Gazing Across the Divide: Dogs in the Colonial Canadian Context (Part 1. Part 2 will appear in vol 23, no. 4.)

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For my dog Cao, the source of much inspiration

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Depending on the region, the indigenous societies of the Americas lived by hunting and fishing, engaged in intensive farming, or dwelled in large urban communities. None of these societies, however, was based on animal husbandry. Protein in the diet of sedentary groups came from the vegetables they cultivated rather than from animal sources. In South and Central America there were three domesticated animals: the dog and two Camelidae, the alpaca and the llama. In North America, the only domesticated animal was the dog, which had been domesticated before the arrival of humans on the continent. Dogs had thus accompanied the first hunters to cross the Beringian Isthmus and then had spread throughout the Americas.

The Amerindiens often found ways to tame many animals, but never managed to domesticate them. These customs were described by Louis Nicolas, a Jesuit priest who lived with the Algonquians, particularly the Ottawa, who in 1685 recorded his observations in a wonderful manuscript entitled Histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales, which has unfortunately never been published. He saw raccoons that had been nursed as babies by a mother dog and that followed their master everywhere; there were also young beavers3 as well as otters that accompanied their masters, without however, showing the cleverness of Swedish otters trained to retrieve fish. He also saw bears, adopted as cubs, that were trained to give “piggyback rides” up trees and that later, as adults, were kept in cages or pits. Father Nicolas enjoyed training two cubs given to him by his hosts. Both cubs became tame enough that the Frenchmen living with the Amerindiens could have them pull loads or walk about all the dwellings in a village, dressed as gentlemen.5

The history of wild and domesticated animals in the colonial context has yet to be written, both with respect to their ethology and their relationship with humans, but it is clear that this relationship was culturally marked and, as we will attempt to show in the case of dogs, differed radically from one culture to another.

According to the observations of the missionary naturalist Louis Nicolas, all types of dogs were found “throughout the land of the barbarians,”6 just as they were in France.7 They showed great variation in size and color, and in shape might resemble either wolves or foxes. Contemporary authors who have made a study of this question suggest that, to be more precise, there were about fifteen races of dogs.8 However, all of them shared certain characteristics—they tended to howl rather than bark,9 their ears were short and upright and they had thick coats with two layers of fur.10

Father Nicolas noted another characteristic of Amerindian dogs, one that at first seems somewhat disconcerting. He wrote: “and since their masters speak a language and have a temperament very different from that of the French, the dogs imitate them in this; they are melancholy like the savages.”11 The melancholy that he ascribes to the Amerindiens cannot be interpreted here within the Roman Catholic paradigm of sorrow and feelings of being helpless and powerless to attain the ascetic ideal, or being overwhelmed by human inability to resist Satan’s attacks, for the Jesuit father lived as an outsider with his neophytes and did not share his inner life with them. Nor can this melancholy be some sort of mournful nostalgia fueled by disappointment in life, since the Amerindian world was at that
animals would sink through the snow crust while dogs could run over it. Dogs also helped with hunting in summer, when they were used to chase moose out of the woods and into a body of water, where hunters lay in wait. Dogs were also useful for sniffing out bear dens, following beavers' movements, retrieving waterfowl and, further to the southwest, hunting buffalo. However, since North American dogs were not brought up with European domestic animals, they also preyed on farmyard fowl and sheep. This was a source of friction with the settlers. On the other hand, the Europeans' pigs, left free to forage, often devastated the Amerindians' gardens.

Dogs were also used as beasts of burden and pulled sleds. On the ice fields, the Inuit traveled everywhere by sled. On the prairies, dogs drew travois harnessed to their backs. On the banks of the Mississippi in 1724, Commandant Bourmont witnessed a migration of 600 men and women with 500 children, accompanied by 300 dogs, each pulling - and this must surely be an exaggeration - "some three hundred pounds" of skins for their teepees, along with their dishes and kettles and other articles. Bourmont was also amazed by the loads carried by the women.

In the cultural areas of the subarctic and northeast North America, neither the Algonquians nor the Athapascans used dogs as beasts of burden as a general rule. The practice was introduced by the Europeans, along with several new races of dogs, including, according to Father Nicolas, "the mastiffs of England and Saint Malo." The missionary added that "among the French [of Canada] there are all the kinds of dogs we have in France." The first Canadian settlers, lacking horses for a long time, used dog sleds to carry their wood, water, and supplies, while missionaries like Hennepin and explorers like Lasalle traveled with sled dogs. Admiring this practice, the Amerindians learned to train their own dogs to pull sleds. As a result, women were freed from having to carry burdens.

When Amerindians and Canadien militiamen went on military expeditions against villages on the border with New England, they sometimes harnessed two large dogs to "a kind of bark sled," on which small loads were placed, although it was fairey rare to find dogs that were well enough trained to pull in tandem. The combination of harnessed dogs and toboggans seems to have resulted from a two-way cultural exchange. Although the Innu are known for using dogs to pull toboggans, they began to do so only recently, that is, at the very end of the 19th century, when, in addition to their small hunting dogs (mahikan atum), they obtained large sled dogs (mistatam) from French Canadians, along with French vocabulary for commands. However, the Crees living further north apparently borrowed the idea of sled dogs from the Inuit, who had been using them from time immemorial.

Warfare in North America was traditionally conducted in the manner of "petite guerre," very much like hunting, with warriors displaying their cunning and bravado in skirmishes and surprise attacks. Dogs played a critical role in this type of warfare, acting as guards and sentinels,
warning of danger and flushing out the enemy. The dog that earned the most fame in this role was Pilote, a dog belonging to Lambert Closse, during the Iroquois Wars. Chevalier Henry Bouquet, the same man who distributed smallpox-contaminated blankets to Pontiac's envoys, was responsible for two cavalry companies of 50 horsemen each when he was an officer at Fort Pittsburgh in Ohio. Like the Spanish conquistadors and, later, the slave hunters, he arranged for his cavalrymen to be each accompanied by a large hunting dog "to discover the enemy in ambush and to follow their trail: they seize the Savage by his fleshy parts and give their masters time to catch up with them."28

As in Asia, but in contrast to European custom, dogs were eaten in North America. Dog meat was not everyday, ordinary food, but rather consumed for survival in times of famine30 or served in ritual feasts. There is nothing to indicate that a particular race or line of dogs was reserved for these ritual occasions. Nor is there any indication that dogs were specially fattened for such purposes, as was the case among the Aztecs.30 For the Great Lakes Algonquin nations and the Iroquoians, dog meat was the most highly appreciated dish. No feast or celebration could take place without it, although it was often accompanied by other meat. Such occasions included grand councils, diplomatic meetings or councils of war, ritual murders and feasts for the sick or for the dead.31 The French adopted these customs, but only in their interactions with Amerindians rather than among themselves. Governors and officers thus hung caldrons of beef and dog meat over the fire for meals with their allies.32 Some of the French were like Captain Bossu, who ate dog with the Illinois "out of politeness rather than with relish," taking as his maxim "that it was best under the circumstances to conform with the character of the people with whom one is obliged to live and adopt their manners to gain their favor."33

