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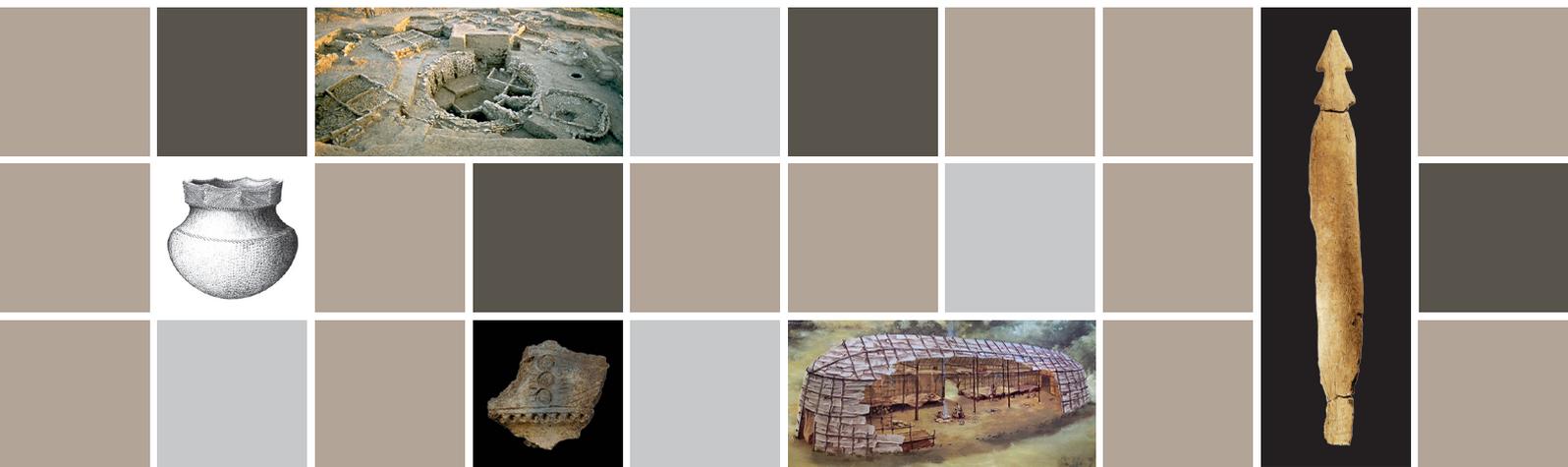
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HOUSEHOLD ARCHAEOLOGY

A Transatlantic Comparative Approach



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FOR A SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE DROULERS / TSIIIONHIAKWATHA AND MAILHOT-CURRAN SITES

Claude CHAPDELAINÉ

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FOR A SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY AT THE DROULERS / TSIIIONHIAKWATHA AND MAILHOT-CURRAN SITES

Claude CHAPDELAINÉ

Abstract

St. Lawrence Iroquoian social archaeology is at the center of our investigation and households will be discussed in this paper using domestic pottery and spatial analysis of cultural remains from two village sites of the Saint-Anicet area. The villages of Droulers and Mailhot-Curran will be used for this study. Droulers is a late 15th century village, which is actually the biggest known Iroquoian village in Québec with an estimated size of 1.3 ha. This settlement was probably occupied by at least 500 souls distributed over a dozen multifamily dwellings. Mailhot-Curran is a smaller 16th century village with six longhouses distributed over 0.6 ha with an estimated population of 200 persons. Selected households allow us to study social relations between its members and their clan affiliation.

Keywords

St. Lawrence Iroquoian, sedentary village, socio-political organization, household spatial analysis.

Introduction

The Iroquoian world is made of several large cultural groups sharing a language, an economy, a socio-political organization, and a system of beliefs (Tremblay, 2006). They all practiced slash and burn agriculture and lived in longhouses. During the time of Jacques Cartier's 16th century explorations, the Iroquoians living in the St. Lawrence Valley were very active in a large interaction network, although they maintained certain differences. The most intriguing aspect is the distribution of shared identity attributes over 600 km along the St. Lawrence Lowlands. This relative homogeneity cannot mask regional differences that support the idea that Iroquoian Laurentia was occupied by several tribes (Trigger, Pendergast, 1978; Chapdelaine, 1989). A second difference from other Iroquoian groups is a direct access to marine resources for the tribe living in the Quebec City region which could hunt beluga and seals at the mouth of the Saguenay River, but also cultivate fields around their villages as other Iroquoians did (Plourde, 2012 and this volume). A third aspect to consider is the distinctive St. Lawrence Iroquoian domestic pottery at the stylistic level. Their functional vessels bear a different style from neighbouring Iroquoian groups and we will concentrate on this production.

The occupation of the St. Lawrence Valley by several tribes is a very logical hypothesis when looking at the distribution of known village sites, which shows regional clusters that may represent individual tribes (figure 1). The Saint-Anicet cluster with its four villages sits in a region conducive to agriculture. Of the four identified villages (figure 2), Berry, McDonald, Droulers and Mailhot-Curran, only the last two will be used in this paper to study Iroquoian households. The Berry site (Pendergast, 1966) was already disturbed by a large sand deflation when it was found and it was impossible to verify the presence of any dwellings on the site. The site is located far inland from the St. Lawrence River and conforms to the general Iroquoian settlement pattern

