

Two Highland Teenagers

Conversations with Thelma Fayle

PETER FRIESEN

Thelma: Tell me a little about yourself.

Peter: Well, I've lived in the Highlands since I was two years old and I just turned 15. I'm in grade ten at Belmont.

Thelma: Can you tell me a little about what you like to do in your free time?

Peter: I like hiking and mountain biking and skate boarding. I like to go up around the Gowlland Range. I go up there all the time—usually just on weekends at this time of year, but more often in the summer months.

Thelma: Do you spend most of your free time in the Highlands?

Peter: Oh yeah, I don't really leave that much. I prefer being here rather than in the city. Although it would be nice if we had a bus route. That would make it easier to go to the city once in a while. Even just one in the morning and one at night would be great.

Thelma: How do you get around?

Peter: I ride my bike or get a lift from my mother. I work with people down the road and I usually ride down there. I do yard work, chop and stack wood, clean weeds out of the lakes, and sometimes take care of neighbours' animals if they go away—whatever needs doing. Sue Johnson is one of the main people I do work for.

Thelma: It sounds like you're earning a few extra dollars. What are you saving up for?

Peter: Nothing really right now. I bought a stereo last year.

Thelma: Have you got a little sports car in mind?

Peter: Of course. But I don't have enough jobs yet. Eventually.

Thelma: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Peter: My older brother lives in Sidney now. I guess he's one of those people that wants to be in the city. He likes it there better. And I have a younger sister, Lyndsay.

Thelma: You've told me some of the good things about living in the Highlands. What are some of the negatives? Is there anything you don't really like?

Peter: I can't really think of anything right now.

Thelma: How about spiders?

Peter: Yeah, I guess that's what I hate the most. That's the only bad thing. My sister and I saw a

black widow once behind a huge rock. Oh there is one other thing. Sometimes people drive really fast around Millstream Rd. and I like to skateboard here. So that's not great.

Thelma: Is there somewhere else you can skateboard?

Peter: I usually go up to the West Firehall if it's nice out.

Thelma: Are there any dances nearby?

Peter: Sometimes I go to the Belmont dances when they have them, but I don't dance that much.

Thelma: I guess I'd be surprised if you said you did—not many people your age dance a lot. Do you go swimming much at Juan de Fuca?

Peter: No, I'd rather swim in Lost Lake. It's more fun.

Thelma: Many people would say that you've had an idyllic childhood growing up in this environment.

Peter: I'm lucky I guess.

Thelma: What is your favourite season here?

Peter: Summer is the most fun. There's so much to do.

Thelma: Do you have some favourite places in the Highlands?

Peter: Gowlland Range, Lone Tree Hill and Lost Lake.

Thelma: I guess you know them like the back of your hand?

Peter: I know Lost Lake and Lone Tree—that's a pretty basic hill, right? But the Gowlland Range is so big. I know where I'm going but I don't know it like the back of my hand yet.

Thelma: Tell me more about the kind of things you like to do.

Peter: I build car models and play nintendo and listen to music. I like Fleetwood Mac and The Police and stuff like that. I like local music too. I have some friends from school that are in a band. I like Liquid Courage and Goat Boy and Hudson Mack.

Thelma: Do you play any music yourself?

Peter: I tried to play the guitar myself, but that didn't work. So I tried the pennywhistle and I can play one song on it. I'm not very musical, I guess. I like to listen to it though.

Thelma: What are you studying in school?

Peter: Right now I have woodwork, science, math and cooking. My favourites are woodwork and cooking.

Thelma: Do you do any cooking at home?

Peter: Yep. I make dinner sometimes—macaroni and cheese, vegetarian lasagna, hamburgers—and baking too.

Thelma: You sound like a man of the 90's.

Peter: Yep. It's fun. I like eating too.

Thelma: And you enjoy woodworking too. What kind of work have you done?

Peter: I made that table and this candlestick.

Thelma: You made that table? Wow! Its gorgeous. You're quite an artist. Really nice.

Peter: I love woodworking. It's my favourite. When I get older, I'd like to eventually have my own workshop and make furniture. Tables and chairs. Right now at school I'm making a secret box with a hidden drawer.

Thelma: Have you thought of working for a woodworker or getting some kind of apprenticeship?

