Olsen, students from Indian Heritage High School, teachers, and the surrounding community threw a neighborhood BBQ in front of the mural and we all celebrated the victory with food, music, balloons, and laughter. It was a great day of celebration and I immediately felt the moral, camaraderie, inclusiveness, and togetherness that the

mural was pulling out of everyone's spirit.

I wanted to keep this adrenaline rush going and having just witnessed the effect it had on the entire community, a vision to paint a black and white mural on the north side of the cafeteria was becoming apparent. Polly Olson got us the "go ahead" and I began planning out the mural details.

I knew without a doubt that I wanted the new mural to be completed in black and white. Since I first began painting and creating images, I have had a great passion for black and white artwork. This great passion has been drawn to the stillness, tranquility, strength, historical accuracy, and simplicity of black and white artistic creations. Great black and white photography by great masters like Ansel Adams and Edward S. Curtis has always spoken to me. Working in black and white is my most trusted artistic weaponry and I know that creating this next great work would demand my greatest artistic talents and I could leave no room for chance.

I wanted this mural to be historic. I wanted this mural to be paramount in the minds of all who would witness it. I wanted this mural to have a feeling of togetherness, to represent all Tribes. I was aiming for an inter-tribal feeling. I wanted to cover all demographic areas of Native America, and to leave no region out of the big picture.

I returned to my library of printed photos and unprinted photos. I scanned the internet for images; searched through

libraries, and choreographed a photo shoot with a Native American model. I wanted this mural to tug at people's heart and for the community to see this type of fine art work on a grand scale. The size was a big factor and at this point I had never painted a mural so large. I was hungry for the creation process. I was immersed in the feeling of getting started; I was naturally high, and desperate to create. When I stood looking at the large blank wall that was to be painted I thought of it as a super sized buffet and I was a hungry person who hadn't eaten in years. This is the kind of tenacity I had towards the second mural.



Native friends posed in traditional costumes .

I gathered all supplies, retrieved ladders, planks and showed up at the mural location ready of anything. I prayed to God and asked that keep me safe during this creation process and bless these images that were going to manifest on the great wall of Indian Heritage. I chose the first image to paint and began sketching on the great wall of Indian Heritage.

This creation process was drastically different from the "Chilliwack" creation process. The "Chilliwack" process was

very structured and strategized and this new mural was the exact opposite. This new creation process is what I like to call "freestyle". The freestyle creation process simply begins at the point chosen on the wall and the design extends in all directions from this original point--the epicenter of all design details to follow. This particular design method depends more on intuition, rather than logic. It is a matter of planting your feet, planting your root, planting your first step, and then letting this first intuitive move guide all that follows. I learned this technique from years of writing my tag name on the streets and doing it in a freestyle manner.



This freestyle mural began during the first week in August of 2001 and it took 5 full weeks to paint. I painted 6 days a week and painted for 12 hours a day. There was no scaffolding for this mural. I borrowed ladders and planks from my father, Gary Morrison. My father had a contract painting business when I was growing up and he employed my brothers and sister, and myself to work for him. WE painted interior/exterior homes and businesses throughout the entire Seattle area from

Tacoma to Bellingham, WA. I learned many essential painting techniques from my father and his stern teachings I received growing up were very fundamental in my mural making process. My father is very old fashioned and he raised me to work very hard and work very long hours without complaining. To this day, this nonstop work ethic that was ingrained in me as a child still shapes my attitude toward completing all work.

As before, the entire neighborhood rallied around the new murals. Day after day, my commitment was showing on the wall. Brick by brick and inch by inch I edged forward towards completion. It seemed at this time the notoriety and exposure of this creation was beginning to radiate out into the community even more so. This mural was being created in the heat of summer, in the middle of August, and during nothing but dog day afternoons. Musicians began randomly showing up with instruments and playing music. A few local radio stations began showing up and interviewing me about what was happening and why I was creating on such a grand scale. Spectators and neighbors were constantly in attendance and children began to use this area as a playground. During the first few weeks of this creation process I was so single minded in my approach and what I was doing that I did not even talk with some visitors because I did not want my train of thought and actions to slow down in anyway. There were many times that

an appointed friend of mine or family member would stand by and simply greet people as they entered the area and answered question about me.



Professional photographers began coming by and took photos of the process. Everyone's approach was very respectable and never did I have one incident of disdain or disrespect by a community member. The Indian Heritage School is one block off of Highway 99/Aurora and this neighborhood has historically been the home of transient homeless people. Many of my visitors were homeless men and women and they were simply passing by when they would notice the creations. I had extensive conversations with this marginalized community and I found all of them to be very articulate and passionate about their appreciation for the work. Over this five week process I made dozens of friends.

The images manifesting onto the wall were like stars beginning to shine from outer space. Keep in mind that this was the first mural I had created of this size and magnitude. I was shell shocked and even surprised myself. I knew that the work would be paramount and I knew that I would finish it but again this freestyle process was unplanned and this matrix design was unfolding on a daily basis and unfolding on an hourly basis.



Some of the images painted were local heroes like Steve Smallsalmon, Louie McDonald, and Heather Lamarr. All Native American dancers dressed in regalia. I included horse parade riders from the Coeur e' Alene Tribe, Coast Salish, Crow Nation dancers, San Carlos Apache Crown dancer, and Jingle dress dancers. I was painting these characters so large that they appeared as protectors and watchmen. This idea of protectors and watchmen stuck with me and to this day I paint my large characters as guardian angels for all those who see them.

The second mural is modern art history and the very definition of contemporary art. Every image painted on the wall is a real person who is living and breathing to this very day and they were all hand painted with Krylon spray paint. I believe that many spectators were shell shocked by the creation process because prior to them witnessing me painting this mural, there is a strong possibility that they have never seen an individual create with spray paint. Many people's idea of spray paint is tagging on the street and graffiti. By me constructing such a paramount piece of artwork with these humble tools it contradicts and challenges the general public's perception of how the graffiti culture is seen as destructive. This process of progress perplexed many and all of those that were willing to open their minds to the possibilities of greatness within the art form were naturally elated in its power.





After five weeks on nonstop painting, smiles, laughter, photos, food, drinks, and fumes, the mural was almost done. The day was September 10, 2001 and I was hours away from finishing the last image. I

asked my friend who was there with me on that day, "Should I finish today or should I finish tomorrow?" My friend responded, "Let's finish tomorrow. Let's go have fun." With that said, we left with plans to finish the next day. On September 11, 2001 I was awakened by a phone call from my Auntie Joylin Young. I picked up the phone and she was screaming out-of-control and all I could hear was, "We are under attack! We are under attack! Turn on your television!" I turned on my television and at that very moment I saw the first Twin Tower collapse to the ground. One year prior to this date I was standing in front of the two Twin Towers in New Your City and now I was watching them in disbelief.



Alone I sat in the living room for hours watching this history unfold on my television. All airplanes in the United States of American were grounded and it had seemed as if the world came to a great pause. Early in the afternoon I had decided that I was going to finish the Great Walls of Indian Heritage and I drove down to the school. I showed up and began painting without saying a word. After a short time word got around that I was painting outside on the cafeteria and the entire school staff, students, and administrators came out to watch me. Everyone stood in the north parking lot watching me paint

for hours and no one said a word. I finished the Great Walls of Indian Heritage on September 11, 2001 and upon completion everyone in attendance simply looked at the great walls, looked at me, and we all nodded our heads in agreement. It is very symbolic that the Great Walls of Indian Heritage were constructed, erected, and finished on the same day that the United States of America's two shining examples of our Nations' capitalism were demolished. Rest in peace to all those who gave their lives on this day in our Nations' history.





A year had passed since the first ribbon-cutting of the first mural in 2001 and I was back at the Indian Heritage School. I was playing basketball on the outside courts of the gymnasium. The gymnasium had these four large blank 25'x 25' walls that faced east. I had another premonition to enrich these walls and paint 4 great warrior chiefs on each panel. Staying true to the All-Tribes and togetherness theme,

we were standing on and calling home was the land of the Duwamish/Suquamish people and Chief Sealth was the leader of these people. Historically, the Duwamish have lived in the Puget Sound since the beginning of time and I wanted to commemorate this great man's legacy and wanted to make a public demonstration of my admiration for his character and visually document his significance.



I had this vision to paint Chief Sealth of the Duwamish/Suquamish, Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce/ Colville, Geronimo of the Apache, and Chief Sitting Bull of the Lakota peoples. I wanted to touch on each demographic area of our nation and give the viewers a feeling of inclusiveness. It was at this time that I began to develop of a relationship with the surrounding Licton Springs Community and I had met a woman by the name of J.J. I explained this idea to her and she suggested that we seek funding to pay for the supplies and reach out into the community for support. I thought this approach was fitting and we agreed to partner to begin this vision quest. I wanted to and painted Chief Sealth on the first panel because the land

It was now mid-June 2002, JJ and I began campaigning around North Seattle to get the supplies donated and our requests were quickly met by the local Home Depot and a rental company that supplied Genie Lifts. We had received the okay from Seattle Public Schools and I was quick to capitalize on this momentum. I retrieved the supplies from the local Home Depot and the Genie Lift was delivered on a mid-June cold and rainy day. I had one assistant and this assistant suggested that I wait until it stopped raining and put off the work until the next sunny day. I found this suggestion to be ludicrous and obviously my assistant had no idea of the drive, conviction, and passion I was harvesting. I told my assistant that they could go



home and dry off or stay and help. The momentum and energy cultivated on my painting days radiate like a transformer and once my creative process of progress is set in motion there is little that one can do to deter me from my artist path, my immediate artistic goal, and the task at hand. I began painting Chief Sealth's image in the pouring rain with no umbrella, no raincoat, no hat, no audience, no cameras watching, and no spectators applauding. As I was painting and being pelted by the cold rain drops I felt that it was only fitting to paint Chief Sealth's image in the rain. A quiet strength was internalized on that cold and rainy day back in mid-June of 2002. This action of humility turned into a humble drive moving forward and it was being fueled only by love. This pure and unconditional love is what was poured into all of the murals on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage.

The first 25' x 25' mural of Chief Sealth was completed in 3 days. This was the fastest mural completion from beginning to ending that I had performed up to this point. It was a victory in my mind and I kept this truth to myself. I told viewers, spectators, and media that it had taken me weeks to paint. I could feel this god-given artistic expression becoming more powerful by the minute and I did not want to overwhelm the public and people who might not understand the creation process.

