



Village Life of Ohlone Women

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Ohlone Women



Women's Activities in a traditional Ohlone Village

Gathering food

Cooking

Basket making

Caregiving

Clothing

-Women's Appearance





Gathering food

Edibles gathered by women included berries, plants, acorn roots, hazelnuts, pine nuts, walnuts, and vegetables. They gathered wood for fires.

Berries



Hazelnuts

Pine Nuts



Pine nuts



Walnuts



Wood

- If they were close to the ocean, women would go to mud flats (wetlands). By the end of the day they would have baskets full of sea food such as mussels, clams, and oysters.



lands



Mussels



Clams



Oysters

- If fresh water was nearby, women would be able to go out and get it. If not, men would.



Cooking

- Women were responsible in making the meals for their families.
- Thanks to all the things women gathered and the animals men hunted, women were able to do that using wood fires.
- Women cooked their meals over open fires, using basaltic rocks. These “cooking rocks” wouldn’t explode at high temperatures. They were heated and then carefully placed in waterproofed baskets where meat and other foods cooked in their heat.



Basaltic Rocks



Open fire

- ▶ They also steamed or smoked over slow burning fires.
- ▶ A popular food was Nupa (acorn) Soup. This was made by letting acorns dry, leaching them, pounding them, to turn them into flour. This was mixed with water and cooked in a watertight basket with hot cooking rocks. The soup simmered with hot rocks replaced as they cooled until meal time.



Watertight basket





Basket Making

- Women made baskets from plants including willow shoots, sedge rhizomes, bulrush rhizomes, tule, hazel.



Willow Shoots

Sedge Rhizomes



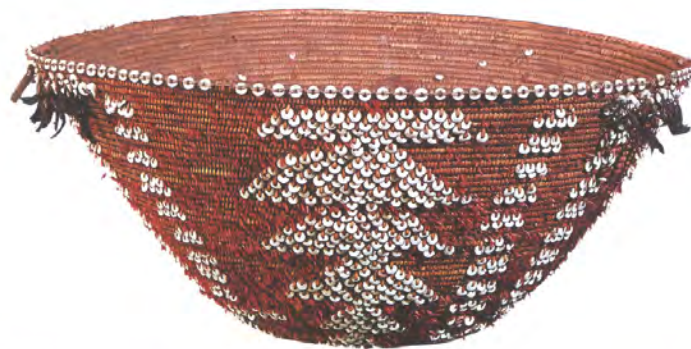
Bulrush

Tule



Hazel

- Plants were harvested in their season, processed, dried for several months, then cleaned and trimmed for weaving.
- Baskets were very time-consuming to weave.
- Baskets were a women's art and every basket had its own unique design.
- Baskets included cooking baskets, gambling trays, serving baskets, storage baskets, water-carrying baskets, etc.



Great art thrived among the California Indian people. This is an Ohlone/Costanoan coiled basket from the San Francisco Bay Area. It is decorated with olivella shell disc beads and woodpecker feathers. California Native American baskets are a fine art that combines beauty, form and function. The San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas are the home of the Ohlone people. (Musée de l'Homme, Paris, #09-19-53)



This is the oval form of ornate Ohlone/Costanoan coiled basket. Note the olivella shell disc beads attached using weft strands from below the beads, an unusual feature for the Ohlone people. (Musée de l'Homme, Paris #81-108-1)

- ▶ Linda Yamane, is an Ohlone Native American. She has been tracing and recreating her tribe's rituals, art, clothing, and jewelry throughout her life. She brings back the way of life of the Ohlones, so we don't forget how they lived.

Linda Yamane



- ▶ In the video below you will get a chance to see how baskets were made, starting with finding the right plants. Yamane begins singing some related Ohlone songs, then explains the art of basket making.
- ▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPBuGZ6sbKw>



Taking care
of others

- Though they did have healers called shamans, ordinary women were able to take care of others using different types of plant remedies. Yarrow reduced inflammation. Wild Ginger relieved toothaches



Fragaria Chiloensis helped stomachaches



Ribes currents helped swelling



- *Salvia Apiana* (White Sage) is an anti-inflammatory



- *Satureja Douglasii* (Yerba Buena) helps colds and fevers





Clothing

- Women were in charge making clothing for males and females.
- Women used the leftovers from the animals (skin, fur, bones) to create the clothing.



