

Ohlone Women Elders: Restoring A California Legacy



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**This book honors all those who came before us,
including Adeline Castro and Ella Rodriguez,
and all those who are still to come.**

Created and produced by Costanoan Indian Research, Inc,
Ann Marie Sayers, Director

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and Community Works West



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WELCOME HOME!

akkuyuT miSimipi

We move away now
From the horror of '49
From the genocide that trailed through our world
From the greed and violence
That forced the ancestors
To move into the shadows
The silence is broken
We walk with those who came before
They are proud and grateful
That we made the journey to find them
We walk in beauty
We are still here!
We are home

akkuyuT miSimipi

“The elders were always honored. At the gatherings elders go first. They are our teachers.” –Terry Reynaga

Costanoan Indian Research, Inc., under the direction of Ann Marie Sayers, conducted honoring ceremonies for Ohlone women elders in 2004 and 2006 at Indian Canyon. The elders speak of their experiences and reflect on the meaning of the honoring ceremony. By their very presence they provide the vital connection with the past and toward a more positive future for the Ohlone people.

The Costanoan/Ohlone people lived for thousands of years in harmony with their environment that extended from San Francisco to Big Sur and from the Pacific Ocean to the eastern side of Mt. Diablo. Foreign incursions into Costanoan territory began in 1769 when Portola traveled the San Francisco peninsula. The Spanish invasion was the prelude to the far more devastating rush for gold that almost over night became an assault on California native people and their living space. It is estimated that between 1848 and 1850, at least 4,500 California Indians were murdered by whites.¹ Volunteer militias waged a war of extermination supported by public policy. Municipal governments offered bounties for Indian scalps and heads. Edward Cheever, writing in 1870, stated that “*The Indian, if he becomes an obstacle, is classed with the wild animals, and is hunted to the death; this antagonism becomes mutual and is perhaps as natural as the antipathies of cats and dogs.*”² As a result of this holocaust, many native Californians bore silent witness to the horror. This assault has had lasting consequences that are still playing out. Silence became a tool for survival that has been passed down through generations long after the murdering ceased. To honor our living elders is also to honor those who came before, those who could not speak.

1 According to one estimate California’s native population declined from 150,000 in 1845 to less than 30,000 in 1870. From *The Indians of California: The Changing Image*, James J. Rawls

2 Edward E. Cheever, “The Indians of California”, *American Naturalist*, 1870



Viviana Soto-Torres-Espinosa
b. December 2, 1823



Elders



Louise Angulo



Louise: My great-great grandmother owned property near the golf course off Hwy. 68. Mom said when the white man would come to collect taxes, she'd run and hide in the hills because she thought they were going to kill her. That's how they got her property. Patrick Orozco said she also had property in Carmel Valley, clear down to Big Sur. I know that my mom was Indian; that's all she ever said. I really don't know too much about it the Ohlone culture. We didn't go to any gatherings. They didn't have any ceremonies or anything. At one time there was nobody living in Santa Rita except all our relatives. There were no outsiders. After they passed away and then different ones came in, you don't know nobody out there now. My oldest brother stayed there until he passed away. My younger brother moved to town. I got married and moved here to Salinas. My oldest sister got married. My cousins eventually moved away.

Q: Did your mother talk with you about being Ohlone and pass anything down to you?

Louise: No, she just said that her mother and father were Indian and that was about it.

Q: What does it mean to you to be considered an Ohlone woman elder?

Louise: It makes me proud. My mom was born in Monterey and all her relatives were born in Monterey way, way back. That makes me proud cause my mom was California Indian. I have a brother who is ninety years old. My sister just passed away. In her obituary that came in the paper, it said how proud she was. She knew a lot more than I do. My oldest daughter is the one who did all the family research. We went to the diocese in Monterey and read through many old baptismal records and found where my great-great grandfather, a 'neophyte', was baptized and given the Spanish surname, Espinosa. I said, "That's it!" Right after our Monterey Diocese visit, we came to the courthouse to do more research. We found records referring to a man who died in an old Indian woman's home in the Corral de Tierra area. The old Indian woman was my grandmother!

Q: How did the honoring ceremony make you feel?

Louise: It made me feel proud, really proud. These are the beads they gave me; they are beautiful. I enjoyed the groups that danced and the good food too. A gathering was held at Hartnell Junior College in Salinas. The next day my ninety

year old brother attended the dance group's performance at San Juan Bautista. Patrick Orozco introduced him to the crowd. My brother told the group, "I'm really happy that you're singing the songs that our great-grandmother sang." An old wax recording of her singing is at the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C.

Q: What would you like to see happen for the Ohlone people in the next generation?

Louise: I hope they would help the kids, especially those who want to go to college, so they could get an education and be successful. For the ones who can't afford it, who don't have any insurance, if they would have something to help them. Healthcare. If they had a club for the kids to join, that would be nice. They don't have anything like that here. I told them over at the Candelavia Center that I'd like to see more gatherings. Something for Indian senior citizens -- recreation would be really nice.

Q: When you were in school was there any teaching about native culture?

Louise: No, nothing.

Q: What could the larger society learn from the Ohlone?

Louise: The way they lived. They were a kind, peaceful society.

Q: Are any of your children or grandchildren interested in finding out more about their heritage?

Louise: My grandsons, John Knappe, Eric Angulo, Barry Knappe, and granddaughter, Roxanne Dickinson all have an interest. They know they are California Indians and are proud of it.

Work history ~

Louise: I went one year to high school. My dad left to work in the shipyards up in San Francisco because that was the beginning of the War. He left my mom and my younger sister and me; we had no money, no food, no nothing. I was sixteen. My girlfriend and I went down on Front Street in Salinas to the American Laundry and got jobs working there. They paid fifty cents an hour. I supported my mom and sister and myself. I worked there maybe two years. The school officials caught up with me and made me go to night school. Then my dad came back. I got married and I didn't work until my youngest girl was going to graduate from high school. I have four children. I worked at Laurel Inn for nine years until I quit to take care

of my grandson while my daughter worked.

Delfina Diaz



Q: When you were growing up, were there gatherings or celebrations related to being Native American?

Delfina: Nothing like that. I don't know why. It was not that they were ashamed, but it was never brought up. If it was brought up at home, I didn't hear it. We had a baseball team that was called the Santa Rita Indians. I must have been in seventh or eighth grade when they just started saying, "Oh, you Santa Rita Indians," kind of putting us down. I didn't understand why. I just let it go. I really didn't know how much Indian I had in me. My father was from Mexico. My mother is the one that's got the Indian. She looked Indian. She had the big nose, although she was very light. She lived in Santa Rita most of her life but was born in Salinas. I never knew my grandparents.

Q: When did you become interested in your Indian heritage?

Delfina: I think after I got into high school and maybe when I got married. My children started wanting to know their lineage, who their grandparents were. That's when we started looking up who my real great-grandparents were. Viviana Soto was my great-great-great grandmother; she was Indian. They have a tape of her singing.

Q: Why do you think there was all this silence about the culture?

Delfina: I don't know why. When I found out I had Indian in me, I was happy. In Santa Rita there was a group of kids. We were all related in Santa Rita one way or another. We used to play cowboys and Indians. I always wanted to be the Indian. The boys were the cowboys and the girls were the Indians. It was just a hide-and-seek type thing.

Q: What was it like growing up in Santa Rita?

Delfina: Everybody used to help everybody. It was like a big family. If someone got sick down the road, someone would be there to help them. It was just part of what we did. We always supported one another.

I remember growing up – it was just my brother and I. I was his protector because he was younger than me. I got into fights with boys. I was such a tomboy. I had long hair and Mama always had it braided. I'd come home with my braids half hanging out because the older boys tried to bully my brother. He was a sickly little

guy when growing up. I was always the one watching out for him when we went to school. When we were little he always used to call me ‘Honey.’ After he started school, the ‘Honey’ went away because they started teasing him.

Q: What would want the Ohlone children growing up now inherit about the past?

Delfina: To come out and realize who they really are, that’s how I feel. I wanted to know more of where my heritage was. I think this is something that they should know.

Q: How did they honoring ceremony make you feel?

Delfina: Belonging to where I come from. Getting to know more. There were so many questions I wanted to ask and I finally ended up going down and asking why the dancers had these marks on their chins and some of what the dance was about. I loved it! It just gave me chills. I was just so happy. It was something I had never seen before. I wished that my children would have been there to see the ceremony.

Q: As an Ohlone what do you think the Ohlone and Native Americans in general have to offer the larger society? What can the society learn from the Native American experience?

Delfina: To have respect. For one thing, the Indians were here first! These days it looks like the whites that came from Europe own everything. They took over and smothered the Indian culture. I never realized until I was an adult that it was such a wonderful culture and I was part of it. I think the younger generation needs to know this. I’ve told my children. I have three boys and a girl. I have fourteen grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Growing up we had to have respect for our elders; when we were introduced to them we had to say their last name, not just their first name – Mrs. Nunez or Mr. Castro. That’s one thing my mom and my grandpa said, “Keep respect for the elders always.” Not only anyone who is older, but if you have respect for younger children, they are going to have respect for you. That’s how I brought up my kids, because that is what I was taught. Have respect for everyone and their property.

Q: What would be your vision for the Ohlone in the future? What would you like to see happen?

Delfina: I think just to come out more, to have more of the younger generation get involved. To me it’s wonderful honoring the elders, but I think they need to pull

more from this next generation coming up. That would be great just to get them to understand who they are.

Q: What was the trigger for your renewed interest in the Ohlone culture?

Delfina: My mom and step-dad used to go to a lot of parades. Lu Diaz' husband, Paul, had a dance group in the early sixties/seventies. They were in parades at San Juan and Salinas. That stirred my interest, just watching them dance. From there I just kept off and on thinking about it, but really not getting into it, because I was trying to raise four kids.

Q: As an Ohlone woman elder, is there anything you would like to pass on to the next generation?

Delfina: Be proud of who you are! Regardless of what mixed nationality you have in you.

Q: What do you believe are the responsibilities of an Ohlone elder?

Delfina: To get the next generation more involved in going to some of the gatherings. I think that is what we need to do. I'll do whatever I can do, and participate whenever I can.

Q: What do you see as your involvement in the cultural restoration process that is taking place?

Delfina: To do whatever I can, participate whenever I can. I think it is wonderful that we have these gatherings. Some of the songs they were singing, Patrick Oroszco told me later, were songs that my great-great grandmother had sung on a tape. I thought that was pretty neat. My mother never, never spoke of the Indian heritage. I knew that we were, but it was never talked about. If they spoke of anything, it was always in the Spanish language. As little kids we were sent outside. I don't know whether they didn't want us to know, but they never spoke of it. I don't know why. I knew the one I called my grandfather, who was actually my great-uncle, Jose Silvano Espanoza, looked like an Indian. He was dark-complexioned, had the nose, the high cheekbones. I loved him dearly. I was his favorite. I was always with him. We were always in the garden planting. He taught me about planting and talked about herbs, what they were good for. I do recall a few things. We'd talk about things that happened there years ago. He would take my brother and me on walks sometimes. We had a place called The Lane. He'd pick different kinds

of greens, saying what was good to eat. He was just trying to teach me about herbs, what was good and wasn't good. I remember being very young at that time and not really paying attention when he would say, "Now this is yerba buena or this is mansania", which are teas that can do this, that. The one that I did remember is the one called wormwood. It is supposed to be good for your feet if you've got dropsy – its swelling. He told me to use mud on a bee sting and it will take the sting away. Had I paid attention, I might know more about different plants out in the garden.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people? What would you wish would happen in the next ten years?

Delfina: I'd like to see more gatherings and storytelling to get the younger people involved. I think the young men who sing and dance right now are great. I've told my children, "You should come! You would enjoy it and learn a little bit more of your heritage." I have two who live in Hollister and two in Prunedale.

Q: What would you like the larger community to know about the Ohlone culture?

Delfina: That it is here. That it is all around us. I was born in Hollister, but I was raised here in Santa Rita. My mom would say, "Well, she is your cousin or that's your aunt." Actually it wasn't my aunt; they were cousins, but through respect we always said, Aunt Eleanor and Uncle Augie. We never called them by their first names until I got married. We were just all related and one big family.

There are nine or ten of us ladies now that go once a month and have lunch. They are all part of old Santa Rita that I grew up with. We are family and it's part of our culture. Growing up, a lot of Santa Rita kids didn't admit that they were Indian. We were called Santa Rita Indians, not Ohlone or Costanoans. They should go to the gatherings and get to know the Ohlone culture.

Q: When you were growing up was there any education regarding the contributions and culture of the Ohlone people?

Delfina: Not that I can remember. When we did the missions like San Juan, Carmel and all of the others, then they did speak of the Indians. But I never knew who they were; they were just Indians. It has changed. There is more education now.

Q: Is there anything else you will like to happen for the Ohlone people now and in the future?

Delfina: With you ladies coming and interviewing us, that is great. Nobody has ever done that before – come and talk with us and ask us questions. I would like to see more gatherings and someone to tell the story. I know there are storytellers, but when the dancing is going on, there is no one there to tell you what the dance is about or what they are singing about. That is what I'd like to know.

Work history ~Board and Care for Mentally Ill

My husband, Tony, and I raised four children. First of all I worked in the fields. I know what it is to work out in the hot sun. I have respect for all those people who are out there in that field, because I know how my knees felt, how my back hurt, and I was young then. Then my husband didn't want me to be working. When my children got into grade school and in their teens, and I knew I needed to be home more with them so I took a job taking care of mentally ill people. I had six ladies who I took care of – different ages, from their thirties to their sixties/seventies. I did that for thirteen and a half years. I had a halfway house where they needed to be in with a family and help them to get where they could go out on their own. I was so happy that none of my ladies ever had to go back to the Agnew Hospital or to Napa Hospital. I had a lot of good information and talks with the psychiatrists who they saw. They helped me out a lot, understanding what their problems were and how to cope with them. This Japanese lady, Yoshiko Teraji, had been in concentration camps during the War and in Agnos Hospital for I don't know how many years. I love her to this day. When she came to me all she would ever say was yes and no or I don't know. My youngest son I think was the one who really brought her out because he would come home from kindergarten and show her his papers. That's how she started coming out. To this day we still keep in touch. The reason why I gave up home care: Tony and I kept wanting to go places and do things. One night I woke up and said, "I'm not going to renew my license this year. This is going to be the time for Tony and I to do what we want to do." My children were all out on their own then.

Lu Diaz & Marie Rhyans



Q: What were your feelings about the honoring ceremony?

Lu: I thought it was great. It felt a belonging to something. It was really, really nice and satisfying to me.

Marie: I enjoyed it. I thought it was very nice. I didn't know what to expect going there because it was my first time for something like that. I very much enjoyed Ann Marie who really is a neat person. Of course we saw dancers that day too which were very enjoyable. I enjoyed learning everything about the culture that I didn't know. I felt honored for being honored as an elder.

Q: What does that mean to be an Ohlone elder?

Marie: I haven't given it a lot of thought, actually. Tells me I'm certain of getting older. I need to see how other elders feel and react. Some of them are certainly closer to the Indian culture than I have been.

Lu: I, too, would like to learn more. We were never in that kind of a group except for family so it's new to me, but I think it's great. I'd like to learn a lot more.

Q: When you were growing up was there any reference to being Ohlone?

Lu: We were known out here as the Santa Rita Indians. In that way we were together. We went to school up to the eighth grade here. When we were in high school, we were separate from the Mexicans and other cultures. We were always Santa Rita Indians. We knew that, but that is about it. Our people were all busy working and doing this and that. I remember being different. My uncle, who we called godfather, told me even when they were young, that when more people came into the area, they were prejudiced against the Indians. He had a couple of brothers who were blond and blue-eyed and they got the jobs. They were the ones who were invited to join the American Legion or whatever while the darker-skinned were called 'buckskins' and put aside. So even then I heard that. Maybe that's why we were amongst ourselves, I don't know. I remember hearing that a lot.

Marie: We were not referred to as Ohlone growing up. I think our society put them down. They stopped them from doing their cultural and religious things. They changed their names. It wasn't a popular thing, I believe, at that time to be an Indian, even though I think most of them were proud to be Indian. Still it was kept

quiet because of our prejudiced society.

Q: Were there any gatherings – dances or religious ceremonies or cultural activities?

Lu: Not that I remember.

Marie: Our cousin, Eddie Alvarado, we always thought of him as the Indian. He was raised on a reservation down south in the San Diego area. When he would come, there would be dances around the bonfire. He would show how to make different things to participate. I do remember the drum he made. My brothers and sisters and anyone who was around, neighbors, he'd show them how to do those things. He taught them how to dance around the bonfire. They just had a good time. I remember as a little kid seeing that. What he wore he would put together – some kind of Indian type dress, probably deer skin and feathers. I remember his moccasins. It was a fun thing to me.

Lu: I remember him making the arrows and the quiver – making some of those things was exciting.

Marie: I remember him teaching them how to use them.

Lu: Our dad's personality demanded respect. Lot of other men respected him. He wouldn't take too much from anybody because if they said something disrespectful, he might punch them out. If they acted out of line in our house – had too much to drink and said something, cussing or whatever, he would not allow that. He was not a big man, but he was tough.¹

Marie: My dad was so loving and respectful to my 'Nanita', my great-grandmother. He always bought food that she liked and he'd give her a little glass of wine with her dinner. We had a lot of gatherings at our house, not necessarily Indians, but probably most of them were part, because they were all relatives. They came from San Francisco or wherever to have a barbeque. He enjoyed getting the family together. My mother was a good cook so of course all the relatives liked that.

Lu: Colache is a squash, corn, tomatoes and onions dish. It's something like succotash. We went to Linda Yamane's uncle's, who is my dad's first cousin, one of his favorite cousins – the Barcelons. I took a big pot of that. He was so happy to eat

¹ *He was a descendant of the first governor of California under Spanish rule.*

some. Linda said, “Gee, I never heard of it before. Is it a Native California dish?”
Oh yeah.

Q: In school was there any education regarding the Native American culture?

Lu: I don’t think so or we would remember.

Q: When did you become interested in your heritage?

Lu: I think I was always interested in the back of my mind. About 1951 our people got an attorney and they sued the government and got some money for us. Not very much. Then again, we received another amount so I knew that we were Indian and my kids were all happy to know that too.

Marie: I became interested more so in the teenage years. That’s when people who lived in town started referring to us more, I think, as the Santa Rita Indians. I remember when we were in high school and received that first check from the government for being part Indian – my dad, of course, and his brothers, and then for some reason Lu and I. It had to do with the year we were born, I guess, but our brother and sisters in-between had to re-register.

Q: When you were growing up family members really didn’t talk much about being native and what that meant?

Lu: I was told we were Carmel Mission Indians. I remember having a birthday party for my uncle. Everyone came dressed with feathers and Native American attire. He was so thrilled about that. Then we were invited to a pow-wow by the Redhouses, who were Arizona Indians. We took my uncle and they treated him so beautiful. He just loved it. He even danced. He really liked it. But we never did get invited to other gatherings.

Q: What would you want the larger society to learn from the Ohlone experience?

Lu: Maybe that we’re still here. We’re not gone. How about being recognized as a tribe to get whatever benefits could be from that. Federal recognition. Everybody thinks of gambling casinos, but I think of clinics and education, including higher education.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people in the future?

Lu: Federal recognition. That would be one of the nice things to be recognized

as a group of people, tribe. To be able to have gatherings once in a while would be nice. Get to know more about us.

Marie: I don't have any idea of how many Ohlone there are. I'd like to find that out.

Q: What do you think the current role of the women elders is in the Ohlone culture?

Marie: I think they are highly regarded as elders, first of all as women who have the children. Our nephew, Gregg Castro, mentioned how important the women are. He likened them to a bear who was very highly thought of and strong and respected.

Lu: As we grew up, we always respected and honored our elders. When my great-grandmother came, everybody just doted on her. My father and uncle would go buy this certain lamb to fix for her. It was so wonderful. All the family would get together around her. I think that is so beautiful that Native Americans are known for that. Respect. Not only for each other, but for the land. There are so many terrible things going on on the earth right now.

Q: Do you want to talk more about the land issue, particularly in this area?