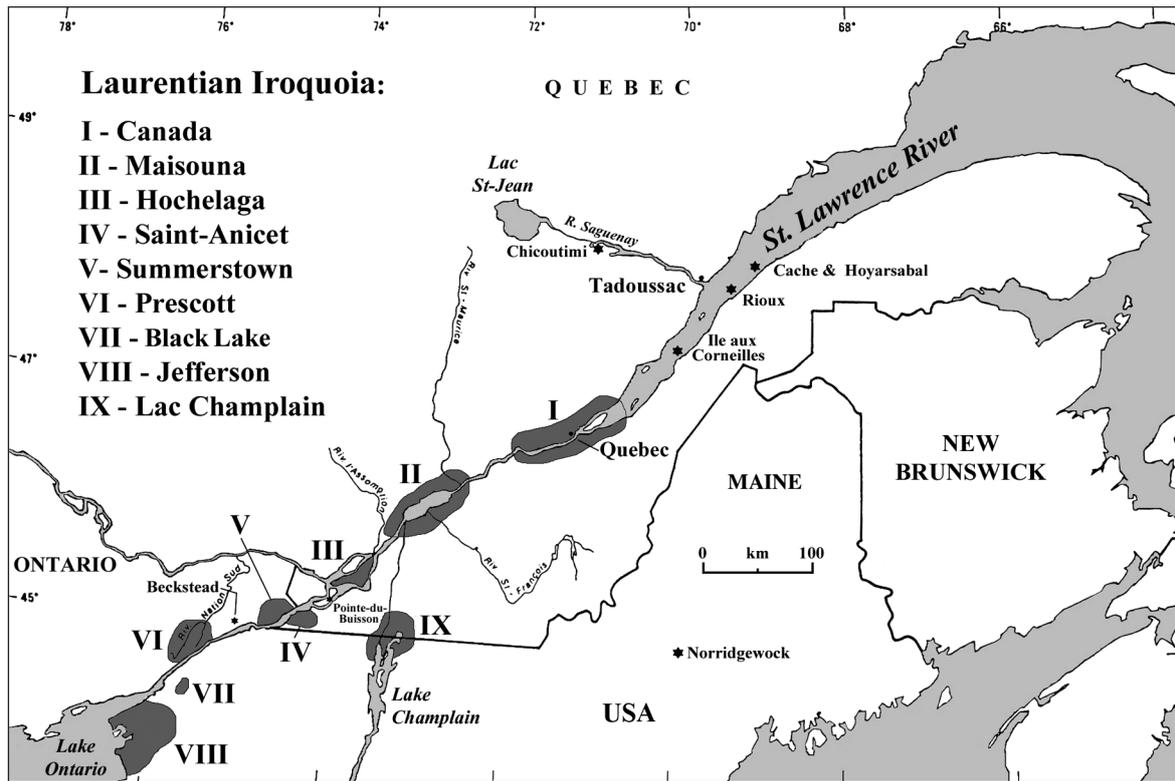


Figure 1 - Site clusters of Laurentian Iroquoia.

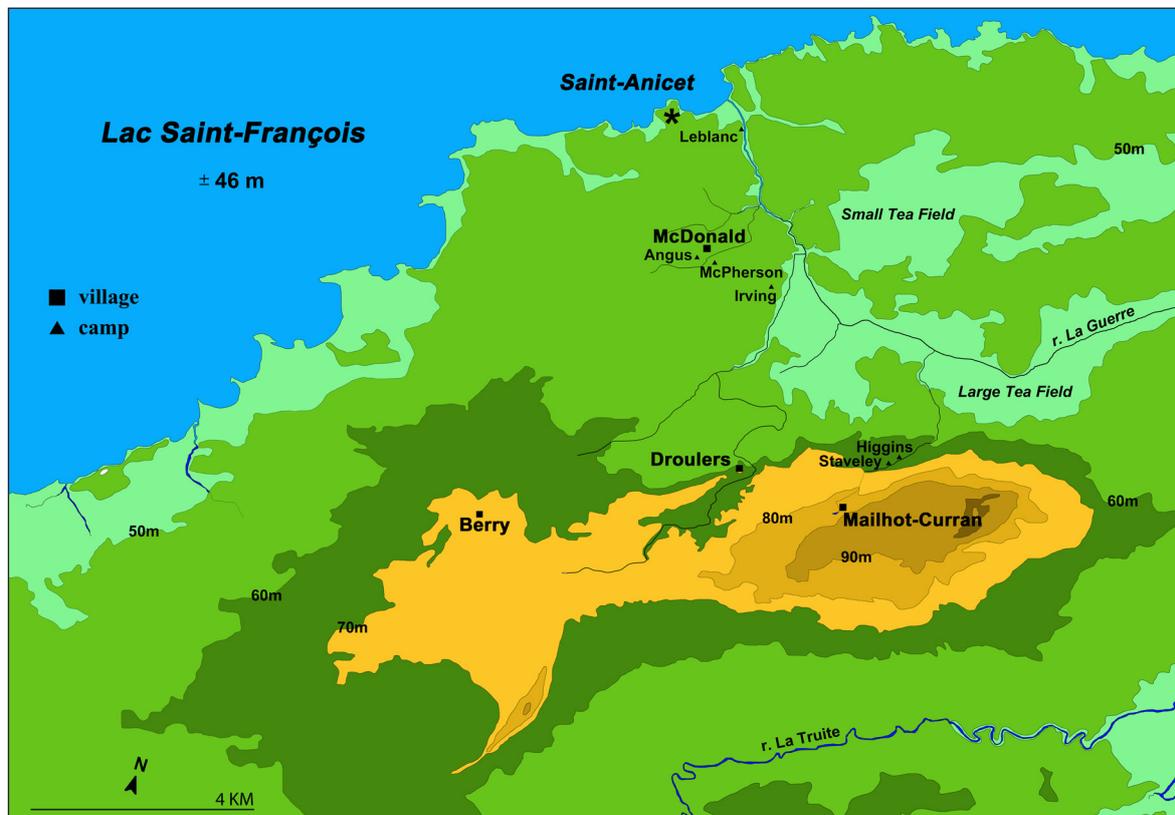


Figure 2 - Location of Iroquoian sites in the Saint-Anicet region and its four villages: Berry, McDonald, Droulers and Mailhot-Curran; the other sites are specialized camps.

(Chapdelaine, 1998). It is thus considered a village just like the McDonald site (Clermont, Gagné, 2004). The McDonald village site is considered small, with three longhouses and several small middens. Based on ceramic style, McDonald is considered a 14th century village which makes it the oldest village in the Saint-Anicet cluster.

