Volume 01, Issue I May 2020 Pg. 89 - 117

Matrix: a Journal for Matricultural Studies

https://www.networkonculture.ca/activities/matrix

Matriculturality and the Algonquian Language Family: An Interim Report, May 2020

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Abstract

As the notions of matrilineal kinship and matriarchy are becoming popular again, in both the public at large and Indigenous societies, it is important to trace the scholarly context in which these notions became meaningful. During the second half of the twentieth century, patrilineal descent used to be considered the most usual state of affairs for all human communities (47% of the world societies) ranging from small bands of hunter-gatherers to sedentary tribes to state societies, with bilateral systems (as in Europe) as the second most common type of kinship. Matrilineality, which is much less common (18% of the world societies, mostly Indigenous), used to be explained away as a result of special circumstances giving women the control of food production, mostly as horticulturalists, while men are engaged in other pursuits away from home.

These views have shaped the development of kinship studies in North America, influenced the ways in which North American Indigenous people have been described, and informed governmental policies. But they have since been challenged; and other perspectives are emerging, including a potential connection between language and the development of a strong matricultural cultural context able to sustain matrilineal lineages. Such a connection has been noticed in the case of Indigenous North America; matrilineal and patrilineal systems are each found in different linguistic families, so one can predict the likelihood of a community being matrilineal simply by the linguistic family to which it belongs. However, the Algonquian and the Siouan linguistic families seem not to follow the others in that they are split between matrilineal, patrilineal and bilateral descent systems. This discrepancy gives us the opportunity to re-examine the ways in which descent has been defined and then used to classify cultures. Part I of this report retraces anthropological theoretical stances and concepts leading to the present opposition between patrilineal and matrilineal systems, and the establishment of semi-official labels for Indigenous communities, and the increasingly separate work of the

linguists on understanding the genetic connections between the Indigenous languages. Parts II and III, still to come, will examine the case of the Algonquians in more detail, bringing linguistics, archaeology and ethnology together, widening and deepening our ethnographical, ethno-historical and ethnological knowledge of the Algonquian kinship systems and the cultural context supporting their matriculture, including social organization and worldviews.

Résumé
Alors que les notions de systèmes de parenté matrilinéaire et de matriarchat refont surface dans le grand public et dans les sociétés autochtones, il est intéressant de retracer le contexte savant qui a permis au cours des deux derniers siècles l'établissement des études de parenté qui ont contribué les concepts dont nous nous servons aujourd'hui. Les systèmes patrilinéaires ont longtemps été considérés comme dominants et ordinaires dans l'organisation sociale des sociétés humaines (47% des sociétés du monde), avec, au deuxième rang, les systèmes bilatéraux (en Europe, entre autre). Les systèmes matrilinéaires, bien plus rares (18% des société du monde, presque toujours autochtones) furent longtemps vus soit comme un reliquat des temps archaïques, soit comme le résultat de circonstances particulières, le plus souvent en lien avec l'horticulture, donnant aux femmes le contrôle de la production de la nourriture pendant que les hommes étaient engagés dans des activité prenant place loin de la communauté.

Ces théories ont informé le développement des études de parenté en Amérique du Nord et contribué à la façon dont les peuples indigènes on été décrits, ainsi qu'au développement des politiques gouvernementales les concernant. Ces théories ont pourtant été contestées, et parmi les perspectives différentes, la possibilité d'une connexion entre la langue et la nature patrilinéaire ou matrilinéaire des systèmes de lignages et de clan fait l'objet du projet présenté ici. Dans le cas de l'Amérique du Nord, il est possible de prédire la présence de systèmes soit matrilinéaires, soit patrilinéaire à partir de l'appartenance à certaines familles linguistiques. Deux exceptions majeures, la grande famille des Algonquiens, et celle des Siouans, sont chacune divisées entre plusieurs modes de transmission parentale. Ces exceptions nous offrent l'opportunité de réexaminer les termes usuels définissant les systèmes unilinéaires et bilatéraux, ainsi que leur utilisation par les ethnologues.
La première partie de ce rapport retrace les attitudes anthropologiques qui ont mené à l'opposition entre matrilinéaire et patrilinéaire, d'une part, et d'autre part, au divorce méthodologique entre études de parenté et linguistique. Les deuxième et troisième parties (à venir) présentera plus en détail le cas des peuples de langues algonquiennes, en réunissant linguistique, archéologie et ethnologie pour reconstruire les systèmes matriculturels des peuples en question.

This interim report is part of an invitation addressed to members of matricultural communities and to interested researchers, especially those with links to North American Indigenous communities (see *Introduction*). I invite you to join the team that supports the research process described

herein, or to take the underlying questions and hypotheses and make them your own, so as to further the debate.

Prologue[1]

In 1977, Sandra Lovelace, a Wolastoqi (Maliseet/Malecite) woman on the Tobique reserve in Canada, brought a case of discrimination to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR; then known as the UN Human Rights Committee) in what is known as the case of Lovelace v. Canada. This case was about the fact that Canadian Indigenous women lost their official Indian Status when they married a white man, though Indigenous men could marry white women without losing their status. While not addressing her case directly, in 1981 the UNCHR found *inter alia* Canada to be in breach of Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Canada still has to completely comply with this ruling;[2] see Lynn Gehl, 2013 and 2017, for a review of the case and its consequences.

During the proceedings, the Canadian federal government argued that in order to protect the land rights of Indigenous communities, the Indian Act at its inception took into account "the fact that patrilineal family relationships [...] were traditionally used as a basis for determining legal claims."[3] For this reason and others, the act provided that an Indian woman who married a non-Indian man would lose her status and land rights (see Boyer, 2009)[4]. As acknowledged in the final decision adopted by the UNCHR, the contention that legal relationships within Indian families were traditionally patrilineal was disputed by Sandra Lovelace in her submission of 20 June 1980 to the UNCHR; it also includes a letter drafted on her behalf by her counsel, Donald Fleming, which states:

> The government of Canada implies that Indian families were traditionally patrilineal in nature, when such is – or, at least – was not necessarily the case; many Indian

1 This is a revised version of the Prologue, corrected on 3 August 2020; see the original version at the end of the text. My thanks to Lynn Gehl, who pointed out the missing references for the first paragraph, and the error in the text that should have recognized the fact that the UNCHR did not rule in favor of Sandra Lovelace, but, rather, ruled against Canada and the Indian Act.

2 For a complete review of the case, and the consequences for children whose father is not specifically identified as an Indigenous man on their birth certificate, see: Lynn Gehl (2013), 'Indian Rights for Indian Babies: Canada's "Unstated Paternity" Policy,' *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 8(2), 54-73. Retrieved from https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/187*;* accessed 28 July 2020. See also Lynn Gehl (2017), 'Ontario's History of Tampering and Re-Tampering with Birth Registration Forms,' *First Peoples Child & Family Review*, 12(1), 24-33. Retrieved *from* https://fpcfr.com/index.php/FPCFR/article/view/311; accessed 28 July 2020.

3 The relevant content reads in full: "In what was then a basically farming economy, it was considered that Indian reserve lands were more threatened by non-Indian men than by non-Indian women. *This, together with the fact that patrilineal family relationships, rather than blood quantum (measure of Indian ancestry), were traditionally used as a basis for determining legal claims*, led to the introduction, in 1869, of the first legislative provisions dealing with the status of Indian women who married non-Indian men." (emphasis mine) Retrieved from https://indigenouslaw.usask.ca/documents/publications/lovelace/Lovelace_doc13.pdf, pp. 2-3; accessed 28 July 2020.

