



When one culture adopts some aspects from another culture, it is important to acknowledge and give recognition to that culture. For example, when the language, cuisine, music, dance or dress of a culture is used without permission or portrayed in an insensitive manner, it is known as **cultural appropriation**. Read about an example of cultural appropriation in the **Did You Know?** activity below.

### DID YOU KNOW?

#### *Are those your designs?*

The Oma is a small ethnic group with only about 2,000 people living in Laos. The designs that they hand stitch on their traditional clothing have been created and passed down through generations of the Oma people.

In 2019, a large Italian fashion company plagiarised\* the traditional designs of the Oma ethnic minority group in their clothing collection. The company digitally duplicated and printed the designs onto their dresses, skirts and blouses. The colours, shapes and arrangement of the designs were identical to the traditional Oma designs.

The company was called out for cultural appropriation. People pointed out that simply scanning and printing the traditional designs on clothing was disrespectful to the Oma people, who take the time, skill and patience to create their homemade textiles. Furthermore, the company did not acknowledge the Oma in their marketing, labeling or display of the clothing collection.



► **Figure 6.23** The Oma ethnic dress features distinctive vibrant red embroidery and traditional motifs.

Engaging in cultural exchanges with people from diverse backgrounds allows us to appreciate and learn from one another. As we engage in cultural exchanges, it is important to do so with an attitude of openness, and in a manner that is sensitive and respectful towards others. This will enable interactions in a diverse society to remain harmonious, meaningful and beneficial.

\* Plagiarise refers to using another person's ideas and passing it off as it is one's own.