

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Lost Calusa Findings / Press Conference**

Saturday, March 13, 10:30 a.m.

Randell Research Center at Pineland  
13810 Waterfront Drive at Pineland on Pine Island in Lee County

Two recent, tremendously significant discoveries concerning the Pineland Site Complex and the Calusa Indians who inhabited the area (from 100 AD to 1708) will be announced at a press conference on Saturday, March 13, at 10:30 a.m. On hand to unveil the exciting news will be:

\* Dr. John E. Worth - With a Ph.D. in anthropology and a decade of experience researching native populations and Spanish colonialism in Florida, Worth is the full-time coordinator of research programs and services at the Randell Research Center (RRC) in Pineland.

\* Dr. Brent Weisman - Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida in Tampa. Weisman received his Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Florida and specializes in integrating anthropology, history and archaeology; ethnohistory; Seminole Indian culture; and archaeology in the Southeast United States.

\* Phyllis Kolianos - Manager of the Weedon Island Preserve Cultural and Natural History Center in St. Petersburg, FL. Kolianos has a Master's Degree in Applied Anthropology from the University of South Florida. Her major focus of study is the archaeology of central and Southwest Florida. She is currently vice-president of the Florida Anthropological Society.

**DIRECTIONS:** Follow Pine Island Road (Hwy 78) west through Matlacha to its end at Pine Island Center (a four-way intersection). Turn right (north) on Stringfellow Road and go 3.1 miles, then turn left onto Pineland Road. Follow Pineland Road, go past the Randell Research Center office and post office to Waterfront Drive. The site entrance is on the right hand side about 300 feet from the corner of Pineland Road and Waterfront Drive, across from the Tarpon Lodge. Look for the Randell Research Center sign. If you get lost, call the office at 239-283-2062.

**RSVP:** If you plan to attend, PLEASE RSVP to Press Coordinator Cathy Chestnut by calling 239-275-2014 or by emailing nutcat@earthlink.net by Friday, March 12, 11 a.m.

**FESTIVAL/PHOTO-OP:** Calusa Day Festival will be held Sunday, March 21, from 1 p.m. to 6 p.m. Activities include viewing an open

'dig,' free tours, Seminole storyteller, Tarpon Lodge specials, sunset cruise, door prizes and information booths. For information, call Operations Manager John Paeno at 239-283-2062.

## Randell Reseach Center at Pineland

### FACT SHEET

- \* The Randell Research Center (RRC) at Pineland is a program of the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH), Florida's official natural history museum. The Museum has undertaken archaeological and ecological field research in this area since 1983, and at Pineland since 1988. At one time, the Calusa town at Pineland encompassed as much as 200 acres. The RRC contains over 50 acres today.
- \* The RRC has existed since 1996 when Donald and Patricia Randell donated over 50 acres of the Pineland site so that an education and research center could be established there.
- \* The RRC's mission is to establish and maintain at Pineland a permanent facility dedicated to learning and teaching the archaeology, history, and ecology of Southwest Florida.
- \* In January 2001, Lee County purchased the historic Ruby Gill House at 7450 Pineland Road and leased it to the Florida Museum for use as RRC headquarters and laboratories.
- \* At the Pineland Site, massive shell mounds over 30 feet high still stand, and remnants of a Calusa Indian-built canal that reached 2½ miles across Pine Island sweep through the site. When Smithsonian archaeologist Frank Cushing visited Pineland in 1895, he measured the canal at 30 feet wide and 6 feet deep.
- \* Archaeologists have discovered that Pineland's waterlogged sediments preserve artifacts not found in dry sites, as well as ancient botanical remains found nowhere else in North America. (The earliest chili pepper seeds from the eastern U.S. and the only papaya seeds known from pre-Columbian North America come from Pineland.)
- \* The Calusa settled at Pineland around 100 A.D. and disappeared by the early 1700s, victims of warfare, diseases, and slavery introduced by Europeans.
- \* The Calusa were unusual among North America's native peoples because they built mounds, engineered waterways, and controlled vast territories even though they were fishing people, not farmers. They thrived from Charlotte County to Collier County for more than 1,500 years on a diet and culture linked to the bounty of the sea.

\* Through grants and donations, the RRC is building a teaching pavilion, classroom, parking area, public restrooms, and an educational walking path called the Calusa Heritage Trail. Meanwhile, archaeological research continues and visitors and students can learn about the historical and ecological dynamics of the site.

\* About \$140,000 remains to be raised in order to complete the classroom. Contributions to the RRC are tax-deductible. Donors who give \$30 per year can join "Friends of the RRC" and receive a quarterly newsletter. Volunteers and docents are needed to help with RRC programs.

\* Recent excavations by RRC archaeologist John Worth are revealing patterns of Calusa houses that date to about 1,500 years ago. Finds of pottery, fishing implements, fish bones, shells, and plant remains are helping to paint a vivid picture of ancient life in Lee County.

\* For information on tours, programs, volunteer opportunities, and donation information, call the RRC at 239-283-2062.

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