Our scientific research project initiated in 2010 is a long-term program oriented toward a better understanding of the Saint-Anicet cluster's cultural originality. To achieve this goal, we decided to work extensively on the Droulers and Mailhot-Curran sites. After two field seasons at Droulers in 2010 and 2011, we moved to Mailhot-Curran for three seasons, 2012 to 2014. Trying from the start to understand the internal organization of these two villages, the longhouse became the focus of our attention. It is thus with the longhouse as our basic unit of analysis that we tried to achieve our goals. It is with the total horizontal exposure of the longhouse interior that we intend to compare the material culture of each longhouse in order to understand the relationships among the occupants. This approach favouring the extensive excavation of the dwelling floor in order to link the cultural remains to the internal longhouse structure has been pursued several times in Iroquoian contexts (Wright, 1974; Girouard, 1975; Dodd, 1984; Finlayson, 1985; Knight, 1987; Chapdelaine, 1989; Pendergast, 1990; Warrick, 1996; Clermont *et al.*, 2003; Kapches, 2007; Snow, 2012). This type of analysis of Iroquoian data within a social archaeology framework is frequently associated to a detailed analysis of ceramics, which is the dominant category of material culture recovered on all Iroquoian sites (Martelle, 2002; Birch, 2008; Chapdelaine, 2013). This is particularly true when dwellings are meticulously excavated. Household archaeology, which leads to Iroquoian social archaeology, was originally inspired by research carried out in the American Southwest (Longacre, 1970) and by links established between the dwelling, its occupants, the cultural remains and its social organization (Deetz, 1968; Hill, 1977; Wilk, Rathje, 1982; Netting *et al.*, 1984; Wilk, Ashmore, 1988; Santley, Hirth, 1993). Household archaeology is still a very dynamic approach that has been recently revitalized by a new generation of scholars (Canuto, Yaeger, 2000; Gillespie, Joyce, 2000; Robin, 2003; Nash, 2009; Pluckhahn, 2010; Carballo, 2011; Douglass, Gonlin, 2012; Birch, Williamson, 2015). This type of approach to the household, although it shows promising results, can also rely too heavily on the validation of a model generated by the rich ethnohistoric data for the American Northeast which in turn poses serious limits that we address in this paper.

1 - Saint-Anicet Iroquoians – the Droulers Site

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Iroquoian presence south of lake Saint François was not well documented. The Iroquoian cultural and archaeological landscape changed dramatically with the discovery of the McDonald site in 1992, the Droulers site in 1994, and the Mailhot-Curran site in 1999 (Chapdelaine, 2015).

The discovery of this new cluster of villages was made possible through the efforts of Michel Gagné (Clermont, Gagné, 2004). The Droulers site has now been excavated during two field seasons (Chapdelaine, 2010, 2012). Three longhouses are confirmed and the potential for many more has been tested within the village limits (figure 3). The site covers 1.3 ha and a large midden has been identified in the northeast portion of the settlement on the slope of a morainic ridge. The presence of a palisade around the settlement is still not confirmed and archaeological evidence is lacking to identify this defensive measure. Longhouse #1, the excavation of which was initiated by Michel Gagné, is almost completely exposed, as well as longhouse #2. These two dwellings occupy the eastern-central portion of the village and they are aligned parallel to each other. Its members may have been part of the same clan. Pottery analysis can answer this question on the affiliation of the members of the two households.

The third longhouse, although confirmed with the discovery of three aligned hearths, is not sufficiently excavated to be used in this study regarding the household social network.

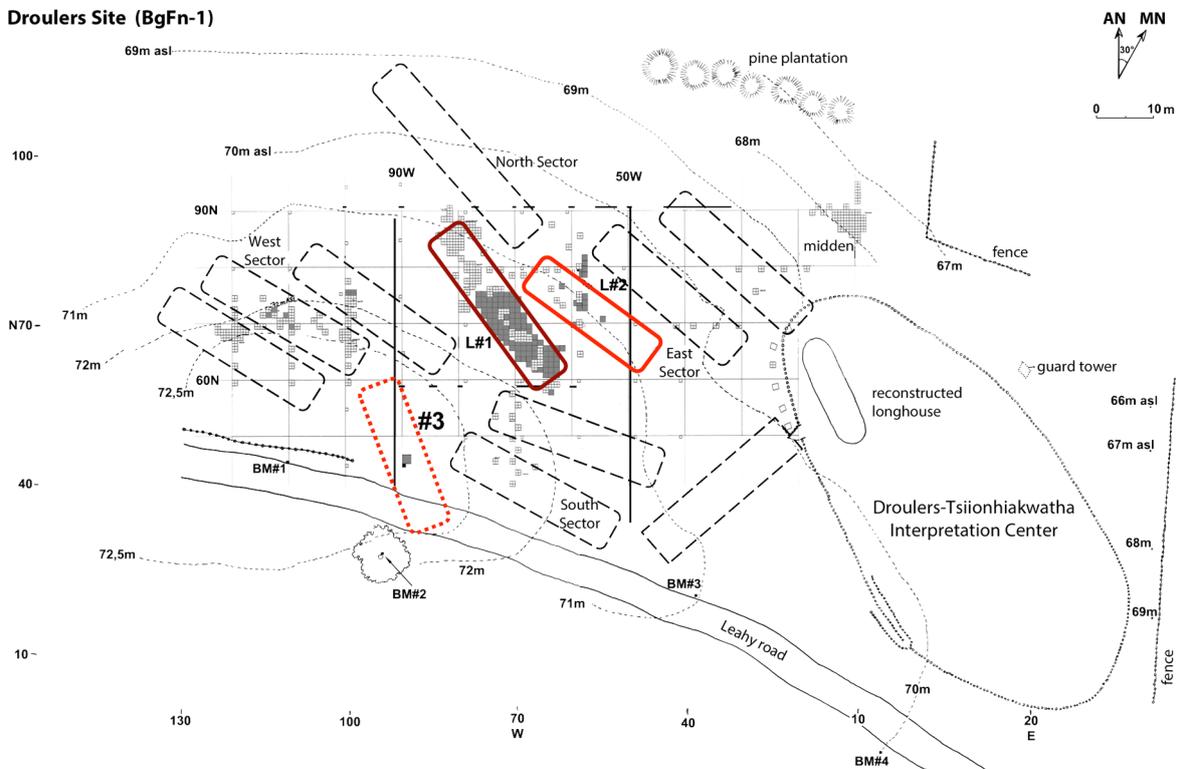


Figure 3 - Map of the Droulers site and the location of three confirmed longhouses, other potential longhouses, and the reconstructed village that serves as an Interpretation Center.

