

# preservation *today*

## Voices from the Redland

Residents, advocates and policy-makers chime in on Miami-Dade County's beloved historic agricultural area and how ever-increasing development affects the countryside's quality of life.

**PLUS:** Teach the Truth Garden • Cape Florida Lighthouse • DHT's NOAH Update, and more!



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## FEATURES

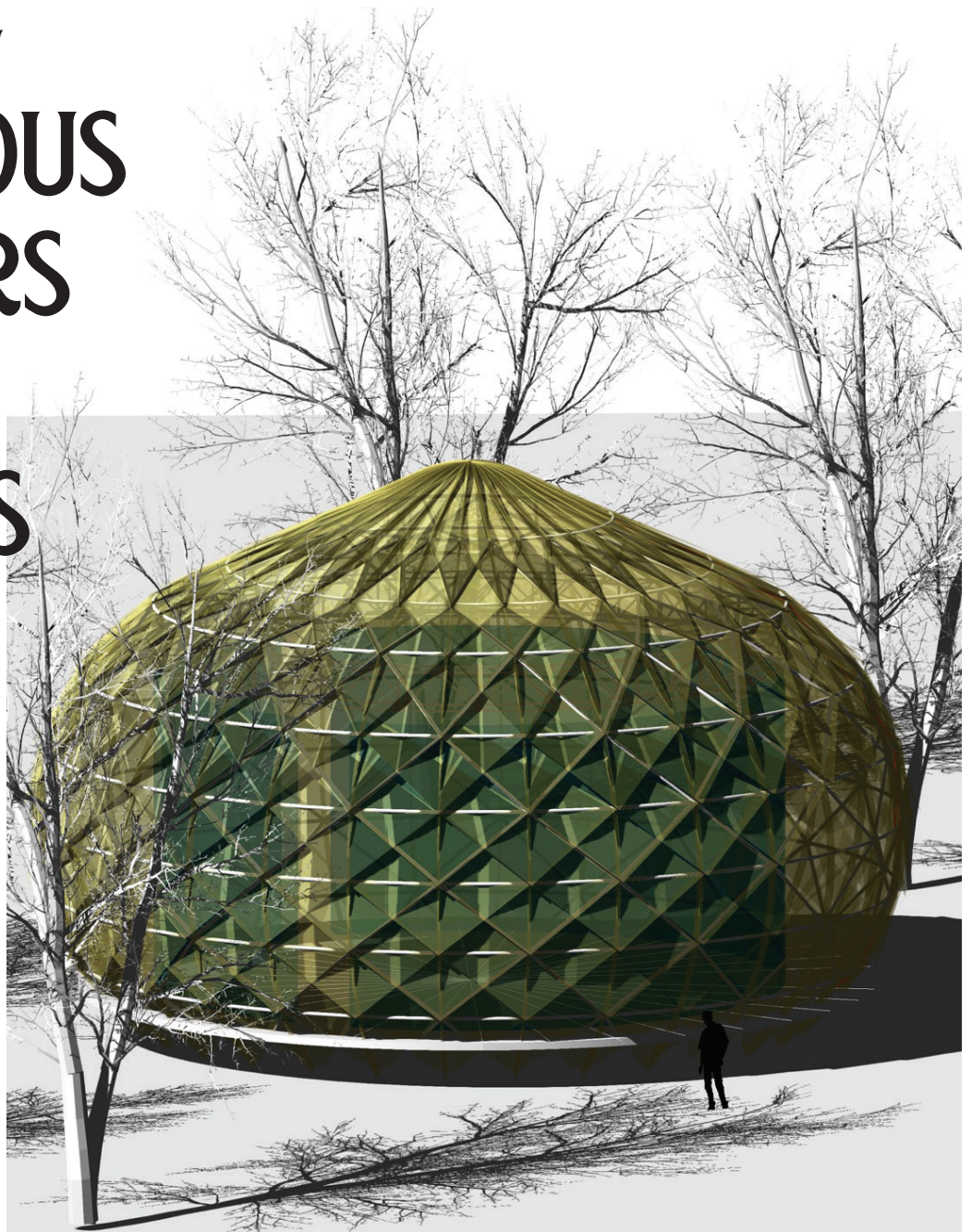
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# TURNING INDIGENOUS WHISPERS INTO A TIMELESS VOICE

*By Jeff Zbar*



The PineCone – potential housing for a hologram installation at Fort Dallas on the Miami River

Khadijah Cypress remembers growing up among the elders of her Miccosukee tribe west of Miami. Her grandparents would share stories of their own upbringing – stories retold by the elders who guided each generation from their community within the Florida Everglades.