Lu: I think it is terrible. The people who run the cities and counties have no heart because they come from here and there. They don't think of the future; they think of now. Money. We have a beautiful land here. It is farm land, land to grow things, and they are just building on it. Our water is bad and they are still trying to develop more. We're not taking care of our land. It's really a bad sight. I think we need to learn a lot more about how to take care of our land. Our ancestors took care of the land.

Q: What do you think your duties are as Ohlone women elders?

Marie: Telling our children and grandchildren about the respect that should be due to not just the elders, but to all Indians in general, the tribes. Teach them what we have learned and then probably we should learn more about things ourselves. How our ancestors lived; how they treated the land, their respect for all living things. I think they were treated badly and because of that, they turned on the white man. They were lied to over and over and over and definitely not respected. My sister who died last year mentioned that they were killed for sport at one time. They were not respected at all.

Lu: To teach our kids by example. If we start learning more about it, they will too. I know they already feel a love for Native Americans. But they need to learn more and get involved. Everybody is busy raising their kids or grandkids, like I was twenty or thirty years ago. That's what they're doing now too – trying to make a living. Husband and wife are working now.

Work history ~

Lu: I didn't go to work until my son was fifteen. I had three sons. I was a baker and a cook right down the hill here where I went to school as a kid. I liked that. I used to start at the crack of dawn and be home when they all got out of school. Then I had grandkids we were raising. We used to bake and cook and do everything from scratch. I worked for seventeen years.

Marie: I was working through having most of my five children. I retired here in Salinas after twenty-five years at Natividad Medical Center as a medical unit clerk. I worked in different areas – emergency room, ended up in X-ray. In the middle of this I was trying to raise my kids. My husband was not around.

Lu: Thank God she moved back to this area and lived right down the hill so when she was working later, her kids would come up here. When we were youngsters we were really close. When she got married, she left and I stayed, but she came back and it was like she hadn't been gone. My other sister lived in San Jose and then she moved back. It is nice to have sisters back again.

Q: What do you hope your children and grandchildren will do in relation to being Ohlone?

Lu: I hope they respect that and learn all they can about it. I hope there will be funds eventually to help them go to college. Now I have eight great-grandchildren. Three of them live right here on the block.

Q: How would you like to be remembered as Ohlone women elders?

Lu: That I learned a lot about my heritage and then followed through to the end.

Marie: I think pretty much like she said. I love the Indian heritage. Some of my kids already do, but the rest of them will eventually. The culture that I know about, I admire. Certainly their bravery. They have suffered greatly, that's for sure. It's the people themselves. They were good people. They were honest, brave and treated the

earth, animals and other creatures fairly. They killed when they were hungry.

Lu: I feel sorry for all the Jews who were put to death. It hurts my heart. Then the Japanese because they were taken advantage of. But how about the Native Americans? Native Americans lost their land. They were murdered. They had a price on their heads. We went to a meeting in Carmel. This doctor talked to me afterward and asked if I had ever heard about forty men who were invited to a big barbeque in King City in the 1800's. They shot them all! They killed them! Nothing was ever done about it. Their families were left here with no males. That breaks my heart to hear that. The same uncle who used to talk to us about mistreatment of Indians said people used to go over to hire some braves. "I want you to come and work for me, or show me where this or that is, or dig some holes" They'd take them out somewhere and shoot them! They'd bury them out there and nobody would see them anymore. Nothing was ever done. This was in our area – Carmel. They were taken advantage of. They took their land. People would come and say, "Don't worry about anything. We'll pay the taxes and do all the paperwork." Pretty soon they had the land and out went the Indians.

Marie: It's happened over and over. It makes me lose heart about what is going to happen in the future. Will there be a change? You kind of doubt it. The government has been really wrong to a lot of people, not just the Indians, but certainly them. They were number one. Our family lost land also, to the fork-tongued white man.

Lu: The same uncle, who was so close to the Indian heritage, mentioned that great-grandfather or great-great grandfather had planted the first orchard in Carmel Mission area where they had some land. That land was taken from them for whatever reason. They would find an excuse or a paper or whatever to take the land. He mentioned some land up in the Prunedale area – certain people in the family used to own this land and the government took it.

Lu: Also in Monterey – a lot of land over there. They were told, "Don't worry about it. We're paying the taxes." Before you knew it, they owned it and you are out. The Presidio in Monterey and Carmel and Corral De Tierra were land grants or something that the federal government just took over.

Marie: What did they do? They sent them to these reservations out in the boonies where nothing grows. They hardly had anything to eat. It's been a horrible thing.

Lu: That is the reason why the government took five million dollars and paid each one a certain amount, but they took millions and millions of dollars worth of land. They just paid a little piddly amount. The Native Americans up in Northern California were all mad at us because we took the little bit of money, but who wants to hold out. They still haven't gotten anything up there.

Q: If you were able to influence the future regarding this land issue, what would be fair for native people?

Lu: I don't know what could be done now. I'd like something to be done. Maybe recognize that it did belong to the people. Get some government land back.

Marie: There is a lot of land in southern Monterey County available, where our people were. The government should give some land back, or pay the Native Americans for it.

Q: If the federal and state governments did what was right, what would be fair for Native Californians?

Marie: Give some of that land back. If you ask for money, I don't know how that would go. If they had to give some land back to the ancestors of these people, that would be even better.

Lu: I would like to see land come back, but is it all taken over by whom? How about down the coast – that's where people were anyway. Or even Ft. Ord – there's a lot of land there. There is a lot down south that is owned by the government, a big chunk of land down by Los Padres National Forest. Somehow or another there should be some land available.

Marie: When we went to the burning ceremony² down near the Los Padres Forest one of the guys mentioned that that land belonged to the Indians at one time.

Q: What is the importance of ceremony, such as the honoring ceremony for the elders?

Marie: For me it is togetherness – getting together.

Lu: Showing respect also. Honoring the Indian culture, belonging.

Ruth Orta



Ruth: I was born in Newark in Alameda County. I'm seventy years old and I've been here all my life. My mom was born in Pleasanton in 1902. That's where I have the native in me. She was the youngest surviving child of her mother's children. I know of at least eight. Her father was a Spaniard from Costa Rica. Her mother was the Ohlone Indian. My mother was put into the convent when she was five or six. The records kept on the Indians were not that accurate at the Mission. She was raised by the Dominican sisters at St. Mary of Palms School. It was a convent, but it was also an orphanage. My sisters and I researched her school records to see what kind of grades she had. All it had was when she went into the school, but not the exact date, and that she was half-orphaned. That was when her father put her in the orphanage. Her mother had already died. Then when her father passed away, she was an orphan. She was raised at the Dominican convent in Mission San Jose until she was a young girl, then they sent her out to be a housekeeper. She did cooking and cleaning for rich people. As far as her culture, there wasn't any. In fact, they already spoke Spanish. Her mother, who was the Indian, spoke Spanish. They weren't allowed to have their language or their ways of living or their beliefs or anything. My mother spoke Spanish when she went into the convent. They took that language away from her also. She had to speak English.

My mother was the most knowledgeable woman I've known in my life. She was my teacher. She had eight of us and I'm the second to the oldest. There were four boys and four girls. I'm now the surviving eldest in my family. We were poor. My mother was a working lady. She was my teacher when I came home from school. The teachers didn't take time. Talk about prejudice! We didn't realize it was prejudice, but they didn't help us like they did kids who had money, the people from the ranches and all that. We were lucky, because when we went home, that's when our studies started. My mom was really an educated lady. She loved to read and know about things that were going on in the world. She was women's lib before they ever invented it, and she was an American Indian. And she also said she was an American Indian. I was born in 1934 and my oldest brother in 1932. It's on all of our birth certificates that our mom was an Indian. Back then they didn't do that; they said they were Mexican. Most of the family said they were Mexican. My mom

used to argue with them. I'm not going to say what she said, but in essence, "You're not a Mexican; you're an American Indian!"

My mother was married three times, a widow twice. My oldest brother's dad was Irish. He got killed before my brother was born. My mom was pregnant when he got killed in an automobile accident. She lived with her sister for a while in Brentwood. Then she answered an ad in the paper that wanted a live-in housekeeper in Newark to care for a physically and mentally challenged son. She moved to Newark. This was my dad. His first wife was a full-blooded Ohlone Indian; he was Scotch-Irish from Illinois and came here after the Spanish American Civil War down in Panama. He settled here on the West coast. My mom married my dad, who was twenty-seven years older than her, and she had me, my sister, Faye, and my sister, Lola. My dad died in 1939 when I was five. Then she married my step-dad, who was from Mexico. He was good friends with my dad. I learned Spanish because my step-dad didn't speak English. I'm the only one in my family that speaks Spanish. I got part of my mom's culture back when I learned how to speak Spanish. My mom had four children with my step-dad.

My mom told us to be very proud of who we were: American Indian/Native American. At the time we were known as the Digger tribe. That's what they told us. They also told us we were Costanoans, which is the Spanish word for people-by-the-coast. So we had no Indian name, but this is what they called us. When we had to register, to get on the rolls in California, my mom got all her relatives, who said they were Mexican, to put their names on the roll, because we were going to be recognized as who we were. She was forceful in getting that done, which is not recognized by the rest of the family. They don't say who did all of the running around. My mother never drove. We did all the driving and running around with her as kids. I learned to drive when I was twelve and took her here and there and everywhere. She was the one who got us on the rolls in the state of California. She was really, really a forceful little lady.

Malcolm Margolin, who wrote [The Ohlone Way](#), just wishes he would have got to know my mom when she was well and could speak. He met her when we made the film at Coyote Hills in Fremont for Channel 9 with Michael Tobias, of Science Notes. The film is only five minutes long, but it's awesome. He would have gotten a

more truthful outlook on the Ohlone way than where he got it from.

A lot of the family members didn't want anybody to know who she was because she was so outspoken. She would have said the truth about all of them, saying that they were Mexican and didn't want to say that they were Indian. She passed away in Newark in 1986 when she was eighty-four. We were allowed to go to church, but my mom said, "This is all God's world. We have it here in our house." No matter where we were, that's where he was. She didn't have to go into a house. My mom was not a religious fanatic; she was a spiritual woman.

Q: What do you hope will come out of this honoring ceremony?

Ruth: I hope it's an ongoing thing. I appreciate it. I know in age I am an elder, but I feel like there are more people who are experienced who belong to that word. I want to grow and learn so I can become a real true elder to teach people who are younger. I want to do that as far as the Ohlone intern program at Coyote Hills. I take replicas of artifacts to school and talk to the kids who just love it, because there is somebody who is older that can talk to them, who is actually connected to the people who were here. A lot of kids don't know what Ohlone native people are. I want to do this. I know my granddaughter is going to continue it. She's really involved in it.

I went to the Menlo Park American Indian Veterans for an anniversary of their sweat lodge and found out that theirs is the only sweat lodge that is built on government property in the United States. I got to meet Indians from the western parts of the United States, like Kenny Farmer, the Lakota from South Dakota and all the other Indians I met from different tribes. In the United States, the native people are all one because we believe in the spiritual native way. That's what I like about doing things like that, because we are connected. I want it to keep going where we're all connected so that maybe it will change.

People were so respectful of the earth and of their Creator. I think they had their spiritual way that nobody understood, even like the organized religions – Catholicism and all the rest. The natives had such a spiritual closeness with their Creator and that's the reason why they didn't have pollution or any of that stuff in the land. They gave thanks to their Creator in their spiritual way. For example, you

don't ever disrespect food. You know how kids will throw things. That was a no-no with my mom. You don't do that because the Creator gave us that to eat and you do not ever disrespect food. Also, when growing up we had a lot of animals, like chickens and rabbits and goats because we lived on a ranch. Naturally we rented from the people who owned it. If there was anything that we weren't going to eat, we gave it to the animals to share.

Q: What do you think is special about being an Ohlone woman elder?

Ruth: For me, to learn the ways and to carry on my mother's ways. My mother was so awesome and very outspoken. She was always my inspiration. I always wanted to grow up and be like my mom because I thought she was the toughest, neatest little lady. She could say anything to anybody. Four foot ten. My dad was six four. I wanted to grow up to be like my mom and be as smart and intelligent as my mother. I'd like for people to know me as a strong person because of my mom.

My sister and I were a year and four days apart; I'm the oldest. We were both in this catechism class at the same time. We were going to make first Holy Communion. I'm glad I learned those ways. Then I could make my choices and live the way I think I should live and not the way somebody in organized religion wants me to live. I want to live the way I think the Creator put me here to live. My mother asked us why we were going to make first Holy Communion. We gave her some off the wall answer. She said, "No, you children are not going to make it." We wanted to go because we were going to buy these white little dresses and pretty long veils. We were going to get our hair done. No, it wasn't good enough for her, so we couldn't go and my mother's word was law. The nuns encountered her walking down the main street in Centerville. We lived about a mile down on the ranch where we were raised. She encountered these nuns and they said, "Mrs. Ruano, why aren't your children in catechism and why aren't they going to make first Holy Communion?" She replied, "You ladies are not doing your job. I asked my children what was the reason they were making first Holy Communion and they didn't know the answer. I'm sorry. They'll have to go back for another year. They're not making it." She turned around and walked away.

I was kind of a timid, shy, self-conscious person growing up. I loved to stick my

nose in a book and read. I'd pretend I was in places I read about. My mom always told us, "Don't ever be afraid to speak to anyone or to voice your opinion because this is our country. This is our land. And originally it was ours to begin with. You speak your mind. You don't have to be rude; you just speak your mind. Don't ever say you can't do something until you try it. If you try and you fail, then that's okay. But if you don't try and say you can't do it, then that's another story." No matter what I've tried, I've been able to do because of my mom. She was my inspiration. I guess I grew up to be like my mother. I want to continue to learn so I can carry it on and leave that to my children and inspire them. So far it has because my kids are outspoken about the situation.

Q: Why do you think it is important to honor the women elders and do you believe the ceremony that took place should continue to happen periodically?

Ruth: Definitely. The elders know so much that they can share with everybody about your family and where you came from. The older you get, the more you know. I think it's good for the young kids to listen to the elders. It's great that Ann Marie has ceremonies and gatherings on her property because we don't have anything really in the area where I live that would be like Indian Canyon. It's so close to nature. That's what the ancestors were about -- close to nature. I was really honored to be there. I was doing it for my mom. I know she was shining down looking at me thanking me for doing that. I felt great and I was really honored.

Q: Why do you think cultural ceremonies are important?

Ruth: For me it's because we didn't have anything like this growing up, especially for my mom who was the native. I really appreciate Bev Ortiz from East Bay Regional Park District for the simple reason that she is the one who is involving my daughter and my granddaughter and me in relearning our culture, which we did not know anything about. She asked us if we would like to belong to an Ohlone intern program where we would learn our culture. What we learned in school was nothing so when Bev asked us this, we jumped at it. We didn't learn about the Indians, because there was nothing there for us to learn. When you go to school, like my oldest daughter said, "A page or two", and that was it! There was nothing truthful about the Indians. We knew we were who we were, but we didn't have

anything to show our kids. Now we have it to show my children, my grandkids and my great-grandkids.

I am now an Ohlone intern at East Bay Regional Park District at Coyote Hills in Fremont. We're relearning our culture. I love making acorn soup because it's something that I know my people did. I'm learning to make the acorn soup at Coyote Hills with Bev Ortiz – leeching it, cracking it, pounding it – the whole bit. I actually cook it in the basket with the hot rocks. We cook it the first Sunday in October every year when we have the Ohlone gathering. Bev is the one who started it. Julia Parker came down from the park in Yosemite and showed us how to do the acorn and the soap root and the cordage. She learned from the elders. They still carry on. That amazed me too that there were other California Indians who still had their culture, their language. It was awesome when I heard the first one speak. I'm just sad that my mom didn't get to hear it. I got to speak at Berkeley for one of the California Indian conferences. That was the first time I heard a native Californian speak the language. I was so emotional. I understand that Linda Yamane is learning how to speak off the Harrington tapes from Berkeley. Harrington was an archaeologist back in the '20's. Once she gets to learn, maybe I can learn how to say some words and record it for my family. That would be neat.

I still have a long way to go. I just recently retired, so before that I didn't have the time I wanted to spend on the program to learn. I have to learn all the different types of acorns, which I know a few, but I want to be good at it, where I can know everything. My daughter, Ramona, makes the soap root brush. Soap root is a plant. They made the brushes to clean their mortars and their utensils. They even used it as a little whisk broom to clean their mats or whatever. The plant is also edible. You can cook the bulb and make glue for the handle of the brush. They used it to fish. In fact they outlawed it, because it was so successful in getting the fish. It didn't kill the fish; it got in their gills and stunned them. My granddaughter, Sabrina, does the cordage. Cordage is a string made out of the dogbane plant. That's what they used for string. For baskets they used sedge and willow. As an intern I'm learning how they used to live. It's neat. I was over fifty years old when I learned. We all go to the schools and different places.¹

1 Since this interview took place, I have two more granddaughters who have become Ohlone interns at

Ramona is a most likely descendent monitor. The archaeologists love her, because she loves to work with them. She's really got that strong feeling about who we were and she wants to learn. She's not going to hold up an archaeologist from finding out what we were. She respects the burials and they respect her for that. Ramona is also a native monitor for the developers. They're building in Brentwood. They had a bunch of students that went out there and camped overnight with my daughter. They found out that the acorn goes back further than what they thought, here in California where the Ohlone lived. I think Randy Milliken² was there. I guess he's studying what they're finding in that dig. They've come across hundreds of burials already. They learned a lot from that site. She is the one who wants to learn and she knows a lot.

The grand opening of the park by the Peralta House in Oakland will be in October 2006. My daughter, Mona, and I will have pictures that will be in the walkway. They are going to have an Ohlone part, like a garden where they have the food that they ate. They are going to have stories about it. I just wish my mother could be here, but I know she is in spirit, that she sees what I am doing, and her granddaughter and her grandchildren and her great-great grandchildren. My granddaughter, Sabrina, who does the cordage, her kids want to get involved too. Christopher, my great-grandson, has a verse in our little flyer that we put out for our Ohlone gathering. It just makes me feel good that I can learn about my native ways.

Q: Why are proud to be of Ohlone descent?

Ruth: Because I think we were amazing people. Look at all the thousands of years that they lived here and did not pollute the earth. They gave thanks to the earth for giving them what they had. Whatever they took, they gave back to the earth. It's amazing how they lived here for thousands of years and didn't destroy anything. I wish I lived back then. It was hard, but even in my lifetime it was hard because we didn't have all the modern-day conveniences, but it was awesome growing up because you respected each other more. There wasn't what we have today;

Coyote Hills, East Bay Regional Park.

2 Randall Milliken is the author of A Time of Little Choice: The Disintegration of Tribal Culture in the San Francisco Bay Area 1769-1810.

everything is so terrible. It really is bad. There is no respect for humans or the earth that we live on. I think it's great to learn and to share.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people in the future?

Ruth: The Ohlone need to be recognized as a people and treated with respect and not discarded. There's not a lot in our schools that you learn about the Ohlone or any other California or American Indian. I just hope they have an open mind for us and know that we're still here! When I was a kid growing up, it wasn't good to be a native, but thank God for my mom. She was so proud. My vision is my children and my grandchildren and great-grandchildren: I hope they continue to learn about our people so we can carry it on so it will never die. It will always be here. They almost had us all extinct.

Bev Ortiz and Nancy Olsen, mentors in my late life, helped me learn about my people. Nancy Olsen is an archaeologist/anthropologist. She was the first person to tell me different things about the native people. I asked her, "Why did they call us Ohlone? We thought we were the Digger tribe." We found out that it was a derogatory term used against the native people because they dug in the ground. My mom said to me after she found out that the Digger tribe was supposed to be a derogatory term, "You know what, kids, we're just California Indians. We're native people here." When we discovered the Ohlone word, Nancy said, "It's Miwok or Pomo for people by or near the water so this is what they wanted to call you. But to be exact, how do we find out that it is true?" That's my vision to really know what we were called, what our people were like. Maybe somebody out there knows, another elder. I enjoy gatherings like this because I get to mingle with people who have the same background as I do. We are Ohlone together. Look at Ann Marie; she kept her mother's land. My mom was from Pleasanton; that's where my people were from. That's nothing but wealth out there. We could have had a great part of the country to be ours, if we had the rights, but we didn't have them.

Q: What do you think the Ohlone have to teach the larger society?

