## Extinct humans live on in our DNA

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Denisovan DNA lives on only in Pacific island dwellers, while Neanderthal genes are more widespread, researchers report in the journal <u>Science</u>.

Meanwhile, some parts of our genetic code show little trace of our extinct cousins.

They include hundreds of genes involved in brain development and language.

"These are big, truly interesting regions," said co-researcher Dr Joshua Akey, an expert on human evolutionary genetics from the University of Washington Medicine, US.

Studies of nuclear DNA (the instructions to build a human) are particularly useful in the case of Denisovans, which are largely missing from the fossil record.

The prehistoric species was discovered less than a decade ago through genetic analysis of a finger bone unearthed in a cave in northern Siberia.

Substantial amounts of Denisovan DNA have been detected in the genomes of only a handful of modernday human populations so far.

Denisovans may have encountered early humans somewhere in South East Asia and, eventually, some of their descendants arrived on the islands north of Australia.

Meanwhile, humans repeatedly ran into Neanderthals as they spread across Eurasia.

"We still carry a little bit of their DNA today," said Dr Akey. "Even though these groups are extinct their DNA lives on in modern humans."

Read full, original post: How extinct humans left their mark on us