



code
Béluga



espace
pour la
vie montréal



Genome Québec
25 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN GENOMICS

PRESS RELEASE
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From river to test tube: Espace pour la vie and Génome Québec launch *code Béluga*

Montréal, April 24, 2025 – Espace pour la vie and Génome Québec are proud to announce the launch of the community science project *code Béluga*. Using environmental DNA analysis, the project aims at better understanding the state of biodiversity in the St. Lawrence River Estuary as a means of supporting conservation efforts for key species, like the beluga. The public will be invited in the course of the warmer months to collect samples of water containing environmental DNA at different times and different locations on the banks of the St. Lawrence. The samples will then be analyzed at Génome Québec's Centre d'expertise et de services. In Montréal, the Biodôme will be presenting an educational activity on the estuary, belugas and environmental DNA. This project has been made possible thanks to the Espace pour la vie Foundation.

“The synergy between innovative science, with its many advancement possibilities, and the public engagement of *code Béluga* perfectly aligns with the fundamental mission pursued by Espace pour la vie museums: being moved by nature and taking action to protect it,” said Julie Jodoin, Director of Espace pour la vie. “With this project, Espace pour la vie once again confirms its leadership in conservation, research and education and its commitment to a just socio-ecological transition respectful of future generations.”

“*code Béluga* embodies our vision of accessible science, rooted in people's day-to-day lives and at the service of Québec's biodiversity and natural heritage,” explained Josette Renée Landry, President and CEO of Génome Québec. “The project illustrates the full potential of environmental DNA to transform our understanding and our management of ecosystems. This year marks our 25th anniversary, and we're proud to be inviting the public to take an active part in this scientific adventure.”

“*code Béluga* is an exciting project! Thanks to its innovative nature and the synergy between research, education and citizens, the *code Béluga* project perfectly aligns with our vision of Montréal 2030, particularly in meeting the priority of spurring innovation and creativity,” said Caroline Bourgeois, Borough Mayor and Vice-chair of the Executive Committee, responsible for sports and recreation, Espace pour la vie, the French language, and East Montréal.

An invitation for the public

Over the next few months, residents and visitors of the regions to be visited will be invited to participate in this community science project, more specifically by collecting water samples on the banks of the St. Lawrence River Estuary using a special protocol developed by Génome Québec. The samples will be analyzed at Génome Québec’s Centre d’expertise et de services. The species present will be identified from simple traces left in the water, and the results will be made available both for research purposes and to the general public. This is a revolution in our way of observing habitats without disturbing them.

Here are the four sites and sampling dates selected:

May 22, July 5 and August 23, 2025	La Malbaie at the Centre écologique de Port-au-Saumon
	Cacouna at Pointe de Cacouna Ktopeqonok
May 23, July 6 and August 24, 2025	Tadoussac at the Marine Mammal Interpretation Centre
	Rimouski at Parc national du Bic

code Béluga at the Biodôme

Families will be able to discover the *code Béluga* project in a dedicated area, where a continuous immersive animation will explore how DNA fragments from living things in the St. Lawrence River Estuary can be found in a glass of water. The animation will delve into the laboratory component, the sampling efforts and the ecosystem of the beluga.

In the words of Biodôme director Nicolas Gruyer, “The Biodôme plays an essential role in the preservation of biodiversity through its research projects, its conservation programs and now, its community science initiative. The Biodôme’s contribution will not just help democratize access to advanced technology like environmental DNA, it will also raise the public’s awareness to the wealth of biodiversity in the St. Lawrence River Estuary.”

A philanthropic project

This project has been made possible thanks to the Espace pour la vie Foundation’s Imperilled Species Fund. “Espace pour la vie’s conservation and research projects devoted to endangered species are supported by generous donations from our donors,” said Catherine Ouellet-Dupuis, Chair of the Espace pour la vie Foundation’s Board of Directors. “In this particular case, a great ally in protecting the environment and its biodiversity, Mr. Jean Paquin, has helped make a project a reality with a generous donation. We hope it will inspire other people to take action in supporting these preservation efforts.”

About Espace pour la vie

Protecting biodiversity and the environment is at the heart of the mission of Espace pour la vie, which groups the Biodôme, the Biosphère, the Insectarium, the Jardin botanique and the Planétarium. Together, these Montreal museums form the largest natural-science complex in Canada, and each year welcome more than 2.5 million people. In light of the challenges facing our planet, Espace pour la vie is working on expanding its impact by fostering dialogue with communities and by taking actions aimed at engaging the population on the path to socioecological transition.

About Génome Québec

Génome Québec's mission is to catalyze the development and excellence of genomics research and promote its integration and democratization. It is a pillar of the Québec bioeconomy and contributes to Québec's influence and its social and sustainable development. The funds invested by Génome Québec are provided by the Ministère de l'Économie, de l'Innovation et de l'Énergie du Québec (MEIE), the government of Canada, through Genome Canada, and private partners. To learn more, visit www.genomequebec.com.

About the Espace pour la vie Foundation

The Espace pour la vie Foundation contributes to the philanthropic development of Espace pour la vie and to the scientific, educational, cultural, social and artistic missions of its five institutions: the Biodôme, the Biosphère, the Insectarium, the Jardin botanique and the Planétarium. The Foundation accelerates Espace pour la vie's priority projects and amplifies their impact. It supports the implementation of projects that benefit communities, in harmony with nature and towards a juster and more inclusive socio-ecological transition.

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[Digital Press Kit](#)

Information for the media: Roy & Turner Chloé Rossi 514 652-6478 crossi@roy-turner.com	Sources: Espace pour la vie Marie-Joëlle Filion 514 443-6801 marie-joelle.filion@montreal.ca	Génome Québec Laurie Frigon 514-926-5475 lfrigon@genomequebe.com
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