Ruth: The family values that they had and the respect they had for one another. We're learning a lot about how they were with each other. I don't think the Ohlone were a violent people. Maybe in their world it was the end of where they were

because then there was water. They were more of a social people. Our climate here in California is so good so they must have been happy. I just want people to know how they were and what they did. They must have really been passive people to let the Spaniards just come here and take their land. They must have been good people. It's just unfortunate that the people who came here had other things in their mind other than religion. My mom told us to always treat someone just the way you would want them to treat you. She had that in her; it must have been in her mind her entire life.

I thank my mom because if it weren't for my mom, I would have never made it. She taught us so much growing up, giving us good values to use in our life for everyday living. We're only here for a while and then when we leave, everything stays here. We don't take anything where we're going. So just enjoy what you have every day because we may not see tomorrow and what happened yesterday is gone. We can't change that. If it was bad, just forget it and try to do better. I think a lot of people wouldn't have to see a shrink if they would think more like that.

Work History ~

I didn't graduate high school. I got married young, but that didn't stop me. I've never been without a job in my life. I worked since I was sixteen years old in all kinds of jobs. I have five daughters and two sons. I worked in very difficult jobs starting out. My first job paid eighty-five cents an hour; it was in a packing shed. It was horrible. They used to dump up the cauliflower. We had these rubber suits on. The water would come down on us. I worked in canneries and packing sheds and warehouses. I worked in a hospital. I ran a press in a check printing place. I worked in everything you could think of since I was sixteen years old. I operated the light rail trains in San Jose for Santa Clara Valley Transportation and I drove buses. When we were kids, everybody worked in the fields out here cutting 'cots and picking strawberries and cherries, harvesting corn and green beans. But this place was beautiful! It was so gorgeous. We used to go to the canyon with my mom for our Sunday dinners in the summer. It was so clean you could see the fish in Niles Canyon. It smelled so clean and now it's so ugly. It's gross; it's got junk in it.

Charlotte Paes



Talking about family ~

Charlotte: My parents are John and Eleanor Soberanes. I've got Indian on my mom's side and my dad's side. I grew up in the Santa Rita area. We lived in Santa Rita all of our lives. I was always happy with my childhood. We were poor. We got poor when my dad brought the other kids in, but you know, it made us stronger. My dad taught us family values. I have a lot of good memories about my parents. I never heard my dad say a cross word to my mom. Every Sunday was family day. We went to church. There were four of his children and dad and mom brought in two girl cousins and two boy cousins because their parents weren't taking care of them. That was nine and he worked like a dog, but he put us all through Catholic school. All of us went to school. All of us had a Christmas. Now kids have to go to an amusement park to have fun. We used to go the beach, go the park and have a picnic. The kids nowadays want to be entertained; they don't know about entertaining themselves.

We only had a two-bedroom house in Santa Rita. He had one step-uncle, who was paralyzed, could not move from the waist down, and then he had an uncle who lost his legs bull riding and he had a wooden leg. They lived there too. We took care of those two men, took their food out to them and did their laundry and cleaned for them. My dad did take care of them too. He had his own little heritage there. He took care of everybody. He grew up very hard. He started driving the tractor in the fields at the age of thirteen. He only went to sixth grade, but he could help us kids with algebra. He could do anything. He was a very smart man.

My dad and I were very close. When I was about twelve years old, he and I would go up there alone to Jolone Mission to a place called The Indians. It was about a three and a half hour drive. My dad went to The Indians to hunt deer. He would leave a couple of deer there and bring one home. I remember years ago when I was a little girl he and I would take food to them. They were Costanoan and very, very poor. That's where we did most of his visiting. His parents died very young; he had step-parents. I don't know whether it was a real uncle or an adopted uncle, but that is who he used to go see in Jolone. We'd be there all the time, every other weekend, taking vegetables. There wasn't any storytelling. It was just sad stories, living in sad places. They had to carry water in. There was nothing really like a happy story

because it was always poor and sad. There are really not any good memories about the family up there. My dad had to feed them. I loved them all to death. They were just poor as they could be, but they were the kindest people. Kind, kind, kind. They helped others; no one went hungry. I remember Grandma Manuella. She tried to save the flour when she knew we were coming so she could make us biscuits. My dad liked hard biscuits and she would make hard biscuits for him and coffee.

The Army tried to stop us a few times. They didn't want you to go through. They wouldn't let them go through to go to town. I wish I could find the papers that my dad filed to get the right to go in and out whenever he wanted to and for them to get in and out whenever they wanted. You had to go through the army base to get there.

My mother was a nurse and her mother was a nurse. Mom hardly ever spoke about her tribe. I don't remember my mom saying anything about her past. Dad and I talked, but he never did have any good stories. It was always sad stories. My dad's family died of tuberculosis. Up there a lot of them died of tuberculosis. My mother's family died of tuberculosis too. My mother was the only one who lived out of four boys. My dad was the only child. My dad said he never saw his mother, that she died in childbirth. Now that we have gone through these papers it said that she lived until he was twelve. He always thought that she had died. He had no family. Now everybody is related to everybody.

My Grandmother Bessie was a very proud lady. She worked in the hospital. She was the best cook ever. She cooked everything on a wood stove. We got together and got her a stove and refrigerator, but she still would use her wood stove and lanterns. If you were sick, she would fix chicken soup. I remember when she was about seventy-two years old when my mother just got out of the hospital. She said she was going home to fix chicken soup. I went down to her house and she was in the chicken coop. All the chickens were falling over. She was trying to ring their necks, but she didn't have enough strength to do it. All the chickens were running in circles. It was so funny. She was so mad. She told me to do it. I told her, "I'm going to the store and buy a chicken."

My grandmother said you never let anybody go hungry and you don't take in mind what they look like. You judge a person by what is in their heart. She used to work for a hay press. They would go in Hollister hills and all over up there and bail hay. I would be there helping her cook. I was about ten years old. We did everything to make money.

My family life was great. It made me have compassion for others and be a better person. I have a great husband, six children, fourteen grandchildren, and five great-grandchildren. I hope I will learn more about our Indian heritage.

Q: When did you become interested in learning more about your cultural heritage?

Charlotte: About 1970. I tried to ask my mom and dad questions. My mother was ashamed to be an Indian and so was my dad because they got ridiculed a lot about being a “dumb Indian, stupid Indian”. If I started talking about it, he'd say, “There's nothing I can tell you.” Dad said he was a Costanoan. I wanted to find out what I was for my children's sake. My children should know what native they are. That's when I started to find things out about it. My brother and I went to the courthouse and got death certificates.

Q: When you were growing up was there prejudice against the Native Americans?

Charlotte: Oh yes. I went to Sacred Heart. I think the only thing that saved me was my grandmother's sister was a nun and she was my teacher. There was a lot of prejudice. When you told them you were Indian, they'd say, “No, you're not. You're Mexican.” Well that was okay. If you were dark, you didn't get nothing. I talked my dad into letting me go into a public school and that was even worse. You have to be in the clique and you have to have money. I remember fighting a lot. My brother taught me to box. My cousins and I stayed close all through school. We lived next door to each other.

When we moved up here to Turlock, when they found out the kids had Indian heritage, they would mock them. This is the teachers! They told my oldest daughter that she shouldn't go to school anymore, that she would make a good Playboy bunny. They told my boy, “You'll just give anything away if we just give you a bead or two.” They just degraded them all the time. It was terrible here for the kids. I can see why my dad didn't say that he was American Indian. Something

must have happened along the line for him not to talk about it.

We buried Grandma Manuella on the Indian burial ground over in Jolone and the Army had their cattle running free. We had to ask them not to leave them in the burial ground. They said there was nothing they could do about it. Dad got the horses and he and Frank Avila got the cows out. They fixed the fence so we could have the burial of my dad's step-grandma. Everybody was ashamed to be an Indian. They got tired of being called names.

Q: Are your children and grandchildren interested in knowing more about their heritage?

Charlotte: Yes.

Q: When you were in school was there any teaching about Native American cultures?

Charlotte: No.

Q: Why are you proud to be of Ohlone heritage?

Charlotte: My father always denied that he was American Indian and so did my mother. They did talk about being Indian, but he was mostly ashamed. I tried to get my dad and mom to talk about it, but they would never say too much. I'm just proud that I have American Indian in me. I'm happy about it. It's something that my family didn't care to hear about, but I like to hear about it. I'd like to know more about our tribe and know more about my family. My mother is American Indian too. My brother says that my mother is Ohlone too.

Q: What are the responsibilities of being an Ohlone woman elder?

Charlotte: To teach the children and the community so we can have more knowledge of our culture. I would like to learn more about it.

Survival story ~

When my children were little and my husband left me, I was having a hard time because I had six kids. There was a lady at the Indian Lodge in Hollister who they called Indian Letta. Her husband was a big Scotsman. She said, "Why don't you come on up?" These guys from Salinas wanted some deer meat. I used to go deer hunting. I said, "I can get you a deer." He said, "I'll pay you thirty-five dollars." The fair was coming up for the kids for the 4H and I needed to get money to buy a lamb so I said, "Okay". I went up there and got the deer. She and her husband

would clean it up for me. I would bring it home and make deer jerky or whatever and I'd sell it. That is how my kids and I made it. It's really weird that I'm going back to Hollister hills again. I used to go up there all the time and get deer. The cops would stop me and say, "Your tail light is out". I'd say, "I know and I'm going home." There would be two or three deer underneath my kids! My dad would say, "What are you doing? I'll give you money." I'd say, "No, Dad, I can do this." He always thought I was going to get arrested. My kids got to go to sixth grade camp and they got to be in 4H. I know it was against the law, but at least I wasn't on welfare!

The only place I really had the right to hunt and fish was when I was in Washington. We were hungry again. I went back to my husband and he wanted to move to Washington. We did. He told me that it was the land of opportunity. Well he left and the six kids and I were getting hungry. I was talking to this Indian man and said, "I got to go fishing. I've got to go get something." He said, "Are you a Native American?" I said, "Yes." He said, "You can fish with us, but you can't bring anybody else with you because they are not allowed to fish in our waters." I got salmon and all kinds of stuff and went deer hunting. They hid me out for a long time because I didn't live in the state long enough so I couldn't get my hunting license. They helped me up there feed my kids. Then my husband came back. We were having deer meat for dinner. The Indian, Gerry White Horse said, "The game warden is looking for you." The game warden knocked on the door while we were eating dinner. I asked him to come on in and if was hungry. He said, "No, but it looks good. Are you Charlotte Stuckey?" I said, "Yes, I am." My first husband jumped up and said, "Yep, she does everything illegal. She hunts illegal; she fishes illegal." He said, "And who are you?" He says, "I'm her husband." He says, "Well you're under arrest." He says, "Well, I didn't do anything illegal!" He says, "You are under arrest because you are responsible for what your wife does." I laughed. I thought it was so funny. Tell on me! I just loved it. They took him to jail. I had to go to court and they asked me how come I was hunting and fishing. I said, "He left me and he just came back and he wouldn't work. I couldn't find work with all six kids. The Indians let me fish." He goes, "You are American Indian?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Okay. You go ahead and go and keep the meat, keep everything."

But he gave my husband a lecture and fined him forty-five dollars. “You’re the man of the family. You’re the one who should be out there supporting your wife and children instead of your wife supporting you.”

He was abusive, very abusive. I would get beat up more than it was worth. My kids, the three oldest ones were becoming teenagers and they asked me, “Mom, why do you stay with Dad?” I said, “Because you kids need a father.” They said, “Don’t do us any favors, Mom. We don’t need a dad.” So I filed for divorce. My dad stood by me.

My second husband is wonderful. Too bad we didn’t meet a hundred years ago. He is good to my children and my grandchildren. They are just like his kids and his grandbabies.

Q: What do you want for the next generation of Ohlone?

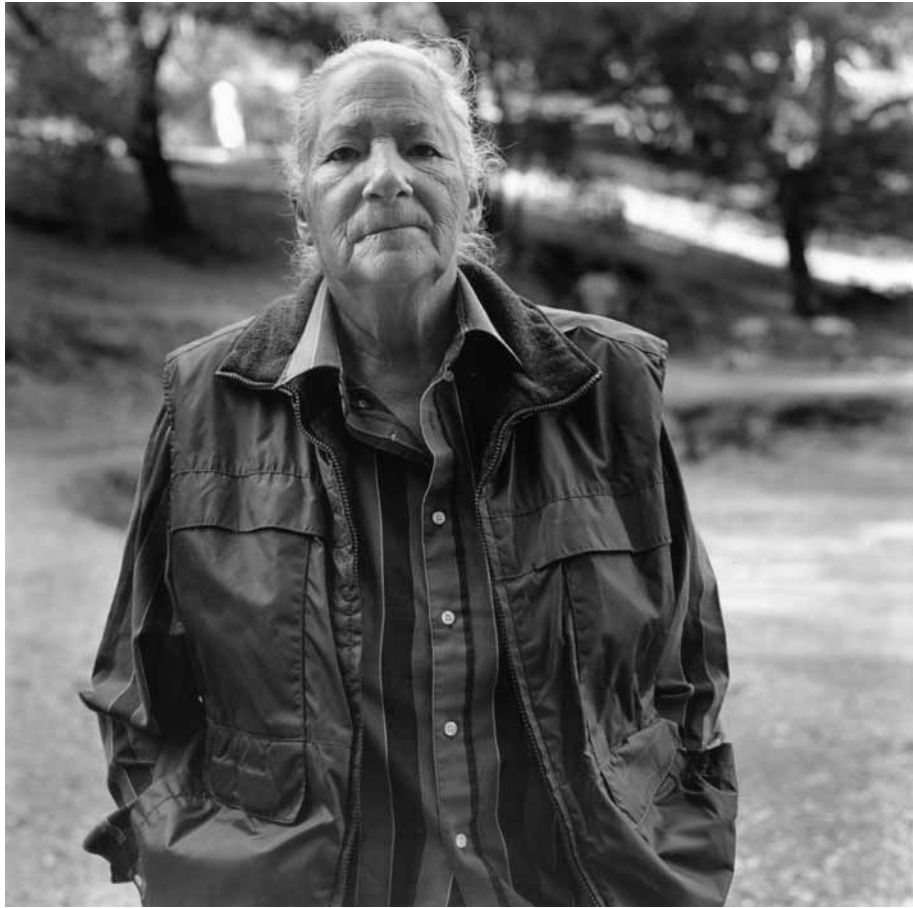
Charlotte: To be known more and to know more about our heritage. There are a lot of people who don’t know about the Ohlone Indians. The children need to know their culture. They need to have more things for the kids to get into. Right now, nobody knows nothing! My kids don’t know anything about the Ohlone Indians. They need to have meetings for the kids. We need to have more meetings for the elders, but mostly for the kids so that they will know about their Indian heritage. We were never taught. We just never spoke about it.

We need to be more recognized. All the tribes should band together to make one group. There are so many different tribes.

Q: What do you think the Ohlone culture could teach the larger society?

Charlotte: More about our heritage. People should know what they believed in, what their family life was like.

Ella Rodriquez



Q: What does it mean to be an Ohlone woman elder?

Ella: I know I'm the elder in my family. I have a brother and sister left and I am the eldest of all the cousins. My mother was one of sixteen or seventeen children, so that's a big family. One of my aunts had sixteen children; another had eleven. I have three aunts and one uncle who are between six months and ten years older than me. I've always been like the rock to everybody, even when I was young. Everybody seemed to come to me. I'd listen and I wouldn't tell them what to do. I advise them – you can do this or that. I've always been wise way beyond my years. My aunts and uncle, who are older than me, still don't have the knowledge that I do. I was born and raised in the mountains, the Mt. Madonna Mountains, redwoods instead of oaks. I learned more from my dad than I did from my mother. It seems like Indian women really don't want to discuss anything. Maybe way back when, they would pass it on, but within the last two or three generations they haven't passed it. Possibly because it is so mixed with other cultures, they don't want to pass it down. I was almost three years old when my grandmother died and I faintly remember her. I never saw my mother grinding corn or any of that. We didn't grow up in that tradition. My dad was Cherokee and white. Some of my family spoke Spanish which was traditional for any Indian to learn a little of it. We didn't even grow up speaking Spanish. My mother spoke a little off and on with her brothers when they'd come. We understood, but my dad said, "You're American. Talk English!" I didn't learn to speak Spanish until I was in my thirties. I did that on account of my job; I had to be bilingual. I went down and lived in Mexicali, across the border, rented a little place there and learned from the little kids between eight and twelve years old. I learned so good that a lot of Mexican people would ask me what part of Mexico I was from.

Q: What do you hope will come out of the honoring ceremony?

Ella: Every year they have an honoring of the elders at Mt. Madonna. I attended the first few of them. It was about ten years ago that I was honored as an elder. It wasn't just for being an elder with grey hair; it was what I have contributed on the monitoring and preserving and protecting burial sites and getting out there and yapping. They wanted me before to start becoming like religious. I said, "I can't because I have a few cuss words that I haven't got out yet. I'm just not the religious

type to go into being humble, to being a spiritual advisor. That's not my cup of tea. I'm headstrong and I can't. Getting out with the developers, I can talk with them and some of them are really nasty, but with my experience they know I know just as much and more than they do. I'm hoping tomorrow that I get to meet some other elders. I might have run into them over the years, but not known their names. There might be some of them that are even related to me, because my grandmother was born in Monterey. I know she had a lot of siblings. I don't know any of my grandmother's sisters and their children.

I more or less grew up with just my grandpa and my uncles and my aunties. We all grew up together in the mountains. We were secluded up there. We didn't have a car, no means of getting any place. My dad did have a saddle horse, but you can't load them all on it. So we used to walk into town once a month and get our supplies and then hoof it back up to the hills. I learned a lot more outdoors that what I did in town. They can never call me a sidewalk Indian because I've hardly ever lived in town. Even now where I live it's out toward Moss Landing, out there near the sanctuary. It's out in the country. I can't live in town. The noises and everything, bothers me. It has to be just totally quiet for me to get any rest or anything. I don't mind the birds.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people in the future? What would you like to see happen?

Ella: What I would like to see is -- it might be an impossible big dream -- but there be no more squabbling. We've squabbled constantly. It's like siblings always fighting each other. I guess it's because one wants to be the chief and the other wants to be.

I'll always be Native American. I do have European. I just had a family reunion this year on my dad's side of my family. We were the black sheep of the family because we were mixed. All of a sudden now they had a big reunion and we were invited. I didn't go there and lord it over them; it just made me feel good that I got to see some of my relatives that I hadn't seen. You don't have to meet each other constantly, but more harmony. We do need to have a lot more respect for the elders, as well as for the children. Now days, it's like that with all cultures -- there's no respect for the old or the young. That's where our harmony is lost. The kids

before, when we'd tell them something, "yes, m'am, no m'am" – that's the way I grew up or else I would get swatted across the mouth. When we grew up, we were poor, but very mannerly. Now, it's like, "yeah, what?" There is no respect for somebody that is older than you.

Q: As an Ohlone woman elder, what would you want the young people to learn from the elders?

Ella: Not just from me, but from the elders, male or female, to learn to listen. It's possible that their elders might not know any more than what they do, but they are wiser with years and they might not be able to pass anything culturally down to them, but wisdom is always there to pass, regardless of what. Listen to the advice of people and to try to grow up and be a good citizen and not be disrespectful and go out and destroy property, doing what you're not supposed to, really. They need to respect their elders and listen to them. Of course the elders have to respect the young too. You can't just expect respect from one side and not from the other. It has to be earned. I can understand because mostly two people have to work to support one household so the kids don't have anybody to guide them. Before one parent was always home – your mother was always home. She was the one who taught you. Now you don't have a mother at home or father; they meet each other going and coming, so you're just sort of abandoned. The kids need to use common sense and start thinking, why is it that both of my parents are working. What is it that's costing so much? I know before the kids used to go out and help – pick apples or berries or do something after school or a paper route. Now all they want to do is kick back and look at TV and play video games. When I was growing up my mom said there was no money for it and we understood. They need to start helping their parents and the parents need to do more by giving their kids chores to do. There has to be more harmony, more respect and more love and caring. Not just for today or tomorrow. It's got to be constant.

Q: What do you think the Ohlone culture can contribute to the larger society?