The Jesuit missionaries, for their part, overcame the aversion they would have felt in France and made dog broth for their patients,34 while Father Nicolas, who was exceptional in his adaptation to Amerindian lifestyles, considered that dog meat had "an exquisite taste."35 While these eating habits were accepted by the French as normal in Amerindian country, they nonetheless remained a sign of barbarity and of a loss of respect for civilized ways, as is made clear in a letter written by Intendant Denonville in 1687 to the Minister of the Colonies, expressing his indignation and alarm with respect to the proximity of the nomadic Amerindians to the French settlement zone:

...but, Monseigneur, regarding the other Savages who rove and wander about the outskirts of individual seigneuries without being grouped in villages like the others [in the missions at Sillery, Lorette, Sault de la Prairie and La Montagne de Montréal], you could not believe, Monseigneur, the mischief this does to discipline in the colony, for the seigneurs' children not only grow accustomed to living without rules like them, but also abuse the girls and women they keep with them, and go along on their hunting trips in the forest, where they sometimes suffer hunger to the point of eating their dogs.36

Dogs were also killed in ritual ceremonies without being eaten. They might be hung from a pole to drive away illness or confront some threat, and they were bound up for the arrival of spring. Such customs will be dealt with further on, but for now it will suffice to mention that the missionaries saw a parallel between the sacrifice of the dog and that of the lamb. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, lamb meat can be eaten in everyday life, but the lamb itself is also invested with a powerful symbolic value – for it is the animal sacrificed to God in the Old Testament to renew the covenant with his people, while in the New Testament, it becomes a symbol for Christ, the Lamb of God offered up to atone for the sins of the world and redeem humankind. Dog sacrifice thus was seen as related to devil worship.37

The missionaries projected a Judeo-Christian interpretation of Amerindian religious rites involving the dog. Such sacrifices actually had nothing to do with expiation or redemption, since the notion of sin, either original or individual, had no place in the religious thought of these animists. Killing a dog represented a propitiatory sacrifice to communicate with the supernatural and renew an alliance,38 reflecting a worldview that we will attempt to explain further on.

The dog's third function was as a scavenger and dung eater. Historic sources are silent on this matter, or only allude to it very discreetly. However, the question is an essential one: how was hygiene regulated in the camps and especially in the villages? What happened to human excrement in the Huron villages, which often had populations of 500 and, in some cases, it is thought, over 1000 and even nearly 2000. Brother Sagard, a Franciscan missionary in Huronia, left a clue in his writings. It is not surprising that this information comes from him, since the Franciscans gave better descriptions of the little details of ordinary life than did missionaries in other religious orders. He wrote that he eventually found dog meat to be:

...good, tasting a little like pork, for do they not normally live just on waste that they find along the streets and roads; they also very often put their long muzzles in the Savages' cooking pot and sagamity; but they do not consider it less clean for all that and even put into it what is left over from the children's soup; which is nonetheless extremely disgusting for those who are unaccustomed to such filth.39

It can be understood from this passage that the village was kept clean by dogs. To complete the picture.
here is another passage about hygiene in a Huron longhouse - to my knowledge, the only other known example:

While they have countless mice, I can state that they have infinite quantities of fleas, which they call Toulauc, especially in summer, and they are truly tormented by them; for, as well as those engendered by their urinating inside the houses, they have many dogs, which obviously provide them with more, and there is no remedy for them apart from patience and the ordinary defenses.40

Sagard doesn’t actually say that the dogs are coprophagous, but it can be induced that they are. Arctic dogs eat both their own excrement and that of humans. At one time, the Inuit had “bum-wiping companions” who chased dogs away from the person who was defecating. Among the Chipewyans, a Dene nation in the Northwest Territories, the anthropologist Henry S. Sharp observed that almost all the garbage in the village ended up in the dogs’ stomachs and that, in winter, abandoned dogs lived on dead dogs and on feces they found in outhouses.41 It must have been like this everywhere at one time, especially since there were “downtimes” in hunting and fishing, when dogs had nothing to eat. Furthermore, it must have been necessary for people to defecate as well as urinate in their longhouses. The very silence of the accounts constitutes evidence – is it not possible that there was no reason to write about this kind of waste because dogs cleaned it up? But, since Sagard also says that the same dogs put their muzzles in the food pot, this would imply as well that they are with humans and were eaten by humans – that they had a place at both ends of the food chain.

“French dogs have infinitely more spirit”42

In his Histoire naturelle des Indes occidentales, Father Louis Nicolas records a seemingly enigmatic comment made by his Ottawa hosts about the two European dogs the missionary brought with him. Father Nicolas tells us that he had them for all the purposes generally associated with dogs, such as “pulling heavy loads,” pursuing game birds even in water, and following “large game.”43 He adds that:

... these people admired them, having never seen such a thing [and] they held council to decide whether it would not be advisable to make sacrifices to them, as they would to their divinities; these men kept on saying that our dogs had infinitely more spirit than theirs; they are Manitou, they said, and ours are just stupid beasts and their spirit is good only for hunting beaver and moose; these dogs are like their masters; they have Infinite genius and they are skilled in everything, like the people of the nation of the great wooden canoe, as they called the French [...] Keghet, they finally said of our dogs, covering their mouths with one hand and slapping the ground with the other to show their admiration [...] in truth and in good faith, the Frenchmen’s dogs have much spirit.45

The Ottawas acknowledged that European dogs had greater skill and were capable of doing more than their own dogs, whose abilities were limited to hunting beaver and moose. This superiority of European dogs was seen as analogous to that of the French sailing vessels in comparison to the Amerindian canoes. Furthermore, these dogs’ superiority was a manifestation of a greater inner strength, in the sense of spiritual strength or a more powerful spirit, a view which is consistent with an animist vision of the animal world. On what basis were the European dogs’ skills judged to be greater? In our opinion, three factors played a role. The first, as already mentioned, has to do with the fact that the Ottawas, like other Amerindians in the northeast and subarctic, had not previously seen sled dogs.