Peter: I was thinking of that, but I'm not sure of how I'd go about doing that.

Thelma: Well, maybe one of our readers in the Highlands could give you some advice.

Peter: That would be neat—to be able to work with someone, or even watch and help out where I could. I've always liked handling wood. I used to build forts out of wood up around my backyard or pick up pieces of it for firewood. I really enjoy handling wood.

Thelma: You're a lucky guy, you seem pretty happy.

Peter: I'll say. A couple of years ago, I went to army cadets for two years and did the camp in Vernon for three weeks. We went out on survival camp for a week straight, in the mountains. Not showering or anything, and making our own fires. That was one of the funnest times I ever had. I made a lot of friends. My friend Cory who lives on Blacktail went too and is still in cadets.

Thelma: Any other immediate plans on your

agenda?

Peter: At the moment I'm thinking of taking up boxing in Metchosin. I like the physical endurance aspect, but there's also a mind-body aspect that appeals to me.

Thelma: Can you see yourself living here when you are older?

Peter: Oh yeah. After I graduate, I'd like to travel a bit, maybe go to Europe. But I'd want to come back here. I hope to become a long-haul truck driver like my Dad. I want to buy the house from my parents, and live here and maybe run for mayor of the

Highlands one day. That would be kind of neat. It would be cool.

Thelma: Have you gone with your Dad on any trips?

Peter: Oh yeah, we've been down to California, to Calgary, and we went to San Francisco just a week ago. But it always feels good to come home to the Highlands.

Thelma: Do you remember many changes that have happened here?

Peter: There used to be a lot less traffic when there was a smaller population. We knew every car

that went by. That's another thing I don't like much—the population is getting so big. But it's still really nice up here.

Thelma: If you were mayor, what kind of things would you do, twenty years from now?

Peter: Probably fix some kind of population control. Population has such a big impact.

Thelma: What else would you do, Mayor Peter?

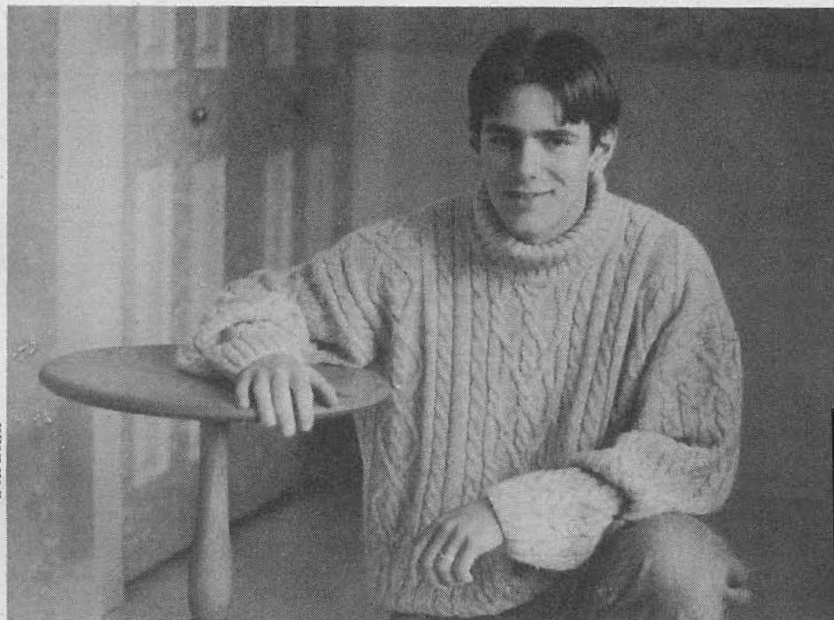
Peter: I don't know, it's hard to say about twenty years from now. Try to protect the wildlife I think.

Thelma: What skills do you think would be most important for a good mayor to have?

Peter: Probably someone who's really approachable and easy to talk to; and someone who is generally wise; and a person who understands the issues really well.

Thelma: That sounds like a good combination. Do you have any idea what you would do in the Highlands if you were mayor right now?

Peter: I'd build a skate park. Not as big as the one in Sidney. That one cost \$13,000. We couldn't afford that in the Highlands but maybe we could afford a smaller one, maybe a "half pipe". It could be used for everything—like skate boarding, roller



Don Benn

blading, BMX bikes—snow boards in the winter.