Ella: We have to get out there and let people know who we are and not in a mean, rude, demanding way – just like you're talking to your neighbor. Let them know what we stand for, where we're coming from, and also to learn from them, who they are. All they hear about is "Yeah, those savages!" We have to let them know that we

are not near as savage as they think we are. Maybe way back when we were, but then they probably were too. That we are people.

Monitoring ~

Ella: We had the uprising back in 1975. The developer was building a big building and tearing up the Indian burial sites so a bunch of us got together and tried talking with him to let us retrieve the remains that were scattered about. He literally just flipped his cork and told us to get out of there or we'd be arrested. We didn't know what to do. We put out word to others. We tried to get help from other areas. We did get a little help from the Northwest Indian Cemetery Protective Association. That's how we were able to start getting a restraining order against the developer to hold up his development. We were contacted by the American Indian Movement and they came in and then fur flew! We got it done then. Well, at least we salvaged a part of it, not the whole thing, but we were able to go in there and retrieve. We did take a stand and we were in there for a month or so. The SWAT team had us all just corralled in there, but we didn't care. We were determined to protect those remains; they could not take care of themselves. What was so awful when they were building and putting the footings in, I saw these big, burly construction workers just kick these little baby skulls, probably the size of your fist, out of the way like they were rocks and keep going. It just really upset me. I told them, "Don't you have a heart, whether it's your relative or who it is? That person can't take care of themselves." I had a movie camera and was photographing it all. I gave the film to the organization I belonged to and they lost it and I'm sorry for that.

We had a lot of problems with the construction – the developer, the city, the whole nine yards. Pre-1975 there were no laws protecting Indian burial sites whatsoever. They were like animal bones, horse bones. This was in Watsonville about a half a mile out of the main city parts. It was so upsetting to see the destruction. I had been living in the state of Washington for quite a few years and had come back. My dad was getting old. He was the only one I had left; my mother had passed away years before. He had passed away a couple of years before this developed. Normally I would have gone back to Washington because I have a lot of family up there too, but I just hung around. There was something that just kept me in the area. I'm glad in a way; in another way, it's been a hard, hard road. It was really hard at the

beginning; now it's a piece of cake. Normally, if there are Indian burials, you rule. What you say goes, because there are laws. Before that, there were no laws. They could do what they wanted and they could arrest you or kick you out of the area and you couldn't do anything about it. I took us quite a few years to actually get some laws. Dr. Garry Buscini, who is an archaeologist and lives in Salinas, wrote a book about the Esalen Indians. He did an awful lot to help us get these laws in.

Q: The graves protection act (NAGPRA)?

Ella: All of those. Before it was just like a misdemeanor. We said that's just a slap on the hand and hide them and keep going. We fought to make it a felony. This was in the 70's. I spent many a night driving all the way up with Terry's uncle and sometimes both of her uncles, to meet with Governor Brown and then come back and change our clothes and go to work. I had a good job; I was a foreman in a warehouse. I ran the whole place really. I had power of attorney. I was set. Unemployment in the winter. But I couldn't do both at the same time. If they called me to go where there were burials, I couldn't just up and leave my job, although a lot of times I did. I would leave somebody responsible taking care of it, but there were times when I couldn't. I decided to drop out of that and just go into monitoring. It was hard, because we weren't getting any pay at all before for monitoring. You used your own so that's why I had to work and use that to pay my gas and whatever my expenses to go someplace. Gradually, I don't know whether it was through the archaeologists and various others, who decided we should be compensated for our time, but that's what it's come to now. I never set my price. I always tell them, "Well, whatever you think I'm worth." As long as I can live comfortably and get a little more than my pension, which is hardly anything. You can't live on a pension, not if you want to go to bingo or just go some place or do something. When you're young you always say, "When I retire, I'm going to live off of my pension." Well, don't believe it. You can't when you don't have anything set back for retirement. If you set it back, some way or another they're going to take it away from you anyway.

Q: What is the most interesting site you've been on recently?

Ella: Well I'm still on one which is the Metcalf Energy Center in Morgan Hill.

They sent out a letter to all the Native Americans asking if you knew anything in or about near the area. I called. I knew the one who had sent out the letter. He had been with another firm before. When they were doing the 'blood alley', which is the strip of road between Morgan Hill and San Jose, at the Metcalf Bridge, there was a very deep site that I worked around 1978. I told him, "We did leave one burial. It's still in the middle of the road by where the footing is for the bridge." He said, "Do you want to monitor on that one?" I said, "If I can." He said, "Okay, it's yours." The second day I was on the job I found a mortar. Then that Friday a burial turned up. Nobody expected anything there. Somehow or another, I had to be there. Wherever I go, if they're there, they're going to come out. About a month later we had another cluster that turned up. We've had quite a few off and on all through that energy plant that they're building. I've been on that almost three years now. Whenever they dig into the native soil, they have to contact me. Then I go. They took a lot of the original soil out. I know the area so well. I started from day one out there when it was just a big open field. This last year has been off and on. It's coming to a termination. The first year, we were working ten hours and seven days a week. We had three weeks of steady frost day and night. I had an old convertible. I used to go to work and had no heater. I'd use old stale coke on the windshield to keep the ice off. I was there every day to work. When it was cold everybody would get into their cars and turn the heater on and warm up. I said, "It's warmer outside than inside my car!" This was just a couple of years ago. I had to be there.

Q: How do you feel when you find a burial site?

Ella: It's easier now. It's never totally like finding a treasure or something. It's hard because you have to realize that they wouldn't have been found if all this development wouldn't be going on. At least my one consolation is that when they are found now, they are protected. We can retrieve them if they can't remain and we move them and bury them someplace where they will not be disturbed again. It's all documented in Sacramento and on the Sacred Land Files. If it's on private property, where they are buried will go onto the deed in case that individual sells that property in the future. It shows that there are burials on the site where they can't disturb them; before, they could disturb them.

You mess up where a doggy cemetery is, you go to jail immediately, but in the past, not with an Indian burial. They weren't considered a cemetery. I have no idea what they were considered. I had one incident in San Jose at this church, downtown, right off San Carlos near the Guadalupe River. I had been called up there because they had found a burial. The coroner removed the burial and then I was contacted from Sacramento. They have a rotating list of people who are most likely descendants. I contacted the archaeologist. The diocese wanted to retrofit the footings that had been damaged in the earthquake. My recommendations were that it couldn't stay right there. The majority of it had been taken out by the coroner. The footing was going to go right where it was located. I said, "Okay, if we can move it over and rebury it maybe just a foot or two away from the footing and if that's not possible, bury it someplace on the top where they have a little greenbelt area." The site was down in the basement of the church. I discussed it with the priest. My sister and I still talk about it. I was recommending to him if it couldn't be buried underneath there, then it would have to be reburied up on the top in or near the area there. He just went ballistic. He said, "Oh, no! I can't allow having a heathen buried on the site here. This is sacred land." He left me dumbfounded for a minute, but it's lucky I've been doing this so long. I told him, "You know what, I'm a heathen also because I've never been baptized anything." I was downright rude. I was so upset. I said, "I didn't have any old priest's piss poured on my head. Do you want the church to be finished? You'll do it my way or no way. If it can be left right where it's at – there's still half of it there. There are laws. Catholic or Protestant or whatever, you are not protected when it comes to burials. They are protected." He said, "Well, I can baptize." I said, "No you will not baptize that individual. They were baptized in their own whatever it was. Who am I or who are you to say what we're going to do? No way." Oh I was so ready. He was just about my size. I told my sister, "I wanted to reach across and grab him by the throat so bad!" In my younger days I probably would have. I'd have been all over him. But I've learned to work with the public. Immediately, yeah those wild bunch of Indians or savages! It was so hard to keep my cool. It was a female about thirty-five or forty years old. It could be buried there if he baptized it! I told him, "Where were you four or five thousand years ago? You could have baptized it then."

What are you playing, Father Junipero Serra? He baptized a lot of the Indians, brought them into the missions, but the only good thing he did for you guys and the Europeans was pave the way with the bodies of my ancestors. He made a road and laid them out; he didn't care dead or alive, as long as they were breathing their last so he could sprinkle them with whatever they sprinkle them with." I was just so upset about that – "Oh, no, we can't allow a heathen to be buried here!" I told him, "You let me know if you want your church to be built, the footing to be built, otherwise it will not move from where it's at right there. If I have to ask for security, I will get security out here. I want to talk with somebody who is above you. You're just the housekeeper here." I finally got it through their heads that that burial was going to be reburied and I was going to watch and there would be nothing sprinkled on the bones. On the top he could do whatever he wanted, but not on the remains. We did it like that. He didn't know what to do when I told him, "So you're calling me a heathen?" "No!" I said, "Well, you're calling the remains there that has never been baptized 'heathen'. It probably has been baptized way before your ancestors ever existed. They had their own religion and I'm not going to okay it for you to baptize it. This is their land, not yours."

I go through a lot of those kinds of incidents. I was in Belmont, working up there for parks and recreation. They redid the police department and the senior center. There were lots of burials that came up from there. This was a good twenty years ago. This little old man had lived there all his life and he must have been eighty-something. He came tootling over and says, "I wonder why the Indians decided to bury their dead right in the middle of Belmont." I'm there with my mouth open. I couldn't answer him quick enough to think. It was really stunning. I had to explain to him that there was no Belmont at that time. We're talking four or five thousand years ago.

There have been incidents where I've worked. I have called the developers and the construction workers to come over and see when they uncover a burial and they pedestal it and the archaeologists form it all out. A lot of them were amazed and these were pros who have been working for years on construction. They said, "My god, look at that -- the backbone, the ribs, the skull, the legs!" I said, "What did you think it was?" They're just used to seeing pieces of bones on the bank

when they plough through it. They're not used to seeing the whole skeletal form out there in a fetal position. "I told them, "All you would have to do is put flesh and hair and skin on that individual. Your skeleton is just like that one; it's no different." It amazes them to actually see. That's how I've educated a lot of the construction workers and in a nice way, not being mouthy and screeching and hollering because you can't do that either. You have to make them understand. It's like talking to your kids. Yet you have to make them feel like you're talking to an adult. You've got to word it the right way to make them understand where you're coming from and to show them what you mean about protecting. I'd like to save all of the burials, but you can't. Industry and progress is a very vicious animal. We're not going to stop it; you might hold it up a little bit, but you'll never stop it. On a site, if I can save one burial and leave it where it is and have to remove several others, at least that one stayed and I saved one. A lot of people want to save them all or remove them all. I've worked with developers all up and down, with the state and FEMA, with housing development, with CALTRANS. I have worked with a lot of agencies and I never leave with bitterness. I talk with them and make them understand what I want. I said, "I'm willing to go half way. We'll meet half way and see if we can work this out. There's a pipe you can move a little bit over; well, fine, if you can't then we have to move that individual over." My work is just something I had to do. I'm still out there doing it. I don't like to get up early in the morning and trudge in the mud and the rain, but I'm out there. They know, cold or not, I don't stay huddled in the office where it's warm. I want them to see that they are paying me for something and not just standing around.

Rose Stephens & Babe Littlejohn



Q: Why are you proud to be Ohlone?

Babe: Because we were the first Americans. I think it is a wonderful honor to be a Native American. It's too bad the federal government doesn't recognize the Ohlone. The state government does, but not the federal. It doesn't make any sense – you are of Indian parents and you have an enrollment number. Why would you have it if you're not really an Indian? I don't understand it. I am very proud to be a native elder. It is really a great honor. Of course as you get older, you feel it more. As a child you don't think of those things, how important it is to know your ancestors.

Rose: I'm just proud to be an American, born and raised right around here. I'm just proud to be an Ohlone. Our folks were all born and raised in New Idria in those mountains.

Q: What does it mean to be Ohlone?

Rose: I didn't really realize a lot of this until they started talking about how I was related to this one and that one. Come right down to it, I guess I'm part of it and didn't really realize it. My mother had nine children so she didn't really have a lot of time to explain to us what life was really about. We grew up in Tres Pinos; she grew up in New Idria. Babe takes more of an interest – she's younger. The first time I knew about it, she mentioned it. We had a little lady who lived with us who was one hundred and six years old. She told us about the banditos she used to hide out, Vasquez and all of them up at New Idria mines. She was Indian. She moved in with us, my mother and nine children, because she didn't like her daughter-in-law.

Q: How did you feel about the honoring ceremony?

Babe: I thought it was great. It was wonderful to see all that it entailed and to meet the other women elders. Ann Marie did such a wonderful job. I knew Ann Marie's mom. When we lived at the ranch we used to see her mom all the time and her brother Chris. She was a really neat lady. It's nice up there. Ann Marie is always so good to invite you and make you feel so welcome. It was very touching. The dancing and just the ceremony itself was very impressive.

Rose: I thought everybody did such a great job. The dancing, the beads. I was really impressed with it. I've never been to one before. I really enjoyed watching everything.

Babe: There was a woman who did some of the Ohlone language which was very interesting. I've not heard a lot before so it was very interesting to hear that. I wish we had a tape of that.

Q: Do you think the ceremony should continue?

Babe: I think so, especially for the younger generation coming up so they would keep it an ongoing thing. That would be wonderful. I think any heritage that you have is important. When you were young you didn't think and care about your ancestors; when you grew older then you were sorry that you didn't learn about all this. Jim's dad used to tell us stories and take us to gather herbs and things. I didn't really pay that much attention to it because I was young at the time.

Rose: Keep the ceremony going for the younger generation. A lot of them don't know a lot of this. I didn't as old as I am. I think it would be nice for people to go back to their heritage and try to figure out really what happened to them years ago. I never even thought about any of that.

Babe: It's very important to continue your heritage. I had been up to Indian Canyon when Ann Marie opened the sweat lodge. I was so glad because then I could tell our children and grandchildren.

Q: Did your family talk about your Indian heritage when you were growing up?

Babe: My dad died before I even knew him. There were nine kids. My mom worked. There was no welfare. Everybody worked. On Jim's side, his aunts and uncles went through the time when they were afraid to say that were Native Americans because they were not treated too well. They used to help the bandits, like Vasquez and Joaquin Marietta, who helped the poor around here. They knew them. Jim's dad used to say that he knew a place way up in the country, called Lone Tree area, where he would hide what he stole from the rich to help the poor. His oldest aunt, who died about ten years ago, wouldn't give us any paperwork because she didn't want anybody to know that she was Native American. She was afraid. She still had that feeling that they would not be very nice to her.

Q: Growing up, who made you aware of the Ohlone culture?

Babe: Well, more so Jim's dad, his aunts and uncles. They could tell you stories years back. His dad would tell stories. When our two oldest were growing up and we lived out on a cattle ranch in the Paicines area, his dad would tell me about herbs. I wished I had paid more attention. I was fifteen when I was married and Jim was twenty. I had my first baby at sixteen. We've been married fifty-four years. At the time when the children would get sick, I used herbs because I couldn't afford a doctor. We'd go up by the mines and pick a few different herbs. We would treat them, whether it was a fever or diarrhea or whatever. Even our mom used a lot of herbs to cure. It was a different world than it is today, believe me. The kids missed the ranch. As they got older and we didn't have insurance, we had to get a job so we had benefits. It was a good life. The kids missed it, the two older especially.

Q: Were there any Ohlone gatherings when you were growing up?

Babe: No. Nothing like that.

Q: Are your children and grandchildren involved in cultural activities?

Babe: Yes. We went to a gathering in Boloda Park and they were showing the different games that they played. They showed them how they used to make tule boats. Of course they were miniature, but my granddaughter made a tule boat. She was really interested. I took a little boy, who is in college now, whose father is Potawatomis. He is a teacher here. I worked eighteen years at the high school and his kids worked for me in the cafeteria. The sweetest kids. He begged, "Can I go with you to the gathering?" I said, "Sure." So I took him and he was so interested. They go up to Stanford every year when they have the big pow-wow there. The Potawatomis had a meeting over a Jackson Rancheria. They keep up on their culture. He was really interested in the gathering because he got to learn all the different things that the Ohlone did.

Rose: I'm afraid that my children are not involved. See her children were raised on a ranch and mine were born and raised around the Hollister area. They never had the opportunity that her children did. They were lucky to be born and raised up in the country.

Babe: As big as our family was it surprises me how different the city kids are from

the country kids. Our kids have always hunted and fished.

Q: What would you like to teach the Ohlone children coming up?

Rose: I think you should take the time to explain to these young people growing up, love one another now, and teach love and respect for one another. I've always taught my grandchildren to be kind and loving to one another. We grew up in a large family and we had to learn to take care of one another. I never had anything, but I was happy. When you got something, you appreciated what you had; you worked for it. You weren't handed everything. It's just my personal belief that you grow up loving something, and you take care of it, you cherish it. You teach love.

Q: Do you think the Ohlone have something to teach the larger society?

Babe: Definitely. My husband, Jim and I have always said that because we lived on the ranch for so many years, we could live off of the land. We hunted because that was what we ate, whether it was quail, dove, rabbit, deer – wild game. I think we could survive much better than city folk, because we are used to that.

Everything is so different now. Our mother raised the nine of us, and she went to the store maybe twice a month. We grew our own. We have chickens here so we had our own eggs. We had a cow. I didn't know we were poor. I didn't know my dad because he died before I was old enough to remember. We could teach people how to survive without all of the modern conveniences, how you do live off the land, whether it is your food, your water. Many of them have really missed a lot, not knowing and not growing up with that culture. We didn't have much, but yet we had a lot because we learned so much, even in medicine, with the herbs that his dad would teach us to pick and use for the kids when they were sick. One of them was called a fresno root. You would shave it, boil it and use it for fever. My aunt made poultices from myrtle if you were cut or bruised. Then there's 'squaw tea' – conetilla, for bladder infection. Jim has found it in Arizona and Nevada and here. Even now my daughter goes up to get conetilla for urinary infection. I've had friends from Sonora call and ask me to send them some. You just boil it and make a tea, hot or cold. There is a rose called rosacasto that the folks had by their house. We would dry it and use it for fever too. Mint and elderberry also for an upset stomach. Chamomile. Jim's dad said he made coffee out of acorns, but I never did

that. I think the main thing growing up Ohlone was learning the medicines, being able to survive without all of the modern conveniences. I think there are a lot of people today that couldn't do that.

Rose: Respecting and loving one another and trusting one another, showing one another kindness. I just respect older people. I was just brought up that way. I loved being around old people, because they appreciated me. I took them for walks, did different little things. I just enjoy them and I still do it. You have to feel useful. Otherwise you just sit and deteriorate.

I used to work years ago on an ambulance with my husband. I was an EMT. I took care of the patients in the back. They sent me out to remove bodies. I had to help him to get our business established. It was good experience.

Q: Are there duties and responsibilities when you are a woman elder?

Babe: I think teaching the younger ones, letting them know about the culture and what has been from their ancestors and to be proud that they are Native American. The land means so much. Just to be proud and teach them to be good people and care about their ancestors. My sister's family does all the Indian pow-wows and dances because their dad was a bear dancer. We have a nephew that does hoop dancing. He is so good at it. They even took him to China to dance. The nephew plays the drums and does the singing.

Q: What would you like to see happen for the Ohlone in the future? What is your vision?

Babe: Let it be known about the culture to everyone, not just to our family. I think it would be great if it were just out there and everybody knew about the culture and how things were then and now.

Rose: It would be like Jacob's family who are Navajo. They have different things going on for them all the time. People go to see those people all the time. They have their pow-wows. We don't have anything like that. They could have it for the Ohlone.

Babe: Those people had treaties where the Ohlone didn't have anything like that. I don't know why they didn't. You go to any other state and Native Americans are recognized for everything. It's too bad that in California that they are not. It would

be nice to have a museum like most people do to show people.

When we moved to Nevada our neighbor came over and she was just awed because we have bows and pestles and eagle feathers. Jim and I did hunting up until about seven years ago – a lot of deer, pig, dove, and quail. There was one place up on a ranch where a girlfriend of mine still lives we called Eagle Rock. Eagles would lose their feathers and so we made mandelas and dream catchers. Our kids did too. Jim used to work the ground at the ranch and almost cut up Indian bowls. Our neighbor just loved all the native artifacts we have.

To me the overall vision is for the Ohlone to have medical help, because I know so many that don't have it and can't afford insurance. If they get ill, they have nowhere to go. My husband's sister, who is very ill, moved up to Jackson because there are clinics up there for Native Americans. She had to move away from home to get medical care. They need to be taken care of. It's terrible. They need more for the elderly. It's a shame that the elderly have to give up so much to have money for their medication and living expenses.

