

Journal #5784 from sdc 8.9.24

Bear Brother

Miami's little-known Indigenous history

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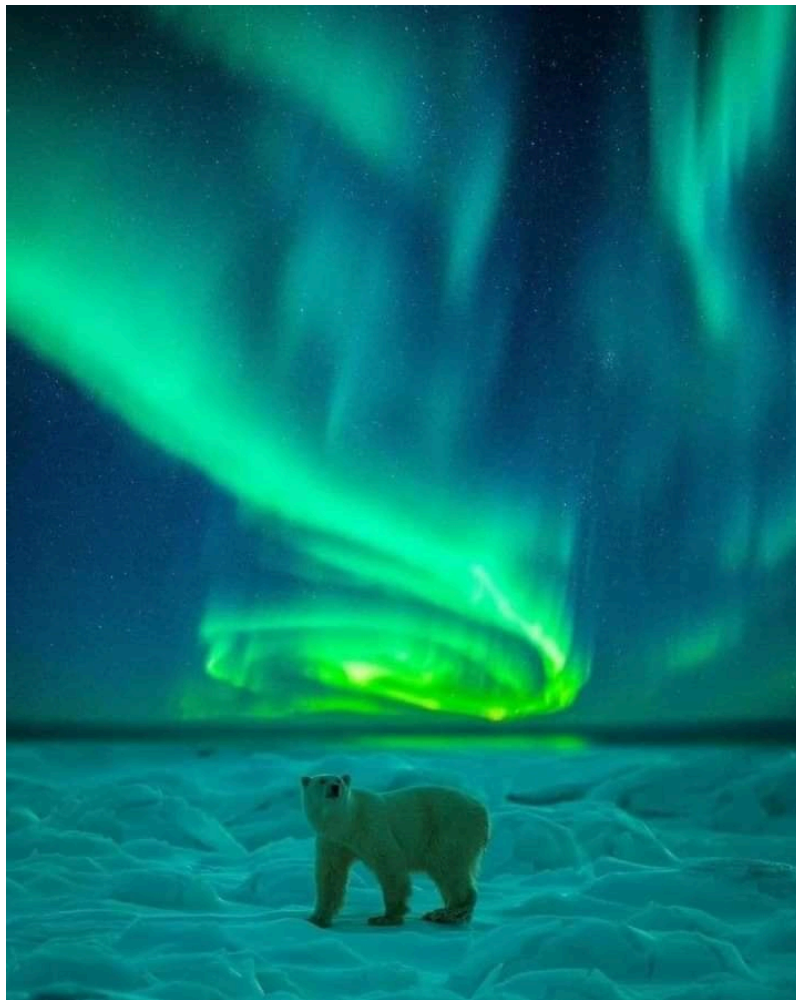
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Manitoba, Canada

Photography By @nateinthewild

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AFP/Stringer/Getty Images

Miami Circle is a 2,700-year-old Indigenous site that has been called "America's Stonehenge" (Credit: AFP/Stringer/Getty Images)

Miami is one of the US' youngest major cities, but it's built atop one of America's oldest Indigenous civilisations. Now, a series of discoveries are unearthing its little-known past.

Miami, Florida, is renowned for its flashy clubs, Art Deco design and eclectic Latin and Caribbean culture. Yet, most visitors today have no idea that Miami – one of the United States' youngest major cities – is built directly over one of America's oldest Indigenous civilisations.

From roughly 500 BCE to the mid-1700s, what is now Miami was inhabited by the [Tequesta civilisation](#), one of the first people to occupy south-eastern Florida. The Tequesta settled near the mouth of the Miami River and Biscayne Bay and built a thriving coastal society alongside a far-reaching trade network. Today, South Florida, and to a broader extent, [all of Florida](#), is located on Tequesta, Seminole and Miccosukee Indigenous ancestral lands. And as the region's population has rapidly grown in the last few decades, archaeological discoveries found along the Miami River area have shed new light on Miami's little-known Indigenous history.