Secondly, in the European tradition, dogs were trained to behave in more diverse and specialized ways than they were in North America. It must be kept in mind that hunting in Europe (like freshwater fishing) was the exclusive privilege of the nobility, who devoted much of their leisure time to it. This tradition encouraged breeding by selection for certain traits and led to the development of very diverse races, ranging from large greyhounds to basset hounds, which could follow game into their lairs.46 Peasants had guard dogs like the Bouvier des Flandres and German shepherd for their flocks, as well as dogs for pulling loads. There were also rescue dogs and diving dogs that worked with fishermen. Different dogs were used for specific purposes to a degree that was unknown in North America. This was especially true among the nobility, who had special dogs for each kind of game and could expect specific performances from certain packs of hounds or from certain individual dogs, such as pointers. It follows that, as “practitioners” of hunting, the Amerindian had to personally exercise more skills than the European aristocrat, while the latter directed a more powerful hunting “enterprise” than his North American counterpart did. A parallel might be drawn here between a craftsman’s workshop and a factory, but a more direct comparison is found in Father Nicolas’s text. This missionary and hunter, born into the French aristocracy, contrasted hunting the “Indian stag” (probably the wapiti, which has now disappeared from the east of the continent) with stag hunting on horseback in France. According to him, these two types of hunting were totally different. The Amerindians were the most skillful hunters in the world and they had absolutely no need of the methods of hunting in the old country, which involved royal huntsmen who organized hunts with hounds, even though the aboriginal hunter owned just as many dogs as the aristocrat. The North American hunter did not have whippers-in to accompany him or kennel huntsmen to direct the dogs. All the Amerindian needed was a canoe and paddles, with a bow and arrows or a gun. Able to dispense with “all the great apparatus of hunting in Europe,” a
“Savage,” could single-handedly, without dogs, make use of his extraordinary ability to follow tracks and outwit his prey. Louis Nicolas tells us that the savage hunter almost never sets his dogs on wild beasts and, even though this hunter’s dogs [...] are every bit as good as our bloodhounds, foxhounds, retrievers, Artois basset, greyhounds and mastiffs, they are hardly used in summer and he does it all by himself and one could say that he combines in one person the characteristics of a very good hunter and a whole pack of dogs trained for hunting. In short, regardless of the animal’s ruses and detours, the hunter always catches up with it, even when he must follow its trail over old snow. Sometimes the hunter even “claws like a serpent to get to a place where he can kill them” and, the author concludes, “it is quite rare for a hunter to fail in his plans.”

According to Nicolas, what counts is not the development of canine races for various purposes in hunting but rather the way dogs are used and the sharing of roles between humans and dogs. The aristocrat delegates everything to his huntsmen and dogs. The Amerindian hunter delegates nothing to servants and honrs his ability to decipher and follow the animal’s trail by himself, without turning this entire task over to his dogs. The Amerindian hunter uses cunning to catch an animal, becoming one with it, while the aristocrat doesn’t even get off his horse, dominating his prey and nature itself through his pageantry and power. In the forest of Fontainebleau, at the end of the event, the head huntsman offers his master the stag’s right leg and gives the heart and head to the bloodhounds, the aristocracy of the dog world, and in this way respects the proper hierarchy for everyone involved.

To continue with our attempt to explain the greater “genius” attributed to French dogs by Father Nicolas’s Ottawa hosts, it is evident from the missionary’s marked interest in hunting and the attention he gives it that he had a passion for this pastime, including falconry, which may be traced to his aristocratic origins. He also had a passion for the animals he describes in their North American environment. He loved to train animals as well: he taught two young bears to walk upright like men, to dance, carry halberds and mimic muscular exercises. It is therefore very likely that, within a social context in which dogs played different roles, Father Nicolas would have been an exceptional trainer of dogs. Furthermore – and this leads us to the third factor explaining the apparent superiority of French dogs – at the time, it was only the aristocracy that kept dogs as pets or home companions, purely for pleasure. Contemporary portraits of aristocratic families often depict these animals at their masters’ sides in comfortable, elegant interiors. These three factors, reflecting racial, social, and individual differences, may well have seemed reason enough for the Ottawas to attribute greater “spirit” to French dogs. As for Father Nicolas, he was far more impressed by the Amerindian’s skill, cunning and discretion as a hunter than by the majesty of a lord hunting to the hounds. And it seems that the merits of such ideas are still being debated in the United Kingdom!

Relationships with the dog

The preceding section dealt with differences in relations between human-dog relations in Europe and those in North America. In this section, we will look more closely at the relationship between Amerindians and their dogs in various spheres and different periods of life. The documentary sources provide an ambiguous picture that is often contradictory.

Regardless of the century or the nation, observers have been unanimous in underlying the unfeeling way Amerindians treated their dogs. At the beginning of the 18th century, Father Charlevoix wrote that, even though dogs were faithful and attached to their masters, the latter fed them poorly and never caressed them. Thomas Anbury says the same thing towards the end of the century. In the middle of the 19th century, the German geographer and ethnologist Johann Georg Kohl stayed for a time with the Ojibwa of southern Lake Superior (Wisconsin) and found the Amerindians’ relation with their dogs both cruel and ambiguous (since they seemed to see dogs as impure and sacred at the same time). In the 1970s, the anthropologist Henry Sharp observed the same hardheartedness, even cruelty: people got as much work out of a dog as possible and then killed it or turned it loose, which meant that it would starve. Almost everywhere, the word for dog was also used to mean slave or captive. The word dog was also a synonym for worthlessness, cowardice, and betrayal. Inversely, the dog never acquired the totemic status of the wolf, bear, or crane.

However, women breastfed pups that a mother dog was unable to nurse. Brother Sagard gives us further ethnographic information:

If a mother dies before a child is weaned, the father takes in his mouth water in which corn has been well boiled and puts his mouth to the child’s, so that the young one receives and swallows this water, in order to make up for the lack of breast milk or gruel... The same invention is used by the Savages to feed puppies that mother dogs give them, which I find extremely unsavory and nasty - to thus join their mouths with the puppies’ muzzles, which are often none too clean.

It may be noticed that it was women rather than men who fed puppies this way; and, it seems to me, the notion of uncleanliness has less to do with dirtiness than with the impropriety of bringing together things that should remain separate. In the same period, a Jesuit observer wrote that there was a common rule when it came to the education of dogs that went off hunting or children who shouted or cried: in neither case should one show displeasure. It was said that great power came from loving dogs and that dogs could understand language even though they had lost
the ability to speak.57 People offered dogs as presents and the missionaries observed that “a dog is no small thing in this country,” and had the same value for the Amerindians as a horse did for the colonists.58 In 1697, Lamoth Cadillac, commander of Fort Mackinaw, imprisoned a Frenchman “for having refused to pay for a Savage’s dog that he had injured.”59 “The usual presents for the Savages” offered by the king’s representatives in Louisiana in 1758 included “1200 knives and forks with dog-headed horn handles.”60 According to Father Lafitau, a missionary among the Iroquois of Sault Saint Louis (“Kahnawake”), “instead of their fur robes, they wore blankets of wool, dog hair and fine red and blue cloth.”61 Huron hunters could boast about their favorite dogs’ hunting exploits, refuse to let them be sacrificed and give them a name.62 Finally, the dead were often buried with dogs, along with precious objects.63

This contradictory relationship is, of course, not only found in old Amerindian societies. It exists in our contemporary societies and shows up in language. While the term “puppy love” may convey a certain indulgence, the word “dog” in English has insulting connotations, while the word for a female dog, “bitch,” is even more derogatory. This stronger connotation associated with female dogs does not seem to have colored Amerindian relations with their dogs. In Haiti, relationships with dogs are influenced by a history of slavery, in which master beats slave, slaves beat dogs, and dogs turn on each other.64