Rose: Like back up here (indicating Indian Canyon), it's peaceful. I'd like to see the families get back closer to one another than they are. They have the same heritage. You don't see this until you get older though. When you're growing up you don't pay that much attention. People have more time for one another, more love for one another -- that's my vision. I'm old so I can't do a lot, but I volunteer at a nursing home to feed old people.

I have to do something to keep busy and I'm too old to take a job, so this is what I do. I know I'm going to be there some day. I think people should spend more time with one another because it's going to be too late some time to do for other people, so you do it now. I'd like to see people get along better.

Eva Tuosto



Q: Let's talk about when you found out you are part Ohlone and what that means to you.

Eva: I was interested in my health and knew nothing about my father's death, because he and my mother had separated. I thought he died when I was two, but I discovered going to the Mormon Church over in Santa Cruz that he died in 1930. From there I got a birth certificate and found that he died of heart failure. I started researching my family history. I found that I go back about six generations to the Ohlone, which I never knew were in my family. I started checking and I found out that when DeAnza came in 1776, my great-great-great-great grandparents had come in with him. Some settled in Santa Clara and others went to San Francisco. Bernal Heights was named after some of them. Maria Teresa Bernal was my great-great-great grandmother and she married Marcos Chaboya whose family came in from Spain. They had a son, Jose Chaboya who married Mariana Vasquez. Her mother was Maria Leocadia and her father was Jose Antonio Vasquez. Maria Leocadia's parents were the Indians. They go back to 1755 and somebody thought it might be earlier. I've tried to find their birth certificates or baptismal certificates. They lived in San Juan village, but it wasn't San Juan Bautista; it was a village out of San Jose. I'm still on that track. He married Mary Ann Vasquez, who was the daughter of the Indian gal. They gave birth to my great-grandmother, Juana Chaboya and she married Alexander Shenave who was a Frenchman. I cannot locate information on him. They told me that they used to jump ship. I am assuming that that is what he did. I have French, Mexican, Spanish, and Indian. They had a daughter named Narcissa. She had my father with Jose Jesus Lugo. My mother wasn't married to my father, Thomas Lugo when I was born.

Q: How did it make you feel when you found out that you were part Ohlone?

Eva: I thought it was wonderful. My stepfather was Ohlone Indian. My mother didn't even know that my father was Indian. She always thought he was Spanish and Mexican. She didn't know he was French and Indian also. She died very young so I had no background information. I thought I was Indian through him before this, because his grandmother, who is buried up in San Juan church, was one of the last Indians who was buried in there. I called her 'Grandma.' I always said to my mother, "I have to be part Indian because she always said I was one of the grandchildren. She was really nice. We were raised around the Lopez's, the

Coronas -- all the Indian people. I was raised in Watsonville, but we went over to Gilroy and Monterey, because my father's grandmother was there before she died. I didn't realize until later that she really wasn't my grandmother, but she treated me like the other kids.

Q: Did you connect with other members of your family regarding being part Ohlone?

Eva: I had a half brother that I met for the first time when I was sixteen. He never really delved into it, but this is what he said: "We have Indian and French in our family. I've never looked into it. Why don't you do it some day?" He was almost ninety then. My stepfather was proud of his Indian background. I don't remember going to pow-wows. My blood father died when I was four. I didn't see him that much. My mother took me a couple of times to see him in Gilroy. The next thing I knew, he had died in Redwood City. There's a lot I don't know because I've only done this about five years.

Q: Since you found out that you were part Ohlone, have you done some investigating about the culture?

Eva: A little bit. I've got some books. My husband has been sick with cancer so we had a lot of stress there. I have a lot of information on disk, but my computer broke. I will get back on it because I want to know more. I've been to three gatherings. I came up here to Indian Canyon with my father and mother when I was about ten. It's so different now, but I had the feeling that I'd been here before after I came over the little bridge.

Q: How did today's ceremony make you feel?

Eva: Oh, I loved it! It made me want to cry. I just felt wonderful. It was such an emotional thing for me. I'd never been through this and I really, really loved it. Just walking up to the waterfall and then the part where Ann Marie took the shell with the sage and smoke and seeing everyone smudge themselves, it really touched me. I felt so honored because no one has ever asked me to anything like this, to be honored in this manner. It's really a touching ceremony. The woman across from me is 79 and I'm 80 and the other lady was just going to be 81. We were all laughing and said, "We're all sisters, not only with the age, but with just being here, being Indian -- the Ohlone part of it." We'll always be friends and we'll be connecting with on another.

Q: As an Ohlone woman elder, what would you hope for the Ohlone children in the future?

Eva: For my grandchildren, I would hope that they would carry on and be proud of the Ohlone heritage, be proud to have that Indian blood running through them. We talk about it now because my daughters and sons didn't know of their Indian heritage. I want them to remember that we are a family with many different cultures – Italian, Spanish, Mexican, French and Indian. I have one son who didn't care to be a Mexican, but he is. One time I said, "You know Michael, you are born of my womb and my womb is Spanish, Mexican, French and Indian. He looks more Mexican and Indian than my other children. He's dark like me. We laugh about it. The kids are proud now. My older son said, "Mom, don't find any more languages or genes because it's hard for us now to write down when we complete papers on our background."

Q: From what you know about the Ohlone culture, what does it have to offer the larger society?

Eva: I think they are a people who really know how to do things and get by. They would be able to fend for food and shelter. They love their children. They are very friendly, very loving. Everybody has that connection. Everyone you meet greets you. We hug. I know the Italians and Spaniards do, but there is a little different feeling. My girlfriend was complaining, "Can you imagine those Indians now got these casinos and they're building these beautiful homes." I said, "Excuse me, this was our land before you ever came here. My family was here and the whites came and took it away from them. Now people are complaining." She said, "Oh God, you're right!" Oh, I get upset. They are finally getting money where they can better themselves, give their kids education. They donate a lot to the poor Indians, the ones still out on reservations.

We were poor. I had seven children, but we always had food on the table, a roof over our head, maybe not the modern clothes, but clothes to wear. When I think about some of those little kids on the reservation, I want to go there one day to Ashland, Montana and see if I could help. My husband said, "You're eighty years old; they'll be helping you!" I said, "I'm taking you with me!" Then he got sick.

Q: What would you like to contribute to the Ohlone people as an elder?

Eva: I'd like to let people know who we are and what we do and what we are about.

A lot of people don't know. I remember when I told my cousin on my mother's side that I was part Indian. She said, "You're part Indian? We always said you were Spanish." I said, "Well, I'm still Spanish, but I have these other backgrounds and I have the Indian background." She thought about it and said, "Hey, you're still my cousin – what do I care what you are!" I think we can be an example to other people. The best teaching tool we have, is not only to be proud of our Ohlone background, but to live a life that other people would envy by being honest and trustworthy. I always think of helping people because I do some of that and I think that is one way of showing it. If you are honest and people know that you are trustworthy, it means a lot. I want to give that out as an Ohlone elder. I help down at the Senior Center right now. My children got upset with me because we were doing so much volunteer work after we retired, that we didn't have time to visit. My husband was doing St. Vincent DePaul, picking up clothes, and I worked in the store and then I also worked in the church office for seven or eight years. Then I volunteered nine years at the grammar school where I had worked. I went sometimes twice a week and helped different teachers. I help my neighbor distribute food monthly to the poor at her church. It keeps us pretty busy.

I can remember my father saying, "They are always putting the Indians down. If you tell somebody you are Indian -- ohh, dirty this and that." That was the culture then because they lived in these mountains. My father said, "These people lived a better life than we're living. They didn't have water to pay, the telephone to pay. They would camp in one place and when the fish ran out or the deer ran out, they would move their families and go to another place and feed them." He was into some of it, but he never wanted to talk about it to me or my mother because he didn't think of us as being Indian. He didn't know I was part Indian.

I have a big case just full of binders of genealogy. I said, "When Grandma dies, I hope this isn't gone into the fireplace. My granddaughter said, "Oh, Grandma, we wouldn't do that. We'll pick it up; don't worry about it." That's a blessing for me because I've gone through a lot of looking and reading.

Los Californianos is an organization dedicated to preserving the heritage of early Hispanic Californians in Alta, California. We call each other cousins when we have our meetings, because everybody is related in this Indian/Mexican background. If

your family was here before 1840, you can join. We do have a good time when we get together.

Q: Considering the world is in a pretty bad mess right now, how do you think the native point of view could help the situation?

Eva: I think if they could see this (referring to the Indian Canyon setting)– the peace, the beauty – if everybody could get to that point where they could see everybody as one people, then they could all love one another. Many people are jealous now of what the Indians are accomplishing, even though it is through the casinos. That is their way of getting out of poverty. They are doing so much for their own people now. This government who stole their lands didn't give them any money. First they gave them a dollar, then they gave them six hundred dollars. My father had that dollar someplace, but I never could find it.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people in the future?

Eva: I hope with the money they are receiving from the casinos, that the young are better educated and will pass their knowledge on to future generations.

Q: What will you be doing to further the cultural revitalization process?

Eva: I will be taking my children and grandchildren to the different council meetings, pow-wows and other Indian educational gatherings.

Q: Why are you proud to be Ohlone?

Eva: Because it is my heritage.

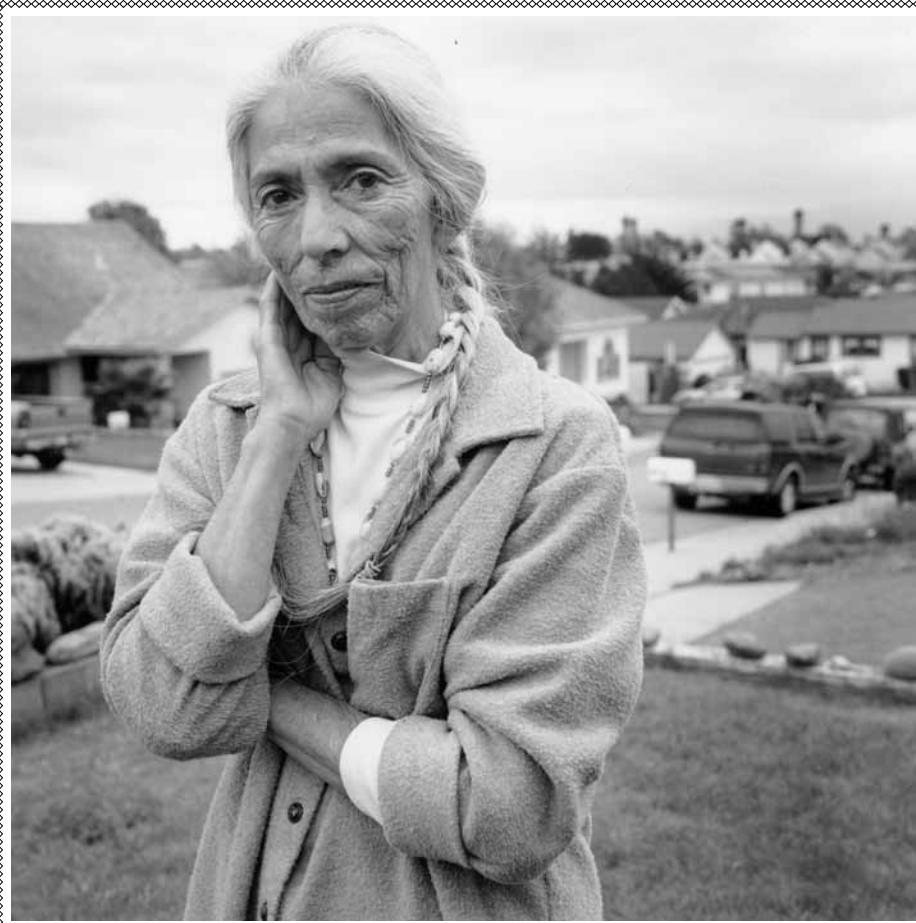
Work history ~

During the World War II my girlfriend and I went up to San Francisco and applied at the shipyards. We went to school for two weeks and worked on the liberty ships at Kaiser. Then I went on a specialty crew. All I had to do was tack the shell of the ship. I was going to become a journeyman when my husband (now) couldn't walk. He bent down and was paralyzed. He was in the army. I went to see him and the day I got there, he was released from the hospital.

I taught handicapped children for fifteen years. I was a teacher's aide, but I worked with these children by myself. I worked with this head teacher and then we did lesson plans for the week. I would grab the children and work with them

for four days. The fifth day we would return to the classroom and see what we had accomplished. I loved it. I would have never quit if my husband had not retired. He said, "When are you going to retire so we can start traveling?" So that's what we did. We bought a motor home and we traveled. We went cross country three or four times and also went to Canada.

Laverne Wilcox



Q: How did you feel about the honoring ceremony? What did it mean to you?

Laverne: Awestruck! It was very spiritual, especially at the end when I heard the wind rustling through the trees. Just as I've seen in movies. This was real! It gave me goose bumps. When you get goose bumps, there is something there. You could imagine your ancestors at a similar ceremony. You kind of feel awkward because you had no idea how the ceremony goes. I felt honored. It was a very spiritual experience. We didn't know much about our ancestors. We are just now learning more and more about both sides of my family. No matter what I find, it's exciting.

Q: When did you get interested in your heritage?

Laverne: I was in the eighth grade and my grandmother had these neat books on local vital statistics. We knew one of the grandmothers was Indian. We had to dig and get paper work. I love research. My neighbor was doing research. He belongs to Los Californianos.¹ It was through his books that I discovered my great-great grandparents were at the Presidio in Monterey. My cousin, who lives in Missouri, was doing some research and he said that my great-grandmother on my mom's side was Indian too. She was registered at the National Archives. She was on the Cabrillas role, the 1928 registration. My father was interested but he didn't know too much about it and didn't have the time because of work. He looked Indian. He had the nose, if there is such a thing. We were here in Salinas and my great-grandmother was from Big Sur, then Rancho Toro on the Salinas/Monterey Highway when she married. They had a rancho there at one time. They said she lived in an adobe; she would not live in a house.

Q: What direction is your genealogical research taking?

Laverne: It's taking me in all directions, but I've come to a standstill with my mom's stroke as it requires more time taking care of her. I have my father's line very incomplete and my mother's line half-finished. We'll find out more information on my mother's line through Los Californianos. We haven't really found too much information on my dad's side. On his great-great-grandparent's side, they were over at the Presidio in Monterey in 1771. The only one we know was Indian was Viviana Soto. I'm just finding out about her. When someone went knocking at her

¹ Los Californianos is a group of descendants of Spanish Alta Californians who arrived in Alta, California prior to the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, February 2, 1848.

door in the adobe, she'd run for the hills. I don't know whether she was afraid of the tax man or whatever.

Q: When you were growing up was there any education in the schools regarding native contribution?

Laverne: I don't remember that. The older generation said that at one time you didn't even want anybody to know that you were Indian.

Q: Why do you think there was silence concerning your heritage within your family?

Laverne: I don't know. We didn't know anything about it.

I was born and raised in Santa Rita. It was a neat little town. Everybody knew everybody, and as time would tell, everybody was related. Just about! I don't know how they did it. My mother raised six kids. Christmas and Thanksgiving, when you have big meals, she would do it all. Most of the older generation was really hush-hush about relatives. They kept everything in the closet.

Q: What is the responsibility of being an Ohlone woman elder?

Laverne: I guess whatever research you get done to make sure it gets out there.

Q: What makes you proud to be an Ohlone?

Laverne: We were here first! I don't know too much about it. I think it's a bunch of nice people, great people. They were just underestimated by everybody.

The Ohlone were close to nature and I feel a connection to my ancestors because I am too. The animals and birds and insects are God's creatures and the Ohlone respected them and only killed animals to feed their families. I read that article in A Gathering of Voices² that Pat Orozco wrote about feeling close to the birds and animals. I've always felt close to the birds, and lately it's been squirrels. I always talk to them. I've always liked nature.

Q: What do you think the Ohlone have to teach the larger society?

Laverne: That we haven't gone away, that we are still here in larger numbers than they realize, and that we are good people.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone in the future?

Laverne: The Ohlone need to get along together, because there are some groups

that don't, according to the newspaper. They all want to be head chief. If it is a common cause, why are we fighting amongst ourselves? We need to get along so we can get more accomplished. We need to get the youngest generation's help, steer them in the right direction. I don't think you are going to solve anything if there is constant bickering. We have to listen to everybody. I've heard more about Indians in the last couple of years than I have in my whole life. I think it's the younger generation; the older generation was more or less silent because they didn't know what the repercussions were going to be. I want to find out all I can. I'd like to know how the ancestors lived from day to day, family life. We are finding out more information and the more we find out, the more we can give that to others. We need more education about the culture. You want everybody to know about your heritage, how it is and how it was. There are more people getting into research who are going to find out a lot more. It's more that trend now. I think we need to know that they are there, a part of this countryside. We should have something there to see. I've checked through these rancho books and it shows where all these Indian places were, but only if you had this particular book would you know that. I think they need to write more about it. It should be a protected area. They should give some of the land back.

Work history ~

Laverne: I worked at Sears Roebuck for twenty-two years. I worked in shipping-receiving, audit, sales floor and snack bar. I worked in the service department. Then I worked at a bowling alley as a cook and the local golf course as a cook, sometimes working both jobs in the same day.

Irene Williams



Q: Did you go to the tribal dances or get-togethers when you were young?

Irene: They never really had any. The first time I ever went to see the Indian dances was down here at the ballpark in Salinas. They had a whole bunch of them. It was about ten years ago and I'm eighty-five.

My mother's mother died when she was sixteen years old. There was only grandpa who was married to her and we never, ever knew her. It seems like the whole family separated. My mother had a sister and three brothers and everybody lived somewhere at a distance. The two men went into the army. I guess that's about the only way they could support themselves. There was one brother they lost and they never did know where he went. Adolph, I knew him real well. He used to come and visit us and my aunt visited with us. Other than that, we didn't know them too well. They live in Martinez and us down here.

My grandmother on my father's side moved here from Santa Clara. We went to Santa Clara about a month ago and visited the Berryessa Adobe. That's where my grandmother and grandfather used to live. That was something brand new to me. The old timers, they never told you too much. Now my grandmother told stories. She died when I was eighteen and she was going to be one hundred and four. She was born in 1834 and in 1850 was the Gold Rush. She was already married and having children. She used to tell us about Fremont. She never spoke English; she always spoke Spanish. We learned to speak from her. I was the youngest one. I never learned to talk too well, but I managed to converse with my grandmother. My grandmother on my father's side was not an Indian. Mother was the Indian of the family and Dad was the early California Spanish guy. Mother spoke Spanish. I can remember mother telling me that you had to be careful. Sometimes there were snakes in the trees. My uncle on my mother's side lived up in Priest Valley; he had a ranch up there.

I grew up in Santa Rita and we are all part Indian. You know how kids do; we all went to church together and we had picnics and dances. It just changed in the last few years when we met Patrick Orozco. Patrick was married to my niece. He came to my sister's funeral. He has helped with work in cemeteries and historical work for the Indians.

Q: Did your family ever talk with you about being Native American?

Irene: Not too much. My mother was half-Indian and her mother was full. Mother never talked too much. We knew that we were part Indian. Then when they were giving out those roll numbers I guess I was ten or eleven years old. I had two sisters and a brother. Mother always cooked nice for us. She always made nice pies and things. In those days they didn't run to the grocery store to get lemon juice or stuff like that. They squeezed the lemons and that's the way she made her lemon pies. We had an apple tree and a cherry tree. My dad grew strawberries, tomatoes, corn. Of course we always had chickens and a pig. We used to get a lot to eat. Those old timers never said too much to us.

Q: How did you feel about the honoring ceremony?

Irene: I had never seen anything like that. I really enjoyed it very much. I thought the dancing was very nice. The company was great and everybody treated us very, very nice. The food was good. I was impressed with everything. It's the first time I'd ever seen anything like that. The ladies go out and eat once a month and I wear my necklace. Addie Castro always wore hers too.

Q: As an Ohlone woman elder, what would you want the young Ohlone people who are coming up to learn? Is there something that you would want to pass on to them?

Irene: Schooling of some kind would be nice for them. Some of them are destitute and they don't have homes to live in. At first they didn't treat the Indian people very nice. Now they don't belittle the people as much as they used to do. The Indians are standing up for themselves too. I think that's great.