Thelma: How many people do you think would use it?

Peter: My friend Matt and I would use it, and other teenagers and probably lots of little kids with BMX bikes. Probably 50 people. I know I'd be there everyday.

(Peter's little sister came into the room just then)

Peter: This is my little sister Lyndsay.

Thelma: Hi, Lyndsay. Do you think your big brother would make a good mayor of the Highlands?

Lyndsay: Hmmm. Yes.

(Peter's Mom quietly mentions that Lyndsay might not know what "mayor" means.)

Thelma: Do you know what a mayor is?

Lyndsay: No.

Thelma: Well, the mayor's job is to collect money from everyone who lives here and then try to figure out what roads need to be fixed, and what else

people want him to do. Would Peter be good at that?

Lyndsay: Yes, he'd be very good at it.

Peter: Now that I think of it there is one thing I'd like to suggest to Highlander readers. If people find litters of abandoned kittens in the ditches, I think it might be really cool - if they can't take them home and try to keep them till they find homes - please call me. Don't just leave them to suffer. I don't like to see animals left in the ditch so I'd be happy to take care of them until we can find homes. We could offer sort of an orphan house for kittens that are found in the ditches in the Highlands. Or if anyone wants to volunteer to be an orphan house as well, they could call me and I could keep a list of phone numbers to contact if we suddenly need a family to nurse an abandoned litter. It could be a good group effort.

When he is not in school, Peter is available for hire to anyone in the Highlands who is looking for a capable young man to split wood or help with what needs doing. You can reach him at 478-7622. ☼

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NICOLE DOUGAN

Thelma: I hear you've lived in the Highlands most of your life.

Nicole: We moved from Gordon Head when I was five and I'm nineteen now. I still love it up here.

Thelma: What kind of things do you like to do?

Nicole: I've always been into sports, even when I was young. I was the girl who would play outside with the boys. Sometimes it would kind of drive Mum nuts because I would go to school in dresses and come home with grass stains on my knees from playing soccer. In junior high school I played basketball for a few years. I'm still playing baseball when I can. I have played with a team in Langford for the past ten years, but next year I'll have to leave that one and find a women's league.

Thelma: Are you still in school?

Nicole: No, I graduated from Belmont. Now I'm working at London Drugs in Colwood. Basically it's full time—five days a week, but right now it's only five hours a day. I stock shelves. It's really my first job. Before that I did quite a bit of babysitting.

Thelma: I hear you are well-known in the Highlands for baby-sitting. In fact, a woman I work with, Sandy Roberts, mentioned you babysat for her and suggested you'd be a good person to interview. Since then several people I have talked to all knew you as a babysitter as well.

Nicole: I don't think I could count all the people I have babysat for up here.

Thelma: Tell me more about you. Are you an only child?

Nicole: No, I have two sisters and a brother; they are all younger.

Thelma: Were there lots of kids to play with in this neighbourhood?

Nicole: Not really many my age.

Thelma: What do you remember most about growing up around here?

Nicole: I was always outside playing in the dirt. I just loved bugs.

Thelma: Did you ever feel that you were missing something by not being in Gordon Head?

Nicole: No. I always felt lucky to have so much space to roam around in. I didn't have to worry about "Oh that's not my yard I can't go in there." The only problem growing up here was getting to and from places. Mum had to drive us. But I didn't go out all that much.

Thelma: Did you save up your babysitting wad?

Nicole: Yeah, and I bought a nice little truck from my Dad—A chevy S10. I've always liked trucks and I needed it to get to work so early in the morning.

Thelma: Did you have a tough time finding a job?

Nicole: In high school I did work experience at Canadian Tire and Home Hardware, so I applied to quite a few places like that before getting hired at London Drugs. I felt good about finding the job myself rather than getting a lead from a relative or friend. The people at London Drugs are all really friendly and I'm getting to learn about the business. After I stock shelves for six months I

can look at other positions, maybe a position with better hours.

Thelma: Do you see yourself staying there for a couple of years?

Nicole: Probably, and I might look at getting a second job. I'd like to save up to move out on my own.

Thelma: Will you look for a place in the Highlands?

Nicole: It will depend on what's available and the cost. I'd like to stay in a rural area, but I'll have to see.

Thelma: Have you started putting some things together for your first place?