JJ was great at networking and getting media attention. On the third day of painting, King 5 Evening magazine came

out to shoot my story and they were very thorough. They covered my childhood and my running start at the High School level to my acceptance at numerous Art Schools around the country. They filmed for hours and endlessly asked me questions of my creation process. The footage was edited and the episode was played on King 5 Evening Magazine that week. At this point my phone began



ringing off the hook and I knew that I was entering into a new chapter in my life. To celebrate this achievement a friend and I went to Vancouver, BC and spent the night in a hotel overlooking downtown Vancouver. We came back from Canada and immediately went to the mural unveiling of Chief Sealth. Dozens upon dozens of neighbors, spectators, friends, and family were in attendance and gave their congratulations. In attendance was former City of Seattle Mayor, Greg Nickels. Mr. Nickels was very sincere and happy to meet me. Mr. Nickels shook my hand, gave a speech to the people, and said "This is the largest commemoration of our city's founding father and the city's namesake. Thank you Andrew for this great contribution." I never forgot Mr. Nickel's words.

After the success of the Chief Sealth mural I returned to college in Boston, MA at the School of Museum of Fine Arts. Some of the best training and experience that I have received was from living in Boston and traveling around New England, New York, and the east coast. While in Boston I always kept one eye on the murals at Indian Heritage and knew that when I returned the completion would be a number one priority. I graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Tufts

In the spring of 2006 I suffered a life-changing injury to my right arm. The recovery process for this injury took one year and the project was put on hold until the spring of 2007. In June of 2007 I willed enough strength and inner-drive to physically commit to the project's completion. Having put the project on hold for an entire year, I was more tenacious than ever to complete it. On a picture-perfect sunny day in mid-June 2007, a selected team and I began the creation



University and came back to Seattle in the summer of 2005. In October of 2005 I applied for a grant from the Potlatch Fund to cover the supplies to complete the portrait of Chief Joseph on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage. I received the funding and planned on creating the mural in the spring of 2006.

process of the 25'x 25' foot portrait of Chief Joseph. With a relentless work ethic and a take-no-prisoners attitude we completed the mural by early evening and the crew and I threw a makeshift party right on location.







To celebrate this commemoration a mural unveiling was held and the Nez Perce Tribal Chairman, Brooklyn Baptist, came out from Lapawei, ID with his family and blessed the mural with prayers, sage-smudging, and song.



During the summer of 2007, after the success of the Chief Joseph mural, there was one blank wall along the main entry way to the gymnasium. For years I had walked along this path and envisioned a fully painted mural on this wall. Going off of the momentum of the Chief Joseph success I decided to create this mural with all of the supplies that were left over. On a beautiful sunny day during July, I alone showed up on location with supplies to complete this vision. I had one ladder, two gallons of black acrylic latex paint, one roller, and three brushes. This was a very limited palette of colors and supplies. I used what I had and created a mural of the inside of a longhouse.



The center figure is a Wildman (Sasquatch) mask and surrounding him are elders and children. The mural was painted to represent the inside of a Northwest Coast Long-

house. In the Haida culture the Wildman is held in a very high regard and it is not feared. This is the central theme of this mural. The Wildman is respected, believed in, and always represented in the Haida culture. As a living and breathing Haida Tribal member, I felt it was necessary to bring this element of my culture to center stage and showcase this ceremony. This is the one image and the one theme of all the murals on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage that represent my Native Alaskan Heritage. I painted this theme to include all of my Native American brothers and sisters from Alaska.

In the region of Alaska where my family is from when one gets lost in the woods or is lost at sea and never to be seen again, this individual turns into a Wildman. In the Haida culture, if one is lost deep in the woods, banished deep into the mountains, or buried beneath the earth, the elders say to not let fear enter into one's mind. If one finds themselves in this place it is advised to be at ease, be calm, and let nature take its course. If one's peace is tainted at such a time, one will open up a gateway for this spirit to enter and one will cross over to the other side.

The Seattle Clear Sky Native Youth Council was formed in 2008 as a support group for Native American students attending Seattle Public Schools and they met regularly at the Indian Heritage School. I began working with the organization at this time and continued to work with them

all the way up to the final completion of the remaining Chief Geronimo and Chief Joseph murals in the spring of 2013.

In the spring of 2012 rumors began circulating around Seattle about the demolition of the Indian Heritage School

and the murals that I had created. I became aware of these discussions and in the fall of 2012 I began a ten month-combative-uphill-no-holds-barred campaign against Seattle Public Schools to preserve the murals that I had poured so much love into.





Over the 12 years since the first mural's construction the City of Seattle, surrounding area, State of Washington, and an audience from across the nation grew to love these murals. During my ten month advocacy to preserve the murals I received thousands of emails and phone calls from friends, family, professional contacts, business associates, Tribal Councils, and supporters of the murals. I spoke to anyone that would listen and even spoke adamantly to those that did not want to listen. I addressed my opinions publicly with no reservation, no discretion, no discrimination, and no artfulness. My truth telling style began to create ripple effects in the community and media attention soon surrounded this entire story.

Seattle Weekly, Seattle Times, Seattle Central Community College's Central Circuit, Indian Country Today, Apache Moccasin, and dozens of other nationally distributed media sources began communication with me. I reached out to all of these organizations and did not pull any punches with my points of views and opinions. On February 25, 2013 an interview by Linda Shaw from the Seattle Times landed on the front page. The theme of this front page Seattle Times article was Seattle Public Schools wanted to digitally reproduce my artwork at a "size that is feasible" and I would not give my consent. I found this suggestion to be ludicrous and I would rather the artwork on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage be destroyed

down to the ground than willingly engage in this disrespectful action.

In May of 2012 the Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools, Jose Banda, and I met for lunch and talked about finding a common ground to stand upon. I explained to him that "if these walls shall fall" the legacy of these great Native American leaders, the spirits of their descendants, and the hearts of all those who have grown to love these murals would be robbed. I explained that "if these walls shall fall" they would become a martyr and the legacy of this time would haunt Seattle Public Schools for ten years. It was at this time that I advocated for Johnpaul Jones from Jones and Jones to Mr. Banda and explained that Johnpaul Jones could easily preserve the artwork. Also, at this time Mr. Banda gave me a green light to finish the remaining portraits of Chief Geronimo and Chief Sitting Bull. Within one week both 25'x 25' foot murals of Chief Geronimo and Chief Sitting Bull were completed on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage.

In July of 2012 I was hired as an Art Consultant by Jones and Jones and Seattle Public Schools to preserve the murals on the Great Walls of Indian Heritage in their original form. I give all the credit to my Almighty Heavenly Father and so much credit to all the friends and family from across the nations who believe in me and whose beliefs manifested into a physical reality.



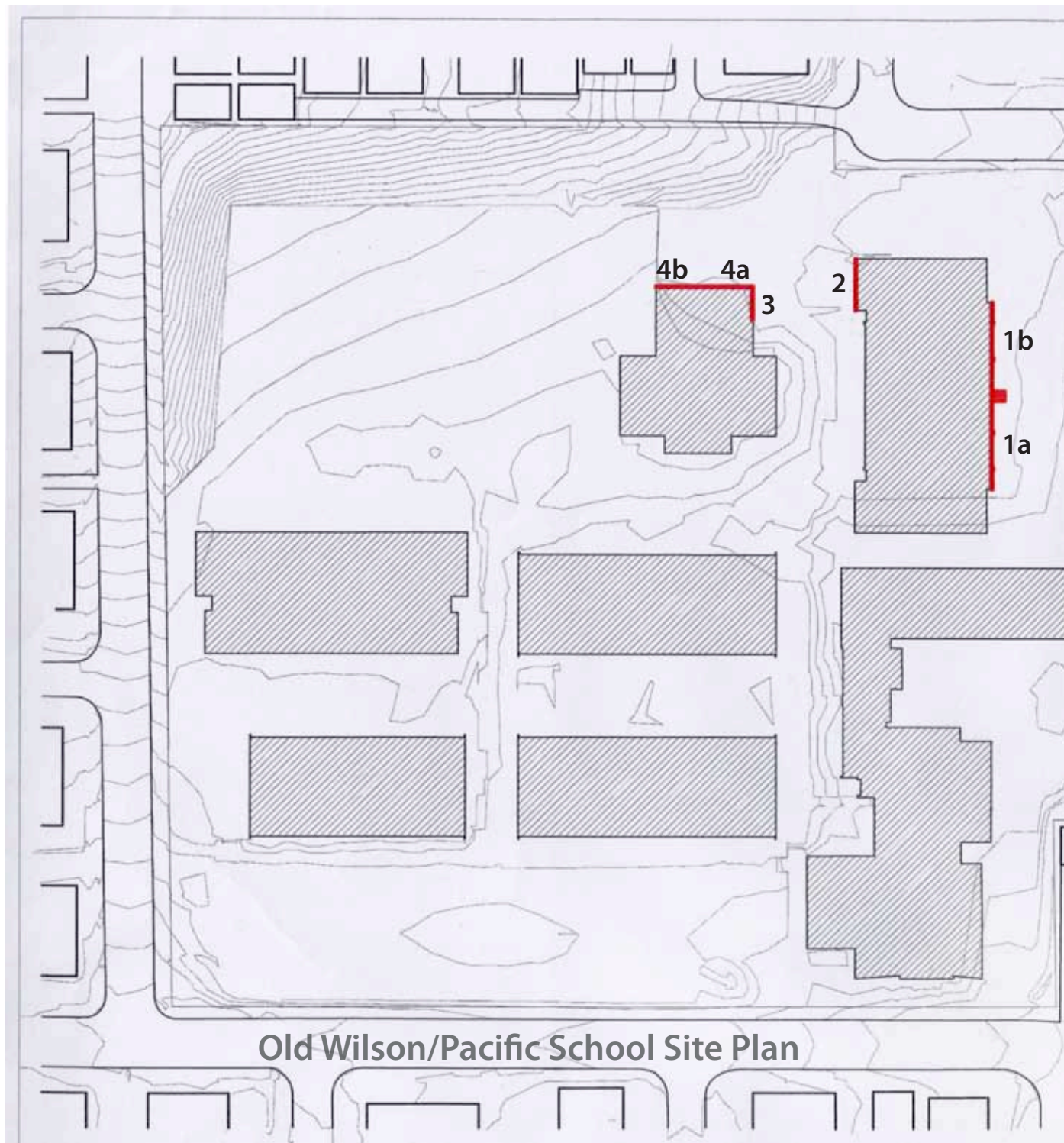
HONORING THE MURALS

This report represents months of research, discovery by the Andrew Morrison team and negotiation between the Seattle Public Schools team and the new school architect team (see page 43). The goal has been to protect, preserve and honor the Indian Heritage murals and integrate all eight murals into the new school design. A series of working sessions over many months between the above teams culminated in a positive and appropriate relocation of the murals.