[Betty Osceola](#), a member of the Miccosukee tribe (which emerged after the Tequesta, but whose [history](#) predates Columbus), has been working for years to educate newcomers and visitors about the Miami area's Indigenous past. Alongside groups like the [Love the Everglades Movement](#) and the [Eco Preservation Project](#), Osceola explained how the rising waters of the surrounding [Everglades ecosystem](#) due to climate change and human intervention threatens the Miccosukee's ancestral home and way of living.



Lisette Morales McCabe

Osceola, a Miccosukee member and environmental activist, has spent decades teaching people about the Miami area's Indigenous past (Credit: Lisette Morales McCabe)

The Miccosukee (who were originally part of the Creek Nation), migrated from Alabama and Georgia to modern-day Florida before it became part of the United States. Following the [Indian Removal Act](#) in 1830, Native Americans residing in the south-east US were forcibly removed to the west, but it's estimated that roughly 100 hid out in the Everglades. Today's present-day Miccosukee, Seminole and members of other Florida tribes are the direct descendants of those who never surrendered and stayed in the Everglades.

Thirty-four miles west of downtown Miami, Osceola immerses visitors in the region's Indigenous past by leading them through the Everglades at the [Miccosukee Indian Reservation](#) with her company [Buffalo Tiger Airboat Tours](#). For the past 12 years, Osceola and a team of Indigenous-led guides has been whisking people through the wetlands' vast cypress domes, "[tree islands](#)", mangroves and hardwood trees while educating them about the Miccosukee. According to [Revered Houston Cypress](#), a Miccosukee artist and activist, in the tribe's language, the word Everglades is *Kahayatle* ("shimmering waters").

Osceola's airboat tours were started in the late 1980s by William "Buffalo" Tiger, the last traditional Miccosukee chief, whose dream was to educate people about the tribe's surroundings in the Everglades. As part of the tour, visitors get to visit Tear Island, where Tiger's family once lived. Guides explain how Miccosukee families lived in stilted, thatched "chickee" huts on the island.

[Samuel Tommie](#) is an Indigenous artist from the Everglades. His family was [one of the last](#) to inhabit the tree islands. "It was a very beautiful paradise, and that was my world growing up. The birds singing, the panthers and the black bears running around. Today, the area is physically struggling but still spiritually dense."



M Timothy O'Keefe/Alamy

Miccosukee and Seminole families once lived in "chickee" huts across the Florida Everglades (Credit: M Timothy O'Keefe/Alamy)

Osceola says that tourists are often surprised that Native Americans "still exist" in the Miami area. "They think Indigenous people are in the history books only, and not living and breathing here today," she said. "We strive to show people the beauty and importance of the Everglades, glimpses of our culture and to let them know we still exist here."

Osceola is also a prominent environmental activist who has protested against fracking and lobbied for water conservation in the Everglades. In addition to her boat tours, she also educates others about Florida's Indigenous past and their traditional lands through public [prayer](#)

[walks](#) (marches to pray for the water and advocate for the land). She is a member of the Miccosukee's Panther Clan, a creature synonymous with the protection of the Everglades.

"There is a lot of history of our people and what our tribe has done to advocate for the environment. If you visit the Miccosukee community, you can get a glimpse of our way of life," she said.

Yet, outside the Miccosukee's community, these traces of the Miami region's Native past are hard to find. "When you visit Miami, there is no indication that Indigenous people ever resided there or are currently in the area unless you visit the [Miami Circle](#)," Osceola explained, referring to the archaeological site that's become a National Historic Landmark. "Even then, I'm not sure people really pay attention to the [Tequesta] [statue](#) near there."



mauritius images GmbH/Alamy

Aside from a lone statue of a Tequesta man, Miami has few reminders of its Indigenous past (Credit: mauritius images GmbH/Alamy)

Discovered in 1998 during construction in Miami's bustling downtown Brickell neighbourhood, the Miami Circle is a 2,700-year-old circular site with 24 holes carved into the limestone bedrock. Also called "[America's Stonehenge](#)", it was a trading and ceremonial site for the Tequesta civilisation. National and international public outcry pressured the state of Florida to repurchase the land from the developer for \$27m and preserve it as a historical landmark. Although it was saved from being bulldozed to build a high-rise, today, the circle is [still not displayed](#) as a Native American monument, and many locals confuse it with a dog park.