Q: Did you experience prejudice when you were growing up?

Irene: I can remember as a kid that people used to call us names. This French lady up on the hill would say, "Those goddamn Injuns!" I thought, well what is she talking about? She never spoke very good English and she said that I was an "Injun". She was that way. Afterwards I was the one who taught her boy how to speak English because they came from France. Then in high school, the Prunedale people, they called them prune pickers and they called us the Santa Rita Indians. I never took offense at it. My dad told us, "You're just as good as the next one. Don't let anybody ever fool you."

I never realized that because I was part-Indian I was supposed to be different. Now that I'm older, I can see, and I'm proud of what I am. As far as I'm concerned, a lot of these people who condemn us, we had more to do here than they ever did. That's how I feel about it.

Q: Do you think the Ohlone have anything to teach the larger society about how to live?

Irene: I'm sure that they could, and that is learning to live with other people and not to be criticizing. Everybody has their little idiosyncrasies. Everybody should understand that and not to pick on somebody because they are a little bit different. Now days they want to shoot people and beat them up and stab them and everything. You see that in the papers all the time.

Q: What would you hope for the Ohlone people in the future?

Irene: The living conditions. Have more food. Be able to make a better living, although a lot of them are going to school and are learning a lot. When they get older, then they can support themselves.

My daughter tried to get help to send her boy to UC Davis and couldn't get any help. I hope there would be something for the kids to go to school. Then too, a lot of people are less fortunate than others. Some of them need eye glasses and their teeth fixed and things like that – something for their health. There are a lot of people who are in need.

Q: Why are you proud to be part Native American?

Irene: I hear people over in Carmel making fun and I think to myself, we are just as good as they are. We were here first before they were.

When I was growing up, we lived out in Santa Rita my dad and grandmother had property from the street clear back to the schoolhouse. I think it was five acres. I could see where the French lady lived up on the hill. It was all open. The Alvarado girls, they are still on their same property they had when they were children. You knew everybody. You could go out and you never had to lock your doors. You could walk at nighttime. They've just taken all the land over and more and more houses. Pretty soon we are not going to have any vegetables or strawberries or anything. It's terrible.

Work history:

I worked through World War II. At first I worked at the Provost Marshall's Office at Ft. Ord. I had already been to junior college and was able to get a job right away. You lived there. We got paid nineteen dollars a month! We had transportation with a big army bus. We had to work and go to school. Everybody had a job. My job was to set the table. On Saturday they would take us to the Presidio. We could go up there and dance. They closed it because of the Japanese submarines on the coast. We could have gone down to San Diego but then we would have only gotten fifty-six dollars a month and we would have had no place to live. I was kind of afraid to go away from home. After that, I worked at the sugar factory. You took over the men's jobs, whatever you could do. I worked on what they called the battery floor. The pulp would go into one of those big heaters and it would stay so long and then you had to reverse the wheels and then the pulp would go out and they made brown sugar out of it. After that, I found another job at Spiegel's Foods that paid forty-four dollars a week. Boy, that was hard work and we worked twelve hours a day, five days a week. That was really hard. During World War II I wanted a car. You couldn't buy cars then, but brother-in-law was a house mover. He knew somebody at the Buick agency in Monterey. Some man had traded in a Ford so I got the Ford, a two-door. I was happy. At least I had a way to work and back, because living out in Santa Rita there were no buses or anything.

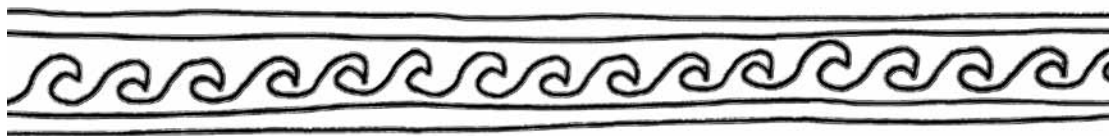
I used to have an adult board and care home for the mentally ill right in this house for twenty-eight years. I quit in 2000. Often they wondered how I was able to stand it because some of those people are not very easy to deal with. I know that some ladies have gone to the psych ward themselves and some of them have had heart attacks. I managed quite well. When I was all through they had a lunch for us and they gave me a plaque. I was licensed for five people. I was here by myself with them and then I used to have a lady to clean up the house and somebody to do the yard. I got kind of wise. Like the social worker told me, "If they are having fusses or something, get in the car and take them for a ride. Get them away from the house." Some of the mothers helped and some of them were not very nice. I think some of them were guilty the way they treated their kids and they were ashamed and didn't want them around. They started from age nineteen up to fifty-nine.

Q: Do you think your Ohlone genes helped you to deal with this situation?

Irene: I've often wondered about that. Because they said how could I keep going. I stopped [running the board and care] when I was eighty. You have to do what you have to do and just be honest about everything. That's what the psychiatrist told me too, "As long as you're fair and you're honest, you should get along real well with them." It was quite a challenge. I was always going camping or fishing with them. We used to go to Big Sur and over to Santa Cruz and up to Lake Tahoe and to Monterey to fish at night in the summertime. They'd all want to take their dinner over there so we'd cook it here and take it up on the wharf and fish. My dad used to love to fish. I don't know what that is, if that was the Indian in me or not. We went clear to Oregon and all around and clear down to Santa Barbara. I took the people with me. That's what the lady told me, "It's your personality. You like to go all the time." I sure do. I enjoyed doing it. We had a van. I used to drive all the time. I guess that's the Indian in me – driving with the window wide open and my hair just flying.



*Ann Marie Sayers and Ohlone dancers at an honoring ceremony for
Ohlone Women Elders at Indian Canyon.*



Convenors



Ann Marie Sayers



Discussing the impetus for the honoring ceremony ~

Ann Marie: Many women have come up to the Canyon and have brought to my attention, “Ann Marie, my mother, my grandmother, my great-grandmother says I am Mexican, but my great aunt said we were Indian from right here.” They will have a big binder full of their genealogy. “I want to know more about my heritage!” I see tears. There’s anger. There is so much emotion that I explain there is good reason for this. In 1854 alone this government paid in excess of 1.4 million dollars, for five dollars a head, fifty cents a scalp. It was called the California Indian Genocide Policy. You have an Indian woman living in 1852 who has seen so much destruction with her culture, with her people, with the gold seekers coming west. She sees her husband killed; she sees her sons killed. She says to her daughter, “Say you are Mexican for sheer survival.” In the 1850’s to say you were Indian was suicidal. When I said 1.4 million dollars, that is a figure that I’ve seen printed numerous places, but that also included not only the five dollars a head, and fifty cents a scalp, that included the gun powder, that included all the supplies for the professional Indian killers – for them to carry out their work.¹

We have four, five, six generations of Indian denial, and it stemmed from a form of survival. It is amazing when elders come to the Canyon how they feel at home, how they feel that they have connected with something that has been absent from them. I just felt we have to honor these women. Many of these Ohlone elders believe they don’t know that much about their native heritage, but when you talk to them, and if they are together, they’ll go, “Well, do you remember when grandma used to sing that Indian song?” They will go right into a Mutson song that has not been sung for many decades. I literally can feel my heart expand when that happens. Selfishly, I love that experience. And so what better way but to honor the elders with honoring gifts and a place for them to feel acknowledged and for their ancestral spirits within them to be honored. That brings out so much. You are the sole product of all your ancestors and you’ve awakened that! For me it is a reason

¹ There was one writer with the San Jose Mercury who quoted 1.4 million one year alone in 1854. I had heard 1.2 million over a period of two or three years. When I asked her where she got that figure from, she told me it was in Theodora Kroeber’s book, Ishi in Two Worlds. For more information regarding the Native Californian genocide see James Rawls’ book, Indians of California: The Changing Image.

for living.

I was raised here in Indian Canyon and I will tell you I thought we were the only Indian family in San Benito County. But there were 179 who received the California Land Claims Settlement in 1972. There are also a lot of California native people who did not even sign up in 1928 under the special California Indian census to get a roll number, because they were afraid that they were going to send them to a reservation.

My mother, who was a very proud, much respected and very strong woman, died in 1974. I was down in Beverly Hills. I wanted out of the Canyon! I wanted electricity! I wanted paved roads! I never knew how hard it would be to get back to build here. I'm living my dream now. Just watching life come alive in so many people. I'm smiling seeing my daughter, Kanyon, come around. All she knew was ceremonies from day one, because there were so many ceremonies that took place up here. She was really involved and then when she got into school, she no longer had an interest. Now she's gone full-circle. It's been special.

My daughter made her regalia to wear for the dance that was honoring Ohlone elders here in Indian Canyon. She not only created the dance, but also the song for the Ohlone elders. Kanyon said, "Mom, I got it -- the dance! She did this dance and it's beautiful. I said, "Now we need a song to go with it." We practiced the dance. She picked up the book and said, "These are the words that are coming out: Honorable elders/Thunder rain wake up!" I said, "That is so perfect! It really is!" [The entire song is as follows]:

Mak-et tcite/We dance for you

Amani auye tura/Rain awaken thunder

It's just four times, *Amani*. Everyone is in a circle and then they do that four times. It's beautiful! It's "honorable elders, wake up, we dance for you/rain wake thunder/wake up!" I feel that Kanyon's ancestral spirits are still alive here and they are bringing in the people who are meant to be. You know you have to be here. No wonder those words were attracted to Kanyon.

It took us about a year and a half to make the regalia, specifically for this very, very special day. The regalia that she wore, I found so amazing. I'm monitoring for

CALTRANS at Yerba Buena Island – an Ohlone burial, 3500 BP. Some of the burials were buried with *ollivella bicopata* shells. The shells on her regalia were the exact same size, the exact perforations and location. That is the ancestral memory that is in our DNA that we are still continuing on with. We went over to the Pacific Ocean at Spanish Bay in Pacific Grove and then up north just south of Half Moon Bay and collected the *ollivella* shells from the ocean. It is so beautiful watching, particularly the young, making their necklaces for the ceremony. When we're making the necklaces that we gave to the elders at this honoring day, as we put the sinew into the shell, every shell is a prayer – a prayer that honors our ancestors. All of these necklaces that are being made for the elders, there are prayers in them. You can just feel it. The power of prayer is so amazing. I think it is for everyone when you are in that special place. It's giving thanks and a positive expression for our ancestors, for the individuals for whom the necklaces are being made. That energy is collected and it is in a circle – the necklace goes full circle. That too passes on and what you give out goes full circle and goes back to you. I believe that my gift was to see my daughter wearing something that she had made herself that I did not teach her how to do, that our ancestors did. It's just like people that cook -- when you're happy you can feel that happiness in the food that was prepared. I can taste that hot, good energy that went into it as I'm eating it.

Cultural renewal, revitalization ~

We're California tribal people; California is very matriarchal. My mother was an extremely strong woman. The people who petitioned within the Costanoan Ohlone territory, petitioned for federal recognition, are primarily women. There is Tony Cerda and Patrick Orozco, but all the other people are women. The Costanoan Ohlone people, who extend from San Francisco down to Big Sur, are not recognized tribally; they are federally recognized as individual Indians. Those descendants whose ancestors filled out a special California Indian census in 1928 were assigned a roll number and their descendants until 1974 were given a number. In 1851 and 1852, there were 18 treaties that were signed between the government and the California Indians. Those treaties were never ratified; they just disappeared. Really, they could not push Indians further west, like they did in the rest of the country. In addition to that, there was too much natural resource,

gold being one of the main items. Everyone started coming west and the Indians were in the way. Then the large railroads came in. There were four main areas where they were going to put the Indians on reservations. Those areas happened to have been too valuable and so the government just said well we can't do that so there was no ratifying and the treaties just disappeared. They were not located until 1904 or 1905. Then it was, "Oh my God, the Indians still own the state of California!" It took from that point in time until 1928 to come up with a workable formula to deal with this situation. If the Indians in California who were living in California in 1928 could prove that their ancestors were living in 1851/1852, then they were assigned a roll number. They were the recipients of the California Land Claims Settlement which was forty-one cents an acre which they believed was the value in 1851. It took from then until 1950 when there was a \$150 of interest that was distributed. In 1972 I believe there was \$668 distributed to the descendants. My great grandfather and my great grandmother, who were living in 1928, filled out this questionnaire. My great grandfather had to have a witness verify that what he said was true and that they did know him. He signed his name with a thumbprint and an X. In 1934, this government created the IRA, the Indian Reorganization Act. The government said to all the different groups of Indians in California that they were working with, "This is how you have to form your tribe or your rancheria. All the people who are receiving services from us, we need their names, the number of people, and we need to develop a constitution. We need to have membership criteria so they know you have become a member and how you have formulated that membership for your tribe."

We've always been here in Indian Canyon since man started walking on the earth. We have the allodial title. The allodial title is pre-feudal; it's before fee-simple deed that you probably have on your property. It's the connection you have with the earth where you've always been from, generation after generation, century after century. We have the allodial title to this area and that's why the ancestral spirits are still here and why the honoring ceremony is taking place.

Everyone has their creation story -- just like the Bible is a creation story. Every creation story I've ever heard is equally valid. We are where we've always been, here in Indian Canyon. I love being where I've always been from -- right here in this

canyon. You can have your Big Bang theory or your migration over the Bering Strait theory, but that's exactly what it is: theory. I have my theory too.

At the entrance, it's not on our property, but where the vineyard is located, that's the original village site that goes back for tens of thousands of years. Just before you come into the Canyon there is a cattle guard; to the west that entire area is the village site. When Ken Gimelli purchased the property -- the vineyard, he came across a Native American burial when he had one of his workers plowing the area. We had the sheriff come out, just what you do by law. You have to stop all construction. Then we had Allison Galloway who is a forensic anthropologist from UCSC. We had the county archaeologist record it with Sonoma State. It's a recorded site. The area has a trinomial, but there has been no dig. We re-interred the remains very close to where it was unearthed. There was no destructive analysis, but the boy was twelve years old. In the 40's when they were originally disking the area to plant grapes, where the grapes are now, Jesus Salcido said, "It would be so frustrating because I am on the tractor and I would go ten feet and come across another mortar. I'd have to get off the tractor, move it out of the way, get back on the tractor and then go another five feet and I'd come across another mortar!" According to Frank Salano, between both of them, they removed in excess of one hundred mortars and pestles, just in that area right there.

Q: Tell us how your monitoring work relates to the cultural revitalization process in which you also are engaged?

Ann Marie: I have participated in monitoring work for the last twenty years. It started shortly after the Loma Prieta earthquake that took place in 1989. An example would be the Moss Landing Marine Lab. Their classrooms and the entire school basically were destroyed due to the earthquake. Because it's a public facility, part of the California State University, primarily out of Long Beach, they use public funds. FEMA came in to help them. When they come all the way up here to Indian Canyon from Washington, D.C., I know they have to do it by law. Because of the new location for the Moss Landing Marine Lab on the ocean in an area that was archaeologically sensitive, the most likely descendants, meaning the Ohlone descendants in the area, developed a memorandum of agreement as to what should transpire if they did come across any human remains, how they would be

cared for, how they will be stored, and what it is we can anticipate with the burials, how much land would be designated for the re-interment of these individuals, and then for potential museum display and educational purposes for the cultural materials that were not burial-affiliated. It took them ten years before they met all the requirements because it was right along the ocean. They had to deal with many different commissions. It worked out well. There was difficulty to begin with, but after people realized they still had to deal with the Indians, because this is the law and federal funds are being used, the scientists came full circle. If they wanted to see the Moss Landing Marine Lab, this was just another hurdle they were going to have to jump over. Upon that realization, we started going forward in a good way. Until that took place it was rather challenging. Particularly when you have descendants who are really quite different, it is challenging. Understanding the Native American post-colonial psychology – what happens to the psyche of the suppressed – it makes it a little bit easier. I was one of the descendants who helped create the memorandum of agreement and then monitor. We went by consensus. There was Tony Cerda, Ella May Rodriguez, Linda Yamane – there were probably about a dozen of us. I've been monitoring since the mid 1980's, if not earlier. Ella Rodriguez was working in the 1970's. I feel like she's the grandmother of monitoring.

When I'm actually monitoring on site I am watching earth being moved, along with archaeological monitors and environmental monitors to make sure that there are no cultural materials or burials that are being disturbed. If indeed there are, the archaeologist will remove them. Usually when an individual is unearthed, the archaeologists I've worked with are amazingly sensitive. They are using a dental pick to remove the earth. It's very beautiful to watch the sensitivity in what they do for a living in their profession. I wish my mother were alive because she watched bulldozers go through burials with no regard at all here locally in San Benito County. Then usually when the individual is totally exposed before it's removed, we'll have a ceremony. I will ask the archaeologists and the field technicians to form a circle around the ancestor and we will smudge ourselves (purify) and say some words for this individual.

Usually I'm making necklaces. Every time I put a bead or a shell on the sinew,

prayers are being said; it signifies that this individual goes back to the spirit world in a good way. There are times when the necklace will go back with that individual when it is reinterred. Some of the necklaces may go to the people who show their sensitivity who were part of the removal and re-interment. They are used as honoring gifts for drummers who may come in for the re-interment ceremony, for the people who carry the burials in the cloth to be placed back into the earth. I've never made too many. My primary job is to be there because by law they need a Native American monitor to make sure that our ancestors are treated with dignity and sensitivity. For me personally, I need to see that these individuals are smudged so they understand that they will be reinterred ceremonially. Disturbing them, our apologies, but it will not be long before they are reinterred. Many Native Americans, including my mother, believe when a burial is disturbed, the spirit of that individual is wandering until that individual is reinterred ceremonially. It's extremely important to me. I feel as though it's the ancestral spirits that go full circle.

Q: It appears that there are many vital women involved in the process of cultural revitalization.

Ann Marie: Ohlone women were matriarchal. Maybe not all anthropologists would agree with that, but that's their problem, not mine. Because the Ohlone people are not federally recognized tribally, there currently are seven groups that are seeking federal recognition of which four of them are women and three are men. People who come up here to the Canyon who are Ohlone descendants, wanting to know more about their heritage, wanting to become actively involved are extremely focused. They've done their homework; they've done their genealogy. They've all been women. There are Ohlone men who are assertive and very involved in their ceremonies, and with tribal activities and with warriorism. That's very much the case, but more of the individuals who I am personally in contact with and have participated in ceremonies with have been Ohlone women. That's why I believe we are matriarchal. My grandmother married a man who was half Chumash and half Ohlone, but he identified himself as an Ohlone because he married an Ohlone woman.

Q: What is the significance of ceremony for the continuing revitalization process?

Ann Marie: My mother believed that when ceremony stops, so does the earth. I too believe that. There are some ceremonies that are so extraordinarily powerful, there's no way you cannot be a part of. The more ceremonies that you connect with, just compounds that connection. Everyone is just the sole product of all their ancestors. When I am in ceremony and I make a definite connection, for me it is a reason for living. There is nothing more powerful. You are one and inseparable from the ancestors. That's a lot of energy.

Q: Is there a revitalization of the language going on?

Ann Marie: In a manner of fashion, yes. It's the Mutson Language Foundation. They've done a very, very good job and then many individuals on their own behalf. I know some people who are very much involved. Language is such a critical part of one's culture too. We haven't had any speakers of the Mutson language since the 1930's. We are revitalizing it just with wax cylinders and with John Peabody Harrington's notes and with Mark Olrand's and De La Questa's notes. It's complicated. Every now and then you come across something that you really connect with and you understand why you are doing it. An example would be "rumme" which means water. It's just not H₂O; it's the creek or the river that contains the water; it's the movement of the water; it's the sound of the water. They are one and inseparable. When you are at a specific place and you make that connection, then you understand – your language, your ceremonies – they're all connected. We are all related. It's not only biologically, but all the life that surrounds us.

Q: What do you see as your role in the cultural revitalization process?

Ann Marie: I hear a lot of Ohlone people talk about it, but I live it. I'm right here. I'm in the sweat lodges. I'm in the ceremonies. I love it. But living in the country when you're off the grid and you have to cut your wood to keep warm, is not the easiest thing in the world, although it makes you one of the richest.

Q: What was the best part of the honoring ceremony for you?

