Seeing in BLACK AND WHITE

A photographer takes a new look at the Red Island, a place of dreams he now calls "home"

Beachcombing at Rocky Point on a misty morning offers a beautiful array of tones.

PHOTOGRAPHY AND TEXT BY DAVE BROSHA

THE RED ISLAND.

Summertime magic. A land of vibrant colours and a happy palette. Bright and bold lupins, fields of green, skies of blue, shimmering waters, and—of course—the bright rust-red rock and soil found across the province.
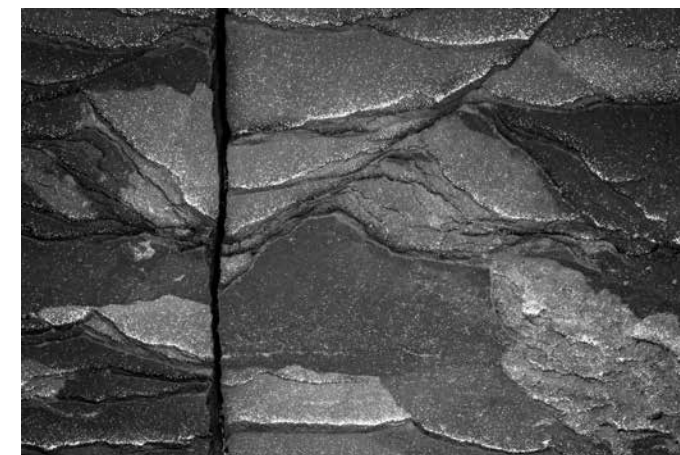
This is the traditional picture of Prince Edward Island—and the image that, admittedly, graced my own thoughts of my Island-to-be, both immediately before I was to move here but also on countless trips I have taken to PEI many times throughout my life, first by ferry and, later, by bridge. The Island made an undeniable impression on me and Erin, my wife. Our trips here would always end with an exclamation: "Wouldn't it be nice to live here some day?" Dreams, of the sort that we frequently express out loud but never really expect to come true.

Only, what if dreams can come true? A spontaneous decision to move from the North; Yellowknife, where we'd spent more than a decade. Sell almost everything, pack up, and move thousands of kilometres across country, back to the Maritimes with three excited children in tow. A desire to be closer to our families—to an area of Canada closer to where we grew up, and now feel the pull to return. To the Red Island. The island of our dreams.

As a photographer, the tools of my trade are light, lines, moments, emotion and, very often, colour. Coming to Prince

Top left: Simple works better than complex when composing an image. Port-la-Joye–Fort Amherst.
Top right: When you see the world in black and white you train your eye to look for tonal variety and contrast. This old wharf in Rocky Point provided a perfect study in contrast.
Bottom left: My family are the subjects I photograph most. A simple moment exploring Brackley Beach caught my photographer's eye.
Bottom right: Canoe Cove rock formations keep my camera busy for hours.

Edward Island, I am as excited as anyone to capture the vibrancy of the natural beauty, the resolve of the Island's people and its unique culture. But in coming here, I also want to try to approach Island photography with a new perspective. Even if that means trying to suppress the obvious.

The obvious, to me, is to simply focus on colourful shore scenes. Red rocks. Blue sky, summer ocean scenes. It's not that I'll deliberately avoid dealing in colour—I'll (hopefully) have a lifetime to capture that—but I want to begin by taking a step back from the overwhelming beauty of the colour of Prince Edward Island to see what might lie beyond. I make a conscious decision to look at the province through a black and white perspective. To focus on the power of tone, contrast and form. To tell my version of the story of this beautiful place.

It helped, of course, that I moved to the Island in December, only one week before Christmas. A muted time of year. Fog and snow. Vegetation taking a small step back to recover before another full-on race into summer. Still, evidence of colour abounds, retreating just long enough not to overwhelm. Those first memorable weeks on the Island my eyes took in an endless black and white set. Now that colour has returned in full force I see it (of course) and appreciate it… but continue to see beyond it.