"[Indigenous people] used this area [bordering the Miami River] to hunt, fish, travel and come together in community and celebration. These sites have great history and significance and should be respected and honoured," Osceola said during a recent [public prayer walk](#) in Brickell.

Since 1981, archaeologists have determined that the areas bordering the Miami River in Brickell contain a high amount of ancient Indigenous remains. But in recent years, Brickell has emerged as one of Miami's fastest-growing neighbourhoods, and as more and more high-rises and luxury hotels pop up, developers continue to unearth ancient Indigenous sites – including at 444 Brickell Avenue that was [unearthed in 2021](#). Archaeologists are currently removing the objects so that development can continue, but Osceola and other tribal members have advocated that [digging in the area should stop](#). Their voices, as she and others have said, are being left out of the conversation.

"South Florida has a rich mix of [cultures] and ethnicities, but traditions get lost, and with all the development and new transplants, it's still important to retain who we are, our culture and traditions," said Talbert Cypress, [official chairman](#) of the Miccosukee Business Council. "We could be in danger of losing what Miami really is, and just become another big city."

To date, archaeologists at the Brickell Avenue site have unearthed roughly [one million artefacts](#), including human remains, tools and ornaments made from animal bones and shells, giant turtle remains and discs of shells representing eye pupils dating from 500-600 BCE. But as Osceola and others [continue to educate others about their importance](#), the future of this site remains contested between commercial developers and those advocating for its protection as a historical location.

Nearby, Indigenous artist and self-proclaimed "amateur archaeologist" Ishmael Bermudez has been advocating for preservation for years. Bermudez, who grew up in a 1920s-era bungalow in the Brickell neighbourhood, has maintained that he is the longest-standing Brickell resident left, and repeatedly [refused to sell](#) his home to developers. Yet, earlier this month he felt he had [no other choice](#) but to leave his home.

Bermudez had spent more than half a century [excavating](#) his basement and backyard – unearthing artefacts used in ancient Native American rituals, fossils, prehistoric objects and a well with spring water in the process. Over the years, he transformed his humble bungalow into what he calls the [Well of Ancient Mysteries](#), which he sometimes opened to the public. His home had been a rest stop for activists and Indigenous representatives who came into the city to help save the Miami Circle after its discovery in 1998.

To Bermudez, the value of his home was priceless. "It's not about the money. This is about preserving ancient history," he said, before moving. Over the years, the growing number of high-rises blocked his view of the sunrise each morning. "I only see the stars when I go to the Everglades, not here," he added.

After meeting Bermudez in 2018, local artist Jaqueline Gomez set out to photograph the Native American sites he discovered. "At first, I didn't believe him," she admitted. Then, she spent time researching the history of the Tequesta people and realised Bermudez was serious. "They don't teach you about this in [school]," she added. In fact, Bermudez wasn't surprised when Miami Circle was discovered just six blocks north of his home.

In 2020, Gomez published [The Tequesta of Biscayne Bay](#), a magazine documenting how Miami's Indigenous sites are still part of the city's landscape. The photographs include Bermudez's home, Miami Circle and [Met Square](#) (a prehistoric village found in 2014) among others. "They have found so many other mounds bordering the Miami River," Gomez said. "I still don't understand how the city decided which ones would get protected and which wouldn't." Yet, having grown up here, Gomez is aware of Miami's tendency to bury its past, leaving Native American tribes in a constant battle for their sovereignty and land rights. "It's sort of a losing battle because these developers always tend to win," Gomez added.

As the last remnants of Miami's Indigenous past continue to get paved over, the risk is that so too will their histories. "If people don't know about, or don't care about the Indigenous sites in

Miami, nobody is going to save them," Bermudez said. But as more activists continue to join Osceola's calls to preserve the city's Indigenous past, perhaps visitors will get a better sense of the history hidden just under their feet.

