

Earliest Americans looked European, but genes tell more complicated story

Before the Europeans came, the Americas were settled by three waves of people from northeast Asia: the oldest wave beginning some 12,000 to 15,000 years ago, which gave rise to most Amerindians, and two later waves, which gave rise respectively to the Athapaskan and Inuit peoples of northern Canada and Alaska.

There is growing evidence, however, for earlier waves of settlement. There's Kennewick Man, who lived nine thousand years ago in the American northwest and who looked more European than Amerindian, the closest match being the Ainu of northern Japan. He also looked a lot like Patrick Stewart.

Nonetheless, a DNA study has found him to be closer to Amerindians than to any other existing population in the world. He was apparently descended from the same Northeast Asians who would later become today's Native Americans. Those earlier Northeast Asians looked more European because they lived closer to the time when these two groups were one and the same people. It may be that the Ainu best preserve the appearance of this ancestral population that would later develop into present-day Europeans, East Asians, and Amerindians.

But why would Kennewick Man be closer anatomically to an Ainu while being closer genetically to an Amerindian? The answer is that the genes that shape our anatomy are a tiny subset of the entire genome.

The GLP aggregated and excerpted this blog/article to reflect the diversity of news, opinion and analysis. Read full, original post: [Guess Who First Came to America?](#)