Nicole: A few things. Not much yet, though. I got a set of glasses for Christmas.

Thelma: People used to call it a hope chest or a trousseau. Is there a 90's equivalent? Hope chest sounds too dependent and prissy for an independent woman like you.

Nicole: People still refer to it as a hope chest. I don't know what else to call it.

Thelma: What are some of your other plans? Have you any desire to travel?

Nicole: I'd like to go to the southern states, Arizona, Tennessee, Colorado and Texas. I'd also love to go to Australia. But I haven't really thought about it too much. It's just an idea at this stage.

Thelma: Have you got friends who want to travel or would you rather travel alone?

Nicole: I'd probably go with friends. My friend Katy McCall and I have talked about maybe going to Hawaii sometime. She and I went to high school together. I could see us doing something like that one day.

Thelma: Do you ever think about getting married or having a family?

Nicole: Someday I'd like to raise a family in a rural setting, but that's a long way off. I'm in no hurry. I like the whole idea of being on my own right now and taking responsibility for myself.

Thelma: I admire your adventurous spirit. Many people your age just want to stay home where it is cheap and the food is good.

Nicole: I know I'll miss home, but I'll have fun too.

Thelma: Do you ever think about taking any courses at college or university?

Nicole: I've always really enjoyed writing. Maybe I will take some correspondence writing courses. A few months ago I sent away to the Writers Institute in the States for an aptitude test on becoming a writer. They wrote back and said I passed and then told me the cost of the course was \$675. U.S. I decided to wait and see if I could find a place in Canada.

Thelma: Well we're looking for a young writer to contribute to the Highlander. Would you think about doing some volunteer writing as a way of getting some experience?

Nicole: I'd like that.

Thelma: What kind of books do you like to read?

Nicole: Usually horror or mystery, but I'll read anything. Especially if people tell me that they read something they really liked.

Thelma: If you could have any job in the world, what would it be?

Nicole: I don't really know because I like doing so many things. It would have to be something I enjoyed, and something that allowed me plenty of time to write.

Thelma: One more question Nicole; do you have any suggestions on how we could improve the Highlands from your perspective?

Nicole: I'd like to see more organized local sports opportunities for

kids.

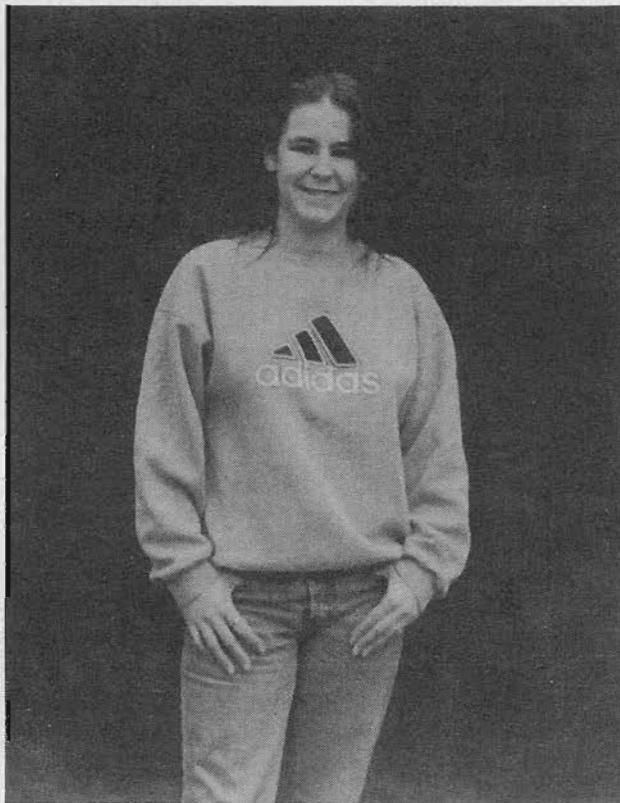
Thelma: Would you be interested in organizing or coaching something like that?

Nicole: I could probably do that. Space is the only problem. There's a small field down at the firehall, but it's not really enough space for a baseball game.

Thelma: If the space issue could be resolved, maybe you could even charge a small fee for your organizing time one night a week. Don't be surprised if you get approached by a few parents who would like to see it happen.