Dogs in myth

To understand the specific nature of the dog’s place in early North American societies, it is necessary to make a digression into mythology and attempt to interpret what myths say about relations between humans and animals, between dogs and women, between dogs and men, and finally between dogs and other animals. A manuscript written in 1702 by Bacqueville de la Potherie, controller of the marine and fortifications in New France, records an Amerindian belief which would have been inconceivable for a Christian at the time – that humans had “taken their origins from animals.”65 The author’s observation was accurate, since creation stories feature primordial spirits, animals and humans. Both animals and humans originated in this early time and both were inhabited by spirits, as were plants for that matter. In this worldview, animals and humans are equally part of culture and, to use a notion developed by Philippe Descola, are distinguished not by substance but rather by form.66 For non-humans always play an omnipresent role in human social life, and in an animist culture it is normal for the line between humans and animals to be blurred, since both are endowed with a similar soul. Animals are individuals with a conscience and are capable of intentionality and solidarity; in short, they have an interiority that is analogous to that of humans. Human beings and animals possess the same spiritual essence and are distinguished merely by what cloaks this essence and gives them their corporal form.67 The earth is a giant tortoise that causes eclipses when it turns around.68 In this realm, there are confrontations between the generally favorable forces of the upper world, exemplified by the Thunder Bird, and the rather more malicious spirits of the underworld, in the form of monstrous chthonian serpents.69

Through important mythical characters known as Tricksters – such as Tsakapesh and Nanabozho, to mention just two – creation stories related the origin of life and death, the transformation of humans from being other creatures’ prey to becoming predators themselves, the cunning and strength of heroes who escaped from the cooking pots of man-eaters and the contribution of the squireled, the mouse and the shrew, who worked together to free the Sun from a snare and thus helped in the creation of day and night. Tsakapesh eventually retired to the Sun,70 and the dog became Tsakapesh’s hunting companion. The dog also guarded a bridge on the road taken by the souls of the dead, and he caused many of them to drown there.71 In the afterlife, the souls of humans journeyed on one trail and those of dogs on another, but both routes lay among the stars:

They [the Hurons] believe that souls are immortal and, when they leave the body, go at once to dance and rejoice in the presence of Yoscaha and his grandmother Ataensig, taking the route they call “Atikesein andahatay,” the path of souls, which we call the Milky Way…. They say that the souls of dogs go there also, taking a trail that follows certain stars close to the path of souls, and this trail they call “Gagnenon andahatay,” that is, the path of dogs. And they told us that in the other life these souls, although immortal, have the same need to eat and drink, to wear clothes and work the land as they did when they were still part of an earthly body.72

In Iroquoian versions of the how the world began, Aataentsic, the first woman, was working in a field when she saw Black Bear pursued by Dog. The bear fell through a hole in the upper heavens, and Woman and Dog followed him, landing on the back of the Tortoise. Aataentsic was pregnant with twins at the time.73 But, it must be asked, pregnant by whom? Since Man did not live in the world before Aataentsic, was her mate Dog? According to other North American and even Asian myths, the answer is yes.74 In Lévi-Strauss’s Histoire de Lynx, a chapter entitled “La femme au chien” reports different versions of a myth in which the original woman is coupled with the dog. The heroine is made pregnant against her will by a lover who is a dog by day but a handsome young man by night. She gives birth to pups, but destroys their pets in a fire to give her offspring a human form. One girl, however, is not given this treatment and thus remains a dog, according to some versions, or becomes half-human, according to others. The dog is thus seen to be almost human and is consequently doubly unacceptable as a spouse – its animal nature means that it is too distant from humans, while at the same time it is “a blood relative, being a domestic animal and a lowly brother,” and is therefore too close.75 The dog is associated with unlicensed sexuality and chaos, from which, according to a Chipewyan
myth, humans extricated themselves only with the arrival of Man, a giant with his head as high as the clouds, who leveled the land and used his walking stick to trace rivers and lakes, which he filled with water.

He then took the dog, and tore it to pieces; the guts he threw into the lakes and rivers, commanding them to become the different kinds of fish; the flesh he dispersed over the land, commanding them to become the different kinds of beasts and land animals; the skin he also tore into small pieces and threw it into the air, commanding it to become all kinds of birds; after which he gave the woman and her offspring full power to kill, eat and never spare, for that he had commanded them to multiply for her use in abundance. 77

In short, animals and humans owe their existence to sexual relations between Woman and Dog, a relationship that was doubly forbidden since it involved beings who were too close (making the coupling incestuous) and too far removed from each other (resulting in bestiality). 78 It was in reference to this widespread myth that an Athapascan nation whose culture was close to that of the Chipewyans called themselves the Dogrib. 79

Having been defeated, the dog became a provider of food, which presented human hunters with a fundamental problem: how could they be sure that the dog would hunt every kind of animal except humans? 80 Could the dog’s incestuous relation in the myth have made him into a man-eater? According to Lévi-Strauss, myths generally suggest a correlation between incestuous tendencies and cannibalistic appetites. Indirect evidence of this idea is offered by Pamela Amoss in an article on dogs in the Pacific Northwest Coast. 81 It was essential that the dog should be able to distinguish humans from other animal prey and, importantly, from all the giant cannibals. In the Innu myths, the newly created humans lived on a peninsula with a narrow neck protected by the dog, which chased away predators and cannibals. The dog was not able or supposed to eat the same food as humans. For, if humans fed the dog with the game they hunted, they risked being eaten by dogs themselves, since the dog would compete with humans for their food and thus put itself in the position of the wolf, whose prey included not only the animals hunted by humans, but also humans themselves. The myths address this danger and how it could be overcome. In this vein, The Boy with Lice, abandoned by his parents, is helped by his grandfather Mistapeu, a fur-covered giant who brings in game. The giant protects him from the man-eating Athens. When the grandson asks his protector what piece of meat he would like to eat, Mistapeu replies “none,” adding that he will be content with the lungs, for, he says, “whatever part of the animal I eat now, humans will have no taste for in future.” 82 When he is brought back to the encampment of the parents of the Boy with Lice, Mistapeu lives exclusively on animals’ lungs, without anyone being able to find out “how he manages to take care of his excrements.” 83 In another story, Tsakapesh slays the cannibal Kaishiuasku, who had devoured his parents. He cuts open the cannibal to find his parents’ bones, but, unable to find them, cannot bring them back to life. 84 What is striking in these tales is the analogy between the dog and Mistapeu in their position and role: both are protectors and providers of food, although they must not eat the same food as humans, and both are dung-eaters. Another salient point is the necessity of returning the bones of hunted animals so that they may be reincarnated.

In a Blackfoot myth, a dog is said to have denounced a woman’s adultery to her husband, who beat her severely. To avenge herself, the woman caused the dog to lose the power of speech and forced him to eat dung. 85 This story makes explicit the relationship of dogs to language: they once possessed speech and then lost it, but they continued to understand it. The Hurons marked eclipses of the moon by making as much noise as possible; this included beating their dogs to make them howl since it was believed that the moon (Aataentlic) loved dogs. 86 Perhaps was a way of making dogs “talk,” as they did in the time of chaos, to counter the threat of their actually regaining the power of speech and thus usurping a human prerogative. 87

The Amerindian notion of dogs’ comprehension of human language is interesting in the light of contemporary research on animals and communication. According to Vicki Hearne, a well-trained dog can understand a great number of signs, but fewer than primates can. However, compared with all the other animals, the dog communicates with humans in the most elaborate manner. This is explained by the fact that the dog, more than any other animal, has gained access to a symbolic universe integrating moral constraint. Consequently the dog does not simply exchange signs, but acts in a responsible way to maintain conditions for communication. The share of responsibility dogs assume in communication means that they have extraordinary social skills in human culture. This distinguishes the dog from the wolf, which can be taught through stimulus-response training to obey commands. The wolf, however, keeps the social skills that are specific to wolves rather than those that are indispensable to living with humans. A wolf therefore could not be entrusted with the job of guarding a home, since it would be unable to tell the difference between family, robbers and guests. Nor would it have the courage to protect a household. The same thing applies to chimpanzees, cleverer than dogs at learning sign language but incapable at adulthood of living with humans. 88