2 - Spatial Analysis of Longhouses #1 and #2 at Droulers Site

The principal characteristic at Droulers is the large amount of rocks present in the sandy soil. The consequence of the rocky nature of the habitation floor is that it is very difficult to identify postmolds in the subsoil. These features are easy to identify in sandy soils that are free of stones. The identification of a longhouse must therefore be done without postmolds, a task that is more complicated but not impossible. Our first approach is the discovery of a minimum of three aligned hearths spaced at regular intervals, generally between 3 and 5 meters. The pits unearthed around the hearths can also be used to identify longhouses, along with a high density of cultural remains within the interior of the dwelling (figure 4). Without the help of aligned postmolds to delimit the housing feature, we propose a width of 6 m for our longhouses (Dodd, 1984; Warrick, 1996; Kapches, 2007). This width is compared to the location of pits around the hearths and to the artifact density. In order to establish the dwelling’s length, we examine the density of cultural remains away from the last hearths in the alignment and a clear decline of artifact density is thus used to define the longhouse limits (figure 4).

The longhouse is a living space as well as an area to consume and to produce goods. This dynamic daily life favours the creation of large amounts of garbage that must be dealt with. Several choices are available to the occupants. They can throw away their waste in a midden located outside

but near to house. They can also take care of garbage by placing it inside pits dug close to interior hearths (figure 4). A third choice relies on discarding some of the waste below the sleeping platform along the house walls. Whatever was their choice, the excavations should reveal the refuse distribution patterns that these Iroquoians selected. The interior floor of the dwelling was made of compacted earth and smaller refuse could have penetrated easily and quickly into the ground. It is thus important to point out that the number of household pits is limited at Droulers and that the use of this type of feature to discard waste was not very popular.

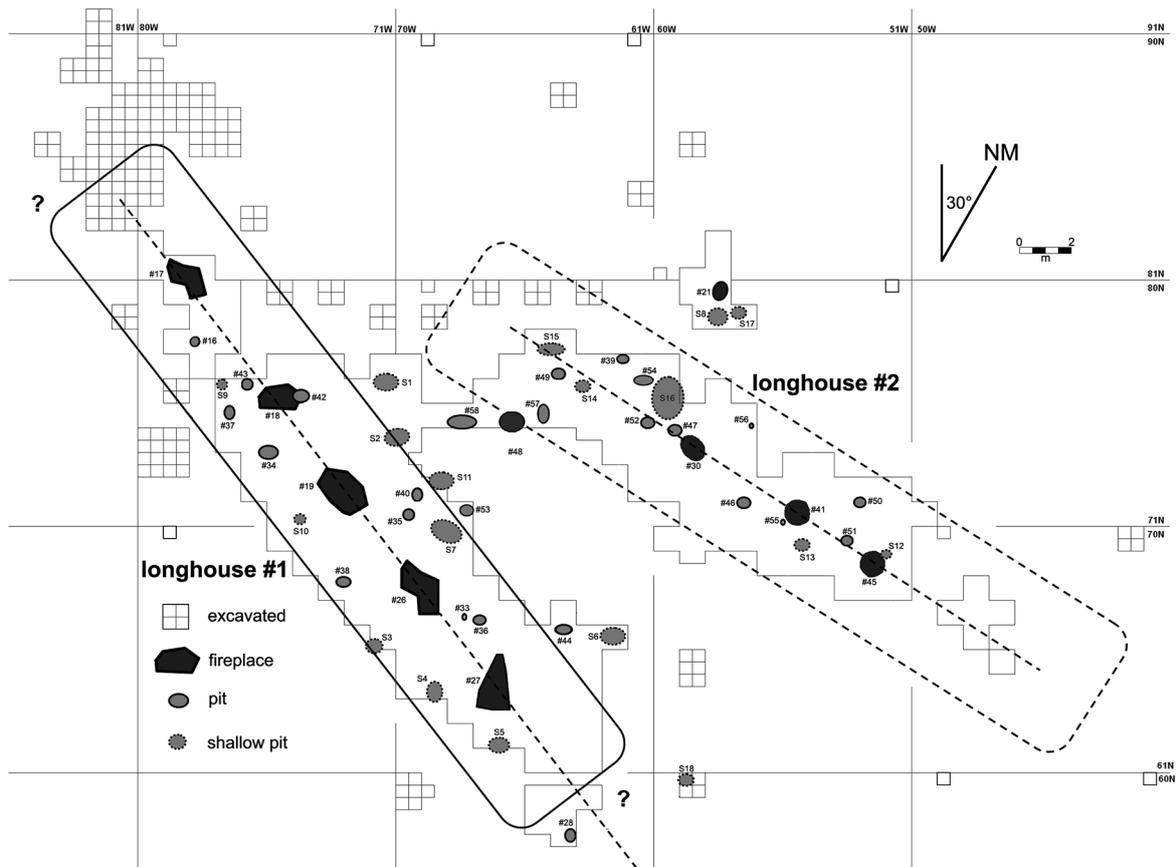


Figure 4 - Hypothetical limits of longhouses #1 and #2 at Droulers with the distribution of hearths, pits, shallow features rich in cultural remains, and postmolds.

The ceramic industry is by far the dominant category of cultural remains that archaeologists amass during excavations of Iroquoian village sites. Of this earthenware production, domestic pottery is the most prolific in numbers. Any analysis of social networks must inevitably rely on a detailed analysis of pottery. These specific vessels (figure 5) with a decorated collar allow us to ask many questions. In this study, we will limit ourselves to three interrogations. Is the ceramic production from longhouses #1 and #2 sufficiently comparable to support the hypothesis stating that members of these two households were members of the same clan? Does the central portion of the two dwellings show a higher artifact density, thus indicating that leading individuals, namely elders, occupied this area on a year-round basis? Is the St. Lawrence Iroquoian emblematic style shared by all the family units or is it in the hands of few families?

