Anzick-1: A 12,600 year old child leads Native Americans back to Asia and leads us all to new ethical ground

Jack Burgess

Senior Division

Individual Website

Student-Composed Words: 1,078

Process Paper: 500 words

When choosing my topic, I considered all my interests within the realm of history. One topic that fascinates me is the lives and migrations of ancient humans. I had recently read the February 2015 issue of the National Geographic magazine, which told of the first humans in the Americas and mentioned Anzick-1, a young child from around 12,600 years ago who was found in Montana. As part of my AP US History class we had to choose a topic from American history, so for me Anzick-1 was a perfect match.

To start off my research process I read some articles on the topic of the Anzick-1 DNA analysis findings, and then went into reading the research paper on which all the articles had been based. Due to my background in genetics I was able to understand the paper well and interpret all of its figures. Reading this paper was an amazing decision because I was able to get information right from the source, information that had not been simplified for a general audience. If I were to start the research process over again, I would begin with reading the central research paper so that I could get a better knowledge base before reading the opinions of others.

I chose the website presentation category because I thought it would allow me to relay lots of information in an aesthetic manner, as well as provide interactive devices to improve the presentation experience. The scientific part of this topic is technical, so I worked hard to show original data and explain them for anyone any understand. I had such compelling photos, maps, and videos that I could only share on a website. I had enjoyed Weebly before, so I was familiar with the design and creation process. I was technically concerned with adding emergency links for the important videos because the voice of a scientist and a Native American were essential parts of the learning I hoped a visitor would take away from experiencing my website. Choosing the website category compartmentalized my argument into pages, whereas other categories might have allowed for a more cohesive effect. All in all, though, I believe choosing the website category was best for me.

My topic relates to the 2015 NHD theme “Leadership & Legacy” in many ways. Anzick-1, in his discovery and analysis, leads us to many conclusions, such as the knowledge that all Native Americans today are related to his people, whose ancestors traveled across the Bering Land Bridge to enter the continent, not from Europe. To lead one must come first, and Anzick-1 comes first in many ways, most importantly in being from the first (and only) Clovis burial site ever discovered and having the first entire genome sequencing of an ancient American. In terms of legacy, Anzick-1 left a genetic heritage and today inspires relatives and non-relatives alike. The treatment and involvement of Native Americans during the genome analysis of Anzick-1 sets the stage for better future relationships with tribes concerning ancient remains.