See page 32-33 for the new relocation of each mural; See page 34-35 for the historic detailed building wall sections; See page 36-40 for the mural support proposed relocationw recommendations.

The next effort will be to carry through with the agreed upon relations and the educational interpretive material for each mural.



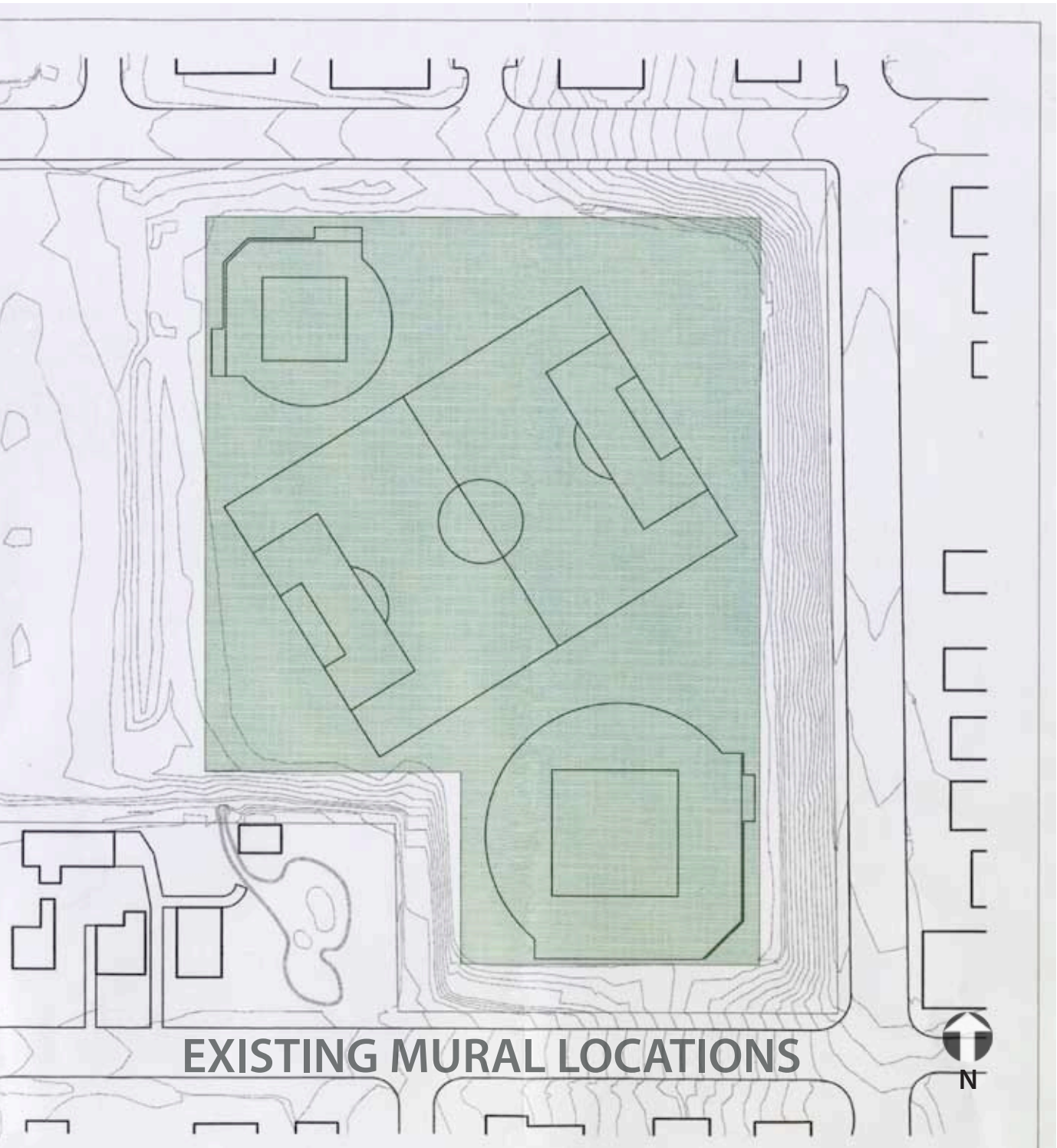


1a

1b



2



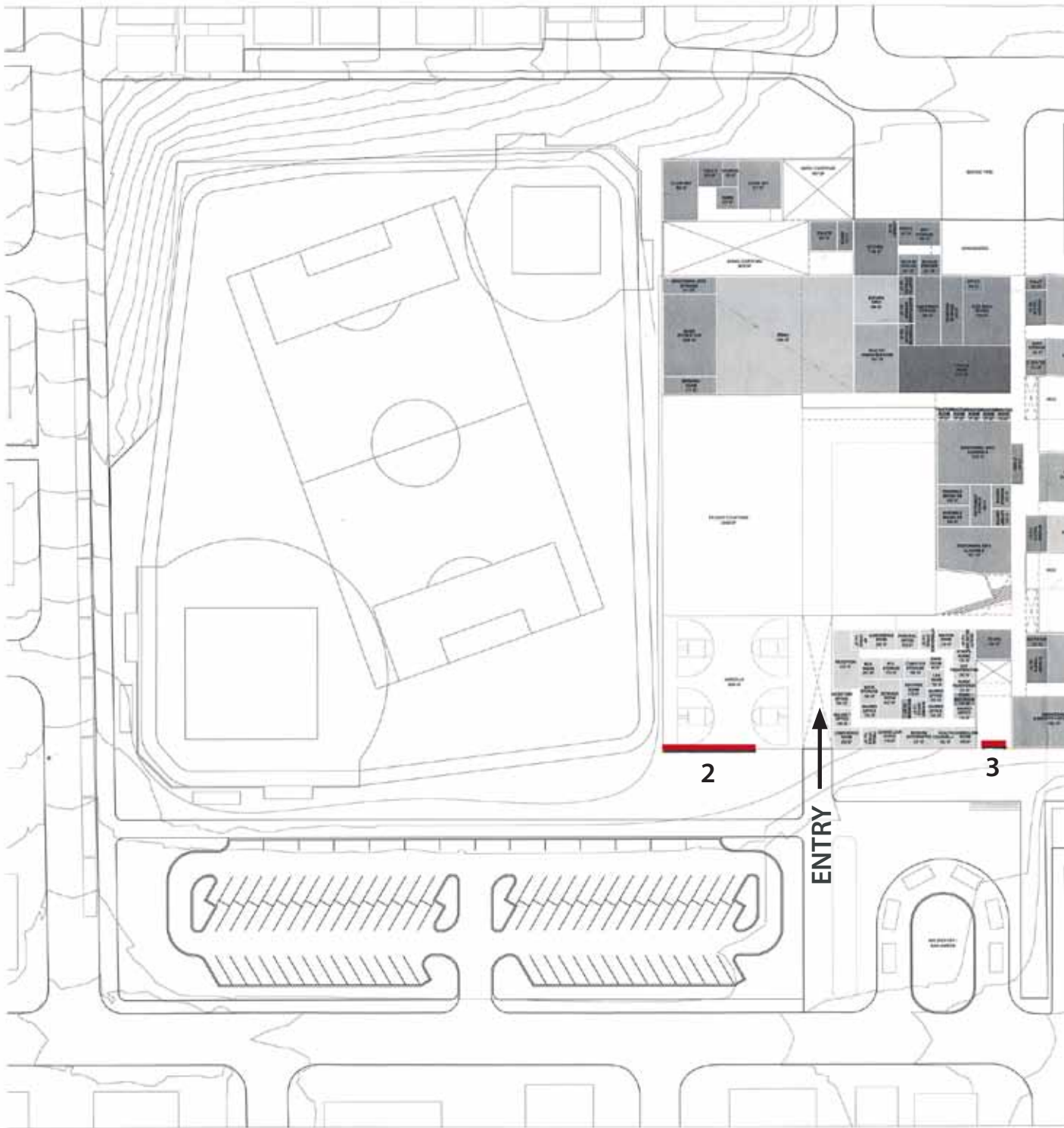
3



4a



4b

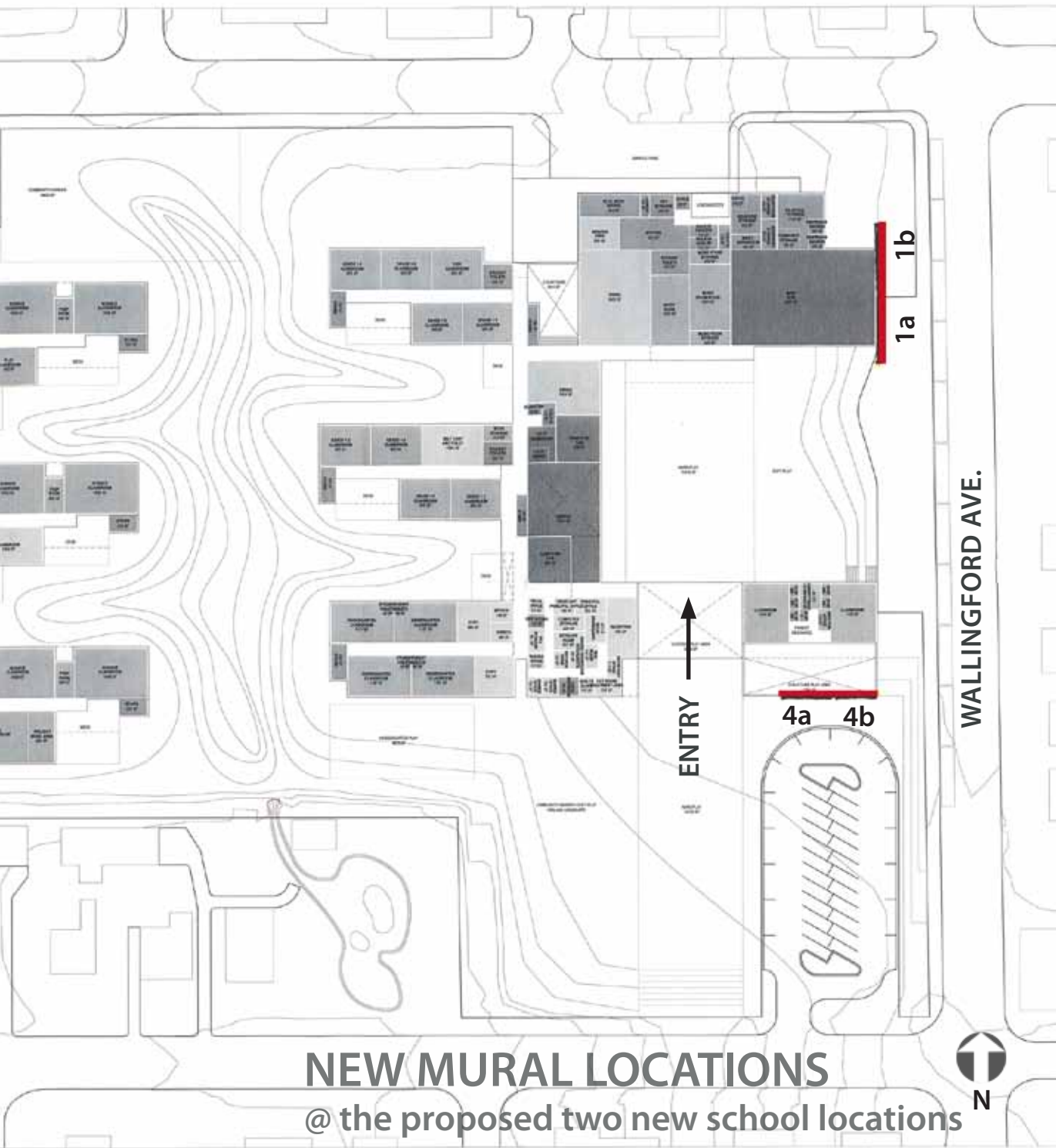


1a

1b



2



3

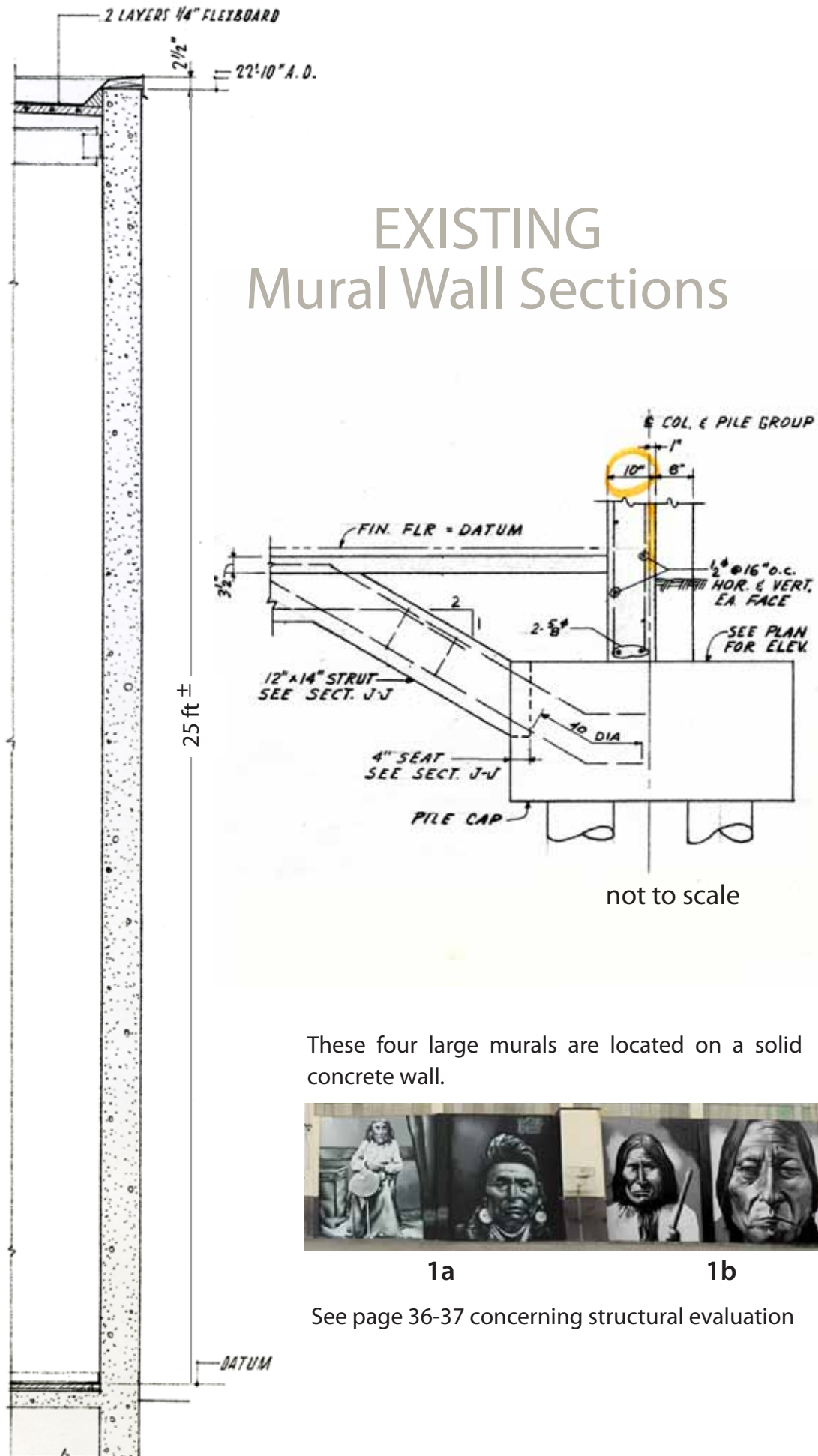


4a



4b

EXISTING Mural Wall Sections



These four large murals are located on a solid concrete wall.

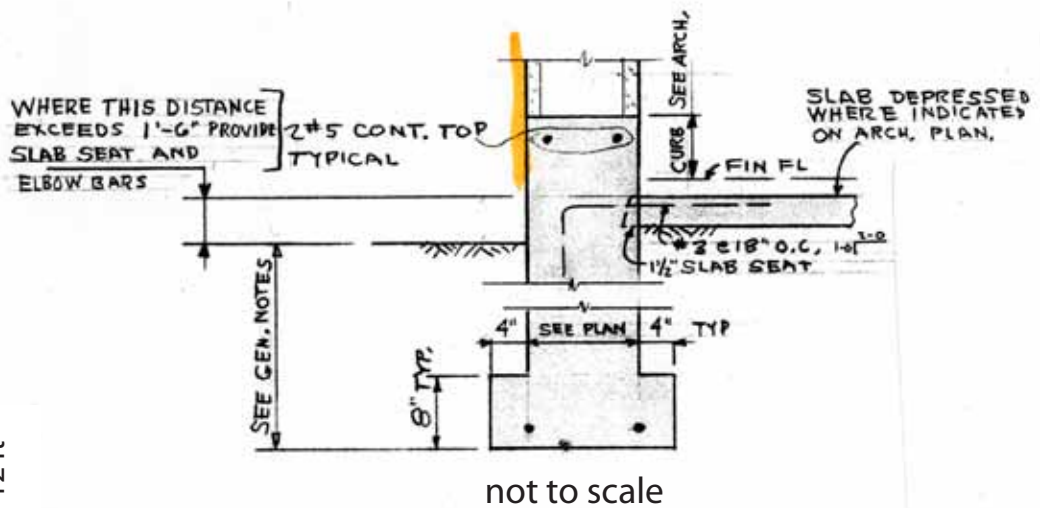
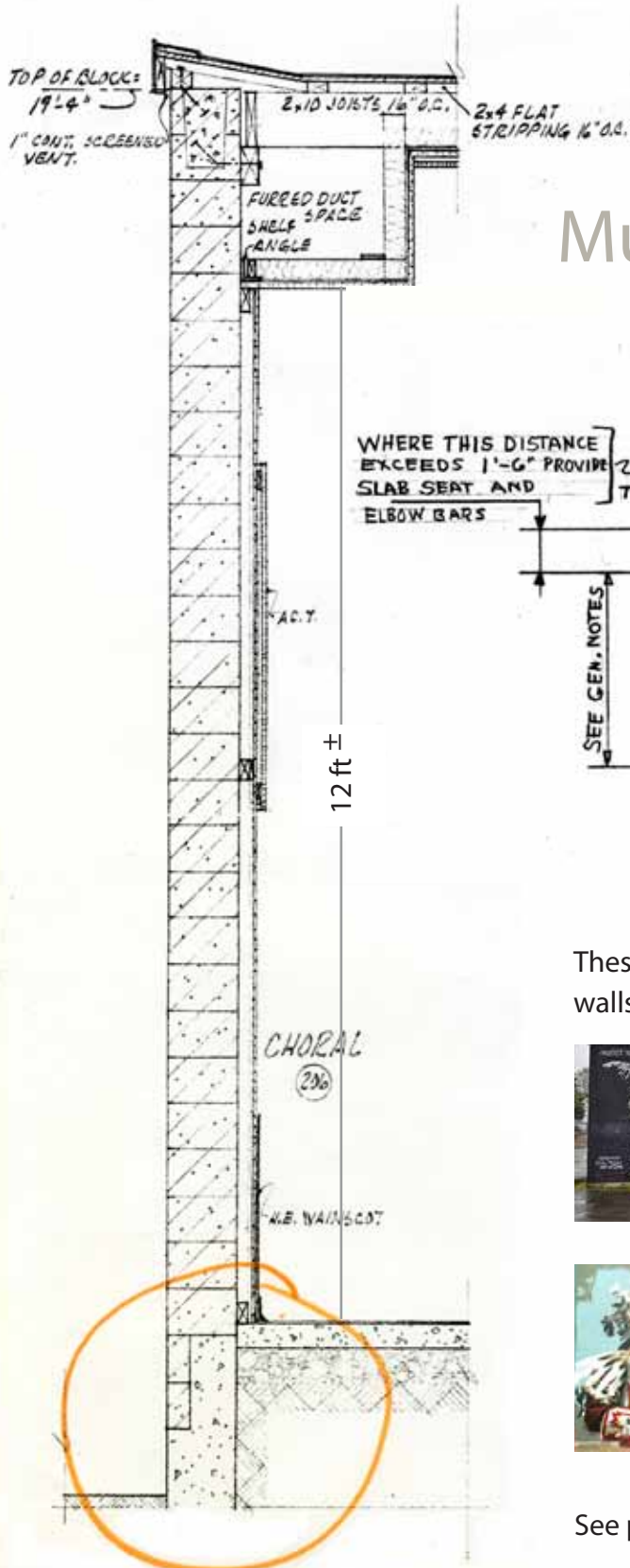


1a

1b

See page 36-37 concerning structural evaluation

EXISTING Mural Wall Sections



These four smaller murals are located on concrete block walls that rest on a concret foundation.



2



3



4a



4b

See page 38-40 concerning structural evaluation

not to scale

RELOCATION FEASIBILITY

COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN
STRUCTURAL - CIVIL - EISMIC ENGINEERING



Estimated saw-cut line

Mural Support:

Estimated Weight: 91,000 pounds (each)

Construction: 10" Concrete Tilt-up

Comments

- Too large to transport off-site without cutting into smaller sections
- Due to the large size and weight of the panels additional strong backing may be required to reduce the risk of cracking during lifting and transportation (see following for a schematic layout of channel support) . Strong backing and lifting lugs on the back side of the panels would require the demolition of the GYM roof structure.