4 Yvonne Boyer (2009), 'First Nations Women's Contributions to Culture and Community through Canadian Law,' in *Restoring the Balance. First Nations Women, Community and Culture*, Gail Guthrie Valaskakis, Madeline Dion, and Eric Guimond, editors, University of Manitoba Press, pp. 69-96.

> communities were matrilineal in nature, and the Indian Act has successfully destroyed that aspect of their culture.[5]

The statement by the federal government of Canada directly contradicted the presence, known by members of their communities and recognized by anthropologists, among others, of matrilineal systems among the Canadian Iroquoian peoples, as well as the Tsimshian, Haida, and Tlingit peoples on the Northwest Coast, and half the Northern Athapaskan, among other First Nations. It also imposed an official patrilineal status on all the Algonquian speakers, the largest linguistic family group of all Indigenous people in Canada, from the Blackfoot (Siksika) in the western Plains to the Anishinaabeg and Cree in central and eastern Canada, to the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet on the Atlantic Coast, among other peoples. In view of the fact that half of the Algonquian speaking community in the USA were known to have been not patrilineal, are the Canadian Algonquians really patrilineal? More specifically, given the anthropological references to matrilineality and patrilineality, and the use of linguistic affiliations to identify indigenous communities, what contributions could anthropologists have brought to the issue?

Introduction to Part 1

This study examines the potential link between language and kinship systems (specifically, descent systems in Indigenous North America) as one unexplored but puzzling aspect of the distribution of kinship features in Indigenous North America.[6] Can what is shared by people who speak the same language lead to similar forms of matriculture?

Part 1 of this study aims to define the contemporary frame of reference for kinship research, the same frame that has informed administrators and their policies, and that has been transmitted in Anthropology and Native Studies textbooks. This frame of reference is best reflected in the concepts or terms we use and in their definition, which are listed below. These terms represent our best achievement to date as anthropologists and, at the same time, the limits of our shared understanding. In the same way as kin terms and explicit codes of descent inform a society, these terms of reference inform our scholarly forays into kinship studies, gender relations, and native studies.

Part 2 of this project, still to come, will focus on patterns of descent in the Algonquian language family in interaction with individual Algonquian languages, and test our understanding of descent systems. The resulting interaction between the Algonquian world, as conveyed by Algonquian languages and kinship patterns, and the scholarly language will, we hope, result in new

5 Lovelace, Sandra, Noël A. Kinsella, and Donald Fleming, 'Section III: Information and Observations Concerning the Rationale of the Government of Canada for Not Amending Section (12) (1) (b) of the Indian Act, Part B: Formal Information and Observations Drafted on behalf of Mrs. Sandra Lovelace', in *Transmittal to U.N. of Lovelace's Submission Concerning the Communication and the Arguments Made by Canada in it's Submission (Document 14)*, p 11 of Part B (document p. 32) https://indigenouslaw.usask.ca/publications/sandra-lovelace-v.-canada-1977-1981.php, accessed 10 July 2020.

6 Please note: I am using the designations and terms for Indigenous groups as followed by current linguistic practice. I do so because the report is about linguistic affiliations, not about administrative divisions whether in English or in Indigenous languages. And the two systems do not match. However, since this research explores correlations between the kinship features of cultural systems and language families, using linguistic terms and understandings is the best option.

perspectives on what it is we are trying to understand, and what happens when we borrow alien concepts to approach Indigenous systems of thought. The process may confirm the terms we use or lead to a new set of terms and definitions.

In Part 3, also yet to come, we intend to widen and deepen our ethnographical, ethno-historical and ethnological knowledge of the Algonquian kinship systems, and gather information on the cultural context supporting their matriculture, including social organization and worldviews. This methodological shift toward matriculture also requires documenting the position and perspectives of women in these societies. Taking matriculture as our term of reference means looking for new data and questioning previous classifications, rather than flagging only identified matrilineal kinship and descent systems. The resulting new horizon may also allow us to test the methodological value of the concept of matriculture in anthropological theory and analytical practice.

Terms of reference in kinship studies

1. *Descent* refers to the transmission of social identity and status from one generation to the next. It comes in three main forms depending on the line of inheritance: In *bilateral descent*, one is related to both father's side and mother's side, and identifies relatives in the same way on each side; in *unilineal descent*, one is related primarily to kin on one side of the family, either on the mother's side – *matrilineal descent* – producing a matrilineal consanguineal kin group or matriline, or on the father's side – *patrilineal or agnatic descent*,– producing a patrilineal consanguineal kin group or patriline. *Matrilineality* means that people belong to their mother's kin group, take their mother's kin group name or family name, or inherit goods and social position from the mother's side. In contrast, in *patrilineal* societies, people belong to their father's kin group, take his kin group name or 'surname', or inherit goods and social position from the father's side. Unilineal descent groups can results in *lineages* (where one can trace back the common ancestor of the kin group), in *clans* (formerly identified as sib, when a common ancestor is assumed but no longer identified), in *phratries* (groups of clans), and *moieties* (when the community or society is divided in two halves, as in two sets of lineages, clans, or phratries), which are usually *exogamous*: one must find a spouse on the other side, or outside of one's group. The presence of unilineal kin groups does not mean that kin outside of the kin group are ignored, on the contrary; they frequently hold important and sometimes precise educative, ceremonial, or social roles in the life of their relatives that are not members of their own kin group. For instance, many matrilineal societies recognize special ritual prerogatives for the members of the father's kin group or for in-laws.

2. *Bilateral* descent systems, where kin ties are traced on both mother's and father's side, result in what is termed anthropologically as *kindred*, which is a kin group based on recruiting kin from both sides. Unlike unilineal groups, the boundaries of which are clearly traced and extend in time to allow the formation of corporate-like groups, kindreds are not descent groups with clear boundaries and cannot become corporate entities; kindreds are reckoned from the individual and extend in both directions, often including affines, which means that every individual in the group is the center of a different kindred.

3. Other forms of descent systems are much less frequent, if not rare. They include *bilineal descent* systems (*or double descent*) where both systems are combined (for instance, when names are transmitted via the mother's side and land is transmitted through the father's side), and *ambilineal descent* systems (where one chooses either one's father's side or one's mother's side, but not both, or when someone else selects the lineage or group to which one will belong). Even scarcer are systems of *parallel descent* whereby matrilines are favoured for women, patrilines for men, with one or two known cases of *alternating descent* where a girl belongs to her father's side, while a boy belongs to his mother's side.

3. *Post-marital residence rules* determine the residence of the new couple after marriage, and therefore the composition of local groups, from households to neighborhoods. As important as descent, as recognized by Murdock in 1955, who thought that matrilineality begins with or presupposes matrilocality, post-marital residence comes in various shapes and forms. *Patrilocality or virilocality* means the new couple is going to reside with or near the groom's parents. *Matrilocality* (when matrilineality is present, if one follows the terms recommended Murdock) or *uxorilocality* (in the absence of a lineage system) means that the new couple resides with or near the bride's parents. Many matrilineal societies, especially ranked societies, prefer *avunculoca*l residence, that is for the new couple to reside with or near the maternal uncle of the groom, who is often the husband of the bride's mother, that is the father of the bride, if cross-cousin unions are preferred. Other forms of marital residence include *bilocal residence* when the new couple moves alternately from the husband's to the wife's family home, and *duolocality* when husband and wife live separately, or *neolocality* when the new couple establishes their own residence in a new site. Post-marital residence can be definitive or temporary, for example, in the form of bride service. Sometimes, especially in a society with social inequality, the rich, powerful families will insist on one type of high status post-marital residence while the poorer families will allow the new couple to move into the residence that is economically most favorable, resulting in what is sometimes called "half-marriages" (as among the Pacific Northwest Athapaskan peoples, where the family of the leaders are patrilocal, while the rest of community is matrilocal.)

