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Ohlone Skeleton Unearthed In SC

The nearly intact skeleton of an Ohlone Indian woman has been discovered on a bluff overlooking the San Lorenzo River.

Archaeologists uncovered the skeleton — estimated to be 200 years old — Thursday as they sifted through dirt at the site of a planned condominium project.

They expect to unearth the skeleton and take it to Watsonville for burial in an Indian cemetery there, said Marvin Barnes, Ohlone Indian spokesman today.

The skeleton is that of a woman in her 20s, said Barnes.

A band of small, delicate shells surround her neck. They are known as Olivella shells, said Susan Baker, an archaeologist with the San Francisco firm of Archaeology Consultants.

The woman was buried in a fetal position, with her legs drawn close to her body and her hands held close to her chest.

As Ohlone custom dictates, she was buried facing east, said Barnes.

The delicate bones were found under about two feet of soil.

The area where the bones were found is believed to be part of an ancient Indian cemetery, said Barnes. But there are no plans for more excavations.

The contractors plan to place four feet of fill over the entire bluff site. Only the area where the skeleton was found was to be excavated.