

News Release

Toronto Police Identify Human Remains From 1995 and 2004

Unit:

Homicide and Missing Persons Unit

Case #: 1995-80618

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Highway 401 Fire Victim

On April 22, 2004, police responded to a fire on Highway 401 in the eastbound collector lanes near Highway 400, where a vehicle became engulfed in flames after intentionally colliding with a tractor-trailer.

After the fire was extinguished, investigators located the badly burned body of an unidentified woman in the passenger seat. The Office of the Fire Marshal determined the fire had been deliberately set using gasoline and that the woman had died before the fire was ignited, confirming it had been used to conceal the cause of death. Due to the extent of the injuries from the fire, the cause of death was never determined.

The driver, Suimi Kilflu "Simon" Habteab, 38, of Toronto, was convicted in 2006 of:

1. Arson to Property
2. Arson Endangering Life
3. Mischief Endangering Life
4. Dangerous Operation
5. Indignity to a Dead Body

He received an eight-year custodial sentence and was deported from Canada in 2012.

The victim remained unidentified for more than 20 years despite public appeals issued in 2009. The case was selected for IGG investigation in 2022 as part of Project 31.

DNA analysis determined the victim possessed Indigenous ancestry connected to Cree communities along James Bay and the Fisher River Cree Nation in Manitoba.

Investigators identified the victim as **Patsy Flora Lagarde** (also known as Legarde).

Patsy was born in Ontario in 1962. Patsy's parents were from the Berens River First Nation and the Long Lake #58 First Nation, respectively. Investigators determined she had two biological children, one of whom was living in Alberta.

These investigations represent two of the most significant unidentified human remains identifications completed by the Toronto Police Service through IGG.

Together, they resolved two unidentified human remains investigations that had remained unsolved for approximately 30 and 20 years, restored the identities of two previously unidentified victims, and enabled notification and reunification with surviving family members.

"These identifications represent the significant impact that investigative genetic genealogy can have on long-term unidentified human remains investigations," said Detective Sergeant Stephen Smith of the Homicide and Missing Persons Unit – Cold Case. "After decades without answers, we have been able to restore the identities of Mary Davidson and Patsy Lagarde, provide information to their families, and uncover important facts about the circumstances surrounding their deaths. This work reflects the dedication of our investigators and the value of Project 31 in advancing cold case investigations."

Detective Constable Michael Kelly of the Homicide and Missing Persons Unit – Cold Case is available for media interviews on these investigations. Please contact corpcomm@tps.ca to arrange.