Ann Marie: When we were participating in the ceremony, the best part was when we danced this dance that Kanyon created. The song that we sang in our language – the words that just popped out at her from these three or four different

dictionaries connected with the elders. You can feel that energy and vibration and that frequency. That energy is so strong that it will be part of you forever. That was special. The emotional part, when we gave the elders their honoring gifts, the tears that were forthcoming, was very beautiful, but it was their actual awakening when we were singing, “*awaken grandmothers,*” in our language when it actually connected, you felt it. A part of them awakened. As we continue to honor them and acknowledge their native heritage, another part of them will awaken. People, who think they know nothing about their heritage, will realize how much they do know. Terry’s aunt was there. She said, “All these visions kept coming at me”, from her childhood when her mother or father would share something with her. When that takes place, you know that spirit is working.

Terry Reynaga



I was born in Santa Cruz. I grew up between Watsonville and Capitola. Everything has changed so much. We didn't know much about being Indian. We did in the seventies because that is when we were supposed to get some money. My grandmother would just say that we were 'Mission Indians'. That's all we knew was 'Mission Indians' until the seventies when they discovered the burial ground in Watsonville on Lee Road. Then it started coming out. They were digging, trying to build some warehouses. My great-grandmother was alive at the time and she remembered the place. As a little girl her father used to take them by there on a buckboard. He would stop and go off and do chanting and praying. He told the kids, "Always remember that your family is buried here." Then when it came out in 1972, that they had discovered a burial ground, my grandmother knew. She told everybody that that is where our family is buried. Everybody went over there. They just barricaded themselves. It was a big deal. They had people coming from Oregon and Washington. I remember going in and saw all these people, our family, sitting there with shot guns and refusing to leave. I think I was fourteen at the time. I left and when I came back, I couldn't get in. The freeways were blocked. They had National Guard and the sheriffs and Highway Patrol and helicopters. They would not leave that burial ground. They were going to build another warehouse on there.

They finally came to an agreement that they were not going to build there and they were going to leave everything alone. Everything that they had dug up, they were going to rebury. It was a big fight, but we won. At that time they formed an organization, Pajaro Valley Indian Council, and that's where it all began. My uncle started doing research and interviewing everybody. It broke up because a lot of stuff was going on – drugs, and drinking and money. There's a lot of alcoholism in our family so it just wasn't run right. My uncle decided he was going to form a new organization to save the graveyard. He did and from that point he has run our organization. He's very strict – no alcohol, no drugs. Don't even come if you're hung over from the night before. That's why I feel safe when we go places. It's not allowed. Ever since then he's been doing the research; he's done a lot of work. Now he wants me to do it. I love it. When I started doing research and looking at microfilm, I got hooked.

Q: Tell us a little bit about the conception of this dance for the elders.

Terry: Ann called me. She had a vision. She wanted to honor the women elders who have never been honored. She asked me if I wanted to be a part of it. My first thought was my mother, because my mother has done so much for the family – helped out the uncles and aunts, helped them out financially and just taking them places and even buying headstones and burial plots for quite a few, maybe ten of them who worked hard all their lives and would have been buried in Santa Cruz County where they just put people who don't have any money. She's done so much and she doesn't ask for anything back. I wanted her to be honored. My mom helps out on the genealogy side, but she doesn't get involved too much with the dancing or the singing or the sweats. She'll cook fry-bread at the pow-wows when we have a booth. She'll come around, but I really want her to feel what I feel. My mother had a really hard life as a young girl growing up and raised four kids all by herself. I made her a nice top out of deerskin. I made her necklaces. She's worn the necklaces; she's never worn the top yet. Someday she'll wear it. She's coming and I am so glad. My aunt is also coming. It just means a lot to me. It's like breaking barriers. They're opening up a little bit. We didn't really have to do anything – just keep doing what we are doing, just being examples. If they just continue seeing you be happy doing what you're doing and trying to be at peace, they start taking an interest because they see that you're so involved. My sister started dancing with us for a little while. She still dances with us once a year and she was in my wedding. It's been good for my whole family. I just wish that they could feel what I feel though

Q: Why is it important to honor the elders?

Terry: The elders were always honored. Even today, at the gatherings, elders go first. They eat first. They are our teachers. A lot of the culture is lost and a lot of it isn't. Some of the elders that I know, don't talk about it too much or practice very much. They know it and it's in there so I think this is going to help bring it out, to bring them back. We need to know more. I could sit all day and listen to an elder's stories. I would bug my grandma. She'd tell me the same stories over and over, but I didn't care. I know my mom has stories. She's told me some. But I think the dance will bring it back – something will happen; it will trigger something where

they'll want to sit with the grandchildren and tell them more. I'm hoping that happens.

I've learned a lot from the elders – from my grandmother, just hanging out with her. I remember a lot of times walking down the river with her, tossing rocks and spending time with her. That means a lot to me. That's why I want to do that with my kids. I want to just be able to get away from all the chaos out here in the world and just spend that time with my kids and pass on what my grandparents did with me, and my mom, too. She would take us on outings to Mt. Madonna. It didn't cost anything. Those were the times I remember the most. I'm sure we went to places like Disneyland and places where you have to pay to get in, but I don't remember them. I remember the times when we'd go up to Mt. Madonna and walk around. I remember getting lost in the woods with my mom. Those are the things I remember. That's what I try to do with my kids. I'd rather do that, not because I don't want to spend money, but it feels better.

The elders are going to be gone soon. I don't want them to go. I want to make sure that they know that they are honored and that we love them and respect them. I wish now, today, that I would have done more of that with my grandparents. At the time I wasn't where I am today. The elders that we have today, they need that. We need that. We don't have too many elders left in our family.

Speaking of the women ancestors ~

We don't know their stories, but we have to honor them. Maybe in some way they'll come to us, their stories will come to us. I just think in my research they'll put something in there for me, like a sign or message. They really do need to be honored. I'm fascinated with these women and the lives they lived and the things they taught their kids – the remedies and the songs – just the way they were raised back then. I wish I could live back then.

Q: How did your experience with dance reconnect you?

Terry: I feel the power in me when I dance. I have to tell the girls when we're dancing, because sometimes they're nervous and think they're messing up, "Don't look at the people. Look at the sky, look at the trees, and just feel like you're alone and just let the spirit come to you. You won't feel nervous and you won't mess up."

Just let it happen. If you look at people, and whose looking at you, or your dress is sideways or you're worried about your hair is not right, then you don't feel it; you don't get the connection. That is what I did in the very beginning, because I was in such a dark, dark depression when I first started coming to dance and talk with my uncle about joining the organization. The first time I danced was at my wedding. I was preparing and I was feeling it. I was starting to feel lighter in all the preparations because we had to go all over shell hunting, feather hunting, skin hunting. We went all over California for a year preparing for this. My mother even went with us feather hunting one time. But then when I danced, the depression was lifting, the darkness was going away.

We had to sweat four times before we got married. This was the first and only time that I had a vision. I was lying there on the ground on my belly. It was hot and the earth was cool. There was only a few of us in there. I was rocking in a fetal position back and forth. I was in the county jail and I was kicking heroin. I was rocking and I was sick because I was a heroin addict for 24 years. It was hurting my stomach and I was just sweating and feeling terrible. A voice came to me and said, "You don't have to do that anymore. The poison is gone." My God! It was telling me that the last of my poison was leaving me. I didn't have to do that any more. I went in first so I had to leave first. Everybody else was waiting for me to get out so they could get out. I just laid there and sobbed. I couldn't believe that it was finally over. Finally I did get up and left. Nobody asked me anything, but my uncle knew something had happened. I told him about a year later what had happened to me. Since then the depression has been completely gone. Sometimes when I get overwhelmed, I can feel when I'm not feeling right and it wants to come back. I pray, burn sage. My son and I dance in the living room just to keep it away because it's such an awful feeling. It is such a darkness with no hope. I know a lot of people go through that. My kids know everything. I don't hide anything from them. They know what I went through and how I had to get myself out and how I had a lot of friends who didn't make it out and how it lies to you. I try to tell them everything so they know ahead of time when somebody comes up to them and says, "Hey, this is good. Let's do this". I try to explain to my kids, when kids are mean to them and they come home crying or teased. My son came home with a banana smashed on his head and his

lip busted or he came home with his lunch taken away. I had to explain to him all the time that kids don't know and parents don't teach them about culture and about being kind. In the past I probably would have gone over there and rang their neck, but I can't do that because it's not a good example. It's helped me in a lot of ways.

I always wanted to be a part of my uncle's organization – the dance and the fry-bread making. I remember my grandmother making fry-bread in Santa Cruz at the Mission. I always wanted to be a part of it, but I knew I couldn't because I was drinking or doing something. There were no ifs about it, I just couldn't. It's something I always wanted to do. My grandmother used to tell me when she was a kid how they would dance or sing. Sometimes she would dance for us in the living room, but I never knew what she was really doing. I thought she was just acting silly dancing. It's a dream. I remember the last time I was in prison, my uncle wrote to me and sent me a list of words to practice so I could learn the language. Every time he wrote to me, he'd send me another list and I'd learn them. They were all animal names, like owl, bear, deer. He just kept encouraging me. A part of me wanted to say, "Okay, I'll always be a drug addict. I'll always be in prison. I'll always be a bad mother. I'll always be no good." Part of me just wanted to say that. But part of me said, "No, you don't belong here." I knew I was different. I knew there was something more for me. I had dreams. I wanted to become an electrician. When I got sober and met my husband, I had the opportunity to go to school so I became a journeyman electrician. Then I wanted to paint cars and do auto body so I went to school and learned how to pull dents and do auto body and paint cars. I did that for about three years. I knew I could do things if I really wanted to. Now I do this. This is my place. This is what I want to do. I'm not looking for anything else. Now I work for the City of San Jose in the Parks Department. I plant flowers, mow grass, trim trees. I'm outside all day. I love the rain and thunder so I'm always outside when it's raining. I'm happy. I dance any time I can. If I feel like I'm getting an empty feeling, I say, "Marcus, let's dance!" He'll get the drum off the hook and he'll play the drum and I'll follow him with my rattle. We have a small living room and we go in circles and circles until I feel better. I've found my place. This is where I'll be until I'm gone. My kids – I'm so scared for them to go the wrong way, because I was there. My son loves to dance. My daughter, Summer,

she's been with my since she was five. She's my husband's daughter, but I've raised her and she calls me mother. She's been dancing since she was five. She makes regalia. She makes necklaces. She teaches the new ones that are coming in. She has been adopted by our tribe. She is Mexican, Filipino and German so I've taken her to a Filipino festival so she can learn that side. I haven't found anything that is German yet. She has another side that I want her to learn too, because I think culture is important. I wish all the kids were like that – could learn about dancing and singing and just feeling the spirit. My oldest son, David, is eighteen. He used to dance, but now he only gets involved when we have vendor booths. I know someday he'll come back and sing and dance or maybe even drum with us.

Q: What do you hope will come out of this honoring ceremony?

Terry: I hope that more of the elders come to the gatherings. I hope we can bring the elders out and have them do some story telling, see if they would be interested in that. Bring all the little kids, and bring all the people who are lost or just anyone to listen to the elders. I've started a photo album of old pictures. I have a lot of pictures of my great-great grandmother. She was in a wheelchair all of her life. She had twelve children. I was the oldest grandchild so I was always with her. She was the babysitter. She would always be at the table rolling tortillas or playing cards. She loved to play cards. Or she would be putting the wash through her old washing machine, through the rollers that squeezed them dry. She would tell us stories. But I was so young I don't remember. I remember some of my grandmother's, but my great-grandmother's I don't. My grandmother used to take me walking down the river with my grandfather. We were always walking down through the river through the water. My grandpa would chase crawdads and they'd be telling stories. If my grandparents were here today, I don't think we could do that. A lot of rivers, you can't walk through or wouldn't want to. It's not the same. I miss that. I would like my mom to tell my kids the stories when she was young. I don't think she's ever told my kids stories.

Q: What would you like to see happen for the Ohlone people in the future?

Terry: I want them to not feel ashamed, embarrassed. I want them to be able to feel what I feel. It's such a relief to be free and be who you are. I was there before.

I had an image to hold up. There was a barrier there that I couldn't get through and once I did, I would never go back. I'm hoping my kids will never be embarrassed to say who they are or to dance, to participate. I know a lot of kids do. They go off in different directions, but sometimes they'll come back. Today I see a lot of young boys who are fifteen/sixteen and I feel so proud because they could be out on the streets. I just hope my kids stay with the culture, practicing the ways. I wish that all people could have something to make them feel proud. There are a lot of people who don't know anything about their culture. That's really, really important. Yesterday we went to dance in Santa Cruz. We hadn't had our regalia on since New Year's Eve when we danced at Monterey. It was in a school in the cafeteria on a little stage. It was night time and raining outside. But even though it wasn't on the earth and in the wilderness, it was so fun to me. I felt uplifted, just having my regalia on and dancing on this little tiny stage just singing, just letting it out. It just felt so good. It doesn't really matter where it is, it's just being able to feel the peace and to not have to hold up an image and be somebody I'm not.

There are a lot of elders that don't want anything to do with it. They deny it and don't want to talk about it. If I'm doing genealogy and trying to help somebody track their genealogy, they can't get any help from the elders. They just absolutely shut down. There is no reason for it. I know there are skeletons in people's closets and they could be from the 1800's or early 1900's – we don't even know why anymore. I just wish they could get past that, because those things don't even really matter. Once you go through certain things in your life, there are so many things that don't matter. You have to take life serious, but little things like that just really don't matter. The peace and the joy that you get from being who you are, accepting it, is overwhelming.

Q: What role do women play in the revitalization of the culture?

Terry: There are quite a few women. I see more women than men. There may be a lot of men out there; I just don't know of them. Women are able to confide in each other more. They come up with ideas. They're more sensitive and close.

Q: How do you see your role in the cultural revitalization process?

Terry: I have a lot of fear. I know I can make regalia and necklaces, not perfect,

because I've seen some stuff out there that is really, really beautiful. I can do that and do some research. I haven't had a lot of education so that's like a fear for me. People tell me why don't you get involved in this and that – different types of fund-raising and I'm just fearful. I don't really have a big role. I can gather all the women together and we can make gifts, do regalia and dance, do some genealogy, bring the kids together and make gifts, and do activities. It's something that's fun. My uncle gets involved in stuff with the city council on preservation, monitoring sites, the wetlands project and stuff like that. I'd like to be knowledgeable, but it's just another world for me to sit down in a council meeting with people and discuss those things. I don't have the vocabulary. I don't know how to write professional letters or proposals, and he does. He's depending on me to continue when he's gone. I keep telling him, "I can't do that." He gets mad at me. He says, "Well, I couldn't either. I just had to get in there."

Q: What do you think needs to happen for the revitalization process to be really successful?

Terry: If we all came together we would have a stronger voice and we could learn from each other. That's what we need. We need more people. There's not enough in our tribe. They're there, but not involved. There's just no interest in a lot of people, or they don't want to take the time or learn something new. It's just hard to get everybody together. There's always something that has gone wrong -- bad words or disagreements. I've always believed that it's okay to disagree. Not everybody thinks the same. All we have to do is just respect that. There's a lot of fighting.

Q: Do you understand the language?

Terry: I know some words. I know a lot of the animals. I know a greeting. We have some of the language written up, but it's just little bits of Santa Cruz, Santa Clara, Aptos and Soquel. A lot of times you have to put stuff together because they're almost similar anyway. A lot of it was lost. I did my wedding invitation in Santa Clara language and then I translated it into English. At that time we still believed our tribe came from Santa Clara from the village of Ritoci.

My uncle Patrick and Ann Marie worked with CALTRANS on a project interviewing all the elders. My uncle has I don't know how many tapes. Two of them are of my grandmother, my two uncles, and they're all gone now. And just to

hear them! My grandmother said, “I want all my grandchildren to learn and know about their culture.”

I love to listen to her. Just hearing her voice just brings her back. We have a dance group with Patrick. The songs that we sing come from a tape that was recorded in 1902 by Viviana Soto, who is his two daughter’s great-great grandmother.

J.P.Harrington interviewed her and she sang on the wax cylinders. She was eighty-nine at the time she sang – those are the songs that we use. We have a picture of her. I do genealogy and I am always searching old stuff in the archives. I love it. I went to Sacramento to the San Quentin archives and found pictures – mug shots, before and after, of my fifth great uncle in the late 1800’s. His before picture when they arrested him and took him in, with a hat and a big mustache, then the after when they shaved him bald and put stripes on him. He was always drinking and they were always throwing him in jail in Monterey. Some of it’s there, but not all of it. The more we can record and put away, the better.

Q: What do you believe that the larger society could learn from the Ohlone?

Terry: Stop building and killing the animals. Respecting the animals’ life. I have friends at work who just can’t wait for hunting season and it just bothers me. They don’t know what they’re doing to us. They’re taking all of our land away. I’m working at City Hall and I see these meetings going on about where they want to build. They want to put twenty-seven thousand homes in Coyote Valley. I drive through there every day and it’s so beautiful and they want to just take it away. It just gets me so upset. Our water – people just don’t think about the future; they’re polluting everything. Over here by Adams Park at the base of Mt. Madonna, I used to go play there. My grandma would take us there. Later, as I got older, we would have birthday parties there. We’d go down into the creek and jump off the rock. Now they have fencing around everything. It turns out that this big rock we used to jump off is bedrock mortars. My ancestors would sit up there and grind their acorns. There are carvings all over the rock. We didn’t know it and we played around there. It’s a good thing that they discovered it and put fencing around and there are trails, but a lot of places, are just destroyed. I know I got upset because I took my kids over there one day. I wanted to show them where I used to play in the river and it was blocked off and I couldn’t get in there. I was upset about it, but

then I had to remember if I go in then everybody else is going to go in and throw all their litter in there.

Respect our water and our birds and our deer. Stop cutting down our trees. I don't know what is going to happen if they don't. The population is just out of control.

Charlene Sul



Q: How did you become involved in the cultural revitalization process?

Charlene: It actually happened at a really young age. There were so many things in my family that were not talked about in terms of culture. The focus was on being a good person and being a good student and contributing to society in the best way we could. My grandmother really didn't talk a lot about our past or the heritage of her family. I didn't ask because I didn't want to make her uncomfortable. I did my own searching.

At the time, during the 70's, I did a lot of reading. I didn't learn about myself in particular, but I learned about so many other people and what was going on. I knew there was a huge gap. I just started to put things together and learned about the area that I lived in. I knew my grandmother and my great-grandmother were born there. I knew we lived there for generations. I thought even if nobody wants to find out or tell me about it, at least I can figure out about the history in that area. I must have been fourteen.

I was born in San Jose and my grandmother was born in Madrone near Morgan Hill. The lack of information was what really began my journey. What were we all about? Who were we really? Then it wasn't until I was probably in my mid-twenties that a document was being shared with my family. It was like a journal entry; somebody was keeping a log going back to at least the late 1800's of when people were born and when they passed. I never saw the book, but I saw this one page. There were probably about twenty people or more before my grandmother and several people after my grandmother on this list. Somehow it got ripped out of the book and my grandmother ended up with that single page. I really was curious. Even though they didn't want to talk about it, here was this list of people.

Most of the people on the list I did not know. Some of her brothers and sisters I did know. What happened? Why did the spelling of her name change? Why was it that some people were on this list and some were not? That really began my own research.

I began by talking to other people and I found out that there were so many other people with the same questions in mind. Through my research I ended up becoming a resource to other people. I would help them find direction and

motivate them to continue their own search. The finding of this one sheet of paper took me on an incredible journey.

In talking with lots of people I ended up meeting people from other tribes and eventually working with tribes on cultural preservation projects. I helped them develop ways to preserve their own tradition and their own culture. Through this, I've been able to do some incredible projects in terms of working with youth and photography and drawing. I also had youth interviewing their own grandparents and sometimes tape recording their discussions. I knew that if we could facilitate dialogue, maybe a bridge towards wellness would be created. The results were positive. People came back to me and said, "Wow, I didn't know (this or that) about our family and our history." That to me is really exciting. Having children record conversations with their grandparents, can change the relationship between children and grandparents. It turned out to be really important work, providing relevance to the idea of cultural identity. Through this cultural identity exercise I saw wellness.

