

Matrilineal Inheritance



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Many American Indian societies in the Chesapeake Bay watershed were matrilineal. In a matrilineal society, who becomes chief depends on the mother's side of the family. For example, the next in line to become paramount chief after Powhatan was not Powhatan's own children, such as Pocahontas. Instead, Powhatan's brothers and sisters and their children would inherit the role. Women also could become chiefs themselves. Female chiefs were known as *veroansqua*. In some tribes, women owned their houses, while men did not. Women sometimes participated in politics alongside other leaders as the heads of family groups.