

## Mound House Staffing & Accreditations

Knight New; Norris Earns CIGT

By Gary Mooney

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Thousands of people annually tour and attend programs at the historic Mound House on Fort Myers Beach. Despite its large visitation, however, the Mound House accomplishes all it does with just a handful of museum professionals. It recently added Museum Educator Adam Knight, while Environmental Education Manager Dexter Norris attained his "Certified Interpretive Guide Trainer" (CIGT) accreditation in February.

### **Shining Knight!**

"I was born in Sarasota," related Knight, "but as a child, we moved to Englewood. Following high school, I attended Flagler College in St. Augustine where I received my undergraduate degree in International Studies with minors in Anthropology and Woman's Studies. After Flagler, I relocated to the Fort Myers in 2016 to work at the Edison-Ford Winter Estates as an Elite Historian through November 2020 when I accepted the Mound House Museum Educator position. While at Edison-Ford, I earned my Master's in 2020 from Johns Hopkins University in Museum Studies."

While calling Edison-Ford "a great experience, I have a real love for anthropology so the archeological aspect of the Mound House really appealed to me," Adam explained. "In addition to that, I want to educate people about the lesser-known aspect of Southwest Florida history, so while many folks have at least a rudimentary knowledge about Thomas Edison and Henry Ford, most must learn about the Calusa, the Spanish influence on our area, and the region's environmental impacts, so the Mound House opportunity played into my wheelhouse, as cliché as that sounds! When I received the Mound House offer, I was ecstatic and officially began on November 20, 2020."

As the Museum Educator, Adam "facilitates the visitor experience on our public tours and programs, including our seven different kayak adventures. I lead some of our 'Guided Beach Walks,' and create new programs like the 'Fishing Rancho Outdoor Guided Tour' to increase the knowledge about how the historic cultures associated with the Mound House impacts our society today. What I bring new to the Mound House team is a focus on the Latino and Spanish eras of the site that fall between our two primary areas of study: the ancient Calusa of 2,000 years ago and the modern era that began with the Case Family of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century through today, and the new 'Fishing Rancho Outdoor Guided Tours' and 'La Florida Kayak Tours' are excellent examples of that contribution. Creating new programs provides an outlet for my creativity and I really enjoy that aspect of this position."

Adam offered that "there are not many actual 'Fishing Rancho' sites left like the Mound House that the public can truly visit, so we offer a unique opportunity to stand at the very place where peoples of that time created a whole new culture. The 'Fishing Rancho' and its society is almost completely left out of Florida and United States history, so it is my mission to correct that, to provide a fuller portrait of our American

story. History in this nation has come a long way in the past few decades, as before that it was primarily the study of the 'Great White Man,' with most other subjects left out of the classroom and books, but recent scholarship now dives deeper into other aspects of American life, to better understand and appreciate who we are as a people and society."

### **CIG & CIGT Accreditations**

Adam recently earned his "Certified Interpreter Guide" (CIG) accreditation through the National Association for Interpreters (NAI). "This is important, because in our profession, we are 'Field Interpreters' and that is vastly different from traditional classroom educators. Often in a classroom, you teach students who must there, but in field interpretation, you interact with folks who want to be at your site, and you want to attract others to visit, to engage as many people as possible. This includes older adults, retirees, school groups, home-school kids, and others. A recent and exciting historical sites trend is the large number of teenagers who now express an interest in places like the Mound House, and my CIG gives me the skills to relate successfully with all these groups rather than just traditional school-age classes."

Mound House Environmental Education Manager Dexter Norris in late February earned his "Certified Interpretive Guide Trainer" (CIGT) accreditation through the NAI. "I can now train other museum professionals to become 'CIGTs,' Dexter said. "It is important for the Mound House that I have this accreditation because it increases our staff's standards of excellence, with a broader programming focus to interact with our community, and it brings the Mound House one step closer to attaining our 'American Alliance of Museums' accreditation that is our long-term goal."

Dexter's CIGT "enhances the training I provide to our volunteers, to improve their interactions with our guests. Personally, I am passionate about historic interpretation, so adding this to my professional resume is another tool in my toolbox to be better at what I do for the Mound House, to improve our already-popular public programming to reach a wider audience and increase our community impact. It is great to add a true professional like Adam to our staff, as he brings a skill set we did not previously have, and new programs he implements, like the 'Fishing Rancho Outdoor Guided Tour,' shows our community we always strive to improve."

### **Visit The Mound House**

The Mound House, at 451 Connecticut Street with overflow parking at 216 Connecticut, is the oldest standing structure on Estero Island and operated by the Town of Fort Myers Beach as a museum complex and cultural and environmental learning center. Admission is \$10 for ages 13 & up, \$8 for students with IDs, \$5 ages 6 to 12, and 5 & under free, with Town residents receiving a 50% discount. For additional information and a monthly programs schedule, call 239-765-0865 or visit [www.moundhouse.org](http://www.moundhouse.org).

"The Mound House is the complete package," concluded Dexter, "as we offer something for everybody, whether you are just want to overlook the Estero Bay to soak in the view, try your hand at kayaking, or get indepth with the history of the Calusa, Latino, and Spanish peoples, and at a reasonable price! Some people plan to attend Mound House

activities months in advance and others at the spur of the moment due to our fantastic reputation, and we want them all to have an outstanding adventure so they return time and again and spread the word about the Mound House to family and friends.”

“We always want to better serve our community,” added Adam, “whether it is Fort Myers Beach residents or Mound House visitors from throughout the region, state, nation, and internationally, to ensure that everyone has a great time while learning about our rich history and sweeping mission. We want to advocate for conservation and the environment, as well as our site’s history that you do not learn about in the traditional classroom setting. To do this effectively to our large and diverse audience, we offer a broad range of programs, activities, and exhibits that illustrates the significant impact the Mound House story has on the daily lives of our guests, to produce positive changes for today and tomorrow.”