[Rediscovering America](#) is a BBC Travel series that tells the inspiring stories of forgotten, overlooked or misunderstood aspects of the US, flipping the script on familiar history, cultures

<https://www.bbc.com/travel/article/20231128-miamis-little-known-indigenous-historyand-communities>.

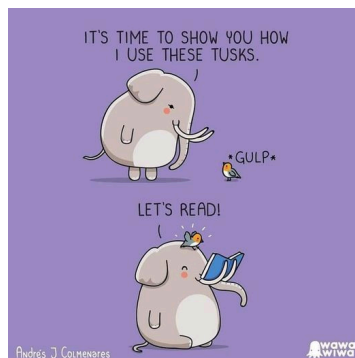
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***One never know where one will stumble across archives/records: Here's some from RI***

Sarah Muckamug: 956 Old Smithfield Road, Isaac Wilkinson home  
c. 1829. Muckamug, a Nipmuc Indian, indentured to Col. Joseph Whipple, of Providence, for 12 years, had four children with Aaron Whipple, a Black slave of Whipple. Muckamug left Whipple after he refused to "maintain" their children together. She was allowed to build a wigwam on this property by the Wilkinsons. She later had another child with Fortune Burnee, a free Black man living in the community. Sarah's life shows the complex role of marriage between First Peoples and individuals of African descent. Read: Daniel R. Mandell, "The Saga of Sarah Muckamugg, Indian and African American Intermarriage in Colonial New England," in Martha Hodes, ed., Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History.

**+ Daily-Ceasar Cemetery:** Located alongside the driveway to 1010 Hartford Avenue, which connects to Borden Avenue. Rhode Island Historical Cemetery Johnston #44 reportedly holds African American and Native American decedents. Among them is Annjemima Daily, daughter of Roby Ceasar and wife of John Daily who passed away at age 17 in 1826. For a list of graves: [http://rihistoriccemeteries.org/newlistgraves.aspx?ceme\\_no=JN044](http://rihistoriccemeteries.org/newlistgraves.aspx?ceme_no=JN044)

**+ Dolly Walmsley** (later changed to Onsley) is buried in Pocasset cemetery. Born as Dolly Smith in Connecticut in 1827 to a Black father named Ira Smith and Native American mother, she married Samuel Judson Onsley, moved to Johnston and had between them thirteen children.

Learn more *here*: <https://johnstonsunrise.net/stories/author-searches-for-black-roots,33598> and [http://rihistoriccemeteries.org/newsearchcemeterydetail.aspx?ceme\\_no=JN044](http://rihistoriccemeteries.org/newsearchcemeterydetail.aspx?ceme_no=JN044)



## [Klamath River Renewal Corporation](#) ·

While restoration of the reservoir footprints involves planting hundreds of thousands of live trees, it also incorporates the use of mature dead trees (referred to as ‘large wood’ in river restoration jargon). Large wood is an important feature of stream systems, but we don’t want to wait decades for natural recruitment of large wood. RES, our restoration contractor, is going to provide immediate, large-scale habitat enhancement by introducing large wood in the form of mature trees -- with root wads intact -- to the stream channels and floodplains of the priority tributaries. Local residents may notice helicopters delivering these trees to the restoration sites. These large wood features serve to slow the water down, form channel features, create cover for fish and wildlife, and provide habitat for insects that fish like to eat. In some cases, we are doing in a matter of weeks what nature would take decades to accomplish.

We are jumpstarting many natural processes to create fish-friendly conditions as rapidly as possible. RES identified five critical tributaries that were submerged and degraded under the reservoirs for decades. These priority tributaries, once restored, will provide high-quality habitat for salmon and steelhead along with other native species like western pond turtles, freshwater mussels, and many species of birds. Each priority tributary has a site-specific design, but each plan follows basic principles of stream restoration design and engineering: return natural fluvial function to the stream through addressing channel cross section, planform, profile, and habitat structure. The restoration team will design and construct geomorphically appropriate improvements using natural materials and vegetation for habitat enhancement and sediment stabilization.