Many federally recognized tribes receive funding for different kinds of projects. One of the really neat things is they have been funded for health and wellness projects. That funding can be used for all kinds of activities because the tribes define the appropriate treatment for their own community's. It is not necessarily one-on-one counseling or therapy they are interested in, this approach has failed over and over. Knowing this, I was approached to help develop alterNative wellness programs for youth. I began by creating activities for youth retreats. One idea offered was journalism. It could be photojournalism, it could be written or audio. Because they hadn't really thought about it that way, kids, and especially kids that don't have a lot of exposure to different things, their first thought is writing for a newspaper and they weren't really interested in that. When they could take it one step further to something they could identify with, that is something that is really interesting to them. A lot of those kids don't leave the reservation unless somebody forces them to explore; a special program, a camp out or something like that might entice them.

Q: How did you start getting in touch with the Ohlone part of your culture?

Charlene: One of my uncles passed away. He was a homeless man. Part of the reason he was homeless was because he insisted that he was Indian. He let his hair grow long and wanted to live off of the land. Yes, he was starting to lose it. His thinking was somewhat irrational, but part of it was that he had a very strong spirit and because there was so much unspoken history in our family, he was one of the few that understood who we were and others would not take him seriously. He insisted that he was Indian and nobody believed him.

When he passed my grandmother came to me and said, “Well, you knew him best. Why don’t you figure out what to do, some kind of a service for him.” This was an honor. He never went to church as far as I knew. He lived on the street. He loved living outside. That’s why he stayed outside. It’s not like he didn’t have family. He chose to live out there. In putting together a memorial I was directed to my daughter’s school, it was an alterNative high school in San Jose based on Native American teachings. She had only been going to the school for about a month. I hardly knew her counselor, but he would send me off on a journey that would impact the rest of my life!

I spoke to him and said, “We had a death in our family. I’m looking for someone who could do a ceremony for him in the park. We want to have some prayers.” I just didn’t want him confined to a building. The counselor asked if we were from the area and based upon that, he gave me a few names and provided me with a few basic instructions that would be incorporated into the ceremony. That was it!

The ceremony leaders met us at Alum Rock Park. There were two people. The first person was Ohlone and also a Sun Dance Chief; his companion was also a Sun Dancer. As it turns out many Ohlone people go to the different sun dances today. The two of them led the service for my uncle. They did a very good job. They not only offered prayers, but explained their work to the guests, the prayers, what they meant and why they were doing them. They provided us with a little bit more guidance. I thought to myself, “Oh my gosh, my uncle passed, but he left such an incredible gift and opened this huge door. After that I stayed in contact with these two men. Eventually they invited me to ceremonies and my circle grew!

I became knowledgeable enough to do work with Native people from many nations,

providing advice or consulting. I don't have formal training, but I offer practical training incorporating art therapy. My formal training is in holistic practices -- really in education. I went to San Jose State and have a Masters degree from there. I incorporated that knowledge and intrinsic knowledge into working with Native people.

One example is in a basket weaving experience that developed into a means to facilitate wellness discussions. I met a woman from Bass Lake who is in charge of the Indian Education Center in the area. She invited me to a Native American leadership women's conference. At that gathering there were about thirty women who came from California and the surrounding states. It was incredible. They were all community leaders, tribal leaders, directors or project administrators doing work similar to the work I was doing.

While we were there, she taught us how to do the pine needle baskets. I was so excited and determined to learn because I knew it was a piece of our culture that I hadn't seen before. I asked her so many questions that at the end she said, "When you go back, wherever you go, you can teach people how to do this. You have enough skills to do that." I was very grateful for that. Receiving permission to share is absolutely essential in this culture. I already know that healing comes when you work with your hands. I absolutely believe in genetic memory. When I'm teaching people this idea -- sometimes through clay work, sometimes through pine needles and sometimes through shell work -- I will usually hear, "I don't know how to do that." I simply encourage folks to try. Ultimately they create something wonderful, and I believe this is the genetic memory in action. They are amazed by their work. I expect wonderful things. The expectation is that if you are doing something traditional, with traditional materials, the natural course of action is beauty.

Q: What is the role of the elders in this current revitalization process?

Charlene: A lot of the elders don't have the conscious knowledge of Ohlone people, but what I have found is that they are very inspirational and motivational in terms of getting other people to figure it out. For example, once they're in a gathering, like the gathering that we had, they're very moved by that. Like my grandmother, she didn't talk about her youth for many reasons. I think a lot of

it has to do with embarrassment and shame. That's why, for example, when my uncle said, "I'm Indian", my grandmother said, "No you're not. Stop talking about that." Because she had that ingrained when she was really young and she taught her children, not to be ashamed or embarrassed particularly, but just don't talk about it. If you don't talk about it, you're not lying. If you don't say anything bad about it, then you're not hurting anybody. If you say nothing, then that's better. So I think they see the gaps in information. They have an idea of what that lack of knowledge has done to people. I think they're excited and happy to see people searching for that information and trying to get it right. For example, when you think about herbs, I know, as a matter of fact, we'll say fifty years ago, no matter where you lived, a lot of people knew how to make certain teas to make you better. They knew about salves and how to make them for different things. Years later we start to become dependent on pharmaceuticals and just even things that are in the grocery store that are not really making people better. They see that and know it. Somewhere in their lives they have even come to accept that, but in their long-term memory they know of these other things that helped people. Here's a current short example: my granddaughter got really, really sick and ended up in the hospital. On my first visit to her I brought some spearmint from our yard. I used to take that to my grandmother toward the end and she loved the smell. It reminded her of home and when she was young. I brought her a fresh batch every now and then. When I brought her that fresh batch, she would tell me about her childhood; she would remember those things. She would just hold it and put it in her face. I take this same medicine to my granddaughter in the hospital and she's having respiratory problems. We put it in her bed. The first day she was there, we had some near her clothes, because she was mostly being held by her mother. I was thinking again about my grandmother and that memory and that place of home and what it means to be home. If you're thinking about the ancestors, you want them surrounding her to provide her with guidance and direction. They were familiar with this herb; she is familiar with that herb and somewhere in that genetic memory it will bring her healing. That's why I brought it. Nurses came in and said, "Oh, what's that in her bed? Is that mint? Do you use it for tea? Do you make something with it? I know my grandmother does." To me that was a blessing. Yes, I brought it for her, but for

them to realize that yes, indeed, people still use fresh herbs and yes, indeed, it's for a particular thing, and yes, indeed, it is medicine and can be used for healing. That was exciting. When they saw her getting better, sure they're giving her treatments, but they also know, these nurses and doctors who are nearby, that we're doing something different and they're very curious about that.

Q: Why do you think having that elder ceremony was so important?

Charlene: As people get older they start to really think about their lives and where they've been and what they've done as a reflection. A lot of elders end up secluded in their own space, whether it's their home or their neighborhood. They just can't get out as much. The really, really exciting thing was these ladies had a chance to talk amongst themselves a little bit. Even though that some of them had never met each other, they had almost the exact same life experiences. When they actually had a chance to talk it through, they felt better about the fact that they didn't or couldn't share their Native culture with their family. They might have felt bad about that, but there was a reason why they couldn't do that and they all had kind of the same reason. It wasn't just them and it relieved them of this huge obligation and burden that they carried, not being able to share that information with a larger group. It wasn't personal anymore; it was a generational circumstance. They had this circumstance that they all shared and now they understood and now, no matter what happens to them afterward, they can do something with that information or not, but they know that it's not just them. I talked with several people. I didn't know the ladies, but we were connected; they would hug me and say, thank you, thank you, and we'd both end up crying, because I knew what they felt. I knew that just the little bit we could do was honoring their feelings and their thoughts. I know if I was in that same place and I couldn't dance and I couldn't sing and I couldn't go out in the world and explore and gather the information and bring it back – if I knew somebody else was doing that, I would absolutely support them in whatever way I could. That's how I felt. I felt honored. I know that some of the work I do is for them.

I'm working, not just with Ohlone people, but many different nations, and most of them are California nations. There is so much in common among the different California nations. When I have the chance to travel from one place to another

and hear these stories, they are almost the same, or the traditions are almost the same, or the baskets or necklaces they make are so similar, because they have the same materials. Maybe two hundred years ago, people were in their little villages and didn't leave their little villages. They lived in California! They didn't need to. Everything that they needed to survive was right there. They had all their food, all the things they needed for ceremony. They hardly had to move versus some of the tribes in Nevada; they had to move because of the weather. They usually had two homes, but we didn't have to move. Nobody knew that there is so much in common with the Ohlone and the Chumash, but that's because they're both coastal tribes. They live in similar climates and have access to the same fish and birds and everything else. Practices that one group has may be lacking in another group. If they are willing to share that information, and allow each other to use that information, then they fill in some gaps.

I think the elders want to know more. I don't know how many people will actually do it for themselves, but they want that information. They want to know what is going on, what's new. They want to be supported. Like everybody else, they hear about the gloom and dreariness of life. They're in their houses reading the newspaper, seeing the television and usually none of it is too good. To see young people, especially the really young people who were there, dancing and singing, that was inspirational to them as they had no clue that that existed. I think it was the really young people that inspired them, gave them hope.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone people in the future?

Charlene: I think it would start with personal wellness and then community wellness. I've been studying podcasting. I'm going to be publishing my first podcast. It's like a radio show. You publish these episodes onto the internet and anybody can download them and listen to them any time. I already have a program I call the Ohlone Wellness Project. Up to now what I've been doing is at different gatherings I'll do little events like the pine needle baskets or regalia making or talking circles or whatever it is. That's what it has been so far, but because people come and are looking for ideas to take back to their community to hopefully inspire wellness, I thought 'podcasting'. I work for Apple so I know something about what they do. What I'm going to be doing is a podcast show. I'll do interviews with

people. They don't have to be Ohlone people, just with people who are working in the area of wellness. I'll be talking to people who are doing art therapy. I'll be talking with people who are traveling and are just coming back. Just like I told my grandmother stories, things about what I was doing, people will learn things and come back. I'll ask them to report on whatever it is that they learned. It's just one place where people can get this information. In terms of the Ohlone people, number one, by actually making it public – it is called Ohlone Wellness Program – you have the name out there, so people will be curious. Podcasting is really new and while there are thousands of programs out there, when you type in just Native American, there's less than a handful of shows. Eventually I would like to see more Ohlone people involved in the information sharing and gathering. I've talked to a few Ohlone people who said, "Wow! That's a great idea."

Q: Do you think the young people in the Ohlone community are becoming active in this process of revitalization?

Charlene: It's really, really slow. I think they're becoming aware. They're not active. They're not trying to do anything. They're not trying to change the world. All over the world, you had communities that were close and everybody knew one another. Because of that you could preserve cultural identity and tradition. Because of the way the world is today everybody is really, really spread out and because Native people ran for their lives in all directions, that really split everybody apart. My son, Anthony, for example, dances and sings, but it is not enough for him to dance and sing way out in Tracy all by himself. He'll heal himself, but that's all he can do. We can teach young people how to heal themselves, how to take care of themselves, and I really think you can do that just in these gatherings that are really short – four days is not a long time. If you can teach young people and their parents that they really have the tools to take care of themselves, to protect themselves, to seek out their own knowledge, then when we're not together, they'll continue to do that. I believe there will be a time as these children are growing up and these adults are becoming stronger physically, mentally and spiritually that it is all going to come to a climax. There will be a point where they're prepared to do what they need to do. It's happening in many communities, not just Native communities, around the world where people are finding these things all at the

same time.

Q: What is it about Ohlone culture that makes you proud?

Charlene: I think that so many people are self-sufficient. When I look at the Native people across the U.S., a lot of people are dependent on some kind of government assistance. There are a lot of young people who have turned to drugs and alcohol. It's a generational cycle of events that keeps them oppressed. For the most part, we've been integrated. The Mission system did a lot of damage, but at the same time it forced us to survive. Because we're not federally recognized like some other tribes, we don't get any of those other resources so we have to make ends meet. We have to figure out how to do things, how to survive in this world. We can build something for our families and for our future, but in the background, besides doing that, is this knowledge base of natural wellness and healing and going back to the land. An elder told me that you can go out there and do your work and you know how to shop and keep a bank account – you know all those things, but what if there was some huge disaster that happened. How will you survive? You will survive because you know how to heal yourself, because you've been put through these ceremonies that take a lot of endurance. No matter how cold the weather gets, no matter how hot it gets, you will be fine. Some people will panic, but you will be fine.

Through a lot of the work I do, working with communities, with youth, with elders, getting them to talk – it's really getting them to open that door again so that people have the vision, that they get the security, that they build the confidence to do the things that need to be done. I'm just a facilitator. I'm out there looking for opportunities. I don't need to be the spokesperson. I've done that before only because I couldn't find anybody else. I would prefer to find somebody else who can take that on and represent the community.

Q: How did the honoring ceremony make you feel?

Charlene: I was just really focused on the women who were being honored, just trying to give them whatever energy I had to make them feel comfortable and part of the community. Some of them, before they came, were confused, which to me, is kind of exciting. One of the things that Ann Marie says to people quite often

is, “Welcome home.” For these people, this was their welcoming. Yes, they were confused in the beginning and that’s kind of the spiritual walk. Sometimes you don’t know where you’re going. They have this incredible experience and forget that they usually use a cane. They forget about all these things that are usually barriers because they are just so surprised by the way they feel, surprised by what they saw, surprised by the commitment that complete strangers have for them.

There are other honoring of the elders that take place so those things will continue to go on. It’s good that people came, that they went home and told people. That is probably the most exciting thing to me. I would like to see our gatherings get larger because of that. Even for people who would have passed, if they told one family member, that’s all it really takes. If the ladies came and got something good out of it and had something good to say to their friends, families or neighbors, then that just expands the ceremony that much further because it will touch people who weren’t actually there.

Q: Why is dance so important, for example, in the ceremony for the women elders?

Charlene: This is my own interpretation and my own understanding of being. I’m inspired by movement and color. They are the flow of energy. When you’re dancing, you’re actually part of that energy that’s flowing. If you are in the Bear Ceremony and part of that dance, then you feel that energy that moves through you. That’s why it’s so important for people, if they feel comfortable, if they can do it, to get in there! Because you don’t understand unless you’re in there and you can be part of all that energy that’s whirling around. Then you’re consumed in it, you’re part of it and as long as your intentions are good, then you can’t be hurt and you won’t hurt anybody else. My son, Anthony, drums and that’s an important part too. It’s not just the dancing and singing, the drumming is incredible. I’ve sat on a drum before. It’s just one of those experiences. The first time I sat at a community drum, somebody said, “We want you to drum with us.” I said, “I can’t do that.” They said, “Oh come on, it will be fine.” The person leading the drum was really good. We start off real slow and we get faster and faster. You could feel the energy. You can feel it coming from the drum and into the people. I had to stop for a minute, and I’m listening. It’s all working together! Mine isn’t standing out. We are all in sync, that energy flowing. Everybody is singing together, a song I

never heard and here I go singing along. It's just incredible. That's the same thing with the dance. That's why people dance. It's not just for a show, but if you really pay attention, you connect with those dancers. That's why dancers pray before they ever get in there because they know that they are carrying that energy. They don't do it on purpose; you just can't help it. You're part of the dance. Your job is to manage that energy for the people who are going to dance with you so that everybody can tolerate it, so it will protect everybody, so you won't harm anybody else, so you're all in sync. You pray for good things to happen to other people, for the strength. Sometimes when you dance and you're done, you're just absolutely drained. Why? Because you just gave out all that energy and you shared it with so many people.

Kanyon Sayers-Roads



Q: What came out of the honoring ceremony, both for you personally and for the elders, in your estimation?

Kanyon: I was so proud of myself to have created the dance and song that came to me. It was just an amazing ceremony. I was really proud of everyone who came together. It healed people. It showed them that we are still here and you are one of us. I was just really enthusiastic and happy. I'm just glad to be a participant in it because not many youth participate in ceremony in their culture. In the past I found it really dull and now I just enjoy it. It gives me life. We just pray they feel connected and powerful and proud to be Indian.

Q: Why do you think it's important to honor the women elders?

Kanyon: Over the years they just have been denied who they are. It's almost a form of abuse. They shouldn't have gone through that in the past. Finally we get the chance to recognize them. We pray they connect with us. It gives them a sense of wholeness. It shows them that they are not forgotten. They are here and they always will be here, on earth or in another world. When they are being welcomed back and are shown that we appreciate them, appreciate the lessons they are teaching us, that acknowledgement makes everyone so happy.

Q: Why are ceremonies are so important?

Kanyon: It brings a feeling of warmth, being whole. It's like a piece of you isn't there until everyone comes together for ceremony. It's not like your everyday schedule when you go to the shopping mall and meet someone. It's bringing everyone together as a family. Everyone is there for a purpose: for self, and also for everyone else. It keeps our culture going. When ceremonies stop, so does the earth. That's what my mother always says. It's been ingrained in my head.

Q: You've created a special dance for the ceremony – where did that come from?

Kanyon: Through pressure. We had four meetings and one of us had a song, but she had forgotten it. When she woke up, she wanted to write it down and it didn't come back. My mom said, "We need to create a dance." I just started thinking about it. I tried dancing around and figuring out steps. We had just looked up some words in our Mutson language book. When we started practicing this dance, we went outside and it started pouring rain. Oh, it should be of the rain – that is how it got created. The introduction is 'We dance to honor you, our elders',

but the words translate to ‘we dance to you our elderly women’. ‘*Mak-et tcite makam muknive-sima*’ The song is ‘*Amani, amani, amani, Auye tura*’. *Amani* means rain and *ayue* means awaken and *tura* means thunder. That’s when we go to the center and wave our clapper sticks. We shake our rattles.

Q: What is the significance of the regalia? Why do you put it together the way you did?

Kanyon: It’s important that we create it and put ourselves into it. In the past all our relatives used this regalia and we just want to continue that. Using the regalia keeps us connected. If we just went out there in our normal attire, it would be a little weird. Outside of our skin and hair, we would look less like Indians; it just wouldn’t fit. It’s like trying to do the honky-tonk without a cowboy hat. That’s why we want to put ourselves into our regalia and when we dance it’s of us and for them. We need it to continue.

Q: What happened to make you more involved in cultural activities?

Kanyon: When I was really, really young I loved to hang out with my mom and it was always cool to hang out with all the natives. When I started school, I just got caught up with friends and all that extra stuff. I love my friends, but there’s just too much drama.

Q: What is your vision for the Ohlone in the future?

Kanyon: I hope to get the name out there. I still know a few people who don’t know the term ‘Ohlone’ or ‘Costanoan’ and they’ve been living in California all their lives. I’m like “Hey, we’re of this land!” I just see it continuing, bringing everyone together and showing them they belong.

Q: What are you currently doing to make that happen?

Kanyon: I am participating in ceremonies. I am showing people the songs and the ways. I just encourage it as much as possible. I’m open to everybody with open arms. I’m proud.

Q: Are you learning the language?

Kanyon: I’m attempting. I do know the songs and I do know a few words. I couldn’t speak like full-on sentences constantly, but I am slowly learning.

Q: What do you see as your role in the future?

Kanyon: I'm just going to be stepping into the spotlight where my mom is. Like not quite so much speaking to the public as much as she does, but I'll continue everything that she does and the understanding and importance of ceremony and the importance of Mother Nature. I'm going to keep the house and never sell it. People need this place. I need this place. I can't go to the Pinnacles and go on the "required" trail that they have. I'm a person that will go on the broad trail, find a ditch and walk there. I can find my way back because I'm so used to living up in the mountains and getting lost and finding my way home. I just love it. There are times when I told Mom, "I'm going to be back at three or somewhere around there." I just run up the hill and disappear for a couple of hours. She never worried about me. I always carried a pocket knife and my dog, or my past dogs, Pooch, Bear, and then Cheyenne and Mishka.

Q: What are some of the important things you have learned from the women elders?

Kanyon: I learned that they have a lot to show us and a lot to teach. A lot of people just see older people as kind of grumpy and aged in time, but they have their stories too. They've lived lives. They've made mistakes and some of them want to show us the mistakes not to make. They've learned from them. They're really amazing.

Q: Do you think there is interest among younger people to learn about the culture?

Kanyon: I hope there is. I know a few people are striving to understand and learn. I know a few of them are still getting caught up in the 'I'm a teenager and I'm going to be wild, doing the teenage thing', but I do encourage the youth because we are the next generation. I want to get everybody together so we can continue our beliefs, our songs, our traditions, and show everyone that we are still here!