In these founding myths, two other animals are closely related to the dog – the wolf and the bear. We will briefly outline their relationship with the dog. A Cree legend relates how Dog, then known as “Narrows,” and Wolf, distinguished by his bushy tail, had a race to decide which of the two would live with people. Dog won, being much larger than Wolf at that time. Enraged, Wolf accused Dog of being too big to live with humans, since he would eat twice as much as Wolf would. Dog then promised to reduce his size so that he would eat less. But Wolf replied, “But remember, every time I see you, I’m going to kill you,” cause
you beat me in that race." The wolf became the dog's enemy to punish him for having won the advantage of getting food from people. The dog was fed by humans and was also eaten by them, unlike the wolf, which could treat both humans and dogs as prey. The dog helped humans to hunt, while the wolf competed with them. The dog was made of flesh, just as humans were, while the wolf was made of bone; the dog was not mature, being dominated by humans; a dog could have an individual name, but the wolf could not. The dog lived in human society, whereas the wolf did not and considered the dog a traitor in this respect. The dog was associated with warmth, food and the spring, while the wolf brought their opposites. The dog was guilty of breaking the incest taboo, unlike the wolf, and therefore could not serve as a totemic figure, while the wolf could.

In the case of the bear and the dog, both were considered delicious as meat. Like the dog, the bear was associated with the return of spring and thus with food and warmth. However, the bear envied the dog because he considered himself to be closer to humans than the dog was in two respects. Firstly, the bear was the only animal whose diet of dried fruit, nuts and honey corresponded to what humans ate, and, secondly, he stayed huddled inside his house all winter just as humans did. This explains why, in myths, the bear was able to adopt human children.

Apart from this special relationship with the wolf and the bear, dogs were considered a threat to other animals in general. In the mythology of the Penobscots, a group belonging to the Abenaki family, the founding hero summoned the animals to a meeting before human beings arrived to see how they would behave once the newcomers were living among them:

The various animals were questioned by the hero. The moose... declared that he would take to flight. The red squirrel threatened that he would carry a man into the nearest tree and gnaw his head off. At that time the squirrel was as big as the moose, but after his threat he was seized by the hero, who smoked him until he shrunk to his present size and became harmless, though, to be sure, little subdued in spirit. The other beasts went away angry, shaking themselves and saying that man would be too poor. Finally one animal stood forth and offered to live with man, sharing his poverty. It was the dog. Then the hero, after thanking the dog, spoke to the others, and ordained that those who went off shaking themselves should henceforth hold in fear not only man but the dog as well. Since that time, man and his canine companion have continued in their hunting partnership.

Man appeared "poor," or weak and ill-equipped compared with the other animals, but as soon as the dog left the world of animals to live with humans, the relationship was reversed and, from then on, the two of them together represented a threat.

Sharing close quarters

To get an idea of living conditions in wigwams and longhouses, let us follow the 17th-century missionaries who were invited into these dwellings by their Amerindian hosts and who described how humans and dogs shared these quarters, as they has for thousands of years, in wigwams at least. On the basis of these descriptions, the reader may judge the pertinence of our presenting the preceding brief overview of the mythical world as a key to understanding everyday life. At the same time, these descriptions show how the missionaries reinterpreted their observations of this environment within their own system of thought.

Entering a crowded wigwam in the pre-dawn hours of morning in the winter of 1634-1635, we find Father Lejeune with his hosts, an Innu family, camped in the Appalachians to the east of Rivière du Loup:

As to the dogs, which I have mentioned as one of the discomforts of the Savages' houses, I do not know that I ought to blame them, for they have sometimes rendered me good service. True, they exacted from me the same courtesy they gave, so that we reciprocally aided each other, illustrating the idea of mutuum auxilium. These poor beasts, not able to live outdoors, came and lay down, sometimes upon my feet, and as I only had one blanket to serve both as covering and mattress, I was not sorry for this protection, willingly restoring to them a part of the heat which I drew from them. It is true that, as they were large and numerous, they occasionally crowded and annoyed me so much that in giving me a little heat, they robbed me of my sleep, so that I very often drove them away. In doing this one night, there happened to me a little incident which caused some confusion and laughter; for, a Savage having thrown himself upon me while asleep, I thought it was a dog, and finding a club at hand, I hit him, crying Aché, Aché, the word they use to drive away the dogs. My man woke up, greatly astonished, thinking that all was lost; but having discovered whence came the blows, "Thou hast no sense," he said to me, "it is not a dog, it is I." At these words, I do not know who was the more astonished of us two; I gently deposited
my club, very sorry at having found it so near me.

But let us return to our dogs. These animals being famished, as they have nothing to eat, any more than we, do nothing but run to and fro gnawing at everything in the cabin. Now as we were as often lying down as sitting up in these bark houses, they frequently walked over our faces or stomachs; and so often and persistently, that, tired of shouting at them and driving them away, I would sometimes cover my face and then give them liberty to go where they wanted... From this custom arose the great annoyance we experienced from these animals, who thrust their noses into our bark plates before we could get our hands in.

While more spacious than wigwams, the Huron longhouses were nonetheless crowded, considering the size of the families living in them. Here is an eyewitness description from 1639-1640:

If you go to visit them in their cabins... you will find there a miniature picture of Hell, seeing nothing, ordinarily, but fire and smoke, and on every side naked bodies, black and half-roasted, mingled full-mell with the dogs, which are held as dear as the children of the house, and share the beds, plates and food of their masters. Everything is in a cloud of dust, and, if you go within, you will reach the end of the cabin before you are completely befouled with soot, filth and dirt.

This view is supported by the writings of other observers, missionaries for the most part, who shared the lives of their flock. To live with the "Savages" meant "to live as much among the dogs as with men," and when there was something to eat, to have their plates licked by dogs, whose "hairy skins serve... as napkins."

The missionaries recognized that dogs were both a necessity and an encumbrance, but for them this proximity represented a transgression, or a blurring of the line that ought to separate the animal kingdom from the human domain. To live with the Amerindians and their dogs was to go back to a primitive state of confusion. Father Lejeune might laugh at the anecdote he tells but it is significant: there was such confusion that he himself confused human with animal. These descriptions are also filled with connotations of poverty, filth and lubricity.

These sources thus inform us about the mutual dependence of humans and dogs when it came to warmth and food (the question of hunting relationships will be dealt with further on). At the same time, humans and dogs competed for space, food and warmth. Other kinds of canine behavior and relationships with humans are well known and should be taken into consideration when attempting to understand the dynamics of living in wigwams or longhouses, even though historical sources speak very little or not at all about them. In discussing these aspects, care must be taken to avoid anachronistic interpretations that disregard the difference between human-dog relations in ancient times and those in the contemporary world, in which the dog-companion is generally neutered and lives in an aseptic domestic space that is nowhere near as crowded as a wigwam or longhouse.