Nicole: That would be fun and would give the kids something to do. They are always complaining about having "nothing to do". But I think that's universal!

An equity and diversity advisor for the Ministry of Children and Families, Thelma Fayle practices left-handed fencing with her husband John Mackintosh for recreation.



LOOKING BACK

The Final Year of the Highlands Little Red Schoolhouse

Teacher Muriel Burkinshaw Stewart talks with Bonnie Chapman

Bonnie: The old schoolhouse was dismantled with great care in 1997 to be re-erected on the Caleb Pike Homestead. Looking at the lengths of lumber stored in the future forge building, I've often thought of the laughter, learning and life they held as a school. It's a true delight to be here with you, Muriel. Would you share remembrances of that time, fifty-eight years ago?

Muriel: Well, I did my teacher training in what is now known as Camosun College. In those days it was Victoria's Normal School. Then I just hunted around for a job and was offered the position in the Highlands.

I taught one year and there weren't enough pupils after that. It was closed down in 1941.

I lived in the teacherage. It was just a small cabin, a room with a bed against one wall, a stove, a stand for a wash basin and a few shelves for clothes. That was it. Very tiny.

photo courtesy Muriel Stewart



The Teacherage

I commuted each weekend to stay with my family in Victoria. They would pick me up and take me back Sunday evening. Each school day, all the children brought lunches, except two that lived across the road. We had recess twice a day and the children would swing, play baseball or tag. I had one big blackboard at the front of the room and wrote out their exercises for them to do. The wood stove was kept going constantly in winter. There were little steps by the entrance where there were wash basins and hooks for coats. Ruth Copley, a student, was more or less the janitor and started the fire going in the morning. I remember hauling water from Manson's up the hill and keeping things tidy. The school day was from 9 to 3. There weren't many field trips. We had a lot of material to get through.

photo courtesy Muriel Stewart



Recess

photo courtesy Muriel Stewart



Not a level playing field!

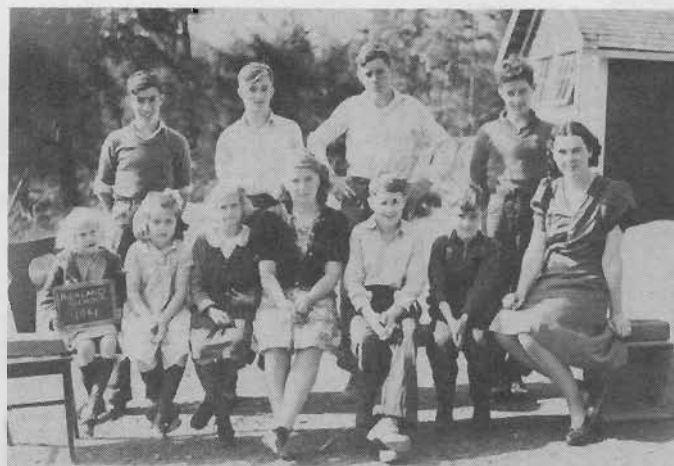


photo courtesy Muriel Stewart

1941—the last year. Back Row: Copley or Burnham's foster son; H. Copley; ?Cunningham; Copley or Burnham's foster son. Front Row: Phoebe Cunningham; ?Manson; R. Cunningham; Ruth Copley; Ron Manson; ?Burnham; Muriel Burkinshaw

Bonnie: Was your curriculum dictated by provincial standards and was there time for extra-curricular activities?

Muriel: We had an inspector come around, so I presume it was provincial. There were no extra-curricular activities. The children had to go home after school to do their chores.

Bonnie: How did you manage to teach all those grades with each child so unique, with different needs? Was there much parental involvement?

Muriel: Well, Phoebe Cunningham was in Grade 1 and the foster boy whose name I can't remember was high school correspondence. So I actually taught grades 1 to 8. Anyone in high school received correspondence material to work with and I helped them. I would set one lot to work and sometimes the older ones would help the younger ones. I had no special-needs students. The families were so scattered, it was difficult.

Bonnie: What was your most memorable experience?

Muriel: Well, I know I haven't remembered it all, it was so long ago. I'd enjoy revisiting the old schoolhouse when it is rebuilt. My most memorable experience? Just getting them through.

Former teacher Bonnie Chapman is a painter, sculptor, & caretaker of the Pike Homestead. ☞