

A group at Miami's Florida International University is raising funds to build a chickee on one of its campuses.

The FIU chickee is an initiative of its Global Indigenous Forum (GIF) and corresponding student club - the Global Indigenous Group (GIG).

The GIF has several projects and initiatives in work, primarily through the student group.

Construction of the chickee would take place at FIU's Modesto A. Maidique Campus. The campus is the original home of FIU, encompassing an entire five blocks between 117th and 107th on Tamiami Trail in West Miami-Dade.

Maidique, born in Cuba, was FIU's fourth president. He stepped down in 2008 as one of the school's longest-serving leaders.

Seminole and Miccosukee builders would construct the chickee. The cost is estimated at about \$40,000.

"The chickee itself is an important symbol of local Indigenous heritage that we aim to celebrate on our university campus," a recent message from organizers stated.

Efforts to raise funds began in earnest on Nov. 15 when the GIF asked those participating in "Give Miami Day 2018" to designate their donations. The group is now continuing to solicit funds for costs associated with the project.

"This thatched palm covered and open sided building would be a gathering place for student/faculty events, meetings and [be] a place of solace," said Dennis Wiedman, associate professor in the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies.

"This significant project reflects an architecture of survival, the continuance of traditions of storytelling and mentorship and a way of facilitating relationships with sovereign nations and their communities," he said.

Wiedman, who founded the GIF about five years ago, said the chickee would be a size big enough to accommodate multipurpose activities - possibly 20 by 30 feet - measured from outside its four corner poles.

Seminole and Miccosukee-made cypress benches would be able to be moved around the structure, depending on the type of event being held. It would have a concrete floor, electricity and lighting.

Student leaders from GIG addressed the FIU Student Government Association during the fall 2018 semester about the idea. Wiedman said they received a welcoming response. The goal was first set at the April 2018 meeting of the GIF advisory council.

Wiedman said it was important from the beginning that the project involve Tribal members.

"With proper contributions, a location and specifications can ensure that the builders are truly Tribal members and that [FIU Facilities Management does] not subcontract out to non-Indian companies," Wiedman said.

A major donor, whether an individual or group, could possibly have their name on the chickee, Wiedman added.

The timeline for construction is dependent on how soon funds can be raised.

“If a contributor came forth tomorrow, then we can move on this very soon. If not, it will take a while,” Wiedman said.

Those interested in contributing can mail a check to Juan Carlos Del Valle, executive director, FIU Foundation; Florida International University; 11200 SW 8th Street, MARC 5th Floor; Miami, FL, 33199.

Checks should be made payable to the FIU Foundation Inc. Write “Global Indigenous Forum” and “Chickee Initiative” on the check’s memo line. Email Del Valle at [jgdelval@fiu.edu](mailto:jgdelval@fiu.edu) for more information.

The GIF, in collaboration with the student led GIG, is a university-wide initiative that connects faculty and students as well as local and global Indigenous leaders with “essential dialogue concerning all matters important to Indigenous peoples of the world.”

The group is comprised of individuals who are “passionate about human rights, scholarship, activism and cross-cultural education.”

More information is available online at [indigenous.fiu.edu](http://indigenous.fiu.edu) or at [facebook.com/GIGFIU](https://facebook.com/GIGFIU).

Please follow and like us:



Originally Printed by The Seminole Tribune