

Genetics Research and American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Genetics research is a fast-growing and complicated area. American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) tribal leaders and citizens have raised many questions and concerns about genetics research. They have also expressed an interest in learning more about the science behind genetics and how other tribal communities are making decisions related to genetics research. This resource guide serves to answer these questions, to highlight cases that describe how some tribes are thinking about genetics research, and to provide information and tools for tribes and citizens as they consider their own stances on genetics research. Each person, family, and community is unique and therefore will have a different set of considerations regarding research.

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Genetics research includes a spectrum of study types, including how genes influence human health, genetic variation between individuals and groups of people, and research on ancient human migration patterns. “Genes” are units of information passed down from parents to child. They are molecules made up of DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). “Genomics” is a type of research that examines the “genome” of an individual. The “genome” is all of a person’s DNA, or their genetic blueprint. More detailed information about the basics of genetics and genomics research is available in the [Basics of Genetics section of the guide](#).