Project: Wilton Pacific Middle School Mural Support

Designed By: MKS/CGH

Date: 6-10-2013

Project No:

Client:

Checked By:

Sheet:

413 PINE STREET - SUITE 300 - SEATTLE, WA 98101 - P: 206/343-0460 - F: 206/343-5891

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RELOCATION FEASIBILITY

COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN
STRUCTURAL · CIVIL · SEISMIC ENGINEERING



Larger Steel Channels @ 8'-0" O.C. on back side of mural

At Concrete Murals



Steel Channels both directions +/- 4'-0" O.C. on back side of Mural.

At CMU Murals

Strong Backing of Murals: Schematic

Project: Wilson Pacific Middle School Mural Support

Designed By: MKS/CGH Date: 6-10-2013

Project No:

Client:

Checked By:

Sheet:

413 PINE STREET · SUITE 300 · SEATTLE, WA 98101 · P: 206/343-0460 · F: 206/343-3491

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RELOCATION FEASIBILITY

COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN
STRUCTURAL - CIVIL - SEISMIC ENGINEERING



Estimated saw-cut line

Mural Support:

Estimated Weight: ~25,000 pound (each)

Construction: 8" CMU Partially Grouted
ontop of Concrete Curb

Comments

- Steel channel strong backing (each direction) will need to be added for lifting and transportation.
- Strong backing can be added on the backside during selected demolition.
- Temporary strong backing can be re-used for permanent support

Project: Wilson Pacific Middle School Mural Support

Designed By: MKS/CGH Date: 6-10-2013

Project No:

Client:

Checked By:

Sheet:

413 PINE STREET - SUITE 200 - SEATTLE, WA 98101 - P: 206/343-0400 - F: 206/343-5891

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RELOCATION FEASIBILITY

COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN
STRUCTURAL - CIVIL - SEISMIC ENGINEERING

Mural Support:

Estimated Weight: ~20,000 pound (each)

Construction: 8" CMU Partially Grouted
ontop of Concrete Curb

Comments

- Steel channel strong backing (each direction) will need to be added for lifting and transportation.

- Strong backing can be added on the backside during selected demolition.

- Temporary strong backing can be re-used for permanent support



Estimated saw-cut line

Project: Wilson Pacific Middle School Mural Support

Designed By: MKS/CGH

Date: 6-10-2013

Project No:

Client:

Checked By:

Sheet:

413 PINE STREET - SUITE 300 - SEATTLE, WA 98101 - P: 206/445-0462 - F: 206/445-1881

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RELOCATION FEASIBILITY

COUGHLIN PORTER LUNDEEN
STRUCTURAL - CIVIL - SEISMIC ENGINEERING



Mural Support:

Estimated Weight: ~20,000 pound

Construction: 8" CMU Partially Grouted
ontop of Concrete Curb

Comments

- Steel channel strong backing (each direction) will need to be added for lifting and transportation.
- Strong backing can be added on the backside during selected demolition.
- Temporary strong backing can be re-used for permanent support

Estimated saw-cut line

Project: Wilson Pacific Middle School Mural Support

Designed By: MKS/CGH Date: 6-10-2013

Project No:

Client:

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ISSUES to be addressed in the NEXT PHASE REPORT:

Relocation details:

lighting concepts

security issues

interpretive panels

mural restoration by artist





“A very great vision is needed and the man who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky.”

—Crazy Horse, Lakota

TOGETHER WE DO THIS

SEATTLE PUBLIC SCHOOL TEAM:

Eric Bedcer, AIA, LEED^{AP}

Senior Project Manager, Capital Projects

Justine Kim

Development & Project Manager, Shiels/Obletz/Johnson

NEW SCHOOL ARCHITECT TEAM:

Geral Reifert, FAIA

Mahlum Achitects

Susan Fore, AIA, LEED^{AP}

Mahlum Achitects

Romil Sheth

Mahlum Achitects

ANDREW MORRISON TEAM:

Andrew Morrison

Native Artist

Johnpaul Jones, FAIA

Native Architect

Jones & Jones Achitects + Landscape Architects + Planners

Barbara Brotherton

Curator of Native American Art
Seattle Art Museum



“I cannot think that we are useless
or God would not have created us.
There is one God looking down on us all.
We are all the children of one God.
The sun, the darkness, the winds are all
listening to what we have to say..”

— Geronimo, Apache

APPENDIX


Petition | Seattle School District: Preserve the murals created by Andrew Morrison | Change.org - Mozilla Firefox

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Seattle Weekly andrew morrison mur... Petition | Seattle School District: Prese... Andrew Morrison Adds Geronimo, Sitka... 20130615-20130628-MediaCoverage...

www.change.org/petitions/seattle-school-district-preserve-the-murals-created-by-andrew-morrison-2

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Petitioning The President of the United States

Seattle School District: Preserve the murals created by Andrew Morrison

Petition by
Ted Heekin
Edmonds, WA

Sign this petition
with 494 supporters

394 NEEDED

First Name
Last Name
Email
Street Address
City
State Outside U.S.2
Zip Code
Why is this important to you?
(Optional)

Sign

☒ Display my signature on Change.org
By signing, you accept Change.org's terms of service and privacy policy

These murals contain sacred figures that represent the history and culture of the Northwest and the native peoples that were the ancestors of this land and should be protected

Recent signatures

Mark Mitchell	SHELTON, CT	394
Gabe Sheddups	ALBANY, OR	394

Unlikely Allies

An effort to defeat a levy has a pro-school twist.

By Nina Shapiro Tue., Feb 5 2013 at 12:00AM



14



0



Submit

An all-schools election is coming up on Tuesday, February 12, and already yard signs have appeared in North Seattle objecting to one of two levies on the ballot. The signs are aimed at Proposition 2, a six-year capital levy that would raise nearly \$695 million to build or renovate 13 schools and make various other improvements.

Why, you may ask, is the group fighting this levy calling itself the Seattle Committee to Save Schools (*italics ours*)? And why do its signs feature a regal-looking Native American?

Let's start with the second question. The Native American in question is none other than Chief Joseph, the famed 19th-century Northwest leader. His likeness, along with that of Chief Sealth and other local tribal figures, grace seven stunning murals that adorn Seattle School's Wilson Pacific building—one of a half-dozen district buildings that the levy would tear down to make way for new schools.



Native American artist Andrew Morrison painted the murals about 10 years ago when he was only 21, he tells Seattle Weekly. He had been volunteering in the building, which then as now housed a program for Native American students. During breaks between classes, he'd take kids outside. "The walls were so bare. They were very bleak-looking," he says. So Morrison says he asked a teacher if he could paint on one.

He could, and did, and he says "From that point on, it was like a spark lighting a fire," generating a sense of community among the families who used the school. "I created another mural, and then another," Morrison recounts.

Even though the Native American program has dwindled to a very small number of students—only some of them still at Wilson Pacific—Morrison says the murals, like the building itself, are worth preserving.

In fact, Morrison would generally like to preserve all the buildings Seattle Schools has slated for demolition. "Seattle should hold on to its history," he opines. Plus, he says he believes the \$695 million could be better spent on, among other things, renovating existing buildings. That's why Morrison is working with longtime district watchdog Chris Jackins on the Seattle Committee to Save Schools, a small group devoted to defeating the capital levy.

"I think you have to back up and see why the district is doing this," responds Greg Wong, president of Schools First, the organization campaigning for school levies. "There's just been this tremendous growth." The district has added 1,400 students over the past year, and projects an increase of 7,000 more over the next decade. So the district simply needs more space, Wong says.

Knocking down decrepit buildings (the Wilson Pacific building is by all accounts not in the best of shape) and building new ones is the "fiscally responsible and efficient" thing to do," Wong adds. "The alternative would be—what? The district going out and buying new land?" he asks.

As for the murals, district staffers have been talking with Morrison about digitizing and then recreating them on other school buildings. Morrison says he's prepared to work with the district if the levy passes, but he wants the original art to remain, and plans to keep fighting to make that happen.



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Originally published February 24, 2013 at 7:00 PM | Page modified February 25, 2013 at 6:42 PM

Beloved Native American murals at Wilson-Pacific may disappear

Seattle Public Schools wants to preserve the five large murals of Native Americans painted on the Wilson-Pacific campus, which is scheduled for demolition. But the artist says he no longer wants to give the district his permission.

By [Linda Shaw](#)
Seattle Times education reporter

Two side-by-side portraits of Chief Seattle and Chief Joseph can be seen for blocks around North Seattle's Wilson-Pacific school, an aging set of buildings now used for offices and programs, including one that historically has served Native American students.

Painted in black, white and gray, the murals each soar 25 feet high, with Chief Seattle, in his older years, sitting in a chair looking off to one side, and Chief Joseph, in his prime, staring straight ahead.

Andrew Morrison, an artist who grew up in the Seattle area, painted the murals and three others on the Wilson-Pacific campus over a period of about seven years, populating the school's dull, beige walls with images of friends, acquaintances and a Haida mythical figure along with the two iconic chiefs.

The murals have become a touchstone for the surrounding Licton Springs neighborhood and the Native American community in Seattle, which has strong ties to the area because of the Native American programs at the school and nearby Licton Springs, once a tribal gathering place.

Now the murals' fate is in limbo, as Seattle Public Schools, with the passage of a capital levy earlier this month, plans to tear down Wilson-Pacific and replace it with two new schools.

District officials hope to preserve all five murals by taking digital photographs of them, then reproducing them at the new school buildings. They have asked for Morrison's permission and offered to pay the costs and give Morrison a seat on the school's design committee, which would decide where the reproductions would be placed.

Morrison, 31, said he considered the officials' offer and, last month, asked them to put their proposals in writing, which they did. But a week ago Sunday,

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BETTINA HANSEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Artist Andrew Morrison painted this mural of Chief Joseph at the Wilson-Pacific campus in North Seattle. He initially agreed to help preserve several large-scale murals of his on the site but later said poor communication from the district soured his desire to be part of the process.

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standing in front of the two chiefs in a light rain, he said that after a lot of reflection, he's decided he won't give his permission for the district to reproduce his work.

He repeatedly congratulated the district for the passage of the levy, which he opposed. But Morrison said he's lost trust in the district, in part because no school official approached him about saving the murals until he started showing up at public meetings about the levy. He also said he's talked with four different officials, and has no confidence they won't simply continue to pass him along.



