

The Genographic Project: Mapping the Human Story

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***At A Glance:***

The Genographic Project seeks to chart new knowledge about the migratory history of the human species and answer age-old questions surrounding the genetic diversity of humanity. The project is a nonprofit, five-year, global DNA-sampling research partnership of National Geographic and IBM, led by distinguished population geneticist Dr. Spencer Wells. With support for field research from the Waitt Family Foundation, Wells and a group of the world's leading scientists will attempt to collect and analyze more than 100,000 DNA samples from people all over the world.

Core components of the project are:

- Field Research
- Public Participation and Awareness Campaign
- Legacy Project

***Purpose:***

The goal of the Genographic Project is to help people better understand their own ancient history, learn about migratory paths our ancestors took to populate the planet, and how, in spite of our diverse appearances, we all are part of the same family tree and share common origins.

***Project Partners:***

**National Geographic Society** – National Geographic, which developed the concept of the Genographic Project with Wells, is providing overall coordination for the project, including management of field operations, sale and distribution of the Participation Kits, the project Web site and other related activities.

**IBM Corporation** – A team of IBM researchers, scientists and technicians, led by IBM's Ajay Royyuru, is designing the technical infrastructure for the project, providing computational biology and research expertise, and driving exploratory research programs related to data compilation and analysis.

***Key Funder:***

**Waitt Family Foundation** – The Foundation has provided critical funding to underwrite Genographic's field research, which is at the core of the project and will form the basis of its findings.

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Global field science supported by the Waitt Family Foundation



A research partnership of National Geographic and IBM

***Primary Project Science and Research Leaders:***

**Spencer Wells, Ph.D.** – Director of the Genographic Project and a National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence. A population geneticist who has conducted pioneering research using DNA to trace humankind’s migratory history, Wells will coordinate and oversee the teams of scientists who will collect, examine and decode the DNA obtained from indigenous populations and the public, with the goal of furthering understanding of the migratory history of humankind.

**Ajay Royyuru, Ph.D.** – Royyuru is the lead scientist for IBM on the Genographic Project. He heads the Computational Biology Center at IBM’s Thomas J. Watson Research Center, where he leads 35 researchers in a wide range of projects, including bioinformatics, structural biology, protein science and applications on BlueGene, functional genomics and systems biology.

***Core Project Components:***

**Field Research** – A consortium of 10 distinguished researchers from prestigious scientific institutions around the world will conduct DNA sampling of hundreds of indigenous populations. An additional researcher will focus on ancient DNA. This field research will be underwritten by the Waitt Family Foundation.

**Public Participation and Awareness Campaign** – The public can take part in the project by purchasing a Participation Kit and submitting their own cheek swab samples, allowing them to track the overall progress of the project as well as learn their own migratory history. These personal results will be stored securely and anonymously to ensure the privacy of participants. National Geographic and IBM will regularly update the public and the scientific community on project findings, by such means as the Web site and National Geographic’s many other media platforms worldwide. A television program, “The Search for Adam,” will air in the U.S. on the National Geographic Channel Explorer series and around the world on the National Geographic Channel.

**Legacy Project** – Proceeds from the sale of Genographic Participation Kits will help fund future field research and a legacy project, which will build on National Geographic’s century-long focus on world cultures. The legacy project will support educational and cultural preservation projects among participating indigenous groups.

***What we expect to do:***

- The largest and most comprehensive **public database of anthropological genetic information** ever compiled, which will be made available to scientists and researchers to help advance the study of human history for generations.
- Creation of a **virtual museum of human history** online at [nationalgeographic.com/genographic](http://nationalgeographic.com/genographic), which will provide access to an unprecedented source of information on the project, its findings and what they mean, and extensive related information about genetics, migration, linguistics, indigenous populations and the threats facing them, anthropology, archaeology, and more. The Web site will also allow public participants to retrieve information about their own ancestral past and will feature an interactive map that will detail the migratory history of all individuals who participate in the DNA sampling. As more DNA information is gathered during the five-year project, new detail will be added to better delineate man’s epic migrations over the ages.