Young Khadijah learned dressmaking from her grandmother and heard stories of her culture and heritage from her grandfather. “You can be what you want to be,” Khadijah recalled him telling her. “At the end of the day, you’re Miccosukee and you’ll always come back to that.”



To help those stories live on, “Indigenous Whispers” will create a series of augmented reality (AR) shorts at stops along a Miami River walking path, and potentially a hologram at nearby Ft. Dallas Park. The stories will give voice to generations of Miccosukee.

The idea came to life in a short film screened at a meeting of the City of Miami Historic and Environmental Preservation Board (HEPA) during a discussion of how best to preserve the huge number of Tequesta archaeological relics discovered along the south bank of the Miami River just west of Brickell Bridge. The Miccosukee consider the 7,000-year-old Tequesta site an ancestral burial ground.

“These are stories passed down from grandparent to grandchild in the Indigenous community,” said Judith Anderson, co-founder of Indigenous Whispers with Christine Michaels. “I would love people to visit Miami and be moved by these stories.”

The sophisticated blend of technology and storytelling will create an interactive experience to bridge Native American wisdom and timeless themes like nature, community and resilience and employ technology to underscore Miami’s emergence as a global tech hub.

Using their smartphone to scan QR codes, visitors will see a grandmother sharing how to collect and eat vegetation originally native to the banks of the Miami River, or telling a young child how a caterpillar that soon will transform into an Atala butterfly shares lessons of healing.

Augmented reality can bring to life a place’s history and layer in the telling of the change a community has seen, said Mario Lopez, partner and chief innovation officer with technology partner Bravent, which is helping to create the pilot production. “With AR, you are in that place,” said Lopez, who has produced similar augmented reality projects for the World Cup.

Former head of Miami-Dade’s Historic Preservation Division, Dr. Robert S. Carr, was at the screening of Indigenous Whispers. Impressed with the project, Carr included funding for their pilot in a

grant proposal seeking state funds to underwrite the Tequesta Trail, a project he is spearheading. Indigenous Whispers will co-locate with Tequesta Trail markers when appropriate.

“It’s very important to give a sense of Miami and South Florida that transcends the modern urban experience,” said Carr, who explored



Khadija Cypress in the Miccosukee sewing center

*“At the end of the day, you’re Miccosukee and you’ll always come back to that.”*

–Khadijah Cypress

ancient mounds along the river as a teen, and today is director of the Archaeological and Historical Conservancy, Inc. “We have thousands

of years of human history right here in Miami. These efforts help our community to build a sense of place.”

Also at the video’s screening were developer representatives who will soon present a plan to HEPB to archive and preserve relics of the past and educate the public on the importance of the findings. “This will be our best opportunity to tell Miami’s story,” said attorney Iris Escarra, who has been involved in 40 such site preservation efforts.



"Understanding the history of the Miami River helps us understand why we have the Miami we have today," said Horacio Aguirre, chair of the Miami River Commission, who as a youth in the 1950s explored the river's banks. The organization has supported pilot planning for Indigenous Whispers project, the greenway project, and many other important historical efforts.

"Throughout the world, all civilizations and social groups start where there's water," he said. "If we're going to understand the Miami of today, we need to reach back as far as we have knowledge. Let's learn about the history of all of Miami by starting with the history of the river."

Michaels, a producer of award-winning historical tours from the Art Deco District to Little Havana, sees the Miccosukee stories as a way to retell Miami's true history.

"There's this perception that Miami is a concrete jungle," she said. "Other cities around the world have found a balance between development, respecting our history, and preserving culture. That's the balance we want to achieve."

Michaels and Anderson hope Indigenous Whispers will tell traditional stories, not from the voice of historians, archaeologists, or settlers, but through the voice of the indigenous populations themselves, and touch the hearts of Miamians and visitors alike. ■

*Images courtesy of Judith Anderson.*







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