

Native Peoples of the East Bay



Before the coming of the Europeans, the land we now call California supported hundreds of tribal groups. The East Bay had about 25 independent tribal groups with well-defined territories. The people of these tribes spoke dialects of three distinct languages: Ohlone (also called Costanoan), Bay Miwok, and Northern Valley Yokuts (see inset). Each tribe's leadership and culture varied and each had three or four village locations, both permanent and seasonal. Village populations ranged from about 40 to 200. Individuals commonly spoke two or three languages and marriages occurred among neighboring groups.

This map shows the tribal groups who inhabited the East Bay at the time of the Spanish settlement in 1776. Tribal names spellings follow Spanish pronunciation. Those tribes marked by all capital letters had the largest populations.