We have already discussed the way Amerindian dogs were coprophagous, but they also ate out of their masters’ rognas, or bark dishes. In this way, the dog was like a foil to humans. Dogs were also hierarchical. A dog’s master was always a man, a hunter. A dog always sought to rise higher in the hierarchy of the pack, to get closer to its master and to take his place as soon as he was absent. Unlike wild animals and, specifically, the wolf, a male dog, has a constant sex drive. Bitches go into heat twice a year, compared to once a year for she-wolves. Male dogs are always attracted to female odors; they can smell menstrual blood and sometimes try to put their muzzles in women’s crotches. In some of today’s households, certain non-castrated male dogs can be observed to have great interest in women’s underwear. Not too long ago, in the Arctic, where dogs roamed free, menstruating women took a stout stick with them when they went outside. Finally, dogs are not concerned with consanginity — mothers can mate with sons, and fathers with daughters. Thus, the dog has a constant sex drive, is untroubled by the incest taboo, seeks to take the place of the man who is its master and is attracted to female sexual organs with an interest that is probably accentuated by the close cohabitation of humans and dogs over the millennia. This way of seeing the dog gives much more meaning to the myth of the Woman-Dog couple in the time of primordial chaos and the story of Dog’s overthrow by Man, who establishes the Woman-Man couple and the incest taboo. While the missionaries interpreted the relationship between humans and dogs as reflecting a lack of civilization, the Amerindians must have experienced this relationship as a confirmation of the myth establishing their social order.

The next sections will deal with different spheres of social life, exploring how they may be applied to the principles of myth analysis and how they were interpreted by Europeans.

Hunting

To introduce this discussion of hunting, we turn the following observations, probably made by Intendant Raudot at the beginning of the 18th century:

They consider the bear, beaver and wolf to be bodies animated by a rational spirit and never kill a wolf without invoking
the Great Spirit and sacrificing to him; as an offering to the spirit or god of bears, they attach all the bear's head bones to a post after eating the meat. In order, they say, to please this God of the bears, for otherwise they could no longer kill any. For the beaver, they believe that it is a rational spirit like a man, and that it is a pity that the great Spirit did not allow them to speak.  

This quotation makes it clear that hunting (and predation in general) was a religious undertaking, since it placed the hunter in a relationship with animals endowed with a spirit, and each species belonged to a master with whom the hunter had to make an alliance. In this ancient concept of hunting, it was less a matter of a hunter killing an animal than an animal that gave itself to the hunter out of generosity or compassion. It was important for the hunter to maintain relations with the animal's spirit through persuasion and magical coercion. In this way, he would be given knowledge about the future movements of his prey through fasting, dreams and reading the message on a caribou shoulder blade pulled from a fire (scapulimancy). Other rituals would be carried out after capturing and consuming his prey; only by showing such respect could it be ensured that the soul of the slain animal would be reincarnated as another individual of the same species and that the generosity of the spirits would be renewed.

Dogs were trained mainly for hunting bears, moose and beavers. A pack of dogs was particularly useful for harrying a bear or a moose in deep snow until the animal was exhausted. Once the prey was killed, the dogs were fed the intestines, but it was of critical importance that they never be given the bones in any circumstance whatsoever. As well, fish bones had to be returned to water and the skulls (not the heads) of beaver and Cervidae had to be hung from trees, out of the reach of dogs. The tree represented the vertical axis of the world, pointing towards the Milky Way and the celestial lands where the founding heroes, Tsakapesh, the Thunder Bird and others dwelled and where the reincarnation of life took place. This funeral ritual ensured that the slain animal would be reincarnated as another member of the same species.

The anthropologist Frank Speck observed this custom among the Innus as late as the early 20th century. When he asked for an explanation, hunters gave him answers that are very similar to those obtained by the missionaries of New France when they were told that the bones were indigestible, made the dogs sick and broke their teeth, and that omitting this ritual might iritate "the spirit of these animals, who would prevent hunting from being fortunate the next time." Father Charlevoix, a rationalist professor at the Quebec seminary writing in the early 18th century, added: "but I think this reason came after the fact: this is how superstition has often superseded natural causes, much to the disgrace of human intelligence." The explanation given to Speck by the Innus is more detailed — wild animals would consider it the ultimate insult to see "their bones fought over, crunched and devoured by dogs," for the dog, an animal like themselves, had become a traitor to its own kind by living with humans and helping them to track down and kill other beasts. Speck saw a relation between these answers and the Penobscot myth about the arrival of Man among the animals and his association with the dog. Might they also be related to Chipewyan myths about the world being put in order by the gestures of the primordial giant who tore the dog to pieces, creating fish from its entrails, animals from its flesh and birds from its skin? This notion is supported by the fact that the dog was defined by its flesh, as was man, rather than by its bones, as the wolf was; as well, the flesh of dogs was tender, like that of fish. But the most important aspect is not whether or not dogs should eat the entrails, bones or flesh; what is essential, following the example of Mistapeu, is that the purveyor of food should not eat the same parts of an animal as humans do. As explained above, this ensured that the hunter was not in danger of being eaten by dogs and, in addition, that the dog should fulfill its role as purveyor of food by bringing back to its master whatever it caught. Finally, the funeral ritual of exposing bones to ensure the animals' reincarnation echoes Tsakapesh's incapacity to bring his parents back to life in the absence of their bones. Through their customs, then, the hunters were literally living their myths.

For Europeans, the digestive system (stomach and large and small intestines) of woodland animals was not edible; the Amerindians, on the other hand, ate the stomach and probably the duodenum. Father Louis Nicolas, trying to explain these cultural differences, had this to say:

In the land of the Virginians, they feast on even the parts of an animal we give to dogs and add dung to the pot as seasoning, for they clean neither the animal's stomach nor its intestines, saying that everything inside is only grass and leaves cooked by the animal, and that the French are much more ridiculous than they are because they eat raw plants as salad or cooked in a pot, saying that it is much more natural when such food is cooked in an animal's stomach than otherwise.

Nicolas exaggerates when he writes that all the innards of an animal went into the pot, and he mistakenly identifies the contents at the beginning of the intestines as dung. However, if this first part could be eaten by humans, it would further support the position of dogs as established in the myths - that is, eating only what humans do not eat, as in the story of Mistapeu and the Boy with Lice, and eating dung, as in the Black Foot tale of the adulterous woman who condemned the dog to being coprophagous.

