

The **Ohlone Indians**, also known as the **Costanoans** (a name given by Spanish colonists meaning “coastal people”), were the original inhabitants of what is now Castro Valley, California, and much of the San Francisco and Monterey Bay areas. Their presence in the region stretches back **thousands of years** before European contact.

Life of the Ohlone in Castro Valley:

Territory:

The Ohlone people occupied an area that included present-day Castro Valley, Hayward, San Leandro, and beyond. The

Chochenyo-speaking group of the Ohlone lived in the East Bay, including Castro Valley.

Villages:

They lived in **small villages** or extended family groups, typically near creeks or springs.

Castro Valley Creek, for example, would have been a key water source and ideal for settlement.

Villages were often made of tule reed huts and surrounded by oak woodlands and grasslands.

Diet:

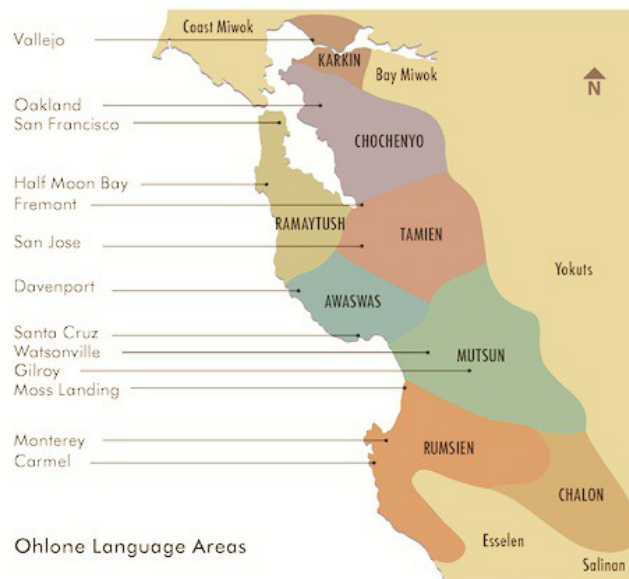
Their diet was rich and diverse:

- **Acorns** (particularly from valley oaks) were a staple, leached of tannins and ground into meal.
- **Game** included deer, rabbits, and birds.
- **Fish** and shellfish from nearby creeks and the bay were also important.
- They gathered **seeds, berries, roots, and nuts** depending on the season.



Culture and Traditions:

- The Ohlone practiced **animism** and believed all natural things had spiritual significance.
- They used **shell beads as currency** and traded with neighboring tribes.
- Music, storytelling, and dance were vital cultural practices.
- They held **ceremonial dances** and used **sacred sites**, some of which may have existed in the East Bay hills.



Technology and Craft:

- Tools were made from **stone, bone, shell, and wood**.
- They crafted beautiful **basketry**, often watertight and used for storage and cooking.
- They were skilled at managing the land through **controlled burns** to promote healthy ecosystems.



Spanish Contact and Impact:

With the arrival of the Spanish in the late 1700s, particularly through **Mission San Jose (1797)** in nearby Fremont, life for the Ohlone changed drastically. They were:

- **Converted and relocated** to mission life, often forcibly.
- Exposed to **diseases** that devastated populations.
- Subjected to loss of land, culture, and autonomy.



Legacy Today:

Despite colonization, **Ohlone descendants still live** in the Bay Area today. Tribes such as the **Muwekma Ohlone Tribe** are working for **federal recognition**, cultural revitalization, and land acknowledgment.

In Castro Valley and surrounding areas, archaeological findings (like shell mounds and grinding stones) and oral histories still bear witness to the deep Ohlone roots here.