The First People

You are standing on the land of the Huchiun, one of 45-50 Indian Tribes who thrived in the Bay Area. Nearby is a village site that is more than 2,000 years old. Historic accounts and the oral traditions of living Ohlone provide insights into the traditional way of life of this area’s first inhabitants. These accounts tell us that the people that lived in this area were known for their generosity, sharing, fair play, and humor.

The Ohlone used tules, which grew in profusion around the Bay. Here they were used to construct lightweight, buoyant, and maneuverable boats from which to hunt and fish. (Ohlone People in a Tule Boat on San Francisco Bay in 1816 from a lithograph of a watercolor by Louis Choris, by permission of the Bancroft Library)

The Ohlone Way of Life

Long ago, the Bay’s waters, marshlands and mudflats teemed with plants and animals, including elk, antelope, grizzly bear, and millions of migrating birds. The Ohlone skillfully used these natural resources for buildings, boats, clothing, baskets, nets, traps, snares, hunting blinds, medicines, and elegantly feathered ceremonial regalia. They traded clam shell beads and pendants for objects that were not available locally, such as obsidian arrow heads and bows.

Odhlon Families, Gathering of Ohlonean Peoples, Coyote Hills Regional Park, October 6, 1996. (Photo by Julia Francia, courtesy Beverly R. Ortiz, East Bay Regional Park District.)