A labor of love

Morrison, a member of the Apache and Haida tribes, created the first mural in 2001, a portrait of a Blackfeet friend from Canada.

Morrison didn't attend the Indian Heritage Middle College, the district's nearly 40-year-old program that has been at Wilson-Pacific since 1989. But he has volunteered at the school and has visited the campus for powwows, dinners, basketball tournaments and other events as long as he can remember.

Neighbors around Wilson-Pacific held a block party when that first mural was finished, and Morrison said that helped inspire him to keep going, even though he has received no pay for any of them.

He finished the second mural — images of friends and relatives wearing tribal regalia — on Sept. 11, 2001, just after the news that two airplanes had flown into the twin towers in New York City. He remembers Indian Heritage students and teachers coming out on the playground, surprised but happy to see something positive on that difficult day.

He finished the last two murals — Chief Joseph and the one with the Haida mythical figure — in 2007.

Morrison's work also can be seen in Chicago, Portland, Alaska and Idaho as well as many places in Washington state, including the Snoqualmie Casino, El Centro de La Raza and Edmonds Community College.

"Cultural continuity"

During the levy campaign, a number of people urged the district to renovate Wilson-Pacific rather than replace it, and to revitalize the Indian Heritage program, which has dwindled in size and also has an uncertain future. The program's supporters wanted the murals saved, too.

The murals "are an affirmation of our identity," said Sarah Sense-Wilson, who chairs the Urban Native Education Alliance and helps coordinate the Clear Sky Native Youth Council, which also meets at the school. Destroying them, she said, "destroys the site's cultural continuity."

Bethany Elliott, a 17-year-old member of the council, said she often thinks of the murals as a source of inspiration when she writes poetry.

Still, both of them say they stand by Morrison's decision to withhold his permission to save them.

Dr. Kelvin Frank, executive director of the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation, said he supports whatever Morrison decides, too, even though he also values the murals at Wilson-Pacific and the one Morrison created for United Indians at the Daybreak Star Cultural Center in Discovery Park.

"As American Indians, very seldom do we see this type of work being displayed in urban settings," Frank said. "When we do, we take it to heart."

Some of the neighbors who live around Wilson-Pacific helped Morrison get a grant to help pay for the materials for the Chief Joseph portrait.

Morrison is proud of how the murals have raised awareness of Native American history, and says they've been one key to his artistic success. He said he went to great lengths to try to find common ground with the district, but didn't feel those efforts were returned.

District officials say they thought they were on good terms with Morrison, and hope he'll change his mind.

"It is our desire to save his work," said Lucy Morello, director of capital projects.

Still, she said, they don't want to go forward, even if they could, without his cooperation.

Morrison hasn't told the district that he doesn't want the murals reproduced, Morello said. She hopes that's a sign that there's still a chance they can work together.

There's time, she says, because the construction of the new schools won't start for several years.

Linda Shaw: 206-464-2359 or Lshaw@seattletimes.com. On Twitter: [@LShawST](https://twitter.com/LShawST)

Artist Offers Truce with Seattle Schools After 'No Way Jose' Controversy

By Nina Shapiro Wed., May 22 2013 at 03:13PM



36



2



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For months artist Andrew Morrison has been expressing outrage about the Seattle School District's plans for its Native American program and a number of stunning [murals](#) Morrison painted on the buildings that are the program's current home. The district has said it wants to tear the dilapidated buildings down, casting doubt about the future of both the program and the murals.

Opposition to that plan drew what Morrison says were a couple of hundred of [protesters](#) outside district headquarters on May 15, shouting slogans and waving signs. "I was one of the loudest people," Morrison says. "It was a shape shifting moment," he says, but not because it stoked his anger, at you might expect. Rather, it did the opposite.

On Monday, Morrison sent an e-mail to district Superintendent José Banda. "I offer a truce," the e-mail began. He offered to paint two new murals at the Wilson Pacific campus in north Seattle, the historic site of the district's [Indian Heritage Middle College](#), which is a high school. One mural would be of Geronimo and one of Sitting Bull.



“I will cover all the cost of the materials and supplies,” added Morrison, who promised to complete the murals within 30 days.

What caused Morrison’s turnaround? Speaking to *Seattle Weekly*, the artist says he was chagrined by the animosity on display at the rally—specifically signs many held reading “No Way Jose” and chants of the same. At the time, he says, he didn’t realize that the slogan could be taken as an ethnic slur directed at Banda’s Hispanic heritage, which is why Morrison says he himself waved such a sign “religiously.”

After the rally, however, he started getting a flood of angry e-mails accusing him of anti-Hispanic racism. He says he holds no such sentiments and is part Mexican himself, as well as Native American. Nevertheless, he says, “I want to make things right.” Hence his outreach to Banda with what he calls a “peace gesture.”

Banda called the artist the next day to suggest a meeting, according to Morrison. The superintendent “looks forward to connecting with Mr. Morrison to talk about moving forward,” according to district spokesperson Teresa Wippel.

Whether Banda and Morrison will find common ground remains to be seen. The artist is proposing painting his murals on the current buildings at the Wilson Pacific site, and yet those are still slated to be torn down, according to Wippel. The district plans to build new schools at the site, so perhaps Morrison can paint new murals on them. But it’s still unknown whether those buildings will encompass the Indian Heritage school.

Banda had [announced](#) that the school’s students would be moving to space the district occupies at Northgate Mall, but after the rally sent out a letter saying that he wanted more input from the Native American community.

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June 5, 2013 at 6:18 PM

Deal reached to preserve murals at Seattle's Wilson-Pacific campus

Posted by [Linda Shaw](#)

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Andrew Morrison painted these murals on the cafeteria at the campus in 2001. His images have become a touchstone for the neighborhood and Seattle's Native American community. (Photo by Bettina Hansen / The Seattle Times)

The large, striking Native American murals at Seattle's Wilson-Pacific campus will be preserved even though the buildings will be demolished to make way for a new elementary and middle school at the site, School Superintendent Jose Banda announced today.

Banda said he met with artist Andrew Morrison a week ago, and the two talked about the murals and the Indian Heritage Middle College, an alternative school that has operated at the Wilson-Pacific site for decades. Morrison, who volunteered at the school, painted the murals over the course of a number of years.

Earlier this year, Morrison said he wouldn't give the district permission to reproduce the murals, in part because he was upset with how he was treated by school district officials. But Banda said today that Morrison now has agreed to work with the district to figure out a way to reproduce or preserve the murals, which have become a touchstone for the neighborhood and a treasured part of the Indian Heritage program.

Morrison also asked for permission to paint two additional murals, Banda said, and has already completed them.

Banda also displayed a painting that Morrison has donated to the school district — a portrait of the late Robert Eaglestaff, who worked as Indian Heritage's principal for seven years and was credited with transforming it into a successful academic program.

Morrison was unable to make the school board meeting where Banda made his announcement and displayed Morrison's donated painting, but Banda passed on a message from Morrison that the painting was from his heart, and was a "peace treaty forever."

 **COMMENTS** | More in **EDUCATION** | Topics: **ANDREW MORRISON, INDIAN HERITAGE MIDDLE COLLEGE, JOSE BANDA**

STRONG PUNCH
CHARLIE HILL PROVES
THAT A SERIOUS
COMEDIAN CAN BE A
VERY FUNNY THING



WATER CURE
HEALING THE MIGHTY
MISSISSIPPI BY GIVING
IT A TASTE OF ITS
OWN MEDICINE



THIS WEEK FROM Indian Country TODAY THE PREMIER NEWSMAGAZINE SERVING THE NATIONS, CELEBRATING THE PEOPLE



A Partial Patchak Patch

Kevin Washburn, Assistant Secretary-Indian Affairs, makes a bold move to

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT 41

Mr. Superintendent, Don't Tear Down This Wall

Seattle's Natives Fight to save historic murals and a school

BY MICHAEL WALSH | JUNE 19, 2013 THIS WEEK FROM INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY | CREDIT: MICHAEL WALSH/INDIAN COUNTRY TODAY



Photo: Native American mural in Seattle, part of the article on Seattle's Native community.

with a new middle school and elementary school. The Urban Native Education Alliance and the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation called for the district to preserve the historic murals, rather than demolish them. This would ensure that the school would continue to be a place where the past is preserved.

Washburn approved the plan, and the school district made plans to move the historic murals to the new school building. The district also proposed moving the historic murals to the new school building, rather than demolish them. This would ensure that the school would continue to be a place where the past is preserved.

Washburn approved the plan, and the school district made plans to move the historic murals to the new school building. The district also proposed moving the historic murals to the new school building, rather than demolish them. This would ensure that the school would continue to be a place where the past is preserved.

including the school and moving the murals to the new school building would be a major step toward preserving the past.

At a May 17 school board meeting, Urban Native Education Alliance chairwoman Sarah Jones-Wilson, Ogish, L. Jones, said that the proposed school design would be an act of erasure, "erasing the Native history and the history of the school." Jones-Wilson said that the proposed school design would be an act of erasure, "erasing the Native history and the history of the school."

Although the fate of the school is uncertain, it appears the school's future is being decided and the future of the school will be preserved. The school district's plan to move the murals to the new school building is a major step toward preserving the past.

At the same time, the school district is also planning to move the historic murals to the new school building. This would ensure that the school would continue to be a place where the past is preserved.

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25507 58TH AVE N
MOUNTLAKE TER WA 98043-5102
P 2104-40
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Will Endangered Seattle School Murals Be Saved?

[Richard Walker](#)

5/28/13

SEATTLE – For months, murals depicting Chief Joseph, Chief Seattle, and Natives in regalia and on horseback have been threatened with demolition—but a grassroots effort to save them may yet prove successful.

Supporters say the murals on the outside walls of the Seattle School District’s Wilson-Pacific Building are more than art. They are symbolic of the indigenous presence in the Pacific Northwest’s largest city.

Artist Andrew Morrison, Haida/Apache, painted the murals to honor the area’s Native peoples and historical leaders, such as Chief Si’ahl, the Duwamish-Suquamish leader for whom the City of Seattle is named.

Since 1974, Wilson-Pacific has been the home of American Indian Heritage School, now called American Indian Heritage Middle College High School. The school is located in Seattle’s Lickon Springs neighborhood, which takes its name from the Lushootseed word “Liq’tid” (LEEK-teed), for the reddish mud of the springs that are still visible today.

So when the school was threatened with demolition to make way for construction of a new elementary and middle school—and Indian Heritage School students moved to a classroom at a nearby mall—the indigenous community rallied.