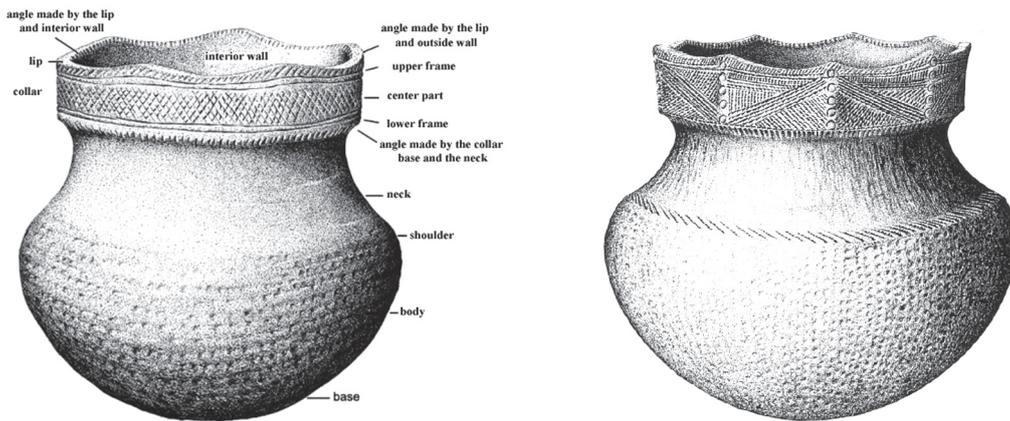


Figure 5 - Line drawing of an Iroquoian vessel with its analytical parts left ; line drawing of a typical St. Lawrence Iroquoian vessel from the Lanoraie site with a high collar crested rim, and decorated with reed punctates (right).

Data from Droulers are not yet totally compiled for domestic pottery. At this stage of our research, it is possible to confirm that the central portion of the two households shows a high artifact density and that their members are related through a shared interest in decorating their pottery vessels with dentate stamped (Perreault, 2014). Some differences occur when examining the emblematic variables. Potters from longhouse #1 use more frequently the ladder motif on their domestic vessels while potters from longhouse #2 used reed punctates (figure 6).

Despite these small differences, it is possible to argue that members of the two households might have been affiliated and members of the same clan. This conclusion is certainly premature but we hope to study it in greater depth at the end of the new phase of excavations at Droulers in 2017.



Figure 6 - Vessels decorated with emblematic motifs. Upper row: corn-ear motif from Mailhot-Curran site, lower row: ladder motif and reed punctates from Droulers site.

3 - Saint-Anicet Iroquoians – the Mailhot-Curran Site

Excavations were carried out at this site from 1999 to 2001, revealing its potential and at least one longhouse and one midden (Gagné, 2002). Between 2012 and 2014, three field seasons identified five additional longhouses and two middens (figure 7). A total of 462 m² were excavated, which corresponds to about 8% of the village core (Chapdelaine, 2015a). Longhouses #5 and #6 are not sufficiently excavated to be relevant for this household study; they are thus excluded from the discussion.

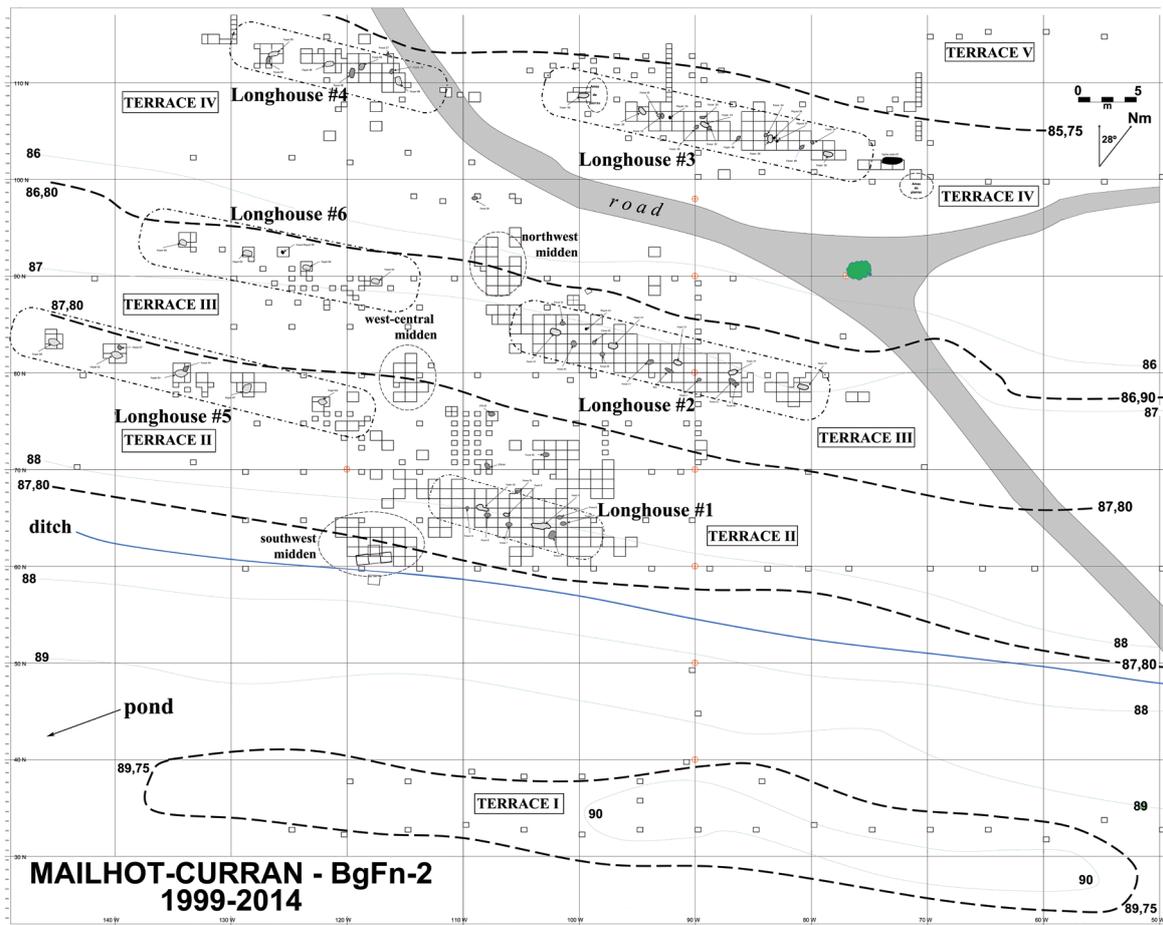


Figure 7 - Location of six longhouses, three middens, and the limits of five terraces at the Mailhot-Curran site.