4. French anthropologist Nicole-Claude Mathieu, on the basis of data from Indigenous communities all over the world, proposed (among other things) to consider the local kin neighborhood resulting from matrilocality or uxorilocality as a kind of matrilineage or *minimal matrilineage*, to borrow the expression from John H. Moore. Indeed, many societies without lineages or clans function as if they had matrilineages when the means of subsistence (gardens, trap lines, fishing sites and so on), social identity, political titles, ceremonial or ritual functions are transmitted from a mother or a mother's brother to her children or to his nephew or niece. This establishes a kind of filiation in the absence of a unilineal kin group.

5. Several contemporary matrilineal societies occasionally refer to themselves as *matriarchal*, borrowing the term from the mid-nineteenth century when it referred to a semi-mythical state of society ruled by women. In its new inception, matriarchy is a term that defines governance and the participation of women in the governance or economy of their community. The distinction between matrilineal (having to do with kinship and descent) and matriarchal (having to do with governance) was best articulated by Peggy Reeves Sanday following her research among the

Minangkabau people of Sumatra (see Sanday's presentation at CASCA 2017, Ottawa). The existence of matriarchal societies that would be the mirror image of patriarchal societies (where women would be, as a gender, dominant, and men would be, as a gender, subservient) is doubtful. Anthropologists do not recognize any such type of society (although they do accept the notion of patriarchy). The societies that call themselves matriarchal today, such as the Iroquois (USA and Canada), the Ashanti (Ghana) or the Mosuo (China), define matriarchy not as the reverse or mirror image of the patriarchal systems, but as its antithesis. That is, these societies tend to define themselves as egalitarian, with both women and men exercising power and participating in leadership, including the exercise of economic and political authority, throughout the whole community. In many cases, this includes not only women as political leaders or landholders, but also as warriors or chief negotiators with outsiders, and as traders and producers of trading goods. We call these social features 'matriarchal features', and they can usually be found associated with matrilineality. Conversely, not all matrilineal societies share these features. Anthropologically speaking, patriarchy is not necessarily tied to patrilineality, but it is reinforced by patrillineal systems, and weakened by matrilineal succession.

6. In this report, the term *matriculture* defines the cultural context that recognizes the presence and participation of women in the cultural fabric of society, in both its weak and strong expressions. Matriculture may support, among other traits, matrilineality (and matrilineal kinship), matrilocality (living near the mother's home), matriarchy (women's participation in governance), or the socio-cultural expressions of these systems even in the absence of unilineal kin groups, lineages, clans, or moieties. Social organization does not stop at kinship systems; a large part of the social, economic, political, and religious structures of society are directly implicated in matriculture… One may therefore add to matriculture such aspects as gender definitions, women's freedom of action and mobility, their entrepreneurship, and the extent to which gender becomes an organizational factor in the community. It may also support matricentric (Georges Sioui) or *matrixial worldview* (see Peggy Reeves Sanday for a discussion of that term) and gendered or non-gendered cosmology. All this presupposes the participation of men in the matricultural system that defines men as much as it defines women, as sons, brothers, husbands, and fathers, but also as participants in governance and contributors to the cultural fabric of society. In all these senses, matriculture can be considered a cultural system in Geertz's classical articulation of the expression.

7. The term *worldview* refers to the ways in which the members of a society perceive, understand, and engage in the human society and the world in which they live, what used to be called intellectual culture.

Please note three conventions used in this study: a) The terminology used in the United States, which favors terms such as tribe and Indians, does not match corresponding Canadian use of terms like nation and Indigenous. The spelling of Indigenous names mostly follows Waldman, 1985. b) The terms 'culture' and 'tradition' in their archaeological usage, do not refer to the cultural context anthropologists and ethnologists understand as 'culture'. Instead they refer to the series of tools and material assemblages that define certain regions or certain periods recognizable in archaeological sites. c) When a tribe or groups is said to be 'officially patrilineal' or 'officially matrilineal', the term 'officially' refers to labels currently used either in administrative documents

or in the majority of atlases and textbooks. Unlike ethnographic studies, the official labels are extreme summaries that follow classifications which are themselves theoretical summaries of academic reports. They are often misleading and devoid of all nuance, and they matter especially when they are adopted by the Indigenous communities themselves and have become terms of reference for insiders.

1- *Kinship and Descent: A North American theoretical background*

Matrilineality and patrilineality emerged early in the history of anthropology as concepts tied both to the systematic observation of societies, and theories on the development of ancient societies. Patrilineality and patrilineal descent is practiced in 47% of the 857 societies in Murdock's Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock 1967); it is found in all parts of the world and in association with all forms of economic and political systems, and remains the dominant system in human societies. Matrilineality is present in only 18% of the world societies; matrilineal systems are extremely diverse and are scattered throughout the world. All but one or two are Indigenous people, with a large proportion of them to be found in Indigenous North America. The rest of the sample, acccording to Murdock, is identified mostly as bilateral systems with a few labeled as others.

From the mid-nineteenth century to the end of the twentieth century, serious anthropological debate was devoted to the development of unilineal kin groups, with many hypotheses offered. Patrilineal kin groups were seen as the 'natural' state for hunting-gathering societies; Julian Stewart (1938; 1955) saw them as best suited to the hunters' natural environment and technology, which he associated with small, nomadic or semi-nomadic, self sufficient and homogeneous groups or 'bands' (Steward 1955: 44), which corresponded to an simple 'level of socio-cultural integration' (see also Service 1962 for an emphasis on the patrilocal residence requirement for hunter-gatherers; and Sahlins 1961: 324). The idea of the patrilineal band as 'the simplest, most rudimentary form of social structure' (Service 1962: 107) affected most northern Canadian Indigenous societies since Stewart applied the term to both the northern Algonquians and the northern Athabascans, among others (see also Owen 1965: 676, and June Helm, 1986, for different discussions of the term).

In North America, matrilineal kin groups were usually explained as being the consequence of external conditions found mostly in horticultural societies, and, compared with foraging societies, at a higher 'level of socio-cultural integration', that of the tribal level. These conditions could foster a range of pressurizing forces from environmental necessity favoring the transmission of cultivated land though female kin, to military or economic demands resulting in men's absence from the home (See Murdock, 1949, 1955:55; Schneider and Gough, 1974). While such factors were presented as central to the formation of social systems, other perspectives, such as worldview orientations, were rarely considered and most theoretical approaches developed in the twentieth century saw values and ethics as a consequence of, rather than a factor in, the development of social systems.

The discussion around patrilineality and matrilineality belonged to a larger academic context, that of kinship studies, which was at the center of both British and North American anthropology during the second part of the twentieth century. While the mostly European (and, later, early

Marxist) idea of an archaic matriarchy - which still surfaces from time to time – disappeared from the official American academic scene, the assumptions of cultural evolutionists continued to inform early American approaches to Indigenous kinship, including research dealing with the reconstruction of early Indigenous kinship systems. (One of these assumptions is the idea that early hunter-gatherers lived a simple life in isolation, defined primarily by a quest for food and shelter; another is that foragers' bands are defined by the boundaries of the territory they exploit.)

