

SUMMER ADVENTURES
ON THE ROAD

Indigenous Origins



EVERGLADES NATIONAL PARK

DID YOU KNOW?

The Indigenous peoples of the Americas arrived from Asia more than 10,000 years ago. The prevailing theory is that they crossed from Siberia to what is now Alaska. Over the ensuing millennia, many of them migrated east and south, populating areas as distant as present-day Nevada and Brazil. Some of them formed communities in the Everglades.

One of the major Indigenous peoples in the Everglades were the Calusa, who lived along the southwestern coast of the Florida Peninsula. They used shells to build earthwork platforms and barriers, potentially as protection from the ocean, and they subsisted largely on fish they caught from dugout canoes they crafted. The Calusa, together with the Tequesta and other Indigenous peoples, numbered about 20,000 when the Spanish landed in Florida in the early 16th century. By the late 18th century, their populations were dramatically smaller, decimated by diseases introduced by the Spanish to which they had no immunity.

Around that time, Creeks from Georgia and northern Florida began migrating to South Florida, where they assumed the name "Seminoles." In addition to hunting and fishing, the Seminole farmed corn, squash, melons, and other produce. Beginning in 1818, the U.S. waged a series of wars to remove the Seminoles from Florida. It managed to forcibly relocate some Seminoles to the Indian Territory, though others evaded capture by venturing into the Everglades.

Today, Florida's Seminole and Miccosukee tribes include thousands of members. Some live on reservations, while others live in off-reservation towns or cities. Many of them have worked to protect the Everglades ecosystem against draining, pollution, and other threats.



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The Seminoles of The Everglades
Ages 4-8

PG 4

True or False?
Ages 9+

Book List

READY TO EXPLORE?



THE SEMINOLES OF THE EVERGLADES

ACTIVITY | Ages 4-8



MATERIALS

Device with internet connection

TO DO

The Seminole tribe has a long history in the Everglades. Consider how the geography of the area – its landforms, waterways, plants and animals, and climate – influenced the way the tribe lived in the Everglades. Use the resources listed below to help answer the following questions:

- The Seminole called their homeland Pahayokee, which means “grassy waters.” Why is this an apt name for the Everglades?
- The Seminole lived in houses called chikees, made of logs and thatched roofs. They built the bottom floor off the ground. Why do you think they raised the bottom floor?
- The Seminoles gathered to perform Corn Dance and Hunting Dance songs every year. What do you think they were celebrating?
- The Seminole diet included a variety of local and native vegetables. Can you guess any of them?
- Many Seminoles live in Oklahoma now. How do you think they ended up there?

RESOURCES

[Seminole Tribe of Florida](#)

[Native People of the American Southeast](#)

[Everglades National Park History & Culture](#)

[Seminole Green Corn Dance](#)

[Enduring Traditions: Seminole Hunting Song](#)

TRUE OR FALSE?

ACTIVITY | Ages 9+

MATERIALS

Device with internet connection (optional)

Pencil or pen

TO DO

Read the resources listed below and complete this activity to learn about the history and traditions of the Seminoles. Write T for true or F for false for each of these statements, then check your answers on the following page.

- _____ 1. The name Seminole may derive from a word for "runaway."
- _____ 2. The Seminoles have lived in Florida for only a hundred years.
- _____ 3. The Seminoles call the Everglades Pahayokee, which means "grassy waters."
- _____ 4. The Seminoles obtained some of their food from growing crops.
- _____ 5. The Seminoles lived primarily in tents called tepees.
- _____ 6. Seminoles have been involved in cattle ranching since the 1700s.
- _____ 7. The tribe was led in the 19th century by chief Sitting Bull.
- _____ 8. Colorful beaded necklaces are a traditional accessory of Seminole women.
- _____ 9. Florida's eight Seminole clans include ones named Panther, Bird, and Bear.
- _____ 10. Sofkee, a sour corn soup or drink, is a staple of Seminole cuisine.
- _____ 11. The first missionaries to convert Seminoles to Christianity were Lutherans.
- _____ 12. The Seminoles have a distinct myth about the creation of the world.
- _____ 13. Africans and African Americans who escaped slavery often joined the Seminoles to live in their communities.
- _____ 14. The Seminoles of Florida are known as "Unconquered People."
- _____ 15. By 1858 thousands of Seminoles lived in the Everglades.

RESOURCES

- [Seminole People](#)
- [Seminole History](#)
- [Everglades National Park Native People](#)

ANSWERS

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1. It is an apt name because, **according** to the National Park Service, Everglades National Park is covered by a “shallow, slow-moving sheet of water ... creating a mosaic of ponds, sloughs, sawgrass marshes, hardwood hammock, and forested uplands.”
2. Southern Florida has a rainy, humid climate. The tribe raised their chikees for protection from flooding and animals.
3. The Seminoles were expert hunters, trappers, and fishermen and raised crops. Their Corn Dance and Hunting Dance songs gave thanks for the abundance of animals and crops for food.
4. The Seminoles’ main crops included corn, beans, squash, and a distinct type of pumpkin called a Seminole pumpkin.
5. The U.S. military forced many Seminoles to relocate to a part of Indian Territory in the present-day state of Oklahoma, which is why today there’s a Seminole Nation in Oklahoma.

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1. T
2. F The Seminoles moved into Florida in the late 1700s from Georgia.
3. T
4. T
5. F The Seminoles lived in houses, called chikees, made of logs and thatched roofs.
6. T
7. F Sitting Bull was a Teton Dakota chief.
8. T
9. T
10. T
11. F Episcopal and Baptist missionaries were the first to convert Seminoles to Christianity.
12. T
13. T
14. T
15. F The Seminoles fought a series of wars in the 1800s to resist colonial encroachment and forced removal. Due to forced removal and the wars, by 1858 only a few hundred Seminoles remained in Florida. Today, several thousand Seminoles live in the state, including on six reservations.

FULL LINKS

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The Seminole Tribe of Florida

<https://www.semtribe.com/stof>

Native People of the American Southeast

<https://kids.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/native-people-of-the-american-southeast>

Everglades National Park History & Culture

<https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/historyculture/index.htm>

Seminole Green Corn Dance

<https://www.semtribe.com/stof/culture/green-corn-dance>

Enduring Traditions: Seminole Hunting Song

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oVTbHJaBW78>

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Seminole People

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Seminole-people>

Seminole History

<https://dos.myflorida.com/florida-facts/florida-history/seminole-history/>

Everglades National Park Native People

<https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/historyculture/native-people.htm>

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The Seminoles of The Everglades: Answers

<https://www.nps.gov/ever/learn/historyculture/develop-everglades.htm>