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Artifacts (shell tools) are measured and recorded at the Mound House by archaeologist Corbett Torrence and an FGCU intern.

## ARCHAEOLOGY

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is now located in Matlacha. The Research Center, a program of the Florida Museum of Natural History at the University of Florida, opened in 1994 after the Randell family donated more than 50 acres to the school. It operates to maintain the Pine-land site and teach the community about local history and archaeology.

Sweeney says she hopes people don't get the wrong impression from the title "research center." While it may imply the site is private or strictly for scientists, she says, all people are welcome to visit and even volunteer there. She lectures at local schools and hosts field trips at the Pine-land site.

"Right now we're trying to find creative ways to bring people out." This includes showing movies like "Raiders of the Lost Ark" and kid-friendly flicks like "The Goonies," during the next month's "Movies on the Mounds."

The Florida Public Archaeology Network, which shares an office with the Randell Research Center, operates to teach and involve the public in archaeology. The Network also works with local governments to encourage archaeological preservation.

Sweeney says while federal law mandates archaeology involvement before major construction projects are started, state and local laws do not always require it. That means ancient sites can be destroyed during construction without even being examined first by a trained archaeologist.

It's hot and sticky but the mosquitoes and fire ants are largely absent today. There is even a slight breeze. The ground we are standing on has been inhabited for about 2,000 years. The site was excavated in the 1890s and again in the 1980s. Over time, archaeologists concluded the site was a major center for the Calusa Native Americans.

Mound Key, located in Estero Bay, is thought to have been the capital of the Calusa, once the most powerful people in South Florida.

"Mound Key would be like Washington D.C. and this would be New York," Sweeney said.

According to David Southall, curator of education at the Collier County Museum, the Calusa, at their height, controlled

11 cities with populations of a thousand each. Their extensive trading network stretched across Florida, where several other tribes paid tribute to the Calusa.

They had a standing army ready to dispatch when needed and were even able to hold off the Spanish, who Southall said were never able to defeat the Calusa.

By the 1700s, the Calusa had succumbed to disease and forced slavery imposed by other tribes with firearms.

We reach a mound overlooking Pine Island Sound. An osprey flies by and I can just make out a sailboat in the distance. The view of the water and Useppa Island, which has an archeological history dating back 12,000 years, seem picturesque to some. This same mound was the site of an early 20th century house, until it burned down in the 1920s.

Walking on the trail's boardwalks, we run into a papaya tree, which was an important food source for the Calusa. Unlike many other Native American cultures, the Calusa were not an agricultural society. Using palmetto-fishing nets weighed down with cockle or scallop shells, the Calusa relied on fishing and some hunting to survive.

We later came across a piece of ancient pottery that Sweeney guessed was from a later Calusa time period. She placed it carefully back on the spot where she picked it up. Since the trail is state property, visitors are discouraged from taking or misplacing artifacts. Sweeney said such removal can mix up archaeologists trying to piece together ancient cultures and customs.

About 30 miles away, archaeologists Theresa Schober and Corbett Torrence, work to decipher clues about the Calusa at the Mound House in Fort Myers Beach. Here shell mounds date from 1,200 to 2,000 years old. Following Calusa settlement, the site was occupied by Cuban fisherman and, later, by people who inhabited the house, which dates to the early 1900s.

"Every single major cultural time period for the last 2,000 years is represented at this site," Torrence said.

Schober, director of the Mound House, sits in the makeshift offices across from the house, which is under renovation. She packs up a box of tools used by the Calusa, which will be shipped off for analysis. Inside the lab, Schober, Torrence, college interns, and volunteers work to brush off, measure, and record the artifacts.

In the next couple of years, Schober said the site will have pathways and signs

to educate people about the various inhabitants of the site. The house will be restored to the 1920s era and feature exhibits and a small museum.

Next fall, an underground exhibit will open in the house where a 1950s swimming pool once was. To make the exhibit, the pool was removed to allow for archaeologists and volunteers to excavate the area an additional five to seven feet. Before 2002, there had never been an excavation at the site.

"I can remember because I counted every single one of them, that we found 13,498 pieces of pottery alone," Schober said.

This does not include bone tools, shell tools, animal remains, botanical samples, and even stone tools, which are extremely rare to find this far south in Florida.

When complete, the exhibit will literally be inside a mound and will show how mounds were constructed, what different layers were made of, and the timeline of the mound.

While people may ask why the ancient past has relevance today, to Torrence and Schober, there is no question about it.

"We get to see how different cultures adapted to different cultural situations... inevitably by understanding long term cultural traditions we have a better frame reference to look at ourselves and evaluate current culture," Torrence said.

For example, after studying this and similar sites, Torrence found a correlation between height and authority that applies even today.

"The most expensive room in a high rise is the room at the top or, if you go into a courthouse, a judge is elevated on a platform," Schober said. "A jury's elevated too, but they're never elevated to the same level as the judge... We demonstrate respect for positions of authority by elevating people."

Numerous studies correlate height and power. Nearly all of the United States presidential candidates who won the popular vote were taller than their opponents.

At the time of European contact, the Calusa capital and home of the chief was thought to be Mound Key. Coincidentally, Schober said Mound Key also has the highest mounds in this area.

Schober said there are other relationships connecting past and present. Without agriculture, the Calusa were able to sustain themselves on local resources and extensive trading.

Torrence hypothesized the Calusa may