

## **Audrey Dumont Poitras.**<sup>1</sup> (b. 1950)

Audrey was born at Elk Point, Alberta, the daughter of Jean Baptiste Dumont and Mabel Kinch. Jean Baptiste was born at the Metis community of St. Paul, Alberta, he spoke Cree, Michif and French, and he worked as a trapper and farmer. Her mother Mabel was from England.

In 1996, Audrey Poitras became the first woman elected to the Presidency of the Metis Nation of Alberta. Audrey's family is linked to that of the famous Gabriel Dumont, and Dumont's spirit is very much alive in Audrey.

Audrey was raised near the farming community of Elk Point, Alberta. This is situated near the Metis Settlement of Fishing Lake. She and her husband Gordon are dynamic participants at the community level. Gordon Poitras is a descendant of Pierre Poitras, a Metis from St. François Xavier who represented that parish in the conventions of 1869 and 1870 when he served on Riel's Council at Red River.



Audrey and Gordon Poitras are successful in both their public and private undertakings. For a number of years they ran a dry cleaning franchise (Master Cleaners) operating as Poitras Cleaners from 1979 to 1990. In the late 1980s Audrey returned to school while still working. She attended the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and became a Certified Accountant in 1990.

On the public service front the Poitras' were involved in the founding of Metis Local 1885. This local initiated structural and organizational changes in the MNA. Audrey was one of the key initiators in developing the Alberta Metis Women's organization. She was one of the founders of Metis Local 999 and currently a member of Metis Local 2085.

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<sup>1</sup> This article is from the book *Women of the Metis Nation*. (Lawrence Barkwell, Ed., Winnipeg: Louis Riel Institute, 2010.) ISBN 978-0-9809912-5-3

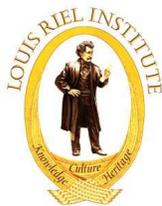
Because of her skills and expertise Audrey was appointed as the representative of Alberta Metis Women to the Selection Committee of Apeetogosan (Metis) Metis Development Inc. Here she acted as a key advisor in the appointment process for the Trustees of Apeetogosan (Metis) Metis Development Inc.

Following her graduation from the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Audrey took the position of Director of Finance for the Metis Nation of Alberta. Subsequent to that she successfully ran for the presidency in 1996. As a Metis leader, Audrey works hard to be fair and accountable, and to listen and act on the aspirations of the Metis people. She was named as one of *Alberta's 50 Most Influential People* in the July 1, 2005 annual listing of *Alberta Venture* magazine. In their tribute to Audrey they stated:

The first female president of the Métis Nation of Alberta, Audrey Poitras has made significant social and economic advances for her organization in her nine years at the helm.

The Elk Point native helped negotiate and sign a historic agreement with the Canadian government in June that will set the framework for negotiating aboriginal rights for Métis in the province. In May, she struck a deal with the Alberta government that enshrined Métis hunting and fishing rights in the province. The successful businesswoman forged a partnership in October with three private oilfield contractors to form the Aboriginal Energy Services Group, a joint venture that will provide employment opportunities for Alberta's 67,000 Métis while alleviating worker shortages. Poitras also negotiated the purchase of a profitable drilling rig in a partnership between EnCana Corp., Lakota Drilling and her 73-year-old organization. Poitras spearheaded the development of a historic site at Métis s Crossing near Smoky Lake. Scheduled to open in August, the cultural interpretive centre has drawn national attention as a tourist destination. She has shown the same skill in lobbying government, signing a \$52-million agreement with Ottawa to provide 17 employment service centres for Métis across the province.

After Gerald Morin was suspended from the presidency of the Metis National Council on January 12, 2003 Audrey Poitras was elected as interim President and National spokesperson of MNC until October of 2003 when Clément Chartier was elected to the presidency. In 2008, Audrey Poitras was re-elected as President of MNA for her fifth consecutive term. Poitras has led the Metis Nation of Alberta in the role of Provincial President for over twelve years.



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