4 - Spatial Analysis of Longhouses #1, #2, #3 and #4 at Mailhot-Curran Site

The same questions formulated to interrogate household data from Droulers were applied to the data from the four selected households at the Mailhot-Curran site. Is ceramic production from longhouses #1 to #4 sufficiently comparable to favour the same clan affiliation for the four households or is it different enough to support the hypothesis of two clans at the site? Does the central portion of the longhouses have a high artifact density thus supporting the presence of elders during a year-round occupation? Finally, is the emblematic style on domestic vessels typical of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians shared by all families or limited to a few families?

To offer the most detailed answers to these questions related to density and distribution of cultural remains inside households, longhouse #2 is selected because it is the richest, the longest with five hearths, and it is associated with a midden (figure 8). The central alley is organized with five hearths along its axis and it also has the highest density of cultural remains. The area between the central hearth and the next fireplace to the west is the richest, confirming in a way the importance of elders (following the ethnohistorical model) within the central portion of the longhouse. However, it must be noted that families occupying the easternmost hearth area also produced a large amount of waste. A spatial distribution analysis of collared and non-collared vessels is available elsewhere (Chapdelaine, 2015b) and we have reproduced here the distribution of collared vessels found inside longhouse #2 (figure 9). Numerous refits of the analyzed vessels allow us to reconstruct

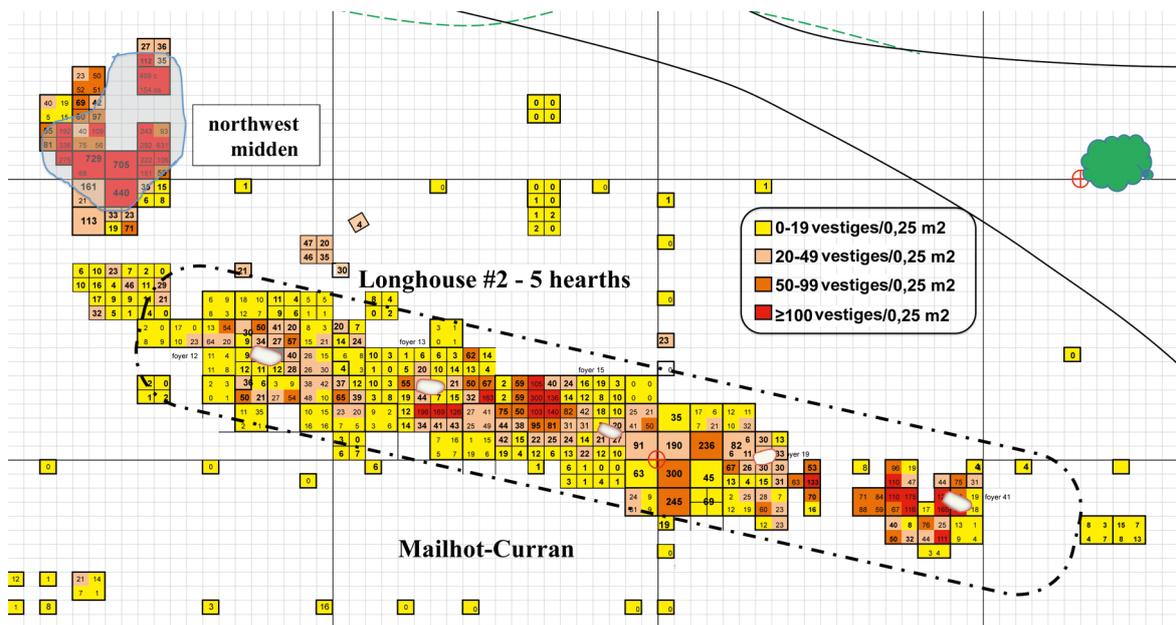


Figure 8 - Density of cultural remains within longhouse #2 at the Mailhot-Curran site.

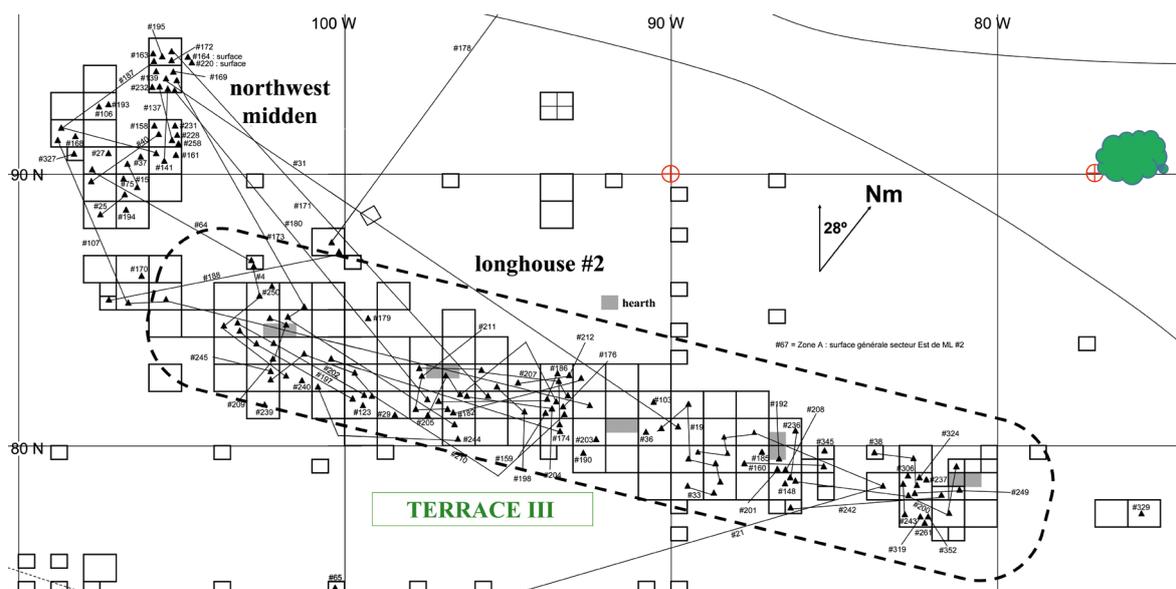


Figure 9 - Distribution of collared vessels from longhouse #2 and location of the northwest midden: triangles indicate the provenance of a pottery fragment, and lines the association between fragments of the same vessel; the number refers to the unit of analysis.

