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Miami's newest park holds oldest attraction

"Ya-ta-hey!" chanted Catherine Hummingbird Ramirez as pungent smoke encircled the crowd gathered in Miami's newest and most historic park. "The ancestors are here," she intoned from the stage, wearing multiple strings of beads and waving a large feather over nearly one hundred people gathered under a white tent.

Miami Circle Park was inaugurated at the mouth of the Miami River, a location that was inhabited 2,700 years ago. In 1998, a proposed development led to the discovery of the Miami Circle, an ancient Tequesta Indian structure. Largely dormant over the past decade, the site was visited weekly by Ramirez, who continues her vigils every Tuesday at 6 p.m.

The state purchased the property for \$26.7 million a few years after its discovery, and in January 2009 the archaeological site became the 41st National Historic Landmark in Florida.

"This park is a tribute to the many who fought to save the site," said by Kurt Browning, Florida's Secretary of State. The park's archaeological elements are managed by the Historical Society of Southern Florida. It will be developed in two stages, with the actual circle remaining underground until the second phase.

"This is a perfect example of historic preservation and celebration of our past," said Miami Mayor Manny Diaz. He applauded this centerpiece in a proposed "baywalk" that would provide a continuous path along Biscayne Bay, running from SE 15th Street to [Margaret Pace Park](#) near NE 20th Street.

Miami Circle Park is a unique, waterfront oasis within the heart of downtown. More than 2,000 years ago, people came here for excellent hunting. Today, they can come at any time of the day to reflect on the past while surrounded by the most modern, towering highrises.

Phase one of Miami Circle Park is expected to be completed by the end of 2009.

