Southern Arizona’s diversity is evident in its landscape, climate and culture. Evidence of Native American culture in the desert around Tucson dates back thousands of years. What is intriguing about the study of work by contemporary Indian artists are the insights these crafts offer into the past. The Native American Gallery at Tucson International provides a glimpse into the dynamics of that history. This display presents the richness of design, ritual and history in such diverse media as textiles, clay, woodcarving, basketry, jewelry, and paintings. Pueblo pottery developed in prehistoric times from simple utility jars to intricately textured and painted wares. The art form was revived with the advent of the railroad and the arrival of tourists in the Southwest in the 1880s. Contemporary Pueblo potters still use centuries-old techniques of construction and are inspired by pottery forms and designs a millennium or more old. Authentic Navajo ceremonial and pictorial baskets along with genuine Tohono O’odham geometric, pictorial, and effigy baskets, are all hand woven in the same traditional manner and of the same materials as woven by their ancestors. The materials are gathered, carefully prepared and then woven into articles of true artistic beauty. The best-known native textile art in North America is the weaving of Navajo Indian blankets and rugs. These impressive rugs are still made in a style that was traditional in Mexico and the southwest United States long before the arrival of Europeans: kneeling before a vertical wooden-frame loom and using a shuttle to weave colored threads together into large-scale geometric designs. Originally Navajo and other Southwest Indian blankets were made of hand-spun cotton thread, but after the Spanish brought domestic sheep to the region the people primarily switched to wool. Kachinas (or katsinas) are stylized religious icons, meticulously carved from cottonwood root and painted to represent figures from Hopi mythology. For generations, these figures have been used to teach children about their religion. Painting is one of the least traditional Native American Indian art forms. There were native painting traditions in many tribes, but they were almost all decoration for functional items, such as paintings on leather war shirts or tipi covers. An exception is Navajo Indian sand painting, which was originally a spectacular religious art. Today some Navajo artists make secular versions of traditional sand painting and other contemporary Native American artists have adapted Western painting styles to depict their own people, experiences, and worldviews. Many different peoples have contributed to Arizona’s fascinating and unique cultural environment. The Tucson International Airport Native Gallery celebrates the many Native American tribes and their art, flourishing throughout the Southwest.