links between different family units around hearths as well as confirming the role played by members of this household in discarding their waste into the northwestern midden. An unbalanced distribution is also visible between the northern and southern halves along the central hearth axis. This impression could suggest an absence of families north of the hearths or a more efficient cleaning of ceramic waste. The horizontal distribution of artifacts and features shows first, the difficulty of understanding all the family units with the absence of a uniform distribution, and second, the lack of a plausible explanation for this irregular dispersion of cultural remains inside a longhouse.

A systematic comparison of vessel units found inside longhouses #1 to #4 has allowed us to propose with confidence that there are behavioural differences between residents of terraces #2 and #3, associated to the southern half of the village, and residents of terrace #4 associated to the northern portion (see figure 7). The internal organization of this particular village settled over three narrow terraces seems to comply with the natural terrace orientation and proximity. Longhouses #1 and #2 are close to each other and they belong to the southern half of the village, while longhouses #3 and #4 are part of the northern half. Several stylistic attributes were selected differentially by potters of these households and this allows us to propose that at least two clans are present, although we have to be cautious since the whole group shares many attributes. It is by favouring differences over similarities that we divide our four households into two distinct clans (table 1). Among the behaviours or distinctive stylistic choices made by potters of the northern half of the village, we should mention a lower percentage of high collar vessels, the scarcity of vessels decorated with reed punctates, the almost complete absence of the ladder motif and a presence of vessels showing Huron influence. There are more subtle differences regarding the choices made by potters from longhouses #3 and #4 to distinguish themselves from potters of the southern half of the village when it comes to decorating various parts of the collared vessels (Woods *et al.*, 2015: 178). With the unique discovery of a zoomorphic effigy pipe, probably representing a wolf (figure 10), we are tempted to identify the dwellers of the southern half of the village to the wolf clan. However, we must await the discovery of a similar class of object to propose a clan name for members of longhouses #3 and #4.

	High collar (> 35 mm)		Castellation		Ladder motif		Reed punctate		Human figure motif		Corn-ear motif	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
M-L #1	10/51	19.6	27/51	52.9	4/50	8	7/51	13.7	0/51	0	1/51	2
M-L #2	11/60	18.3	33/60	55.0	7/59	11.9	8/59	13.6	3/59	5.1	0/59	0
M-L #3	3/36	8.3	14/36	38.9	1/31	3.2	2/31	6.5	1/31	3.2	0/31	0
M-L #4	1/24	4.2	13/27	48.1	0/26	0	3/27	11.1	0/27	0	0/27	0
Whole site	38/256	14.8	128/262	48.9	18*/247	7.3	30*/248	12.1	6*/247	2.4	2*/247	0.8

* Toutes les unités d'analyses non comptabilisées ayant cet attribut proviennent de la moitié sud du site, ce qui inclut les maisons-longues #5 et #6, les dépotoirs nord-ouest, centre-ouest, sud-ouest ainsi que la zone au nord de la maisons-longue #1.

Table 1 - Comparison of selected morpho-stylistic attributes on collared vessels from longhouses #1 to #4 at the Mailhot-Curran site.

Regarding the last question on the typical emblematic style of the St. Lawrence Iroquoians, we must not lose sight of the fact that only 15 % of all analyzed pottery bears the distinctive attributes of a St. Lawrence Iroquoian vessel which is characterized by a high collar of 30 mm or more decorated with a complex geometric motif and frequent rim castellations (figure 6). The addition of short parallel lines resembling a ladder or the use of circular punctates to produce distinctive

motifs can be added to this definition. A corn-ear motif is also highly typical of the St. Lawrence Iroquoian style and this emblematic motif is very rare at Mailhot-Curran, being present on only two vessels. This motif is completely absent at Droulers. The two vessels decorated with the corn-ear motif were found in the southern half of the village. Even if 75 % of all the vessels identified to the emblematic style were found in the southern half, it is also present in longhouses #3 and #4. This style was thus shared at the Mailhot-Curran on the village scale, but it was highly uneven in its distribution.



Figure 10 - Zoomorphic effigy pipe, probably a wolf, from longhouse #2 at the Mailhot-Curran site.

5 - Discussion

Despite a size difference between Droulers and Mailhot-Curran villages, we think that a detailed comparison will be relevant when complete data from Droulers will be available. The possibility of identifying clan affiliation by studying pottery is intimately linked to the quality and representativity of the samples. However, it should not be forgotten that the task will be difficult (Wright, 2006). Potter's activities related to their craft could be carried out inside or outside longhouses according to the season. Each family must manage broken pots and this task could vary at the family or longhouse level. The refitting of vessels could also have an impact on their location on the dwelling floor. The results of refitting is similar on both sites we have studied, but it must be stressed that Droulers was cleared of trees and the soil plowed during the 20th Century, activities that disturbed the vertical and horizontal location of pottery fragments. The exact position of vessels on Mailhot-Curran was only affected by natural factors such as animals and tree throws, which implies movement in the soil, but probably less significant than the displacement affecting vessels at Droulers.

Regarding the question on clans, we think that a village comprising a population ranging between 400 and 600 souls should have several clans. Mailhot-Curran is a small village of about 200 individuals and there therefore a possibility of a homogeneous population belonging to a single clan. However, this small village seems to have been less homogeneous than previously thought and the presence of two clans now seems probable. The location of longhouses and their orientation within a village are two indicators mentioned by scholars to recognize the presence of several clans. It is indeed the stylistic differences found on pottery and the location of longhouses on three separate terraces that has allowed us to propose the presence of two clans at Mailhot-Curran.

