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with **Leslie MacPherson**

QUESTIONS

By Jonathan Vickers



Leslie MacPherson (32), is the Interpretation Coordinator for Fort Wellington National Historic Site in Prescott since (2008). Leslie is married to her husband Nick (Thompson) and they live in Front of Yonge with their son, Gordon. They own 2 dogs named Paddy and Murphy. Leslie's love of family and interest in her Scottish heritage keeps her busy on her off time.



broadcasting and ultimately to work for the CBC. I also loved history and telling stories. I ended up graduating with a degree in Canadian Studies and Communications. The most difficult part about choosing a career is trying to figure out how to make a hobby into a career. It took me a little while to figure that out.

LH: Is Prescott your hometown?

L: Yes. I grew up on a farm outside of Prescott, next to my mother's family homestead and maple sugar bush. How Canadian is that?! My parents still live there, where they raise highland cattle.

LH: What can you tell us about growing up in Prescott and Cardinal?

L: Growing up in a small town was great. I have 3 siblings, and we kept busy. I think we all spent a lot of time dreaming about moving away. Once we left, we couldn't wait to come back. Of the four of us, three of us have returned to live at "home". I was fortunate to have gotten to play hockey in Prescott, attend church in Cardinal, and go to school in Brockville. This whole region was my community!

LH: Where did you go to High School and any particular accomplishments or memories?

L: I went to high school at St. Mary's in Brockville. I was a good student and stayed out of trouble. My favourite class was Drama, and not History. In my final year, St. Mary's underwent some construction, so our school year was condensed and

ended in May. I had an extra long summer between high school and university... now that's an accomplishment!

LH: What high school jobs did you have?

L: My first job was unpaid where I worked grooming and cleaning up after my uncle's racehorses at the racetrack. I loved it. I got my first "real" job as a summer student at Fort Wellington in 1999 when I was 18.

LH: Any lessons from that first job you can relate to now (successes or failures)?

L: If you really love something, you put up with a bit of... "unpleasantness". And you'd do it for free.

LH: What did you study in University and what was your first career choice?

L: Growing up I wanted to be a veterinarian. Then I wanted to be an environmental scientist. I started my post-secondary education in an environmental science program at Brock University in St. Catharines. After my first year, I realized that science was not my passion. I really wanted to get into journalism or

LH: So how did you go about getting the job at Fort Wellington and coming home, so to speak?

L: As I mentioned, I worked at Fort Wellington as a summer student. It was an amazing job, and helped show me that you really can turn a hobby into a career. When I graduated from university, I worked at a diner in Niagara. I applied for jobs at historic sites and parks across the country, and after 8 months of flipping burgers, I landed a job at Bellevue House National Historic Site in Kingston. I spent two years there. In 2008, the position opened at Fort Wellington. I applied, and got the job. I was happy to return home.

LH: What exactly is your job, Interpretation Coordinator at Fort Wellington?

L: Anything that the visitor takes part in at the fort, I am a part of. I get to visit daily with visitors from around the world. I plan and deliver our school programs and our special events. I oversee our historic weapons and costume programs. I also supervise and coach our team of student presenters each season. The short answer: I'm a storyteller.

LH: What is the best part of your job?

L: The best part of working at Fort Wellington is the people. I love my team and I love (most of) our visitors. There is nothing like having a fantastic conversation every day with people you have just met. Or seeing a child have an "a-ha" moment when he/she



understands something for the first time. Firing the cannons is a lot fun too. It is an adrenalin rush!

LH: Why should young people and really, everyone, be interested in the History of Fort Wellington and our Military history along the St. Lawrence?

L: *I could go on a long, passionate rant about this. It is easy to be put off by history when you're reading it out of a dusty old book. But when you start to explore what is in your backyard, you'll realize that it really is exciting. There are stories of love and war, sadness and joy, comedy and drama. This region contributed to the history and the identity of what we now know as Canada. We are a patriotic nation, and everyone should want to know why. These were people just like you and I, who may not have known it, but they were a part of something big. Everyone loves a good story. If you're looking to hear a good one, you know where to find me.*

LH: Now for the more personal stuff: How did you meet your husband?

L: *I met my husband Nick at the Glengarry Highland Games in Maxville Ontario. The same place my parents met almost 30 years before us.*

LH: How long did it take him to convince you to go on a first date and where was it?

L: *I disliked him at first. He was a military guy, and came across as being too confident and very serious. Luckily, my sister and my cousin were bagpipers in the Military Band of the Ceremonial Guard on Parliament Hill that summer, which forced me to keep crossing paths with Nick. I'd say our first memorable date was to a movie. We saw *Blades of Glory*. When I found out he could laugh, I knew he was a keeper.*

LH: What is family life like for you on weekends and where do you go to spend time together?

L: *When we're not visiting Granny and Grandpa on the farm, we can often be found at community events, at the Brockville Dog Park, or at the grocery store. Most of the time however, we can be found outside chasing our son around, who is almost 2 years old.*

LH: If you could have dinner with 3 people, alive or dead, who would they be and why?

L: *I'm going to give you the history geek answer, and I'm assuming that my husband is co-hosting this dinner with me.*

- 1 Sir John A Macdonald, Canada's First Prime Minister. The more I read about him, the more I'd like to invite him for dinner.
- 2 Thomas D'Arcy McGee, the politician and poet. He was assassinated before his time, and would hopefully get along with my other two guests.
- 3 Robert Burns, the Scottish poet. Someone has to do the Address to a Haggis!

(I'd want to be at a dinner where everyone got along. I think these gentlemen would be fine guests, and we'd have a memorable time. I might limit their beverages though.)

LH: Favourite Guilty Pleasure?

L: *Ok. I'll admit it. I'm a sucker for horrible reality television. I've been known to watch *The Bachelor* with a glass of wine.*

LH: Favourite TV Shows?

L: *I recently got into *Downton Abbey*. I also enjoy *Parks and Recreation*.*

LH: Favourite book or Author?

L: *The last great book I read was *A Dog's Purpose* by Bruce Cameron. I laughed and cried. I often return to *Tuesdays With Morrie* by Mitch Albom.*

LH: What is a characteristic in people you dislike?

L: *Negativity. I find it very contagious, counter-productive, and poisoning.*

LH: If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it would be?

L: *I am an obsessive planner. I over-plan. I was once told "If you want to tell God a joke, make plans." Well, to God I'm probably a comedian. Having a toddler has helped me to let go, and taught me that the best days are the unplanned ones.*

BONUS QUESTION

Best part about "LIVING HERE!"

L: *The fresh air and the people. I remember when I first moved home from Niagara, I was going to "run" to the bank on my lunch break. A walk that should have taken 5 minutes took up my entire lunch break. Everyone said hello or stopped to talk. It's also really nice to be able to raise my son surrounded by family, and within the same region I was raised. LH*