However, George Peter Murdock introduced a new tool for kinship studies, i.e. statistics, when he began an ambitious project to expand his comparative research on descent systems and kinship terminology, as part of a larger research project on family and social organization. That is, in 1937 Murdock founded the Cross Cultural Survey in order to compile published ethnographic material. This first effort brought 90 cultures under scrutiny in a vast and growing database. Using a cross cultural analytical method to sort through and compare ethnographic data drawn from research all over the world (established so that it could be used by other social sciences as well), Murdock piloted a series of cross-cultural studies that focused on various aspects of social organization, including descent systems and kinship terminology and expanded his data base. The resulting publication in 1949 of his research informed by this new tool, *Social Structure* (Murdock, 1949), became an instant classic and a focal point for kinship studies. In order to increase the amount of available data towards the maximum, Murdock invited colleagues and universities to form a consortium that became the Human Relations Area Files [HRAF], headquartered in New Haven, Connecticut. This resulted in a listing of all known cultures, the *Outline of World Cultures*, published in 1954, and the *World Ethnographic Sample* (1957) where 565 cultures are coded for 30 variables, the *Ethnographic Atlas (1967),* and the *Atlas of World Cultures* (1981).

Meanwhile, in 1967 Murdock published a summary of his findings for Indigenous North America, linking types of descent systems with post-marital residence patterns and types of kin terminology, all amenable to statistical analyses. His reconstruction of kinship system development throughout history, based on measurable correlations, attracted considerable attention, the more so as several of his basic assumptions matched those discussed by the majority of his colleagues both in ethnology and archeology. For instance, Murdock's interpretation of the potential link between natural environment (or resources) and kinship systems also implies taking into account technology and the division of tasks. This interpretation can inform residence patterns according to a 'common sense' argument that accepts patrilineality as the 'normal' state of society (in agreement with Stewart). A matrilocal and locally exogamous marriage implies that a man leaves his own community for his wife's community. According to Murdock, this change causes a serious handicap in a man's activities:

> A woman can join her husband in another community and continue to carry on without handicap all the technical skills she has acquired since childhood. But a man who goes to a new community in matrilocal marriage has to master an entirely new environment. All the knowledge he has gained as a boy and youth concerning the location of trails and landmarks, of mineral deposits, of superior stands of timber, of haunts of game, and of the best grazing or fishing sites becomes largely useless, and must be painfully accumulated afresh for the new territory (Murdock 1949:213-14).

Murdock (1949, 1955, 1957, 1967) insisted on the double correlation between, on the one hand, hunting-gathering subsistence patterns and bilateral or patrilineal kinship systems and, on the other hand, between horticulture and matrilineality. His insistence was due to his statistical analyses showing matrilineal systems as more likely to occur in societies where women worked and owned the garden, while patrilineal systems predominated among hunters in areas where resources allowed for a sufficient population density and among agrarian or pastoralist subsistence patterns, where men owned the land and the herds. Murdock concluded:

> [Matrilineality is most likely] when the means of subsistence of a people depend primarily upon women's activities in the division of labor by sex. The conditions which most frequently lift her economic contribution to a level above that of a man is the introduction of agriculture into a society previously dependent upon hunting and gathering. Since agriculture is usually women's work, matrilocal residence and matrilineal descent tend to be particularly common among lower agricultural peoples (Murdock 1949: 205). (...) A contributory factor is the absence of movable property in herds, slaves, or other valuables; in the hands of the men these might challenge the re-eminence of landed property and introduce the destructive factor of polygyny. Relative peacefulness is another contributory factor, for war enhances the importance of men and often brings slaves wives or booty with which to purchase women. Still another significant precondition is a relatively low level of political integration, particularly one which, as in Melanesia and among the Pueblo Indians, does not extend beyond the local community. Wider political authority brings to the holders, who are almost invariably men, increased power, property and prestige, which often spell doom to the matrilocal principle (Murdock 1949:205-206).

In that scheme, matrilineal descent could still accommodate male power if the community develops avunculocality, so that groups of men are brought together around the mother's brother, or if it becomes patrilocal while retaining the matrilineal groups only as an exogamous unit, or, even more rarely, organizes around a double descent system.

Many ethnologists still agree with Murdock: The division of labor as defined by the subsistence patterns should strongly shape post-marital residence and one would derive 'rules of descent from rules of residence'. Matrilocality, therefore, should be a prerequisite to matrilineality. Murdock and his colleagues did not take into account the many obvious exceptions to the scheme he had proposed: The pastoralist Tuaregs are matrilineal; the hunting-gathering Pygmies in the Congo basin are matrilineal. In North America, and closer to the Algonquians, the climate and geography of the arctic or subarctic regions preclude the Indigenous development of horticulture or agriculture in the culture areas located in these regions, and should therefore prevent the development or maintenance of matrilineality among the northern hunters. Yet, a large proportion of the northern Athapaskan hunters in the western subarctic forest of North America are matrilineal. Either they are not really matrilineal, answers Murdock, or they have acquired their matrineal descent prior to their arrival in North America. This last hypothesis does not solve the

question since the Siberian forests are not supposed to encourage matriliny either (see Isidore Dyen and David Aberle, 1974: 373).

As a solution to the subarctic Athapaskan anomaly, Murdock and others proposed that northern matrilineal descent resulted from borrowing matrilineality from neighboring groups. Several studies demonstrated that this early hypothesis was invalid. First, David Aberle (1974) reconstructed the lexical aspects tying together the Athapaskan kinship systems from Central Alaska and Northern Canada all the way to the Southwestern Basin in the USA, confirming the ancient reality of matrilineality among the Western subarctic Athapaskans. And Frederica de Laguna, in her 1978 study of northwestern American clan systems, showed that the names of matrilineal clans and moieties had a well established antiquity in the north and could not be the result of diffusion from the Pacific Coast. Second, the reality of northern Athapaskan matrilineal clan systems coupled with fluidity of territorial occupation was confirmed by Nelson (1974) and Catherine McClellan (1987) in the the Yukon, June Helm in the Northwest territories (1986), and Hugh Brody (1981) in northern Alberta, as well as my own doctoral research looking at how a semi-nomadic hunting and foraging society living on the border between Alaska and Yukon could possibly maintain a matrilineal clan system. Third, men in a hunting-gathering society need not limit themselves to a small part of the land. It does not take many years for hunters to get to know the resources and rhythms of new hunting territories they have already visited, and the possibility for men to hunt both in their parent's hunting grounds and in their wife's territory doubles the amount of resources available to them. These semi-nomadic peoples are used to travelling far and wide. People – men, women, children and extended families- used to move from band to band and from camp to camp to visit relatives and benefit from different resources. In effect, both men and women could orient themselves within a vast territory. Finally, Guédon challenged the principle linking division of labor and types of unilineal descents on the basis of faulty conceptions of the division of labor among hunting and gathering economies (Guédon, 2016, 2017). The production of women's gathering activities has been remarkably under-evaluated by theorists; it always includes fishing and hunting or trapping small game, and among all Canadian northern groups, especially the Athapaskan and Cree, women also hunt big game once they are past menopause (see also Landes, 1938; Flannery, 1930; Bruhns and Stothert, 1999).

The case of Athaspascan matrilineality plays an explicit role in this argument because it most clearly challenges views so widely held. We now know that about 25% of matrilineal systems in the world are found amongst hunter-gatherer or nomadic societies, encompassing even Australian Aborigines, several southeastern Asian Indigenous societies, and equatorial African Pygmies, among others. Harold E. Driver's maps of North American culture element distributions, well-accepted classics, and Alfred Kroeber's mapping of cultural areas (Kroeber: 1939), among others, reveal no correlation whatsoever between matrilineal systems and climate, geographic environmental features, demographic patterns, or subsistence patterns.