As of this writing, it appears their voices are being heard. Construction of a new elementary and middle school will still happen, but there’s a chance the walls containing the murals will be incorporated into the new school buildings. The project architect, Mahlum, has a reputation for engaging communities in the design process and incorporating into the final design those things that are important to the community. Mahlum’s previous Native-community projects include the Puyallup Tribe’s Chief Leschi School.

“The district wants to honor this work and has reached out to have ongoing discussions with the artist on how to preserve the murals,” Seattle School District project manager Eric Becker told ICTMN through the district’s public information office. “It is the district’s intent to honor the murals. Art historians have suggested several ways that this might happen. We will continue to work with the artist, design team and community to determine which option will be selected.”

Regarding how the campus's role in Native education and racial integration might be represented in the new school buildings (as Wilson-Pacific School, it was one of the first integrated schools in Seattle), Becker said, "The School Design Advisory Team, comprised of district staff, the architect and community members, will meet to discuss all aspects of the new [elementary and middle school]."

Superintendent Jose Banda wrote in a May 10 letter to Indian Heritage School families, "a design team will be formed to look at future uses and design of the campus." In addition, he invited applicants for a new Native American Advisory Committee to advise the district on implementing Native American education in local schools.

Tracy Rector, a filmmaker and mayor-appointed member of the Seattle Arts Commission, participated in the rallies to save Indian Heritage School and the murals.

"Andrew has rallied and inspired people to come around and support this sacred historical space for Native American families," said Rector, Seminole/Choctaw. "It's been powerful. It sounded like the school district was bent on tearing [the school and murals] down. This has changed the game quite a bit."

Morrison, his brother and sister attended American Indian Heritage School, one of five local schools in which students receive more individualized attention and can take community college courses. In addition, Indian Heritage School offers culturally-based classes, and hosts an annual pow-wow, Native Youth Conference, and Native basketball tournaments. Morrison remembers the school being "the nucleus of the community."

According to Morrison, "By 1992, the success of Indian Heritage [School] could not be denied. Not only did Indian Heritage graduate every student, but graduates also enrolled in post-secondary or vocational school." When the school celebrated its 20th anniversary in 1994, it was noted that every student that graduated from Indian Heritage School in the two previous years enrolled in college.

In 2001, after his freshman year of college, Morrison volunteered at the school and painted the first of his 25-foot murals, often enlisting the help of students and community members.

The controversy began last year, after the district proposed a tax levy to replace the 60-year-old Wilson-Pacific buildings with a new middle school and elementary school. The Urban Native Education Alliance and the United Indians of All Tribes Foundation called for the district to renovate Wilson-Pacific, rather than demolish it, in so doing ensuring the Indian Heritage School would continue and the murals would be preserved.

The tax levy was approved by voters. The school district made plans to move Indian Heritage School students to the middle college program at Northgate Mall for the 2013-14 school year, and proposed making digital images of the murals so they could be replicated later. Morrison wouldn't consent to the replication of his work. On March 6, the school board approved the contract for construction of a new school and recommended only a Native American honoring of Wilson-Pacific prior to its demolition.

On May 15, an Idle No More rally was held at school district offices. At the school board meeting that followed, Urban Native Education Alliance chairwoman Sarah Sense-Wilson, Oglala Lakota, said the district has withdrawn resources and removed Native instructors from Indian Heritage School over the years, “rendering the program a shell of what was once a vibrant, successful, visible program.”

Sense-Wilson said merging Indian Heritage School with the middle college program at the mall would be an act of institutional racism and classism, “assimilating Native learners and further distancing them from their cultural identity, heritage and connection with the Native community, and ultimately a poignant loss of a distinct, unique Native-focused program, which at one time bridged culture, tradition, history, Native perspective and connection with the community.”

She asked that Indian Heritage School be moved to another campus. “We do know there is space at various schools,” she said.

Dr. Carol Simmons, a retired Seattle educator, alluded that destroying a Native school program and Native art on a historically indigenous site would be a continuation of the “historical devastation and destruction of Native culture and the mistreatment of Native students in our schools.”

She said, “These murals must be preserved with dignity and not disrespectfully digitized. This important school must be treasured and not demeaned by placing it in a shopping mall.”

Other speakers included former state Sen. Claudia Kauffman, Nez Perce, who also asked that a permanent home be found for Indian Heritage School. “This is more than just an educational institution. It’s [a place] for the community in which we gather together.”

Banda said he met the day before with concerned residents about Indian Heritage School. He said he will continue to meet with Native American families and a new coalition “to discuss the next steps” regarding the school. “We truly value our relationship with our Native American families and we look forward to working with our families and community members to more effectively support our Native students,” he said.

He referred to the murals as “artifacts” and said the district will work “to ensure we protect those artifacts.”

On May 22, Morrison and Banda had a conversation and made amends; their relationship had been strained by months of protests and press coverage. Morrison is creating a portrait of the late Bob Eaglestaff, principal of Indian Heritage school in the 1980s and ’90s, as a gift to the school district. He’s also offered to paint, at his own expense, mural portraits of Geronimo and Sitting Bull at the current Indian Heritage School campus.

“Chief Seattle, Chief Joseph, Chief Geronimo and Chief Sitting Bull will complete our four directions and this will solidify a commitment between the Seattle Public Schools, the Native American community, my family, and me,” Morrison said.



Artist Andrew Morrison talks to Native Youth Conference participants about the murals he painted at American Indian Heritage Middle College High School. The conference was April 16-18 at the school. The walls with the murals may be incorporated into the new school that is proposed to be built at the site. Photos courtesy Andrew Morrison.









Students hold signs calling for the Seattle School Board to move American Indian Heritage Middle College High School to another campus. Photo by Andrew Morrison.

The Seattle Times

NW THURSDAY

THEATER > 'DRAG RACE' WINNER JINKX MONSOON IN 'HAIRSPRAY' > B5



BETTINA HANSEN / THE SEATTLE TIMES

Artist Andrew Morrison was at odds with Seattle Public Schools about preserving his iconic murals of Chief Joseph and Chief Sealth at the Wilson-Pacific School in North Seattle, but he's come to an understanding with Superintendent José Banda, and the murals will be preserved.

Native murals artist reaches accord with Seattle Schools

Andrew Morris, in what he calls 'a peace gesture,' will let the Seattle School District preserve the seven murals he created at the Wilson-Pacific campus.

By LINDA SHAW
Seattle Times education reporter

After months of conflict with Seattle Public Schools, artist Andrew Morrison has ended the strife over his murals at the district's Wilson-Pacific campus by offering to work with Seattle Public Schools to save them.

"Now is the time ... to let this misunderstanding cease and start this new chapter," Morrison said Tuesday as he stood in front of four giant portraits of Native American chiefs that he painted over the past 12 years — two of them just a few weeks ago.

"Relationships," he said, "can mend."

In a meeting with Banda about two weeks ago, Morrison said he wanted to let go of the past and build a bridge of friendship. He gave the school district permission to preserve or reproduce all seven murals he's created at the site, which he previously had refused to do.

Just how the murals will be saved has yet to be determined, but Morrison has offered to help with the process.

"This is a peace gesture forever," Morrison said. "It's what you call love. It's what you call brotherhood."

The fight over the murals started last year when the school district, as part of a larger

school-construction project, announced it wanted to raze the aging buildings at Wilson-Pacific and build a new elementary and middle school on the site.

Along with the four portraits — which stand 25 feet high and can be seen for blocks — Morrison has painted three other murals at the school, all of which portray Native American friends, acquaintances and mythical figures.

All are cherished by many in the Native American community, which has strong ties to Wilson-Pacific because it's long been home to a program now known as Indian

See > MURALS, B6

L

< Murals

FROM B1

ARTIST REACHES ACCORD WITH SCHOOLS

Wilson-Pacific

Heritage Middle College, an alternative program for high-school students.

Morrison, 32, painted the first mural when he was a volunteer at Indian Heritage and wanted to inspire the school's students and staff, and to enrich the otherwise dreary exteriors of the aging buildings.

Many people who live near the school love the murals, too, as do hundreds of people from across the nation who filled Banda's email box with messages urging him to save Morrison's work.

Morrison found out about the proposed demolition when he attended a school-district meeting about a year ago — not directly from district staff. He soon started trying to persuade school officials to remodel Wilson-Pacific rather than tear the buildings down. He also wanted the district to keep Indian Heritage Middle College at the site.

But he and the others who supported that direction lost that battle, and city voters approved a school-construction levy that included the plans to build the new schools.

District officials offered to take digital photos of the murals and reproduce them on the new schools but, at that point, Morrison refused permission.

He felt disrespected and offended, in part because he'd been passed from district official to district official and, in the process, lost trust in their words.

He became, in his words, Banda's "No. 1 adversary," sending many emails and letters expressing his unhappiness with Banda's handling of the murals and the Indian Heritage program.

But late last month, Morrison, who is a member of the Apache and Haida tribes, decided all the turmoil wasn't healthy for anyone — the Native American community, Banda, other school employees, the larger Seattle community, or himself. He also decided that the loss of the murals would leave a cultural hole in the city, similar to the one created when the Seattle Sonics left town.

So a few weeks ago, he sent what he called a peace letter to Banda, who said he'd been trying to reach Morrison, too.

The two met for lunch. They talked for

more than an hour and visited the murals. Morrison gave Banda several gifts, including a painting of the late Bob Eaglestaff, the beloved principal of the Indian Heritage program in its heyday.

They shook hands on an agreement to preserve the murals. Banda said this week that the district may commission Morrison to recreate the murals, or paint new ones. The district also has hired a Native American architect to study whether the murals can be saved in their original form, he said.

At their meeting, Morrison also asked for permission to create the two new murals, saying they would be a way to start the healing. Banda agreed.

Morrison also hopes that the district will keep the Indian Heritage program at the Wilson-Pacific site and keep Eaglestaff's memory alive by naming one or both of the new schools after him.

Banda said the district is considering both proposals.

But Morrison's main focus is the murals.

He hopes their preservation will leave people with a feeling of love — and hope. "I changed for the sake of the kids," he said, "and for all of us who live here."

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REAL CHANGE

School of hard knocks

Native students, activists mourn closure of Indian Heritage school **PAGE 6**



A loss of heritage

by Rianna Hidalgo

In the '90s, Indian Heritage represented the pinnacle of education for local Native students. Now the school's imminent closure will create a void for many Native Americans

When Valerie Wahchumwah recounts her journey through high school, it is a path peppered with highs and lows. With a soft-spoken quality, save for a sarcastic jab or two, the 18 year-old speaks of her time attending Chief Sealth High School and feeling like she was falling through the cracks in the midst of almost 1,300 students. She worked hard, but she needed teachers who could cater to her learning style and adjust to her needs.



