

*Ohlone/Costanoan Indians  
of the San Francisco Peninsula  
and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*



By: Randall Milliken, Laurence H. Shoup, and Beverly R. Ortiz



# *Ohlone/Costanoan Indians of the San Francisco Peninsula and their Neighbors, Yesterday and Today*

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# ***Chapter 1. Introduction***

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This study responds to a complex historical and anthropological question posed by the staff of the National Park Service's Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA):

Analyze and synthesize sources identifying the Ohlone/Costanoan tribal groups that inhabited [federal] parklands in San Francisco and San Mateo Counties prior to Spanish colonization, and... document the cultural ties among these earlier native people and members of the present-day community of Ohlone/Costanoans (Scolari 2002:4).

Today's Ohlone/Costanoan people are the descendants of speakers of six related Costanoan languages that were spoken in west central California, from San Francisco Bay to Monterey Bay, when Spanish missionaries and settlers arrived in the 1770s. The San Francisco Peninsula lands of the Golden Gate Recreation Area (GGNRA) are within the territory of one of those six languages, San Francisco Bay Costanoan. In this study we describe the prehistoric and contact-period culture of the San Francisco Bay Costanoans and compare their culture to the cultures of surrounding language groups (other Costanoan language groups and non-Costanoan language groups of adjacent west-Central California areas). We then trace the Mission Period history and modern history of the San Francisco Bay Costanoan descendants, as well as of the descendants of the other Costanoan language speakers. Finally, we assess the degree of historic cultural affinity among today's separate descendant groups, people variously called Ohlone/Costanoans, Ohlones, or Costanoans.

In preparing our response to the GGNRA's research question, we found ourselves examining multiple study areas and utilizing the perspectives of numerous intellectual disciplines. This opening chapter provides an overview of those overlapping study areas and research approaches. The first section provides a capsule history of the people whose cultural relationships we are asked to consider. The next section describes six levels of study area that we have woven together in our response to the question. Then follows a section that describes our single most important data set for the historic period, the Franciscan mission registers. The last section of this opening chapter lays out our report organization and provides general information about its multiple research approaches.

## **PAST AND PRESENT OHLONE/COSTANOANS**

The San Francisco Peninsula is a 35 mile long spur of land, bordered on the west by the Pacific Coast, on the east by San Francisco Bay, and on the north by the