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Building a GE³LS Architecture (GE³LS Arc)

Status	Current
Competition	III
Sector	GE ³ LS – Genomics and Ethical, Environmental, Economic, Legal and Social Issues
Genome Centre	Genome British Columbia
Project Leaders	Michael Burgess & Peter Danielson

Project Description

Genomics opens up a universe of new possibilities, but also raises many ethical issues. For example, how can ethical judgments be made on genomic knowledge and applications when there is no single accepted ethical theory to determine right and wrong? How can claims about the economic, environmental, social or health effects of genomics be evaluated against competing claims and alternatives? These are important issues, given Canada's cultural and regional diversity, and the way new genomic knowledge and applications tend to move societal debates to new territory.

Dr. Michael M. Burgess holds the Chair in Biomedical Ethics at the University of British Columbia's W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics, and Dr. Peter Danielson is Mary and Maurice Young Professor of Applied Ethics and the Director of the same Centre. They are project leaders of Building a GE³LS Architecture or "GE³LS Arc".

GE³LS Arc will focus in three primary areas of genome research: salmon genomics, privacy and use of data banks and blood or tissue sample biobanks in health research and forestry genomics.

Building on a previously funded project, Democracy, Ethics and Genomics: Consultation, Deliberation and Modeling, GE³LS Arc will use consultation methods and computer-mediated technologies to develop an understanding of how people make decisions and their perspectives related to genomics research and biotechnology related to human health, food and the environment. The project will address three questions: What social norms do Canadians use to make judgments about genome research and applications (how do Canadians make moral decisions about a policy)? What are the leading moral perspectives on genomics (and what makes different judgments understandable)? And finally, what is the relevance for policy development and implementation (how are worldviews and norms incorporated into policy)?

The ultimate goal of the project is to support dialogue among scientists, policy makers and the public so that public concerns are truly reflected in policies related to genomics.