Valerie Wahchumwah attended the Indian Heritage school in the Wilson-Pacific Building. The building bears murals, including of Chief Joseph. The school will have no teachers this fall, and the building will be demolished. Photo by: Rianna Hidalgo

So Wahchumwah, of the Yakama Nation, transferred in 2012 to American Indian Heritage Middle College High School, part of the Seattle Public School (SPS) system.

There, she was able to forge relationships with her teachers in an intimate setting. She had two Native instructors who could supplement courses with narratives often left out of conventional textbooks. She felt like they cared about more than her test scores and grades. They honored the fact that ever since the second grade, she has loved poetry and that class presentations make her painfully nervous.

But the next year, things changed. The teachers she'd loved so much had been relocated to other schools, and the curriculum had gone digital. All her classes were online.

"We would come in, sign in, then would just go on the computer all day," she said. "There were other students [who] stopped coming because they didn't feel the inspiration anymore."

With three Native students enrolled for the 2012-2013 academic year, no Native instructors, no cultural component and an all-digital curriculum, some wondered if there was any reason to call it "Indian Heritage" anymore.

For some, it was just another symptom of chronic decline that started years ago.

Back in the mid-'90s, Indian Heritage boasted more than 100 students, dropout rates well below the SPS district average for Native Americans and a host of college-bound seniors — not to mention sports and performing arts.

Now, almost 40 years after the Native-focused program first opened its doors, Indian Heritage is closing.

SPS spokesperson Teresa Wippel told Real Change on July 16 that what is now called American Indian Heritage Middle College would not be staffed this fall, given the small number of students enrolled. She added that for many years, the program has existed in “name only.”

The decision caps several months of uncertainty. Community leaders have been embroiled in discussions with SPS officials over the fate of Indian Heritage, as well as the soon-to-be demolished Wilson-Pacific Building, which served as the site of the school and bears cherished Native American murals.



To many in the Native community, the imminent closure of Indian Heritage is a heartbreaking loss they fought to prevent, and some hold SPS accountable for its demise.

“I’m devastated,” said Sweetwater Nannauck, of the Tlingit Nation and Idle No More Washington, a movement to protect indigenous treaty rights. “So many of our kids have graduated from there. They need this.”

Sarah Sense-Wilson, of the Oglala Sioux Tribe and chair of the Urban Native Education Alliance (UNEA), said that she and others were determined to hold onto the program’s existence — whatever shape it was in — in hopes of revitalization.

“If we wipe it clean, then we have nothing to work from,” she said.

A slow decay

In the wake of a history in which Native children were hauled off to boarding schools meant to stamp out the “Indian” in the student, Native Americans have long faced systematic educational challenges.

Native students in Washington have the lowest graduation rates and highest dropout rates of any ethnic group, according to data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

For the class of 2012, the statewide graduation rate for Native students was 56.8 percent, compared with 80.4 percent for white students. For the same groups, the statewide dropout rate was 26.8 percent, compared with 11.8 percent.

Native students fare better in the Seattle school district, with a 67 percent graduation rate; but this is still well below the 85 percent average for the district’s white students.

Native-focused schools and programs, many of which were created in response to the 1972 Indian Education Act, serve as places where students can connect to their Native identity, receive education tailored to cultural differences in learning style, study comprehensive Native history and discuss pervasive social issues.

The Indian Heritage School opened in 1974 and rose to its zenith under the leadership of Robert Eaglestaff in the ’90s. By 1996, it encompassed a middle and high school and garnered a wealth of press coverage for its ability to turn students’ lives around — both Native and non-Native.

Students were commuting from as far as Centralia, about 90 miles to the south, and the school had to turn away many seeking enrollment. From 1993 to 1996, every single senior graduated and enrolled in higher education, The Seattle Times reported.

“There was a feeling of ‘all for one, one for all,’ and that everybody had something to offer,” said Rick Harlan, who worked as a substitute teacher at Indian Heritage in the mid-’90s. “There was a great sense of pride and possibility there.”

In 1996 Eaglestaff died unexpectedly while dancing at a powwow, a tragedy that shook the community. Earlier that year, he had told the Seattle Times that he believed Indian Heritage was producing leaders who would help make things right for Native Americans.

When Eaglestaff died, some said that Indian Heritage had lost its soul.

By 2000, the school’s enrollment had dwindled from roughly 120 to 70 students, and the district merged the school with Middle College High School, a small program aimed at dropout prevention that now operates at several sites.

The move effectively eliminated the middle school. Still, many in the community preferred this change to the district’s initial plan to relocate it within John Marshall Alternative School, which had programs for students who were suspended or returning from juvenile detention centers.

In 2010, Indian Heritage took another blow when the district missed a deadline and lost federal funding for a Native culture and academics program called Huchoosedah (“Parents demand ouster of Indian education manager” RC, May 12, 2010). The blunder meant layoffs of two teachers who often provided Indian Heritage students with volunteer opportunities, art classes and help recouping credits.

When Wahchumwah was at Indian Heritage for the 2012-2013 academic year — after the district relocated her teachers and implemented the digital curriculum — there were 15 students enrolled,

three of whom were Native, according to the district. Wahchumwah estimated there were only about 10 people in class on any given day.

Indian Heritage had become a ghost of the thriving entity it once was. For some, the decision to close the school wasn’t entirely unexpected.

“The thing that no one is really saying, because we don’t want to confront it, is that Indian Heritage died a long time ago,” said Robert Frederiksen, of the Tsimshian Nation and culture teacher at Indian Heritage in the late ’90s. “The school district [has been] keeping this fiction alive.”

Defining closure

SPS spokesperson Wippel said that given the low enrollment last year at Indian Heritage, the district simply doesn’t have the funds to staff the program. She added that current students will be moving to the Middle College site at Northgate Mall, where one of the former Native instructors now teaches. Students can also enroll at the Middle College of their choice, she said.

“Truly, it’s clear that the Native community that has come to us is very passionate about the idea of having that kind of school,” Wippel said. “But if you have a small number of students, it doesn’t matter which group of parents is advocating for it.”

Wippel said the district doesn’t see relocating the program to Northgate as a closure of the school.

“It’s a physical move that to [the Native community] signifies the end of an era,” she said. “But from our perspective, it’s combining two populations for budget reasons.”

Robin Butterfield, director of the state Office of Native Education, said that the district doesn’t necessarily have to have a Native-focused school to ensure quality education for Native students.

“It’s my hope that regardless of the high school itself, that the needs of these students will be met,” she said.

Since Native students in the district tend to enroll in their neighborhood high schools, Wippel said the district is focused on embedding an understanding of Native history, social studies and current affairs into those existing schools. Starting with fourth-graders in the Southwest region of the district, SPS is rolling out a curriculum on tribal sovereignty called Since Time Immemorial.

But as it stands now, many parents still feel that something systematic and oppressive is happening in traditional public schools. They feel Native students end up invisible to administrators and cut off from the heritage that helps them take pride, form a healthy identity and, ultimately, succeed.

Harlan, who is not Native, believes the persistent achievement gaps should be reason enough to bolster a separate program like Indian Heritage.

“In this case, equal shares is not equitable,” he said. “We’re talking about the next generations of these cultures. Unless we do more, unless we actually provide greater resources for the students that we know darn well need more help, then we’re failing to address the problems that, for generation after generation, there have been barriers for some and not others.”

Advocates of Indian Heritage say that if SPS would commit to making it appealing in the first place, students would come. They see the move as the final deathblow in more than a decade of neglect-driven decline and cite past and present decisions as an ongoing attempt to gut Indian Heritage before its ultimate closure.

For Sense-Wilson, the decision not to staff the program exacerbates longstanding mistrust of the district.

“It’s constant vigilance,” Sense-Wilson said. “We’re always having to keep our eye on what the district is doing, because they don’t consult with us.”

On the docket: demolition

The community is losing more than a deteriorating program. They are losing the building that housed it, at least for now.

The Wilson-Pacific, 1330 N. 90th St., has long been a community and cultural hub for Native-focused activities, many of which have been sponsored by the volunteer-based nonprofit UNEA. The walls feature murals by artist Andrew Morrison that have become treasured symbols for the Native community, and the surrounding area, Licton Springs, is considered a sacred site of the Duwamish people.

The building is slated for replacement as part of a districtwide effort to create space for a projected increase in student population. SPS Superintendent José Banda had twice postponed plans to move Indian Heritage to Northgate Middle College based on strong opposition from community members, some of whom rallied and testified at a May 15 school board meeting.

They demanded that Indian Heritage be temporarily relocated to its own distinct site, so it could be rejuvenated as a stand-alone program. After meetings with district officials, many were feeling hopeful.

Since then, the district has arranged for Lincoln High School, which has two gymnasiums, to serve as a temporary community gathering space, and Banda has reached an agreement with Morrison to preserve the murals.

The murals and the community events, however, will live on without Indian Heritage for the time being. Harlan said he’s disappointed, but not surprised.

“I hate to say it, but it really does fit a pattern of promises, and then not enough resources to make it work,” he said. “It often comes down to, ‘Well, we wanted to.’”

New hope for a new Heritage

Even with the program's demise, community members believe a better program can rise from the ruins.

Mike Tulee, SPS Indian education program manager from '94 to 2004, said it would take robust pressure from the community, specifically parents, and visionary leadership from both within the district and outside groups.

If all these elements come together with a solid mission and voice, Tulee said, "That's going to make the district more inclined to want to get this accomplished. The district works on a numbers basis. It's always been that way, and I don't foresee it changing anytime soon."

An online petition to investigate the elimination of the Indian Heritage Program has garnered around 3,600 signatures, and UNEA officials are also asking that the future Wilson-Pacific Building be renamed after Robert Eaglestaff. They want a comprehensive Native-focused education and culture center — one that harkens to the Indian Heritage of the past — established at the Wilson-Pacific site post-construction.

"Let's reimagine it," Sense-Wilson said. "Maybe it could be even better."

It is unclear how many wishes community members will see fulfilled, but Wippel said that at this point, nothing has been ruled out.

Whether plans for a new program come together next month or 10 years from now, Wahchumwah won't reap the benefits. Even though she got a taste of what Indian Heritage used to be, she still feels like she showed up too late.

"I wish I was there years ago, I really do," she said. "It would've been priceless, to be honest."

But Wahchumwah doesn't dwell. When she talks about going into a program at Shoreline Community College to study writing, her eyes light up, and it is clear she is looking toward the future.

Sense-Wilson says the community will do the same.

"We're going to keep pushing," she said. "As much as they resist, we're going to continue our vision of what needs to happen for our kids to [stay] successful. It's a step back, but I don't see anyone that's been on this journey and this mission giving up."





THANK YOU.

JONES  JONES

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