

Poitras, Joseph B. (b. 1841)

Joseph was born June 6, 1841 at Red River, the son of Pierre Poitras Sr. and Marie Bruyere. He married Elise Breland. In the 1860s they were living along the North Saskatchewan River and then moved to the Bresaylor Settlement. In a letter to his mother from Fort Belknap in 1879 Louis Riel mentions meeting Joseph Poitras, his father "Pierette" Poitras and his brothers David and Gabriel Poitras. During the 1885 Resistance Joseph was on the Canadian side, employed as a scout,¹ and was a dispatch rider taking messages to Prince Albert.²

Saskatchewan Herald, April 23, 1885.

March 27, 1885: Col. Morris sent Joe Poitras from Battleford with despatches [sic] to Prince Albert.

TUESDAY April, 7.—Josie Alexander left for Pitt with despatches [sic].

A man appeared at Wyld & Bourke's house this morning, but he could not be made to respond to the signals. In the evening a boat went over when he was found to be Joe Poitras, a dispatch [sic] bearer from Prince Albert. He was snow-blind and could not see the signals or make out how to cross the river. He reports that at Prince Albert there is a complete organization of militia force awaiting the arrival of the promised reinforcements. Riel is said to be on south side of South Saskatchewan awaiting the arrival of General Middleton. Poitras when near Carlton, met a band of Sioux going to the north to be out of the way.

FRIDAY, April 10.—Joe Poitras and Jas Atkinson left again for Prince Albert.

These frequent trips are rendered necessary owing to their being no telegraph to Prince Albert, and the impossibility of getting couriers at the nearer stations of Humboldt and Clarke's crossing.

His brother Toby David Poitras (b. 1834) was charged with the illegal possession of property during the 1885 Resistance but was dismissed on this charge by Judge Rouleau on July 26, 1885.³ Their cousin Jean Marie Poitras was married to Louis Riel's sister Henrietta.



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¹ Douglas W. Light, *Footprints in the Dust*. North Battleford: Turner-Warwick Publications Inc., 1987: 171.

² Gordon Light, *Footprints in the Dust*, 1989: 171.

³ Op cit. page 512.