Factors depending on geographical or environmental features may inflect but do not determine the presence or absence of matrilineal descent. Some researchers looked elsewhere for correlations, and discovered that the presence of matrilines or patrilines may be linked to different features of the social organization.

In his watershed 1925 study, *Distribution of Kinship Systems in North America*, Leslie Spier championed comparative kinship studies and concluded that several distinct features of kinship systems in North America are regularly associated with patrilineality, other features as associated with matrilineality. The matrilineal markers include: lineage, clan, or moiety exogamy, cross-cousin marriage, temporary or permanent matrilocality, kinship terminology tending toward the Iroquois system or the Crow system, a recognized role for the mother's brother's in bringing up children (he is sometimes recognized as the male head of the family), complementary social and ritual functions for the paternal side of the family, and, finally, a strong bond between brother and sister often marked by ritual avoidance and material support. It should be noted that these features vary enough between cultures to prevent a simple unifying definition of matrilineality (see also E.W. Gifford, 1940). Spier considered these traits as consequences of, rather than factors toward matrilineal descent. But he considered that their presence might indicate the lasting influence of a past matrilineal descent system. The clusters observed by Spier, and his students and colleagues were confirmed by Murdock, and provided clues for the reconstruction of the development of descent systems in the Americas.-

Several researchers challenged the orthodox view of kinship development and proposed to enlarge the debate, but one interesting *lacuna* of these studies is that, although they established correlations between features of social organization and descent systems for societies that were identified mostly though their linguistic affiliations, there was no attempt to regroup the findings according to linguistic connections, even when language was part of the methodological context.

Guy E. Swanson (1968, 1969) ventured to include values, as expressed in political regimes, in his own model of the genesis of descent systems. Swanson began with Schneider and Homans' conclusions that "…the kinship system occupies a unique place in any culture, since it is almost always the context within which most socialization takes place. […] The dominant values of the total culture must [therefore] find expression in the kinship system." (Schneider and Homans, 1955: 1208). Swanson asked: "What 'dominant values' are embodied in rules of descent? […] What values are embodied in matriliny, in patriliny? In bilateral descent?" (Swanson, 1969:4). He then developed his hypothesis as follows:

> Rules of descent express the characteristic form that is taken by processes through which a society fits men to participate in its organization and through which it maintains their fitness for participation across the whole span of their lives. These processes usually take the form of socialization or of social control or of some combination of these two. […] I mean by socialization the training of people to participate in their society with increasing skills and commitment. […] I mean by social control any influence exerted by a society on socialized persons to employ the skills they have learned and to support the commitment they have accepted, <u>this despite their personal tendencies not to do so</u>. [*the emphasis is mine*] (Swanson, 1969:5).

Swanson noted, along with most ethnologists that "…women are everywhere the chief socializers of the young. [..] They also have special responsibility for reintegrating dissident members of the

family […] the tasks of socialization." He also proposed that adult males have to lead the group, especially when dealing with divergent interests within the community, and exercise the necessary discipline which has primarily the character of social control (Swanson, 1969:5). He arrived at the following hypothesis:

> I propose that systems of descent symbolize the socialization or social control of a society's members – adults and children – by that society. […] Socialization is impeded, and social control made likely, to the extent that people can rightfully pursue special interests that compete or conflict with the interest of their society – with the 'common' interests. (Swanson, 1969: 7)

The final proposition, that 'matriliny expresses socialization as a style of parentage; patriliny expresses social control' (Swanson1969: 23) is actually verified by his statistical analyses (based on Murdock's samples) that demonstrate that matriliny is definitely found in societies organized politically toward the well being of the collectivity rather than toward the negotiation between divergent goals of subgroup which results in patriliny. In his review of Swanson's work, David Aberle agrees:

> Descent then is traced through the parent whose dealings with the child are in accordance with the essential characteristics of the political regime. Swanson finds it possible to show an association between political regimes and rules of descent that is far stronger than any so far found between other factors and rules of descent. (Dyen and Aberle, 1974:177)

At a general level, Swanson did not consider the genesis of the social values at work in the formation of political regimes and seemed to imply that the political system was the active factor in these correlations. Yet, it would have been interesting for Swanson to chart political systems using linguistic data in addition to historical considerations

Others could have followed a similar path. In 1965, Roger Owen published an article challenging the description of band societies, in particular their supposed homogeneity, arguing that the exogamous rule brought together a set of local men with sets of foreign women, as verified by several cases of multilingual small scale communities. In the course of his argument, he wrote:

> Two assumptions underlie the following presentation. First, I regard language as a means of conveying, amongst other things, a set of traditional, regionally oriented, adaptive symbols. The total matrix of the language is a device whereby one generation passes to another the knowledge, values, attitudes, and techniques necessary to cope with the total environment wherein it has been traditionally located. Second, I regard "culture," or better "a culture," as a complex of traditionally derived adaptive symbols - including, of course, both material and non-material. Thus, the old adage "every language is sufficient to the needs of the speakers" takes on a specific, evolutionary meaning: the language is a device whereby regionally appropriated knowledge and understanding are transmitted to later generations (Owen, 1965: 676-677).

So doing, Owen reintroduced culture as knowledge, values, attitudes and language, in addition to technology, as part of the context in which social systems, and therefore kinship systems, are established or maintained (also see Stewart's answers to Owen in Stewart, 1965). Oddly enough, Owen did not see the languages introduced by women as a challenge to the perenniality of the patrilocal rule, or language in general as a factor affecting a kinship system. In the same vein, one could also check the retention of so called traditional kinship systems against the retention of Indigenous languages.

David Murray Schneider challenged the very terms on which kinship models were based when he presented in 1968, the results of a study on kinship practices in Anglo-American society, *American Kinship*, *A Cultural Account*, followed in 1984 by *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (based on research oversea and with several Indigenous groups). He accused anthropological kinship studies of being embedded in a biased Western worldview that favored biological links over social ties and the cultural principles that he saw as primary. While his critique gave rise to developments in women's studies and feminist theories, it was based on taking kinship narrowly as a symbolic system and was too general and abstracted from everyday life to affect well-established ideas on unilineal kin groups, especially matrilineal kin groups, the issue of which had by then faded from the main scenes of research. (See Adam Kuper, 2018, for an assessment of Schneider's ideas, and of their consequences). In spite of his emphasis on kinship as a symbolic system, Schneider did not consider kinship as the expression of a worldview, even less in relation to a specific linguistic context.

At the end of the 1980s. with the emergence of new issues, new horizons, new methodologies, and the fragmentation of the discipline into a larger and larger number of sub-disciplines, kinship studies faded from the main anthropological debate, although their main terms of reference went on as a (mostly) unchallenged foundation.

Kinship issues resurfaced with the advent of evolutionary anthropology, where genes and their transmission became a new focal point of interest in a section of biological anthropology without making much of a dent in the main anthropological theoretical body. Nevertheless, the question of patrilineal versus matrilineal kinship systems found a new niche in biology (See Mary K. Shenk, Ryan O. Begley, David A. Nolin and Andre Swiatek, 2019). Strangely, feminist studies did not engage kinship studies except to endorse the opposition between patriarchy - as real and linked to patrilineality - and matriarchy - as mythical. Matrilinealiity was explicitly dismissed as an area of non-interest.

Linguistics never developed into the core discipline it should have become, given its central position in cultural processes, and in North America, never received the funding it needed to flourish. Languages and linguistic factors continued to provide an expedient way to identify societies and their genetic connections, but few researchers managed to explore the connections between language and culture (see Rik Pinxten, 1989, for an exception).

2 - *The Linguistic Factor*

Georges Peter Murdock, who used linguistic identity in order to identify his sample societies (as did most of his colleagues), in particular for his American comparative samples, did not consider it more valuable than a test. He wrote rather forcefully:

> Linguistic stocks provide an ideal means of making a test. An irresistible conclusion from demonstrated relationships is that the ancestors of the peoples now speaking related languages must once have formed a single linguistic community, which must also have had a common culture including a common social organization. As the descendants of the speakers of the ancestral language subsequently spread into different regions, they must necessarily have undergone modifications in culture and social structure as well as language. By and large, therefore, we should expect differences in social organization among linguistically related peoples to decrease as we go backward in time, and to disappear as our time depth approaches the period of the original linguistic community. Unless our reconstructions tend to show such a convergence in the past within individual linguistic stocks, the method must be presumed faulty. (Murdock 1949:346-7)

Today, in North America, language is still treated by Murdock, his contemporaries, and his successors as a label identifying the group, not as a correlating feature in the development or survival of its kinship system orientation.

In 1922, Edward Sapir, anthropologist and linguist, had made a first foray in the idea of language as a factor in kinship development, while responding to Kroeber who could not find any way to explain why the Yurok and Wiyot kinship systems were so unlike their neighbors of Southern and Central California. Sapir then attempted to prove a genetic connection between the two Californian groups and the Algonquian family, which proved to be valid. But he did not pursue the matter further. As he explains:

> In spite of the inherent difficulties of the task, it may eventually be possible to work out some of the primary kinship features of the whole [Algic] group, to dispose of others as secondary developments. A refined and detailed study of the whole course of change, from the oldest and most fundamental features down to the most recent dialectic or regional ramifications, it is a task for an Algonquian specialist. I shall not attempt it, the more so as it inevitably leads to a far-reaching distributional study. (Sapir, 1922: 60-61)

It is only later, in the 1960s, that David Aberle attempted such a distributional study focused on the Athapaskan speaking peoples. Following rigorous lexical reconstruction methods, he and Isidore Dyen traced features and variations from the northern to the southern Athapaskan groups, so that a first synthesis was provided wherein certain types of kinship systems were associated with culture and language. However, there was no follow up on his analysis or his conclusions; even Joseph Jorgensen omitted language from the variables affecting kinship and social organization features in his landmark comparative distribution study of the traits defining Indigenous cultures in the western and northwestern Pacific Coast regions.

A supporting hypothesis would come more recently from a very different direction. A correlation newly noticed (Guédon 2016) between the linguistic identity of North American Indigenous communities and the presence or absence of matrilineal and patrilineal systems, or bilateral systems, suggests a connection between the language spoken by a group, its values and worldview, and the development of descent systems.

In the initial phase of the project leading to that hypothesis, we used classical data and long established definitions of matriliny and patriliny to chart the Indigenous nations and/or communities according to the official American classification of their linguistic identity, and the recorded presence or absence of matrilines or patrilines. Combining linguistics studies with ethnographies of North American Indigenous peoples provided further data on their kinship and social organization. This first list confirmed a close association between kinship systems and linguistic families in North America in general. It was presented and discussed at the Southwestern University of Nationalities in Chengdu, Sichuan, China, during the launch of the World Matricultures Research Institute in Chengdu (WIMCRI), an international conference that brought together scholars from all continents.

Simply, we mapped the geographic distribution of matrilineal and patrilineal kin groups in Indigenous North America following their classic definition and attribution to cultural groups, as presented by George Peter Murdock first in 'North American Social Organization' (*Davidson Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 1, no. 2, Winter 1955), then in his *Ethnographic Atlas* (and as found today in the Human Relations Areas Files). These references, which have stood the test of time and remain until now generally accepted, first demonstrated the scattered distribution of matrilineal features throughout the continent. They also confirmed the importance of such features in North American Indigenous cultures. The estimated proportion of matrilineal societies in North America varies widely from one source to the next, from about 15 % for the most conservative (including Murdock) to almost 50 % of the total number of Indigenous people in North America, depending on the date of publication, definition of society, and definition of matrilineality. But even if we take the proportion at its lowest, i.e. 15%, North America still has the highest proportion of cultures tracing descent matrilineally of any continental culture area (Knack, 2004). Patrilineality is similarly distributed throughout the continent. The default identity, that of bilaterality, is attributed to both hunter-gatherers in low demographic density environments and to highly accculturated populations, but it also serves as a residual category for ambiguous systems.

Several factors intervene to blur the picture.

a) Already hard hit with widespread death by waves of epidemics, Indigenous populations have also undergone much demographic, geographic, social, and cultural change and loss due to European colonization, including wars, slavery, forced relocation and the loss of landbases. Indigenous communities faced the challenges of reconstructing their heritage from a handful of elders. This long process lead to the erasure of many cultural processes, but also to rapid adaptation to new situations. This adaptation included kinship systems moving in one direction from matrilineal to patrilineal following the dominant European model, sometimes in the space of two or three generations and sometimes still in progress in present times.

b) Since many of the first European observers of North American Indigenous cultures (and many of the subsequent researchers who relied upon them) were coming themselves from patriarchal societies, they could not understand or recognize matrilineal systems of kinship and social organization. They noticed instead, for instance, that Indigenous peoples were not able to understand normal (i.e. European) 'common' kinship terms, although European newcomers did remark on the surprising (for them) number of Indigenous women involved in trade and politics. The documents we have from that period reflect these cultural biases.

c) We find a related methodological blindness in the ethnography of North American Indigenous cultures that, for the most part favors men, men's activities, and male organizations, so much so that it is rare to access information about women. It is assumed that men are the makers of culture, even though it is also assumed that women are the primary socializers. So, for instance, in the case of a bilineal kinship system, with matrilineal transmission of certain positions and the patrilineal transmissions of other positions, only the male system is described or mentioned. The case of the Cree traplines in Quebec is an interesting example in that, according to the Quebec government, the trap lines should be transmitted as property within the family, meaning from father to son (according to government officials' interpretation) and should be managed by men. Yet, from the Cree perspective, 'within the family' means that the trap lines may be and are transmitted within a family that includes women. For instance, parents may bequeath a trap line through a daughter to a son-in-law; a maternal or paternal uncle may give his trap lines to his nephew; a wife may pass hers to her husband or to her daughter.

d) On the methodological level, we are facing terms of reference that vary from one period to the next. Often, even recent research does not have the proper tools to identify matrilineal or patrilineal traits. We are just beginning to recognize the wide diversity of moiety, clan, and lineage systems, variations in the role of the mother's brother, of the father and of the father's kin group, or of in-laws' kin groups in the overall kinship system, along with the types of matrilines produced in response to acculturation and inter-ethnic marriages. For examples of this last, see the matrilocal systems of the Cheyenne, the Arapaho and the Ute, or the differing responses to a weakening of the exogamous marriage rules in the Pacific Northwest Indigenous communities. (In this case, Tlingit elders still attempt to enforce a strong and traditional clan exogamy by excluding from the clan those born from the wrong (endogamous) unions, while nearby Tsimshian communities favour the adoption of either the groom or bride into another appropriate lineage, so that the availability of adoption safeguards the integrity of clan exogamy while still allowing free choice of marriage partners.)

e) Finally, the thorny question of the parameters for identifying exactly what constitutes a distinct society, community, or cultural group for, in this case, the eventual purpose of statistical analysis or comparative approach, cannot be solved on a globally acceptable basis. What constitutes a distinct society varies from institution to institution, from author to author. Furthermore, in both Canada and the USA, a list of the Indigenous communities who survive outside of the official system that controls 'Indian status' must be added to the list of federally recognized 'Indian tribes' and communities, as several distinct Indigenous societies in North America are still today fighting for

federal recognition, such as the Nipmuk nation in Massachusetts, USA, or the Lubicon Cree in Alberta, Canada.

