



CALUSA NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PROJECT

INSTITUTE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND PALEOENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

FLORIDA MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

NUMBER 5 • OCTOBER 1990

Twentieth Century Florida Encounters the Elusive Calusa

The first and most visible phase of the Year of the Indian Education Program is done for this school year.

On the afternoon of April 27, 1990, by the time the last school bus had transported its last load of children out of the past at Pineland and back into the present world of Lee County, over 3,000 students and their teachers had taken active part in an introduction to prehistory and the disciplines of archaeology.

The introductory unit had made its way through department heads, to school representatives, to in-service teacher workshops, and into the classes themselves, with enthusiastic support and response at all levels.

The classroom presentations included a University of Florida-produced 7½ minute video entitled "Archaeology in the Field," which used footage from the excavation of the Tatham Mound, north of Tampa, to explain field procedure. Not that 7½ minutes is enough, but in this case, bearing in mind the video sophistication of modern children, pictures were worth thousands of words.

The film was followed by interpretation of a selection of cultural materials including artifacts, zooarchaeological and archaeobotanical material, and soil samples, and a carefully controlled "hands-on" examination of these materials for adults and children, followed, in turn, by a series of slides that reviewed and pin-pointed key aspects of the introductory subject matter.

Teachers attended these presentations with notebooks, tape recorders, and sometimes video cameras. They explained that



Photo by Rick Tully.

they had searched, in vain, even in college level American History texts, for comprehensive units on prehistory and on the archaeology that unravels prehistory.

Many had had to resort to the misinformation of quasi-archaeologists who portray themselves to the public as experts, but are, in fact, little more than sensationalists, or to the well-intentioned but misguided device of sand-box digs and similar simulated "dig" projects. These efforts are usually more like Easter egg hunts, encouraging children to root around in the dirt until they find something interesting, promoting object rather than context orientation.

The Year of the Indian program generated its information through the control and discipline of the legitimate archaeological community and engaged an entire county school system, rather than one or two eager teachers here or there. In doing so it provided up-to-date information, making it available to the entire community of teachers.

Through the kindness and foresight of Garfield Beckstead of Useppa Island and Pat and Don Randell, present owners of most of the Pineland site, many students had the special privilege of visiting genuine digs in progress, observing proper

Continued on page 2

INSIDE

- Useppa Island
- Pineland
- Update
- Photos
- Volunteers
- Calusa Constituency



