

Edmonton man who disappeared in 1990: EPS

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The Edmonton Police Service says DNA sequencing has been used to identify the remains of a man who was last seen in Edmonton in November 1990.

Jose Valdez’s remains were found near the North Saskatchewan River outside of Lloydminster, Sask., in 1997, police said. At the time of the discovery, DNA testing was unable to identify the body, but it was retained by the National DNA Data Bank of Canada, said police in a news release on Thursday.

Police said the file remained with the Saskatchewan RCMP historical case unit, and investigators reopened the file using new technology in 2005 and again in 2024.

“Our team worked with the National Centre for Missing Persons and Unidentified Remains and the National Missing Persons DNA Program, and the file was ultimately linked to a missing person investigation out of Edmonton,” said Const. Brendan Sanford, Saskatchewan RCMP’s missing person coordinator.

Last year, detectives continued their investigation and obtained voluntary DNA samples from Valdez’s living relatives.

This February, DNA from the Valdez family matched the DNA in the remains found in Saskatchewan in 1997, positively identifying Valdez. He was 36 years old at the time of his disappearance.

‘Decades of ambiguous loss’

Police said they believe his disappearance was non-criminal. The Saskatchewan coroner examined the remains and determined the death was not suspicious.

“We sympathize with Jose’s family for the decades of ambiguous loss they have suffered, and while this is difficult news, we hope it also brings some measure of resolution,” said Det. Glen Haneman with the EPS historical crimes section.

“This is why we never stop investigating unsolved missing persons and unidentified human remains cases.”

According to EPS, their missing persons unit currently has 95 unsolved missing persons files dating back to the 1970s. The EPS historical crimes section said it “will continue to explore ever-improving DNA, genetic genealogy and other forensic technology as they review these unsolved files.”

“Technology is transforming the way investigations are being approached and solved,” added Sanford.

“It helps to uncover leads in ways that were not possible when the case first opened. Being able to bring closure to Jose’s loved ones is extremely rewarding and gives us hope that we can provide answers to other waiting families.”