

Distinguished Alumnus of the Year

Martin T. Nweeia, D.M.D. '84



- A dental anthropologist and marine mammal odontologist.
- Completed fellowship in anthropology at the Smithsonian Institution while in his second year at the Case Western Reserve University School of Dental Medicine.
- In his third year of dental school, Dr. Nweeia embarked on a two-month expedition to the outer islands of Yap in Micronesia to study childhood dental diseases, and presented papers at international dental conferences while still attending dental school.
- Serves as principal investigator for The Narwhal Genome Project and Narwhal Tusk Discoveries, and was named the National Geographic Society's Explorer of the Week in 2012.
- Dr. Nweeia has devoted 15 years of research, with nine grants from the National Science Foundation, to understanding the narwhal, a medium-sized toothed whale that possesses an unusual protruding tusk as a canine tooth.
- Has lived with two Indian tribes in Colombia and most recently the Inuit of the High Arctic in Canada and Greenland.
- "While everyone else was traveling to Europe and other parts of the world, I gravitated toward being with indigenous people," Dr. Nweeia says. "It felt very natural, and oddly enough I felt very much at home living in these cultures vastly different from my own."
- The work on the narwhal continues, including the first-ever full genome sequence of the whale, a chapter in his second Smithsonian Scholarly Press Book, and a date with an exhibit at the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History in the summer of 2017.