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- **New information on genetic anthropology** obtained from the Genographic Project data regarding the evolution of key genetic markers and other revelations will be published by Wells, Royyuru and all participating investigative scientists over the life of the project.
- **Improved global awareness and understanding** of the critical role played by **indigenous populations** in helping to solve age-old mysteries about the migratory history of humans and the modern pressures facing these people.

***Principal Research Centers/Investigators:***

Internationally recognized experts in human population genetics and related disciplines, located at 10 research laboratories and universities, will lead regional efforts to obtain and analyze DNA samples from indigenous populations. One additional scientist will focus on DNA collected from ancient samples.

East/Southeast Asia

Li Jin, Ph.D.  
Cheung Kong Lecture Professor  
Fudan University  
Shanghai (China) &  
Center for Genome Information,  
University of Cincinnati  
Cincinnati (USA)

North Eurasia

Elena Balanovska, Ph.D.  
Laboratory of Human Population Genetics  
Research Centre for Medical Genetics  
Moscow (Russia)

India

Ramasamy Pitchappan, Ph.D.  
Centre for Excellence in Genomic Sciences  
Madurai Kamaraj University  
Tamil Nadu (India)

Middle East/North Africa

Pierre Zalloua, Ph.D.  
Department of Internal Medicine & Ob/Gyn  
American University of Beirut  
Beirut (Lebanon)

North America

Theodore Schurr, Ph.D.  
Laboratory of Molecular Anthropology  
University of Pennsylvania  
Philadelphia (USA)

South America

Fabricio Santos, Ph.D.  
Institute of Biological Sciences  
Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais  
Minas Gerais (Brazil)

Sub-Sahara Africa

Himla Soodyall, Ph.D.  
Human Genomic Diversity/Disease Research  
National Health Laboratory Service  
University of Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg (South Africa)

Western/Central Europe: Y Chromosome

Chris Tyler-Smith, Ph.D.  
The Wellcome Trust Sanger Institute  
Cambridge (UK)

Western/Central Europe: Mitochondrial DNA

Lluís Quintana-Murci, Ph.D.  
Unit of Molecular Prevention/Therapy of Human Diseases  
Institut Pasteur  
Paris (France)

Australia/Pacific

Robert John Mitchell, Ph.D.  
Department of Genetics  
LaTrobe University  
Melbourne (Australia)

Ancient DNA

Alan Cooper, Ph.D.  
Division of Earth & Environmental Sciences  
University of Adelaide  
Adelaide (Australia)

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## **International Advisory Board**

An international advisory board, composed of leading global authorities in a number of related disciplines along with representatives of indigenous communities, will oversee the selection of populations for testing as well as the adherence to strict sampling and research protocols. The board will also help determine initiatives to be carried out under the Legacy Project.

### ***Advisory Board Members:***

Population Geneticist: Professor Luca Cavalli-Sforza, Ph.D., *Advisory Board Chairman*  
Department of Genetics  
Stanford University School of Medicine  
Stanford, California, USA

Archaeologist: Professor Lord Colin Renfrew, Ph.D.  
McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research  
University of Cambridge  
Cambridge, UK

Linguist: Merritt Ruhlen, Ph.D.  
Stanford University  
Stanford, California, USA

Paleontologist: Adjunct Professor Meave Leakey, Ph.D.  
Department of Anatomy, Dept. of Anthropology  
Stony Brook University  
Stony Brook, New York, USA

Anthropologist/Ethnobotanist: Wade Davis, Ph.D.  
Washington, D.C., USA

Evolutionary Geneticist: Professor Scott Edwards, Ph.D.  
Department of Organismic & Evolutionary Biology  
Harvard University  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA  
(National Geographic Committee for Research & Exploration)

Indigenous Advocate: Tammy Williams  
Director of Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships  
Cape York, Queensland, Australia

IBM: Nick Donofrio  
Senior Vice President, Technology & Manufacturing  
IBM Corporation  
Armonk, New York, USA

Waitt Family Foundation: John Heubusch, President  
Waitt Family Foundation  
La Jolla, California, USA

National Geographic: Terry Garcia  
Executive Vice President  
Mission Programs  
National Geographic Society  
Washington, D.C., USA

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