The image on the top is of staged wood out on site, which will be placed in the coming weeks. On the bottom is an example of wood placement from another project.



**[Yolanda Manning](#)**

**Congratulations to the new OCS (Owyhee Combined Schools) Administrative Principal Lynn Manning! And UNLV Educator Alumni of the year! Happy 26th year! You make this momma very proud!**

## **Browse the Lists of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Register of good safeguarding practices** (Note some glaring omissions. sdc)

The [Committee](#) meets annually to evaluate nominations proposed by [States Parties to the 2003 Convention](#) and decide whether or not to inscribe those cultural practices and expressions of intangible heritage on the Convention's Lists.

By clicking on the inscribed elements listed below, you can discover the nominations, photos and videos, together with Committee decisions and evidence of community consent.

You may also experience a conceptual, visual and interactive navigation through '[Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage](#)' interfaces which demonstrate the thematic interconnectedness between all the elements inscribed and their relation to nature or to threats.

*The designations employed in the texts and documents of the nomination presented by the submitting State Party or States Parties do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Committee nor UNESCO concerning a) the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, b) the legal status of its authorities or c) the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

<https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists>

Build a circle of friends  
who talk about  
Tribal Sovereignty,  
ceremonies, and healing  
instead of gossiping  
about other people. *sent by Annette Cavanaugh*

Utah legislators passed [HB29 in 2024](#), claiming that librarians, teachers, and school board members should suffer criminal "consequences" for having books like Nobel Prize-winning author Toni Morrison's book *The Bluest Eye*, Judy Blume's *Forever*, and Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* on high school library shelves.

The law required the automatic purging of school library books if three districts banned them (or if two districts and five charters banned them).

**Now, the first wave of statewide book purges has begun with the [banning of 13 books](#), and more to come!**

[AmericasFavoritePhotos.com](https://AmericasFavoritePhotos.com)  
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[Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian](#)

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[Step into the SMART World: Where STEM Futures Are Made](#)

The Māori saved their language from extinction. Here's how.

A Māori model for teaching language has shown communities across the world a way to reclaim and rebuild their cultures.

Read in National Geographic: <https://apple.news/Ai6U8lc2zSuWekOatTkKQzw>

Earth Glorious

The Scout Tree, a colossal sequoia situated in Jedediah Smith Redwoods State Park, California, stands at an awe-inspiring height of 72.54 meters (238 feet) and boasts an impressive diameter of 7.08 meters (23.24 feet) at its base, with a circumference of 87 feet (26.51 meters). This ancient tree is estimated to be an astonishing 2,527 years old, making it a true marvel of nature.



Isolated Amazonian Tribe Attacks Encroaching Loggers With Bows and Arrows

Logarithmic An isolated tribe in the Amazon rainforest used bows and arrows to head off loggers who were, as Indigenous advocates say, likely encroaching on their land. As the Associated Press reports based on statements from the Federación Nativa del Río Madre de Dios y Afluentes (FENAMAD) Indigenous rights group, the Mashco Piro people who live [...]

Read in Futurism: <https://apple.news/Ad4LdKzwrT1utPKHZiQWymQ>

Spirit Aligned Leadership

·Spirit Aligned Leadership

Indigenous midwifery is a community, place-based practice that creates safe and healthy birth practices.

We're proud to launch our fifth leadership cohort that seeks to share knowledge about Indigenous midwifery between generations of Indigenous women and their communities.

<https://spiritaligned.org/cultural-atlas-circle-five/>



SATURDAY, AUG 24 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM | URBAN ROOTS - RENO, NV

4:30	LEARN & PLAY	Enjoy farm fresh cocktails and pizza while learning about regenerative agriculture practices through hands-on activities!
5:30	SOIL TALKS	Listen in on a panel discussion with local experts discussing food forests, trees, composting & more!
6:30	HOEDOWN PALOOZA	Enjoy folk music on the lawn, socialize, and visit vendors for tips and tools!
7:30	FAREWELL FARMERS	Grab some merch and head on home to bring regenerative agriculture to your garden or farm!

SOIL TALK PANELISTS

