

## **Everglades Wonder Gardens Announces New Executive Director**

*David Rahaḡ•tih Webb Starts His New Position September 14*

BONITA SPRINGS, Fla.- (Aug. 25, 2020) The Everglades Wonder Gardens is pleased to announce the hiring of David Rahaḡ•tih Webb as the non-profit organization's new Executive Director. In this position, Webb will be responsible for overseeing the Garden's operations, philanthropy, and overall management. Webb will start September 14 at the Gardens.

Webb brings nearly 20 years of experience and leadership in nature centers, zoological parks and aquariums, botanical gardens and museums. Most recently, Webb was Director of Education at the Museum of Discovery and Science in Fort Lauderdale, FL. The cutting-edge programs that he and his team developed to meet community needs during COVID were recently covered in The Washington Post and NBC's Today Show's website. Webb served as Director of Public Engagement at the AZA (Association of Zoos and Aquariums) accredited Aquarium of Niagara for two years, overseeing their education and development departments and breaking through glass ceilings in fundraising, program development, and organizational change. While there, Webb was a professional fellow member of AZA. Webb served as Nature Center Director at the Conservancy of Southwest Florida where he founded the STEM Institute in partnership with FGCU's Whittaker Center for STEM Education, and Collier and Lee County schools. Webb oversaw Miami-Dade County's environmental education and ecotourism programs including six nature centers and museums, and the county's sea turtle protection program.

Webb is a true local, an 8th generation Floridian originally from Sanibel Island. He has a bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies from Florida Gulf Coast University, and he holds multiple professional certifications. He currently serves on the Board of Advisors for the Center for Environmental and Sustainability Education at Florida Gulf Coast University. Webb is a recipient of the Gulfshore Business 40 under 40 award and has received numerous awards for his programs.

"David's roots run very deep in Southwest Florida and his leadership in his past roles, and his proven successes in fundraising have earned him a great reputation," said Everglades Wonder Gardens Board Chair, Donna Flammang. "We are excited and confident that Webb is the best possible fit for the organization at this point in time. I hope you will join me, our staff, and board of directors in welcoming David to the Gardens."

Additionally, David Rahaḡ•tih is Haudenosaunee; Tuscarora and Meherrin Indian, keeping his culture central in his life as a respected traditional artist, Tuscarora language speaker, and enrolled member of his community. His art has been displayed at museums across the southeastern U.S.

### **About the Everglades Wonder Gardens**

In 1936, brothers Bill and Lester Piper established The Reptile Gardens as a roadside attraction along the newly-built Tamiami Trail from Tampa to Miami. It was a place where visitors could marvel at the wildlife wonders of Southwest Florida. In 2014, a group of local residents formed the Bonita Wonder Gardens Inc., a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. With generous financial assistance, in the form of a \$3.5 million loan from the City of Bonita Springs, the new organization was able to purchase the property and business assets from the Piper family in April 2015, saving it from potential commercial development. Thus began a new chapter for this beloved historic attraction. Visit [www.evergladeswondergardens.com](http://www.evergladeswondergardens.com)

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