Despite these methodological problems, however, we can still develop relevant and worthwhile questions.

3 - *North American Indigenous Linguistic Families*

The official list of linguistically different Indigenous communities in Canada and the United States totals around seven hundred culturally distinct communities of all sizes, from some very large groups (tens of thousands or more) to small ones counting only a few individual members. This is an approximation because of the difficulties inherent in the identification of Amerindian societies after several centuries of upheaval following the arrival of European colonizers and settlers. As mentioned above, these upheavals include the drastic loss of population from epidemics, wars, forced removal from their land with the destruction of their economic basis of survival, and the attempt at forced assimilation through mandatory residential boarding schools, among others processes. Despite of the resulting erosion of their linguistic heritage, Indigenous communities most often still use their original language to identify themselves, and linguistic boundaries still indicate the social limits of communities. Distinct languages, even when they are extinct, also define more precisely the identity of each culture, which allows ethnographers and other non-Indigenous observers to distinguish one community from another. Both in Canada and the USA, the original language families, languages and dialects are still used by administrators alongside geographical location to identify Indigenous communities.

According to Edward Sapir, the linguist whose early classification of American Indigenous language families proposed in 1929 was used until recently as a primary reference, there were about twenty-three classes or stocks of linguistic families in North America. Each was divided into groups containing in total several hundred distinct languages. More recently, according to Goddard (1996) and to Nithun (1999), linguists today still recognize 296 languages north of Mexico, which are subdivided into 29 families not including 27 isolates (groups that are not linguistically affiliated to any other group); 29 of these languages or isolates are now extinct.

Linguistic families vary widely in the proportion of speakers, both in the past and today, and in the number of languages they contain. Some linguistic families may support only one language (Kutenai or Zuni, for example) while others support many branches, each subdivided into many distinct languages. The Algonquian linguistic family, for instance, contains dozens of languages scattered from northern Canada to eastern, central and southern United States. Others are represented by a few languages and geographically restricted to one region. One of Sapir's linguistic families, the Na-dene, is not really a linguistic family but, rather, a residual category encompassing languages and linguistic isolates that share the geographical region of northwestern North America. Yet, most of Sapir's propositions have been confirmed.

When one juxtaposes linguistic maps (whether the oldest ones beginning with Edward Sapir's distribution of language families or the more recent ones like those produced by Goddard or

Nithun) with maps showing the distribution of kinship systems in North America, some languages appear to show a strong correlation with the presence of matrilineality or matrilocality. If one classifies the many indigenous societies, big or small, according to their linguistic affiliation, matrilineal societies tend to fall into a limited series of linguistic families. Communities or tribes speaking a language belonging to the Athapaskan (or Na-dene), Iroquoian, Muskogean, Caddoan, Tsimshian, or Keresan linguistic families are extremely likely to be organized according to matrilineal principles, and they all exhibit kinship system features that are able to support matrilineality. In societies where people speak languages that are included in the Caddoan, Iroquoian, and Tsimshian language families, *all* communities or tribes are matrilineal. Among some linguistic families such as the Athapaskan, where most tribes are matrilineal, those that are not matrilineal, such as the northeastern Athapaskan or the Californian Athapaskan, still share a number of kinship system features that are associated with matrilineality, which suggests a previous matrilineal system (See David Aberle and Isidore Dyen, 1974, for an introduction to the kinship and matrilineal features of the Athapaskan speaking tribes intended for a reconstruction of the Proto-Athapaskan kinship system). The Tlingit and the Eyak who join the Athapaskans within the Na-Dene stock are also fully matrilineal. We should also note that in several cases, such as the Athapaskan and Salishan, populations defined by sharing the same language family do not reside in the same region, and may often belong to different cultural areas.

By contrast, with very few exceptions, Indigenous peoples speaking Uto-Aztecan (including the bilateral Shoshoni), Yuman-Hokan, Penutian, Eskimo-Aleutian, and Wakashan languages are almost never matrilineal. Among the few exceptions are languages whose speakers live in close proximity to strongly matrilineal societies, such as the Haisla (Wakashan), who live near the Coastal Tsimshian of Heartley Bay (British Columbia), and the Havasupai (Yuman) near the Apache (Athapaskan). This factor of social and geographical proximity inviting inter-marriages may work also in reverse, as in the case of the Algonquian-speaking Atsina, who seem to have acquired patrilineal kinship systems and clans relatively recently, perhaps due to the proximity of their Siouan neighbors. In this case, the process appears to have followed the introduction of horses and the development of the Plains as a cultural area of its own.

The Hopi people in the American Southwest, with their strong matriclans, used to be considered by all linguists as a linguistic isolate. If included among the Uto-Aztecan, as recently proposed, they would be the unique exception among the bilateral or patrilineal Uto-Aztecan language family, a very large linguistic family representing more than sixty languages spreading from the western United States to Mexico and even further south, including the Shoshone people in Idaho, as well as the Ute people and the Aztec and Huichol speakers in Mexico. The inclusion of the matrilineal Hopi among the Uto-Aztecan is still very disputed, and when included, they are considered an isolated linguistic side-branch of the family with no known close relative in the family; their strong matrilineal descent system does not invalidate the hypothesis.

Similarly, the Tsimshian family with its five languages or dialects was until recently generally considered an isolated language group. However, some linguists have recently proposed to join it with the large Penutian language family, though only as a divergent side-branch. This proposition is not unanimously accepted, but then the Penutian language family is itself a contested category

and considered to be a complex system of divergent language families by some. By others, it is thought to be more an amalgam of separate families. Again, and for the same reason, the matrilineal Tsimshian do not invalidate the hypothesis.

There remain two major exceptions to the proposed theoretical link between matrilineal societies and the kind of language they speak: the Siouan family and the Algonquian family.

The Siouan family is split rather dramatically between matrilineal or matrilocal systems, patrilineal systems, and bilateral systems. Siouan speakers scattered throughout the Great Plains following the arrival of horse in North America and subsequent European colonization, and the composition of the language family is still debated by linguists. (Edward Sapir considered the language family, then joined with the Hokan, to be 'a wastepaper basket stock'.) Its history is complex, with tribes moving westwards away from their homelands during a violent period that saw decimated bands being moved, imprisoned, or relocated by American authorities, and other bands expanding into new environments. On one hand, speakers of languages such as Mandan, Hidatsa, and Crow are matrilineal and matrilocal, as are the southeastern Catawba speakers. On the other hand, Assiniboine, Omaha, Ponca, Osage, Kansa, Iowa, Oto, and Missouri speakers have patrilineal kinship systems, while the Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota, now considered patrilineal, show indications of having once been bilateral. And what are we supposed to do with the Siouan-speaking Winnebago with their exogamous patriclans divided into two moieties (Above and Below)?

> According to Radin, (1923: 181-90, 207-12), there was an inherent instability in the clan system that antedated reservation times. [...] The occasional inheritance of war bundles in the female line was attributed to lack of qualified make heirs, and the naming and claiming of children by the mother's clan supposedly rested entirely on the mother's clan being better able to afford the cost of a naming feast. [...] What might be construed as clan exogamy seems to have been fairly rigidly observed, but so was proscription against marriage between people who were deemed close matrilineal relatives. [...] (Lurie, 1978: 694-695)

Adding the relationship between a mother's brother and his nieces and nephews, where the uncle is said to be closer to his sister's children than to his own because 'they are of the same body' (i.e. share the same female line) to shared allusions in myths and traditions, Radin concluded that the Winnebago were once matrilineal.