Another cultural misunderstanding arose with respect to ritual eat-all feasts, which represented a way of showing gratitude to the animal that had offered itself up. For the missionaries, this behavior epitomized the sin of gluttony.
On the 9th of the month of April a Savage, admired by his people as a great eater, meeting Father de Quen and me [Le Jeune] among the cabins, tried to boast of the prowess of this jaws. "At one feast," he said to us, "I have eaten a quantity of Bear's Grease two brasses long and more than four finger-lengths wide." He imagined that we would admire him; but he was much astonished when we answered him that he was boasting of having become a wolf, - it is the boast of a wolf and not of a man, we told him, to eat a good deal. "If thou hast said that thou hast skilfully fashioned a canoe, a wolf would not dispute thee this praise; but, if thou gloriest in eating, thou art less than a wolf or a dog." All the others began to laugh, and my poor man was much embarrassed.107

The missionary was correct when he spoke of the capacity of dogs and wolves to eat huge amounts at once, thanks to a stomach that expands considerably, enabling them to go without eating for a long time. But in criticizing the man's behavior, the missionaries were contending with two Amerindian beliefs. Not only did they denounce as pagan a ritual thanksgiving to the master of the animals, but more fundamentally, they opposed the notion of humans and animals sharing the same spiritual essence, a notion that is radically antithetical to monotheism and the belief in man's right to dominate nature.108

When Amerindians returned from hunting, it was an occasion to relate the prowess and courage of the dogs that showed the greatest bravery when they stopped a moose in the snow by catching it by the tip of its muzzle or resisted a prey that shook them back and forth, refusing to let go until a hunter killed it. However, it sometimes happened that the moose was victorious and crushed both dog and hunter.109 And then there was the case of Ouatit, whose loss was recounted by a hunter on his return from a successful bear hunt.

...he described the death of a dog, which he believed had been devoured by a Bear, so pathetically that you would almost have believed he was relating the death of one of the brave Captains of the country. He praised his courage in pursuing the Bear, and in opposing him; he added that, having lost sight of him and having long followed his tracks as far as a little river, he had at last stopped, and had said, sticking his hatchet in the ground, "How now Ouatit (this was the name of the dog). Art thou dead? There is my hatchet that I risk with thee." The owner of the dog listened to this speech with so heavy a heart that it would have deceived those who might not know the cause of his grief. "Ah! it is true (said he) that I dearly loved Ouatit; I had resolved to keep him - there was no dream that could have influenced me to make a feast of him, - I would not have given him for anything in the world; and yet it would be some consolation to me now if they had brought me a little Bear which could take his place and carry his name."110

Here we see that Ouatit was part of human society and had a name; to have eaten this dog in a feast would have thus been the equivalent of eating a human and, more specifically, would have broken the taboo against cannibalism within one's community. His master would be somewhat consoled by the present of a bear cub, for the bear was a primordial human that had changed into the most intelligent of animals. However, Ouatit's loss was much more important than that of a bear; it was rather like the loss of a great chieftain in the country - having lived his life as a dog, he was now considered a brave warrior.

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Notes
1 Louis Nicolas, Histoire naturelle des Indes, Bibliothèque nationale, Fr. 2425. (Ancien Oratoire. 162) 196 folios.
2 Ibid., fol. 66.
3 Ibid., fol. 118.
4 Ibid., fol. 113. In his manuscript, Father Nicolas makes a long digression about falconry in France but does not mention falcons being tamed by Amerindians. Ibid., fols. 148-151. Virginia De John Anderson, however, argues that the Algonquians of New England used falcons to chase birds from their cornfields. Creatures of Empire How Domesticate Animals Transformed Early America (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 27-35.
5 Ibid., fols. 73, 74; Gabriel Sagard, Le grand voyage du pays des Hurons (1865; reprint, Montréal: HMEL, 1976, 245 [348].
6 Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 68.
7 "Translator's note: Quotations like this one, from French texts for which there is no published translation, have been translated into English for the purposes of this article by the translator.
9 According to Virginia De John Anderson, op. cit., 52, this is an indication that the dogs of North America were closer to wolves than were European dogs, which bark. However, Louis Nicolas does not write that these dogs did not bark, but rather that they barked differently: "They bark differently, their howls are like those of wolves." op. cit., fol. 68.

11. Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 68.

12. Nicolas de Chamfort, Maximes et pensées, Bibliorom Larousse. [what is this?]


16. Frank G. Speck, “Dogs of the Labrador Indians,” Reprinted from Natural History 25 (1925): 58-64. This copy is unpagged and does not reproduce the photographs of the original.


18. Frédéric Laugrand, personal communication. An article by Scott Weidensaul, “Tracking America’s First Dog,” Smithsonian Magazine 29, no.12, (1999): 44-57, reports the existence of a wild dog known as the “Carolina dog,” living in the wetlands of an isolated area of South Carolina and displaying characteristics that are clearly similar to those of the early Amerindian dogs. However, DNA analyses have not been convincing.


21. France, AN, Colonies, C13A 4, fol. 139 -139v. Relation du voyage de Monsieur de Bourgmont chevalier de l’ordre militaire de St. Louis, commandant de la rivière du Missouiry et sur le haut de celle des Arkansas du Missouiry aux Padoucas. 15 novembre 1724. For long distances, the weighte carried was more likely 50 pounds (22.7 kg) for a sturdy dog, according to Marion Schwartz, op. cit., 52.

22. Bryan D. Cummins, op. cit., 147-151; Marion Schwartz, op. cit., 52.


24. Pehr Kalm, op. cit., 300, 379, 446 [760, 812, 856]; Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 67; Louis Hennepin, Nouvelle découverte d’un très grand pays situé dans l’Amérique (Utrecht: Guillaume Broedel, 1697), 17-18, 96; R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1673), LVIII: 64; (1695), LXIV: 251-253; Frank G. Speck, op. cit.


27. Ibid.


30. Jared Diamond, op. cit., 161. [C’est la première référence donc il faut titre, ville, éditeur]


34. R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1637), XIII: 97.

35. Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 68.


38. Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, "Essai sur la nature et la

39 Gabriel Sagard, op. cit., 219 [310-311].

40 Ibid., 211 [313].


42 Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 67. “Translator’s Note: In the original French article, the quotation reads: “Les chiens français ont inflintus plus d’esprit.” Following consultations with the author, “esprit” has been translated as “spirit” in this context; however, the word also can mean intelligence, witiness and sensibility.

44 Ibid., fol. 67.

45 Ibid., fol. 67-68. When Lewis and Clark met the Shoshones for the first time, in 1805, these people were astonished by the cleverness of their visitors’ dogs: “Every article about us appeared to excite astonishment in their minds, the appearance of the men, their arms, the canoes, our manner of working them, the black man yor [sic] and the sagacity of my dog were equally objects of admiration,” Bernard De Voto, ed., The Journal of Lewis and Clark (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1997), 191-192, in Gilles Havard, “Long Knife and Red Hair: Lewis et Clark en territoire indien,” to be published. ([forthcoming] or “unpublished manuscript”?)


48 Ibid., fol. 78-79, 145-151.


50 François-Xavier Charlevoix, op. cit., 300, 673; Thomas Anbury, op. cit., 45.


54 Nicolas Denys, op. cit., 429-430; Marion Schwartz, op. cit., 11.

55 Gabriel Sagard, op. cit., 117-118 [169-170].


57 Bryan D. Cummins, op. cit., p. 221.


59 France, AN, Colonies, C11A, 16, fol. 89 Champigny au ministre. A Québec, le 3 juillet 1698.

60 France, AN, Colonies, C15A 40, fol. 220. Présents ordinaires pour les Sauvages (1758).


67 Ibid., 15-34, 183-186.

68 R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1636), II: 73.


70 Ibid., 43-67.

71 R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1636), X: 147.

72 Gabriel Sagard, op. cit., 162 [233].


77 S. Hearme, A Journey from Prince of Wales Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean...in the Years 1769-1772 (Rutland, VT: Turtle, 1971), 343, in Henry S. Sharp, op. cit., 28-29.

