

twenty-two years ago a vocabulary of root words representing almost two dozen Déné dialects, with a view to suscitating among philologists investigations which I fondly hoped would result in genuine identifications with Old World counterparts of the same.¹ Although some correspondents qualified for such work kindly endeavoured to make my self-imposed task productive of some fruit, I must to-day confess that the results have proved futile. A few consonant synonyms cannot be regarded as a sufficient basis for ethnic assimilations.

But even though comparative philology does refuse its aid to the solution of the problem of our Indians' origin, some there are, no doubt, who will see in this nothing but a negative proof. If, they will remark, the tribes have left no cognates or agnates in Asia, it does not necessarily follow that they have not originated there, notwithstanding Lord Kaimes' contention to the contrary.² A whole tribe, or nation, pressed by powerful enemies or impelled by any other stimulus, crossing into the American continent, would leave no trace behind. It would, on the contrary, have carried in its own bosom, over the slight obstacle formed by Behring's Strait or the stretch of water dotted by the chain of the Aleutian Islands, unmistakable tokens of its former sojourn in Asia in the shape of similar customs, an identical technology, or even an analogous mythology.³

This being so, I now propose to examine, in the first place, whether there is any possibility of at least the Dénés of America having migrated from the adjoining continent. In the case of an affirmative finding, we

¹ "Déné Roots" (Trans. Can. Inst., Vol. III, p. 145 *et seq.*).

² "Sketches of the History of Man", Vol. II, p. 71; Edinburg, 1774.

³ From the tribal name of the Yakuts Dr. Latham infers previous commerce of some sort between the Americans and Aleuts, on the one part, and the Asiatic people that bears it, on the other. "The name *Yakut*", he writes, "unless we have recourse to the convenient doctrine of accident, cannot well have been taken by those who first applied it to the Sokhalar, from any language except either the Eskimo or some form of speech akin thereto. There was, at some time or other, someone on those parts about the Lena, who called someone *Yakut*. Now, the American Eskimo on the Lower Kwikpak, have, as their name for *men* or *people*, the word *tshagut*. In the Aleutian Archipelago this becomes *tagut* or *yagut*. I believe this to be the root of the name *yakut-at* in Prince William's Sound. So that *yagut* (*yakut*) is an Eskimo word; and at the same time a name in use as far from both America and the Aleutian Islands as the River Lena. How came it there? The name was *not* native. Nor yet Koriak. Nor yet Yukahiri—that we *know* of. In the present state of our knowledge, it is only the Eskimo tongues that supply this gloss. As far, then, as it goes, it is evidence in favour of a tongue allied to the Eskimo having been once spoken as far westwards in Asia as the Lena. For the encroachment which must have displaced it, we have considerable evidence. The Yakut themselves are evidently recent; the Koriak traditions bring them from the south. The Yukahiri language is remarkable for its isolation, and isolation implies displacement" ("The Native Races of the Russian Empire", pp. 183-84; London, 1854).