

Clip of Interview with Dr. Curtis Suttle by Manfred Nissley and Graeme Niedtner

[00:00] CS: I'm Curtis Suttle at the University of British Columbia. I'm a professor that works in the Biodiversity Research Centre.

[00:07] CS: So a giant virus, the difference is not only is the virus particle five or ten times larger than a typical virus, the amount of genetic information that it contains is enormous relative to other viruses. So, in fact, it contains as much nucleic acids in many cases as cellular life does, so a bacterium for example.

[00:29] CS: When you start looking at these nucleic acids, they're very very different. These giant viruses are taking genetic information from all kinds of different organisms and incorporating it into their own genomes, which, leads to a whole bunch of questions about giant viruses and their role in the evolution of life. Are these kind of like melting pots of genetic exchange? There's been questions about, "is this another branch of life," because they're so different than other organisms. So some people think these might have been self-replicating organisms originally that lost the ability to reproduce, just like all parasites do. Obligate parasites, you know, they're still considered life, but they cannot grow unless they infect another organism. There's lots of examples of that. So, the question; is that what was going on here or were these originally tiny viruses that guess just kept adding genetic information? So, they have very interesting implications in terms of life and the evolution of life.