

January 7, 2011

Mr. Dave Singleton
Program Analyst
Native American Heritage Commission
915 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Mr. Singleton,

Supervisor Gloria Molina has requested that I reply to your letter addressed to her on January 6, 2011 regarding the archaeological excavation taking place at LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes.

The excavation is taking place at a former Catholic cemetery adjacent to the church known as La Placita. The church was built in 1818 and dedicated in 1822. The cemetery existed there from the time the church was built until 1844.

The Environmental Impact Report for the construction of our campus requires the presence of an on-site archaeologist at all times during any soil excavation. When the first remains were uncovered on October 26, 2010, LA Plaza immediately contacted the Office of the County Coroner, as per protocol. A Coroner Investigator made an inspection of the site and the remains that had been uncovered. The investigator came to the determination that this was a Catholic burial site and that the archaeological investigation could continue.

We then proceeded to contact the Archdioceses of Los Angeles to determine the protocol they would like LA Plaza to follow in dealing with these Catholic burial remains. The Archdioceses indicated that we should keep the remains until the end of the excavation and upon completion of the excavation we would transfer the remains to the Church for Catholic re-burial.

We contracted The Sanberg Group to do the archaeological excavation. The project team consists of three Registered Professional Archaeologists and a crew of archaeologists who have experience covering all aspects of what this project entails, along with osteological technicians under the supervision of a Ph. D. in forensic anthropology.

All regulations and professional archaeological and osteological procedures are being followed. The highest professional standards both in the field and laboratory are being utilized. There is no evidence of Native American remains. Out of approximately 15 tons of matrix material that has been both dry and wet screened to recover cultural items only a single, out of context lithic fragment has been recovered that is potentially prehistoric. At that time, December 29, 2010 the NAHC was contacted and, after an exchange of information, NAHC told The Sanberg Group to continue with the excavation.

Human remains are being treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve. Cultural items associated with them are being removed in an archaeological contextual manner and conserved for future research into the day to day lives of this community. Based on the work to date, there is no reason the excavation and data recovery not to continue as planned.

At the request of the Sanberg Group the Coroner's office sent today another Coroner Investigator to ascertain that the correct procedures were being followed. The Coroner Investigator determined that this is a Catholic burial site and that work should proceed as before. Some of the elements found among the remains further indicate the presence of catholic religious objects such as a medal that has been found.

After the excavation is finished The Sanberg Group will prepare a report that will be made available to the scientific community.

Our original plans included the creation of a memorial garden, "the Camposanto" to commemorate the space. We will also use placards and multi-media screens to educate visitors about the site.

I understand completely why this issue is of particular significance both to you and to the tribes that you represent. We are very much aware that, in the past, remains of Native American individuals have not been treated with the respect that they deserve and that, naturally, you may be wary of this taking place again. But I am writing you to assure you that this is not taking place.

The purpose of LA Plaza is to educate present and future generations of Angelenos about the original inhabitants of what is now the Los Angeles which, undoubtedly, includes Native Americans. To disrupt a native burial ground would run completely counter to our mission. Again, I want to assure you that this is not taking place.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Miguel Angel Corzo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Miguel Angel Corzo
President & CEO

Cc Hon. Gloria Molina
Supervisor, First District