The relationship between Siouan language family and kinship systems needs revisiting, especially when the acquisition of patrilineal kinship systems appears recent or when matrilineal features seem combined with patrilineal features (Dakota, Lakota). Moreover, the criteria used by American ethnologists to list a group as bilateral are often too vague to be conclusive.

The case of the Algonquian linguistic family is even more complex. Algonquian is the second largest Indigenous language family on the continent, with some thirty distinct languages and not including the dialects (See Goddard, 1969, 1996, and Mithun, 1999). The Algonquian family is part of a larger

language stock - the Algic stock - presumed to have originally spread from a west-central location. The Algic stock includes two other families each represented by a single language, the Yurok and the Wiyot. When the Algic stock split, probably around 4000 years ago, Yurok and Wiyot moved south and west independently from each other and away from the third Algic family, the Algonquians; the first two families, each represented by one language, are now located on the coast of Northern California. The Yurok and Wiyot languages are still recognizable as relatives of the Algonquian languages, in particular because their kinship terminology is close to that of the other Algonquian speakers, including the northeastern groups (Sapir, 1922). According to the literature presently available, 30 to 50% of the groups whose members speak or used to speak one of the languages belonging to the Algonquian linguistic family are or were at one time identified as matrilineal or matrilocal. Of the rest, about 40% are identified as having been at one time patrilineal and the remaining groups are labeled bilateral. With one exception (bilateral Cree), all the Algonquian speakers in Canada are now officially identified as patrilineal.

Today, most linguists subdivide the Algonquian languages following their geographical locations: plains, central, northern, and eastern seaboard. According to Murdock and to the old orthodoxy, the plains people were big game hunters and, therefore, probably patrilineal unless their previous subsistence patterns, such as as mixed horticulture (for the women) and hunting and fishing (for the men), favored a bilateral development. With respect to the northern Algonquians bands in Canada, there could only be patrilineality or bilateral systems amongst them, with a bias toward patriliny as the population increased. The central Algonquians depended partly on horticulture, with hunting and fishing to complement their subsistence strategy, thereby supporting a relatively high density of population. Therefore, they also had to be patrilineal. On the other hand, on the Atlantic coast, where the eastern Algonquian sub-family stretches from the Saint Lawrence River down the coast and into adjacent territories in a long region warm enough to allow horticulture, women did most of the work and may have controlled the production of food, providing sufficient resources to sustain a much higher population density. There, anthropological orthodoxy identified a good ground for the development of matrilineal systems. Moreover, there is disagreement among the ethnographers, especially between earlier and later reports, and research done in the second half of the twentieth century tends to take Murdock's ideas as a default or starting point.

A more precise reading of the ethnographic material throws doubt on the official classifications. For instance, on the Atlantic coast, the Narraganset and their neighbors had both matrilineal exogamous clans and chieftainship inherited through the male line, although a daughter could succeed her father. The descriptions change as history proceeds. In the plains, the Cheyennes were originally described as matrilocal and matrilineal by John Mooney and Rudolphe Charles Petter (1905) and George Bird Grinnel (1923). More recently, after a series of mid-century studies arguing that the Cheyennes were either bilateral or quasi-patrilineal, John Moore (1974) produced a sophisticated analysis of the Cheyenne socio-political systems to conclude that Cheyenne bands were indeed 'matrilineal matrilocal uterine groups' lead by a council of peace chiefs selected in the 'uterine' line, while the bands' five military societies were 'agnatic units of organization' which in war and during the conflict with the US military acquired more authority. Moore's conclusions were disputed by Hoebel in 1980.

Both cases of the Siouan and the Algonquian speaking peoples concern a large population scattered over a wide surface of the North American continent, and this merits consideration. It leaves open a number of questions. In any case, if the hypothesis of a link between language and descent in North America is to stand, at least three options or hypotheses have to be considered:

> 1 - The postulated link between language and descent system is not a strong one and has been ignored for some reason with respect to Siouan and the Algonquian-speaking peoples, which begs for a review of the ethnohistorical, linguistic and ethnographical data in these two areas. This review would attempt to identify why these two language families do not follow the other linguistic families in their association with certain types of descent.
>
> 2- The official classification of groups as patrilineal, matrilineal or bilateral is somehow faulty, and must be reviewed on the basis of a more precise and critical reading of the ethnographical material, which would take into account the historical changes that took place in the communities in question, the more so as many areas suffer from an endemic scarcity of information and a general absence of information about women's perspectives and organizations.
>
> 3- The terms of reference to describe descent systems as matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral are inadequate for the task.

These three hypotheses are going to be explored in the next phase of the project (part 2 of this report, forthcoming), using the Algonquian linguistic family and their kinship systems as a test case. The basic framework was elaborated in preparation for, and then expanded during, a 2017 workshop hosted by the InterCulture research group at the University of Ottawa, Canada, in collaboration with representatives of eastern Canadian Indigenous communities (*see workshop report written by Linnéa Rowlatt, this issue*). Entitled *From Matrilineal Kinship to Matriculture: Establishing a Canadian Agenda*, this workshop also allowed us to test some revised definitions and brought us in touch with the very practical consequences of our research.

If a linguistic correlation is confirmed between descent systems and language, the features of these societies' worldviews that are integrated in or carried by language, such as their cosmology, ethos, and basic epistemological or philosophical principles, may play a role in maintaining said systems. The link between worldview and language as first advocated by Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf, much discussed when it was first proposed, has become more acceptable today, and studies like Rik Pinxten's on the Navaho semantics of space have confirmed that language carries root principles that feed the entire cultural complex (Pinxten, 1983). Swanson's ideas on the influence of value systems on political organization and the development of descent may also be tested at the same time for a linguistic correlation. Even if one does not accept Sapir's perspective, the correlation between descent type and language remains a pending question for the North American continent.

Conclusion of Part 1

Prologue (*original version*)
In 1977, Sandra Lovelace, a Maliseet (Malecite) woman on the Tobique reserve in Canada, brought a case of discrimination to the United Nations Human Rights Committee in what is known as the case of Lovelace v. Canada. This case was about the fact that Canadian Indigenous women lost their official Indian Status when they married a white man (while Indian men could marry White women without loosing their status). The U.N. ruled in her favor, and, after years of advocacy, the Canadian Indian Act was modified. During the proceedings, the representative of the Canadian Federal government argued that in order to protect the land rights of the Indigenous communities, only native men should inherit these rights because, as he declared: “Indian people in Canada are patrilineal”.

This statement directly contradicted official documents describing matrilineal systems among the Iroquois peoples, as well as the Tsimshian, Haida, and Tlingit peoples, on the Canadian Northwest Coast, and half the Athapaskan speaking people in the Northwest, and confirmed the official status of the Algonquian speakers who occupy the greater part of the Canadian territory between the Atlantic Coast and the Rocky Mountains, from the Blackfoot in the western Plains to the Cree in Ontario and Quebec, to the Mi’kmak and Maliseet on the Atlantic Coast, among others. To define indigenous communities as patrilineal inflects the legal and administrative codes governing their life, the rights of grandparents to raise their grandchildren for instance, or the transmission of trap lines and territorial rights, or the political rights to speak for one’s community. In view of the matrilineal history of many of the Algonquian speaking community in the USA, are the Canadian Algonquians really patrilineal? How did their descent system acquire such an aura of validity? And given the use of linguistic affiliation rather than the geographical area or type of economy, to identify the matrilineal and patrilineal societies, is language more than a convenient way to identify Indigenous communities?

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