78 Claude Lévi-Strauss, L'Homme nu, 402.


80 S. Hearme, op. cit., 324, in Henry S. Sharp, op. cit., 28; Rémi Savard, op. cit., 89.


82 Rémi Savard, op. cit., 80, 89-90.

83 Ibid., 81.

84 Ibid., 2.

85 Léa Zuyderhoudt, "The days when dogs spoke Blackfoot. Relations between Blackfoot and dogs in narratives of the past." I am grateful to Ms. Zuyderhoudt for having given me this reference. See her contribution to this book. QUEL LIVRE?

86 François-Xavier Charlevoix, op. cit., 771.

87 Pamela Amoss, op. cit., 296-297.


90 The morphology and behavior of the dog shows a definite retention of juvenile characteristics, in comparison with the wolf. The domestication process was associated with a neotenic mechanism: for example, the dog's skull corresponds more closely to the skull of a young wolf than that of an adult wolf, and a puppy maintains playful behavior much longer than a wolf cub does. See Marion Schwartz, op. cit., 10.


93 Frank G. Speck, op. cit.

94 R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1634-1635), VII: 43-45; see also: (1642-1645), XXVII: 25; (1696-1702), LXV: 42-43; François-Xavier Charlevoix, op. cit., 673.


98 Rémi Savard, op. cit., 158.


100 Frank G. Speck, op. cit.; François-Xavier Charlevoix, op. cit., 276.

101 Ibid., 277.

102 Frank G. Speck, op. cit.

103 Ibid.


106 Louis Nicolas, op. cit., fol. 84; see also Gabriel Sagard, op. cit., 220 [312].

107 R. G. Thwaites, op. cit., (1637), XII: 147-149.

108 François-Xavier Charlevoix, op. cit., 300.


Message from the President

At the annual meeting of the Center for French Colonial Studies in Naperville last October, one of our members suggested that members be apprised of Board activities between annual meetings. I like this show of interest in Board deliberations and am pleased to accede to this member’s request.

The CFCS Board customarily meets three times a year. Some of our Board decisions are reported in news items appearing in Le Journal. In this issue, however, I shall update you on items of interest not reported elsewhere in Le Journal.

First and foremost, we have finalized plans for the annual meeting and conference this fall in Lafayette, Indiana. We have made tentative plans for the 2008 conference in Lafayette, Louisiana, and determined that the 2009 conference will be held in Florissant, Missouri, a town on the Missouri River founded in the late 18th century.

Annual dues have been raised from $20 to $25, effective fall 2007;

We have discussed the nominating procedure under the new by-laws. We have continued our discussions with regard to implementation of the strategic plan and new initiatives resulting from those decisions. We have discussed upgrading our website and the membership brochure. Benn Williams outlined plans for publications through 2012. The 2007 recipients of the Center’s Carl J. Ekberg Research Grants are: Patrick Böttinger, University of Oklahoma, and Robert Englebert, University of Ottawa.

Arnaud Balvay, of Paris, France, and Michael S. Nassaney, of Kalamazoo, Michigan, were elected directors to fill the unexpired terms of Fred Fausz and Erin Bishop, who because of other commitments resigned from the Board. Michael Nassaney will succeed Pierre Lebeau as editor of Le Journal beginning with the Winter Issue.

Our Board is made up of members who are doers, and I am grateful for the contribution each of them makes to the CFCS. Sometimes they drive several hundred miles in order to attend a Board meeting. We had a “first” for our Board meeting in Springfield, Illinois, when our new Board member in Paris, Arnaud Balvay, attended the Board meeting via instantaneous electronic communication.

In the interest of brevity I have provided only highlights of what has transpired at recent Board meetings. I will provide more detailed information about Board activities when we meet in Lafayette, Indiana. Mary Moyars Johnson and Dennis Au have planned a wonderful meeting for our enjoyment and edification. I hope that I shall see many of you there. So mark your calendars now for November 2-3, 2007.

Ruth Bryant, President

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Neither the editorial staff of Le Journal nor The Center for French Colonial Studies assumes responsibility for errors of fact or opinions expressed by the contributors. The editor reserves the right to refuse submitted material and to edit material prior to publication.

Deadlines to submit announcements: 12/10, 3/10, 6/10, 9/10.

All correspondence and materials for publication should be addressed to: Center for French Colonial Studies CM 321, History Department, North Central College, 30 N. Brainard St., Naperville, IL 60540-4690.

<www.noctrl.edu/cfcs>
The 2007 CFCS Conference at Lafayette, Indiana.
Nov. 2-3, 2007

The conference program on Saturday, November 3, will include the following presenters:

Marcel Bénétieau, Professor, folklore and ethnology, Université de Sudbury and France Martineau, Professor, Lettres françaises, Université d’Ottawa


René Chartrand, Former Chief Curator, Parks Canada, author
"Joys, Trials, and Tribulations of a French Garrison in a Wilderness Fort.”
This paper is based on insightful accounts of life in the frontier forts of New France written by various classes of soldiers.

Carl Ekberg, Professor Emeritus, Illinois State University

"Slavery and Racism: Illinois Country Paradox." This paper examines the striking differences between slavery in French Illinois and the nineteenth century American South.

Rick Jones, III, Indiana State Archaeologist

"Archaeological Investigations of French and Native American Sites in Indiana.” The presentation is an overview/synthesis including theory and recent investigations.

Michael Strezewski, Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Southern Indiana

"Investigations at Kethippecanuck, a French and Metis Trading Town on the Wabash River.” The paper focuses on recent archaeological on the excavations at Kethippecanuck.

Hotel rooms are blocked at the Holiday Inn Select City Centre, 515 South Street, Lafayette, IN, 47901. The special CFCS rate is $95/night. 800-423-1137/765-423-1000.

Information regarding fees, dinner cost, etc. will be posted on the web site in July.

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Dr. Ken Carstens
Sara Chapman
Judith Chun
Philip Cook
Andrew M. Cooperman
Anne D. Craver
Helen Valle Crist
Richard Day
Gary A. Dashney
Steve Dasovich
The Voyeurage in the Illinois Country. The Fur Trade's Professional Boatman in Mid America. By Margaret K. Brown, Ph.D.

This story of the Illinois Country voyageur is gleaned largely from an assemblage of some 7000 unsorted and mostly unpublished French documents and records known collectively as the Kaskaskia Manuscripts. Few people are as familiar with this collection as Dr. Brown, who has worked with this and other caches of French Illinois records for years. (38 pages, maps, illustrations.)

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The seventeen articles, selected from more than twenty years of publication, are organized in thematic sections: the French Experience, Sources of Information, the French Language and Culture, the People, the French Heritage and Culture. They reflect the interests of the variety of persons who have participated in the annual conferences of the Center, or whose work has been published in Le Journal. Each thematic section is summarized briefly and a short résumé of the author precedes each article.

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