Animals fur



Animals bones



Women's Clothing

- Women made capes, blankets, jewelry, regalia (the distinctive clothing worn and ornaments carried at formal occasions as an indication of status), and all the special clothing for the special ceremonies such as dresses.



Capes



Regalia

► Traditional appearance

- Ohlone women wore skirts made of tule reed (a hollow grass) and deer skin, held on with rope belts.
- The Ohlone didn't wear shoes nor shirts.
- In winter, the Ohlone wore capes from animal fur to keep warm.
- Everyone wore necklaces and earrings made from shells, beads, and feathers.
- Many women had tattoos on their chins, dots or vertical lines, such as the three lines called "one elevens"
- For some, hair was up tied up with a buckskin thong of yellow or gray deerskin. Some women had bangs, and others wore their hair loose

Women's life events in an Ohlone Village

- Menstruation
- Marriage
- Pregnancy





Menstruation

- The way the girl acted at puberty would affect her the rest of her life, so everything she did had to be extra-carefully done. If she didn't act properly, the rest of her life she would be seen as an improper woman.
- This time was big for girls! The Ohlone had special ceremonies.
- A girl would be put into a separate hut made for the occasion. At night others came to dance and sing to the girl about becoming a woman.



Hut



Ohlone woman

- Girls couldn't have meat, fish, salt, or cold water.at this time



- Girls were prohibited from touching their bodies. Instead, each had a “scratching stick”
- Girls took ritual baths.
- In this hut, girls were taught how to be women by the elder women.
- At the end, a girl had a great feast in her honor, to celebrate her becoming of a women.



Marriage

- If the family was of modest status and respectable, a man who chose a woman would be accepted.
- Among higher status families, marriage was arranged by elders
- Males married outside their own villages to ensure the offspring were healthy.
- Women received gifts from the male's family before marriage



Ohlone man
today



Ohlone Villiage

- One big feast occurred that lasted several days. It honored the new marriage.
- At first, the couple would live with the women's family to see how the man was. If the man was worthy, the couple later moved in with the husband's family.
- Divorce was accepted if either the man or women became unfaithful or if they didn't pay attention to their relationship.
- In a divorce, children would live with their mother.



Ohlone women
with children



Pregnancy

- Pregnancy was a super-important event in a women's life, because she had to follow all the rules in order to have a healthy baby.
- Women were limited in what they ate. They couldn't have a meat, fish, or added salt during pregnancy



Ohlone woman with child

- A pregnant woman couldn't scratch her belly.
- If she had twins or deformed babies, they'd be killed because it was thought they were evil.
- A new mother wasn't allowed to engage any sexual activity until she was done nursing.



Ohlone Woman with
baby

Ritual and death



Group of Ohlone's



Ohlone Grave



Dance



Buried Ohlone's



Ritual

- The Ohlone had many different types of ritual ceremonies for health, spiritual, and social occasions. These included: The Sun Dance, Devil's Dance, Bear Dance, Coyote Dance, Dances, Puberty Dance, etc.
- Some dances were only for women, such as the Loole dance. Women danced in pairs to music created by rattles of wood and cocoons.



Ceremonies

- During ceremonies, men and women wore lots of feathers and other regalia.



Ohlones teaching children to dance

- Usually women did not wear the same ornaments as men



e men
regalia



Death and burial

- There was no difference when it came to burials for women and men. They were treated the same in the last event of their lives.
- Bodies were cremated or buried.




- If the deceased was a Chief, Shaman, or warrior, he or she would be cremated.

- Corpses were “tied in a flexed position with knees tucked under the chin and hands on the cheeks” according to Malcolm Margolin. They were embellished with feathers, flowers or beads.



Remains

- It was very important to bury the corpse with all her or his possessions in order for the deceased ghost to not be “angry” with the living.



Quiz

How were traditional Ohlone women dressed?

How did women express their art?

What were some important rules for women?

What would happen to children after parents divorced?

How were corpses treated, and why?

What occurred when a girl became a woman?

How important were women to the Ohlone?

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