



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Ramapo College of New Jersey Students Solve 20-year-old Cold Case

Nogales John Doe of Pima County, AZ Identified

Students of the Ramapo College of New Jersey [Investigative Genetic Genealogy \(IGG\) Center](#) have successfully uncovered the identity of “Nogales John Doe,” now known to be Donald Sigurd Hadland, Jr.

Hadland’s remains were found in a hotel room in Nogales, Arizona in 2002, where he had registered for a room under a false identity just prior to his death. Although a fingerprint match was found revealing a possible identity as Hadland, questions regarding his identity remained unanswered due to conflicting identifying information. The [Pima County Office of the Medical Examiner \(PCOME\)](#) called him “Nogales John Doe” and his remains were interred in 2003 in Nogales.

Students in the inaugural cohort of the [Investigative Genetic Genealogy Certificate Program](#) at Ramapo College, launched in January 2023, examined genetic associations of John Doe in the database GEDmatch Pro, which revealed his identity was that of Mr. Donald Sigurd Hadland, Jr. “This case was unique as there was an investigative lead to the identity of Donald Hadland Jr. to begin with,” said Ramapo IGG Certificate Program Director Cairenn Binder. “The students were able to compile additional supporting information using investigative genetic genealogy to demonstrate how Nogales John Doe’s genetic matches were consistent with Donald Hadland Jr.”

This case is the first announced successful identification for the IGG Center at Ramapo College of New Jersey. “The teamwork and diligence of our IGG students’ work on this case is a great and consequential example of how the IGG Center at Ramapo College, the first of its kind nationally, contributes meaningfully to our society,” said Ramapo College President Cindy Jebb. “The hands-on learning, research, and investigative casework taking place at the Center helps our law enforcement partners locally and across the nation, as well as those in our communities who long for closure on the loss of loved ones.”



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IGG combines traditional genealogy and genetic genealogy to provide investigative leads in cases involving violent crime and unidentified human remains. IGG can also be used to help exonerate the wrongfully convicted. The first of its kind in the nation, the IGG Center [opened in December of 2022](#) and trains students to become proficient and ethical practitioners using IGG to resolve cases involving violent crime, unidentified human remains, and wrongful convictions. More than 20 cases from across the United States have been accepted since the center opened.

The Ramapo College IGG Center is grateful for the collaborative work conducted with the PCOME and DNA Doe Project, a nonprofit organization with the mission to identify John and Jane Does and return them to their families and communities, as well as Genologue, who performed DNA extraction and sequencing, and Kevin Lord of Saber Investigations who performed bioinformatics on this case.

For more information about Ramapo College and the IGG Center, visit ramapo.edu/igg.

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ABOUT RAMAPO COLLEGE

Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The comprehensive college is situated among the beautiful Ramapo Mountains, is within commuting distance to New York City, was named one of the 50 Most Beautiful College Campuses in America by *CondéNast Traveler*, and boasts the best on-campus housing in New Jersey per Niche.com. Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Applied Mathematics, Business Administration, Contemporary Instructional Design, Computer Science, Creative Music Technology, Data Science, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education, as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice.