

# OPP links decades-old human remains found in Algonquin Park to Cleveland man

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BarrieToday Staff about 4 hours ago



Human remains found in Algonquin Park in 1980 have been positively linked to **Eric (Ricky) Singer**, who was from Cleveland. He was last seen at his parents' residence in Berea, Ohio, on Oct. 4, 1973. Image from Ontario Provincial Police

Provincial police say "investigative genetic genealogy" has been used to positively identify human remains, found in Algonquin Park in 1980, as belonging to a Cleveland man.

The deceased has been identified as Eric (Ricky) Singer, who was last seen at his parents' home in Berea, Ohio, on Oct. 4, 1973, according to Ontario Provincial Police.

"Up until this time, I never felt sad because it has been such a long time and you get numb to it," his younger sister, Merry Singer, said in an OPP release. "This cuts through. I'm honored, I'm humbled, I'm grateful. He was eventually found.

"He was identified and we were able to put him to rest and put ourselves to rest," she added.

Police say a hiker located the human remains near the Hardwood Lookout Trail in Algonquin Park on April 19, 1980.

"Eric Singer's remains were found before I was even born," said Det. Sgt. Philip Holmes, the OPP's lead investigator. "The fact that I'm involved in supporting his family in understanding what happened to him feels a little surreal."

As a result of the initial discovery, officers from the Whitney OPP detachment, under the direction of the OPP's Criminal Investigation Branch (CIB), began an extensive search with the assistance of the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Over the course of several days, police say a boot, a leather wallet, clothing, a sleeping bag and camping gear, as well as additional human remains, were located at the scene and examined by the Office of the Chief Coroner (OCC) and the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service (OFPS).

At the time of the discovery, it was determined that the deceased was a white male estimated to be between 18 and 21 years old at the time of his death. Foul play was not suspected in his death, police say.

It was initially estimated that the man had died sometime between July 1, 1971 and the spring of 1978.

"Further investigation narrowed the estimated time of death to approximately two years before the remains were discovered," the OPP stated in a release on Thursday. "Despite comparing the remains to several missing persons reports and issuing public appeals, the case remained unsolved."

On March 23, 1995, additional human remains were discovered along the same trail.

"A jawbone located along the trail was examined by the OFPS and confirmed to belong to the human remains found in 1980," police say.

Although further searches were conducted, no additional remains or items were found.

In 2017, provincial police unveiled a three-dimensional clay facial reconstruction created by an OPP forensic artist.

"This generated dozens of tips, but despite investigation of the leads brought forward, none led to a confirmed identity," police say.

The investigation continued and, in April 2022, the man's DNA was submitted to the [DNA Doe Project](#) for investigative genetic genealogy analysis in an attempt to determine his identity through family members.

By September 2023, police say the presumptive identity was verified and used by CIB detectives to locate living family members. DNA from family members was then used to confirm the man's identity and the family was notified.

"This summer, Ricky's sisters travelled from the United States to walk the Hardwood Lookout Trail with investigators and visit the place where their brother spent his final days," police say.

"This case demonstrates the incredible results that are possible when modern investigative tools, such as investigative genetic genealogy, are used to resolve historic cases and provide long-awaited answers to families," Holmes said. "This was one of the most rewarding investigations of my career."

For more information on the investigation and the techniques police used, [click here](#).

