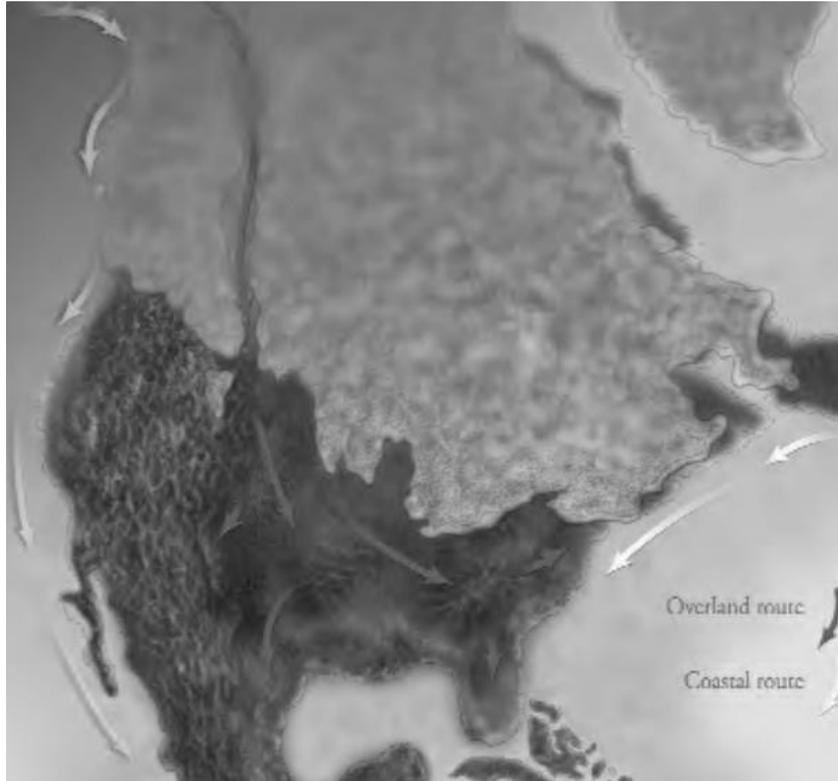


Who were the first Floridians? Where did they come from? How did they get here?

The first inhabitants of America migrated from Asia 25,000 years ago, crossing a land bridge between Siberia and Alaska. These prehistoric people settled across North, Central and South America and became the first Native Americans. 10,000 years ago, some of them reached the peninsula that would one day be called Florida. They were the first Floridians.

First Arrivals



First Arrivals map from the exhibition *Tropical Dreams: A People's History of South Florida*

As these Native Americans settled into their new environment in South Florida, they became expert hunters, fishers and crafts people. The Calusa Indians lived along the southwest coast of Florida. They were great engineers who constructed buildings and dug canals for transportation.

Another group, the Tequesta, settled in the area we call Miami. They lived in small settlements along Biscayne Bay and the Miami River, where they hunted, fished and made tools and jewelry out of shells.

By the 1760s, European diseases and warfare destroyed the Calusa, Tequesta and other Native Americans.



Recommended for 3rd – 5th grade

Archaeologists use the artifacts people leave behind to learn about their history. The artifacts you leave behind today will help future archaeologists learn about life during the 21st century.

You be the Archaeologist! Make a list of the items on top of your dresser or bedside table.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

If archaeologists find these items a thousand years from now, what could they learn about you and your life today?

What is the Miami Circle?



Miami Circle Excavation

In 1998 at a construction site on the Miami River in downtown Miami, archaeologists discovered the “Miami Circle.” They found a circle of deep holes in the bedrock spanning 38 feet that dated back over 2,000 years ago. Based on artifacts found during the excavation, archaeologists believe the Tequesta built the structure for ceremonial or political purposes. The State of Florida and Miami-Dade County purchased the land, and archaeologists are still working to piece together the puzzle of the mysterious civilization that once called South Florida home.