
GERRY ST. GERMAIN

Métis Senator, MP and St. Boniface Police Officer

*Written by John Burchill, President
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Gerry (William Joseph Gerald) St. Germain was born on November 6, 1937, at the St. Boniface hospital and raised in the small Métis communities of “*Petit Canada*” and Lido Plage in the parish of St. Francois Xavier.

On his father’s side, Gerry is a direct descendant of [Cuthbert Grant](#), a Métis leader and founder of Grantown, now St. François-Xavier. The Hudson's Bay Company named him Warden of the Plains in 1828. His task was to marshal the Métis in defense of the Red River Settlement. Later he became Councillor, Sheriff and Magistrate of the District of Assiniboia.

Gerry’s father, Michael, was a hunter and trapper who supplemented his income by working construction or as a bouncer in a local bar. His mother, Mary-Kathleen, was born into a bilingual home. Her mother, who was born in France, married an English-speaking immigrant that was the product of the “[Barnardo Home for Orphans](#)” in London. His maternal grandparents lived nearby in Pigeon Lake, Manitoba. Gerry spent a lot of time learning French from his grandmother, who was determined to help him become bilingual.

Gerry graduated from [St. François Xavier High School](#) and later attended St. Paul’s College. Gerry credits Sister Jeanne Monchamp (teacher and later principal of St. François Xavier High School from 1953-1960) for recognizing his potential at math and encouraging him to go to St. Paul’s College. After leaving school Gerry used his math to gain employment at the Bank of Toronto (now TD Bank) in downtown Winnipeg. However, he didn’t stay long as he decided to join the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF) when he turned seventeen in the fall of 1954.

Recognizing his aptitude for math, the RCAF sent Gerry to the [Canadian Forces Base in Clinton](#), a top-secret radar training station for Canadian, British, American and other Allied servicemen during both World War II and the Cold War. Gerry was taught radar communications using binary math and early computers systems.

Gerry completed the program with the highest marks in the class and was sent to Portage la Prairie in 1957 to work on communications and electronics equipment for the Lockheed T-33 jet aircraft. From there he was sent to Centralia, Ontario, where he took basic flight training on the de Havilland Canada DHC-1 Chipmunk, and then to [RCAF Station Gimli](#) for advanced flight training in 1958. However, in 1959, Gerry decided to leave the air force to pursue another dream.



Gerry in training to become a RCAF pilot in Centralia, c 1957. Courtesy Gerry St. Germain

On June 22, 1959, Gerry walked into [St. Boniface City Hall and Police Station](#) and applied for a position as police constable. Initially the desk sergeant, Wesley Finlayson, told Gerry there were no openings. However, [Chief Joseph Baudry](#), whose office was right behind the sergeant's desk, overheard the conversation and invited Gerry in for an impromptue interview. As a Francophone with a military background, Chief Baudry was impressed with Gerry's french, his RCAF background, and the fact he had been trained in the handling of firearms with the air force. It made him a suitable candidate and Chief Baudry sent Gerry next door to see the City Doctor at the Fire Hall. After passing a fitness assessment, he brought Gerry to see St. Boniface [Magistrate Henri Lacerte](#), who swore him in as a police officer. Gerry was issued a gun and he started that same day. After a couple of months learning the ropes, Gerry as assigned to Recruit Class #55.



Constable Gerry St. Germain (second row) and Sergeant Instructor Charles Tully (front row)
Metro (Winnipeg) Police Recruit Class #55, December 18, 1959

In the police academy and later in senior officer training with the Winnipeg Police, Gerry had great respect for Sergeant Instructor Charles Tully. Like Sister Monchamp, Gerry recalls Sergeant Tully as being one of those individuals who made a difference in his career. Gerry still carries with him a review Sergeant Tully wrote about him to [Chief William Russell](#) (who replaced Baudry) in 1964.

"Constable G. St. Germain, St. Boniface, is a young man with a definitely well above average intellect. He also enjoys the theory of police work and applied himself from the start of the class so I expected his results to be high. This man thinks as quickly as he did four years ago as a recruit and in both examinations was finished writing first, completing one-two hour examination in twenty-nine minutes. He considered both to be very easy. St. Germain is well informed in many aspects of police work and takes an active part in his own City in community aspects. He is also on the negotiation committee for working conditions in his Force and wants to aid in achieving progress and professionalism throughout policing generally. This man is neat of appearance and well disciplined displaying his Royal Canadian Air Force Training (where he was a pilot). His book of notes on the course was an excellent effort and future reference."

"Signed" Sgt. Instructor Tully.

Chief Russell and Gerry didn't always see eye-to-eye. As Gerry wasn't afraid to speak up when he saw an injustice, he was elected as President of the Brotherhood of St. Boniface Policemen within a year of being hired. This would also bring him into conflict with ["Joe" Guay](#), alderman and Mayor of St. Boniface from 1960-1968, regarding police working conditions. As president Gerry was able to successfully negotiate for a wage increase and seniority rights for the membership.

Coming from a small Métis community, Gerry told me the one thing that policing taught him was understanding people and the human condition. He learned how to communicate effectively with people, no matter what their situation was in life. However, he still felt the urge to do something more, so he left the St. Boniface Police in 1965 to join the [3M company](#) as a salesman. That too didn't last. In 1966 he headed west with three kids and his wife in tow, joining the Vancouver Police Department as an undercover officer working in the Downtown Eastside. That experience started him to consider the idea of entering politics.

After a year with the Vancouver Police, Gerry returned to the business world. However, he also became involved in politics, working behind the scenes as an executive for Progressive Conservative (PC) riding association for Mission-Port Moody. In 1983 the opportunity arose for Gerry to run for federal election when the Member of Parliament for Mission-Port Moody, Mark Rose, decided to run for provincial office and gave up his seat. Gerry ran for the PC party and won the Mission-Port Moody seat in a by-election on August 29, 1983 – the same day that future Prime Minister Brian Mulroney was elected to Parliament.

Gerry won his seat again in the General Election on September 4, 1984, when the Progressive Conservative Party swept into power, taking 75% of the seats in the House of Commons and Brian Mulroney became Prime Minister. Gerry, as supporter of Mulroney, served as Government

Caucus Chair, Minister of State for Transport, and Minister of Forestry. He also served as President of the Progressive Conservative Party from 1988-1995.

In 1993, Gerry was appointed by Prime Minister Mulroney to the Senate of Canada in the Senatorial division of Langley-Pemberton-Whistler. During his time in the Senate of Canada, Gerry served on a number of Senate Committees. However, most important to Gerry was his Chairmanship of the [Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples](#). From 2006 to 2012, Gerry helped to pass various pieces of First Nation-led legislation, including the First Nations Fiscal Management Act.



Gerry with Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Courtesy Gerry St. Germain

In 1998, while still a Progressive Conservative, St. Germain explored the United Alternative option, formed by Reform Party of Canada leader Preston Manning, which was an attempt to unite the right. In June 2000, he sat as an Independent Conservative senator, and in October 2000 he became the only Canadian Alliance senator. At the request of Canadian Alliance Leader Stephen Harper, St. Germain led the negotiations to unite the Canadian Alliance and the Progressive Conservative Party. When the two parties merged in December 2003, St. Germain became a member of the Conservative Party of Canada.

On November 6, 2012, Gerry reached the Senate's mandatory retirement age, 75. Upon his retirement Gerry served in a volunteer role to assist First Nations in establishing the [First Nations Major Projects Coalition](#), a national not-for-profit organization that supports First Nations with the capacity needed to make informed business decisions about their participation as equity partners in large-scale economic development projects.

Gerry is a member of the King's Privy Council of Canada. In 2012, he received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the [National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation](#) (Indspire). He was appointed to the Order of British Columbia in 2022. He has also received the Order of the Sash October 2018.

On June 15, 2024, Gerry was proud to receive honorary citizenship from the [Cheslatta Carrier Nation](#) for voluntary work as a business advisor and friend of the nation. Gerry and his wife Margaret reside on their ranch in South Langley.



The Senate of Canada
Le sénat du Canada

Government of Canada
Gouvernement du Canada



Hon. Gerry St. Germain, P.C.

The Senator/Le sénateur British Columbia

NOTE: Every day I learn something new about the amazing men and women who have worked within the ranks of the Winnipeg Police or one of the amalgamated departments. Anyone wishing to recognize a police member they feel made sustained and substantial contributions to policing in Winnipeg and its surrounding municipalities during the past 150 years is asked to send me their name and (if known) a brief description of their accomplishments.