

# Summary: Customs and Cultures

## Uniquely Florida

American Indians were the first people that lived in Florida. Settlers came from Spain, England, and France to create new colonies. Later Cubans and Haitians came to escape unfair governments. Many others came from countries like India and the Philippines to find a better life.

Today, people from many ethnic groups live in Florida. This makes Florida one of the most diverse states in the nation. You can see signs of Florida's diversity in the style of its buildings, the clothes people wear, and the foods people eat. You may go to a Chinese or Cuban restaurant. You can hear the music from Jamaica or other nations. Even Florida's name is multicultural. It comes from the Spanish word *Florida*. This means "land of flowers."

Florida's diverse population shares American culture. They also preserve their own special heritage. In addition to English, many people also speak the languages from their original cultures. They celebrate the holidays and traditions that are part of their heritage.

## Celebrating Florida's Cultures

Floridians from other cultures share their heritage in many ways. Some ethnic groups build museums to teach others about their cultures. The Ah-Tah-Thi-Ki Museum teaches visitors about Seminole culture. Visitors learn why the swamplands are still special to the Seminole Indians. The Morikami Museum teaches visitors about Japanese gardens, tea ceremonies, art, and more. The African American Museum of the Arts teaches visitors about connections between Africa and modern African Americans. The museum also shows African American and Caribbean art.

Another way ethnic groups share their culture is through festivals. Often, festivals occur on holidays. These holidays are special days that are important to people of certain cultures. Festivals allow other people to learn about these cultures. People meet to share music, food, dances, storytelling, and other traditions. Three Florida festivals are Carnival Miami, the Bahamas Goombay Festival, and Greek Epiphany Day.

### Before You Read

Find and underline each vocabulary word.

**ethnic group** *noun*, a group of people who share the same culture

**diversity** *noun*, many cultures

**heritage** *noun*, customs, beliefs, and traditions that come from the past

### After You Read

**REVIEW** How can you tell that Florida is diverse?

Draw a box around three sentences that tell about the signs of Florida's diversity.

**REVIEW** In what ways do festivals allow people to experience another culture? Underline the sentence that tells what people do at festivals.