

Native Americans' genes reveal devastating impact of arrival of Europeans

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Geneticists have traced the travels of Native Americans for tens of thousands of years by sequencing the genes of ancient skeletons and mummies. They reveal a story that begins in Siberia around 23,000 years ago, and is cut dramatically short when Europeans arrived at the end of the 15th century.

Researchers from the University of Adelaide in Australia sequenced the mitochondrial genome of 92 pre-Colombian skeletons and mummies who lived between 500 and 8,600 years ago, mainly in western regions of South America. Because mitochondrial genomes are passed down directly from the mother, they give insight to matrilineal lineage. Researchers can compare the number of random mutations in separated populations, and so establish when the two groups shared a common ancestor.

In the study, [published in Science Advances](#) on April 1, researchers established that Native American ancestors were last in contact with Siberian populations around 23,000 years ago. Instead of travelling directly from Siberia to America, it seems a group of about 10,000 people spent several thousand years in isolation.

This supports the theory that early American ancestors spent several years in Beringia, a now-submerged area between Siberia and Alaska.

Native Americans then seemed to settle down, as lineages began to diverge. But none of the 84 genetic lineages found among the 92 samples are traceable for the past 500 years. And that's when the Europeans arrived in America.

Read full, original post: [Genetic research shows how thousands of years of Native American lineage collapsed when Europeans arrived](#)