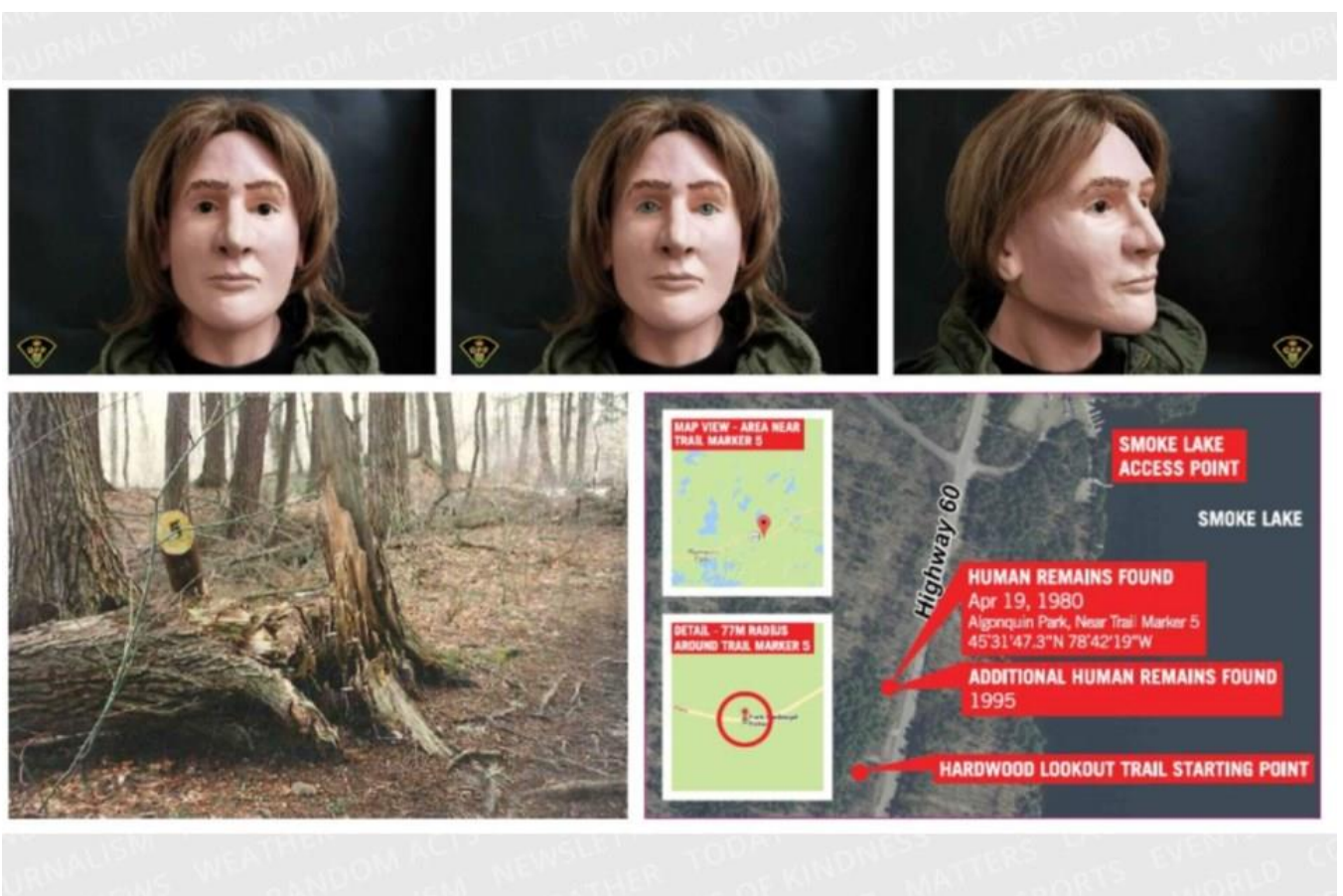
"After years of uncertainty, a family now has the answers they've been longing for thanks to the investigative efforts from many OPP units, the Office of the Chief Coroner, the Ontario Forensic Pathology Service and the DNA Doe Project," said Acting Senior Det. Insp. Sean Chatland.

"Innovative tools such as investigative genetic genealogy are rewriting the possibilities for investigations, including historic cases. We're deeply committed to continuing this important work and helping more families find the answers they deserve," Chatland added.

Dr. Kathy Gruspier, a forensic anthropologist with OCC/OFPS, was also pleased to see the case resolved.

"Since 1994, I've cared for Ricky's remains and explored many avenues to identify him," she said, adding investigative genetic genealogy "has become an amazing new tool to assist us in identifying individuals.

"In speaking with Ricky's sisters, I was amazed at how much they remembered about him after all these years. Meeting them was a privilege and a powerful reminder of how meaningful this work is to families," Gruspier added.



This composite image shows the three-dimensional sculpture created by an OPP forensic artist, as well as the map of where the human remains were found in 1980 and 1995, which were released during a 2017 media event. | Images from Ontario Provincial Police