As we have mentioned at the outset, several factors make it difficult to identify longhouses at Droulers and Mailhot-Curran sites, thus reducing the scope of household archaeology and our attempt to revitalize Iroquoian social archaeology. First, it must be stressed that doing Iroquoian household archaeology without identifiable postmolds is a serious handicap. The absence of postmolds makes it impossible to establish the dwelling's perimeter. A low density of cultural remains at the house extremities is used to estimate the length of the residential structure without knowing if there was a cubicle. House width is also problematic, as well as inferring the presence of sleeping platforms along lateral walls (figure 11).



Figure 11 - Interior representation of a longhouse showing the location of hearths and the sleeping platforms along lateral walls (Clermont, Chapdelaine 1986, painting by Guy Lapointe).

The strong relation between Iroquoian archaeology and the ethnohistoric record is the second problematic aspect of this research. As archaeologists, we should not neglect the historic model that was built upon ethnohistoric data, but our goal as archaeologists should not be limited to simply validating this model. It is thus a real problem when archaeology only tries to confirm the historic model, or tries to minimize the differences encountered that could be used to argue for divergent behaviours or practices in the past. In addition, the more we deal with a context that is further back in time from the Contact period, the goal of developing a model based on archaeological data should be promoted.

Another aspect adding to the difficulty of using a household approach to study Iroquoians is the integrity of cultural remains, which is directly related to the dweller's behaviours in dealing with their garbage. However, we must not neglect the fact that the majority of Iroquoian sites were single occupations, which thankfully avoids the mixing of several occupations and limits the stratigraphy to a single layer. Within this particular context, the total exposure of the dwelling floor is definitely a crucial step toward the reconstitution of the inhabitant's history.

The limits of Iroquoian household archaeology, as discussed above, also need to consider scale as a factor. What type of information can we obtain with a meticulous excavation inside a longhouse and with a highly representative material culture? Knowing that material production can be very useful to address Iroquoian identity, at what scale can we really pretend to contribute by analysing and comparing decorated vessels and smoking pipes? An Iroquoian identifies himself or herself first to his / her family and to his / her mother's lineage. From the perspective of the community, his or her membership to a longhouse is undeniable but his / her second true identity will be his / her clan, which is his / her mother's clan. Inside a longhouse, all the women are related by kinship and thus are all members of the same clan. A homogeneous assemblage of decorated vessels from a longhouse will reflect the close relations between women and their membership to the same clan. Two longhouses having strong similarities regarding their ceramic production will be considered members of the same clan. Significant differences between ceramic productions of two longhouses could be explained by the presence of two clans. Within this interplay of scale, it should be mentioned that clan coexistence in a single village over a period of 10 years, and the subsequent relocalization of this same community to a second village, will produce strong tendencies toward homogenization of the ceramic production within longhouses. A village identity could emerge that will diminish the original contrasts stimulated by clan membership. The analysis and explanation of ceramic remains thus becomes much more complex, and explaining differences more difficult.

The last scale of analysis to be discussed here involves comparing ceramic productions between two villages of the same region. It is thus possible to compare two communities by using assemblages representing a whole village or by selecting households. Of course, it is at the household level that we hope to get answers to our regionally based interrogations and in particular the ethnogenesis of communities. The Saint-Anicet cluster is seen here as a social archaeology laboratory. Will it be possible to measure differences and resemblances between members of each household at the two sites in order to answer the following question: which population segment from Droulers went on to build Mailhot-Curran? In other words, when the community at Droulers decided to change the village location after an occupation that may have lasted 10 to 15 years, did the community rebuild the new village within a distance close to a day's walk, or was it divided into two or three smaller groups, of which one will become the Mailhot-Curran community? For now, given that Droulers is the only large Iroquoian village known in the region, the first scenario cannot be excluded. In addition, Mailhot-Curran is assumed to be younger than Droulers, and it is difficult to establish a temporal gap between the two villages at this time. Mailhot-Curran may have been occupied immediately after Droulers' abandonment. However, the stylistic differences between the two sites seem to favour a span of at least one or two village relocations. These questions related to ethnogenesis illustrates the challenge that we face in refining the chronology between the two sites, a matter explored in more detail elsewhere (Chapdelaine, 2013; Chapdelaine, Woods, 2015). Despite the possibility of using several well known methods such as ceramic typology and radiometric dating, and a more regular use of optically stimulated luminescence on pottery (Forget-Brisson *et al.*, 2015), the problem of obtaining dates that are closer to the ethnographic occupations of 10 to 20 years duration will not be resolved in the near future.

Conclusion

The study of an Iroquoian community can not be studied in isolation and this is why the Saint-Anicet cluster of several villages represents a precious laboratory to integrate data from different but interrelated communities in time and space. It is the historic trajectory of a group of

Iroquoian farmers that we intend to reconstruct with our long-term project that will last ten years. Added to the possibility of identifying clans, as well as better understanding the relations between villages, it is the ethnogenesis of these communities from the same region that is driving us to a much smaller scale analysis using the micro-style study of pottery and a detailed comparative analysis of all the material culture. Our goal is to question the archaeological data within a household framework in a way that can eventually reflect social inequalities at the economic, social, political and ideological levels. Did the Iroquoians constitute an egalitarian society in which the chiefs were not allowed to accumulate goods? Bryan Hayden's transegalitarian concept is useful here to study the transition between egalitarian societies and those societies that gradually transformed into favouring a hierarchy of their members. It is not our purpose here to examine households and Iroquoian community villages in order to verify if they were close to becoming chiefdoms (Noble, 1985), but rather to stress the complexity of the Iroquoian adaptive system. Within the Iroquoian world, the number of chiefs and the sexual division of labour are two well-developed attributes of a tribal or clan based society that was maintained until the 17th Century as an egalitarian system (Trigger, 1990). It is thus our humble wish to establish the basis of a social archaeology for the Saint-Anicet Iroquoian cluster and to evaluate their cultural originality within Iroquoian Laurentia.

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