

The Ohlone Way—Past, Present and Future

(Comments of President Doug Treadway for Ohlone College Convocation September 3, 2003)

(To the Ohlone Indian Elders) Thank you for honoring me and the Office of the Ohlone College President. Thank you for honoring and blessing this place of learning and our community of students and the faculty and staff who serve them

We are the community of Ohlone and we proudly carry our namesake, the Ohlone Indian people who live in this area today as well as their ancestors.

If we were to go back just 200 years ago, we would have found this to be a very different place from what we know today. Before settlement by Europeans, the Ohlone people—over 10,000 of them, lived peacefully together in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Life in the ocean, the surrounding bays, valley and hills was different from today almost beyond our imagination. This was because nature was dominant, not human beings. Animals were dominant, not human beings. All living things were in harmony. The resources to sustain human and plant life were abundant and self-renewing.

Today, in less than 100 years, mankind has totally and permanently altered the natural state of this place. It is no longer self-renewing. We are taking more than we are giving back. We are dominant rather than living in harmony with nature. As humankind, we live in conflict rather than harmony amongst ourselves

While the Ohlone Indians were very different from us, we can learn from them as we go forward into the future. There is an American Indian organization known as the 7th Generation Fund. The premise of this organization is to weigh all decisions made today against their impact on seven generations into the future. The question most often asked is “How will this action we take now impact our grand children and great grandchildren?”

The asking of this question and the answers to come will provide great wisdom.

The wisdom of those who were here before us will teach us in the future to conserve rather than use up our natural resources; to respect all people and their differences rather than to try to form all opinions into a single tribal mentality; to protect the animals, birds and fish with whom we live—bringing them closer to us once again; to be true to our innermost being through our own path of spirituality; to make wise choices in our personal health and habits of living, and to live in harmony one with another, honoring and respecting the older people, caring for the younger people and those who are most frail or vulnerable in our society.

These are the lessons to be learned as we travel the Ohlone Way. The teaching of these lessons is our mission as a college. The carrying out of these lessons in the day-to-day actions of our college community is the most important commitment we can possibly make for ourselves and for generations to come.