

A walk on the edge

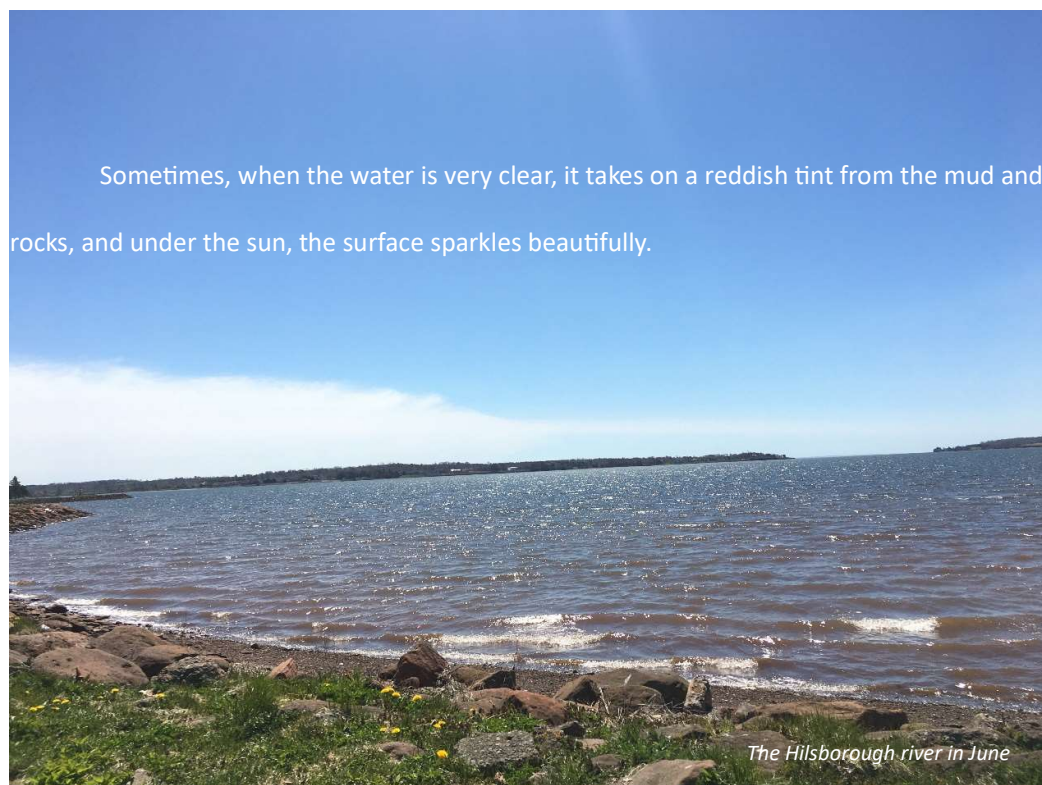
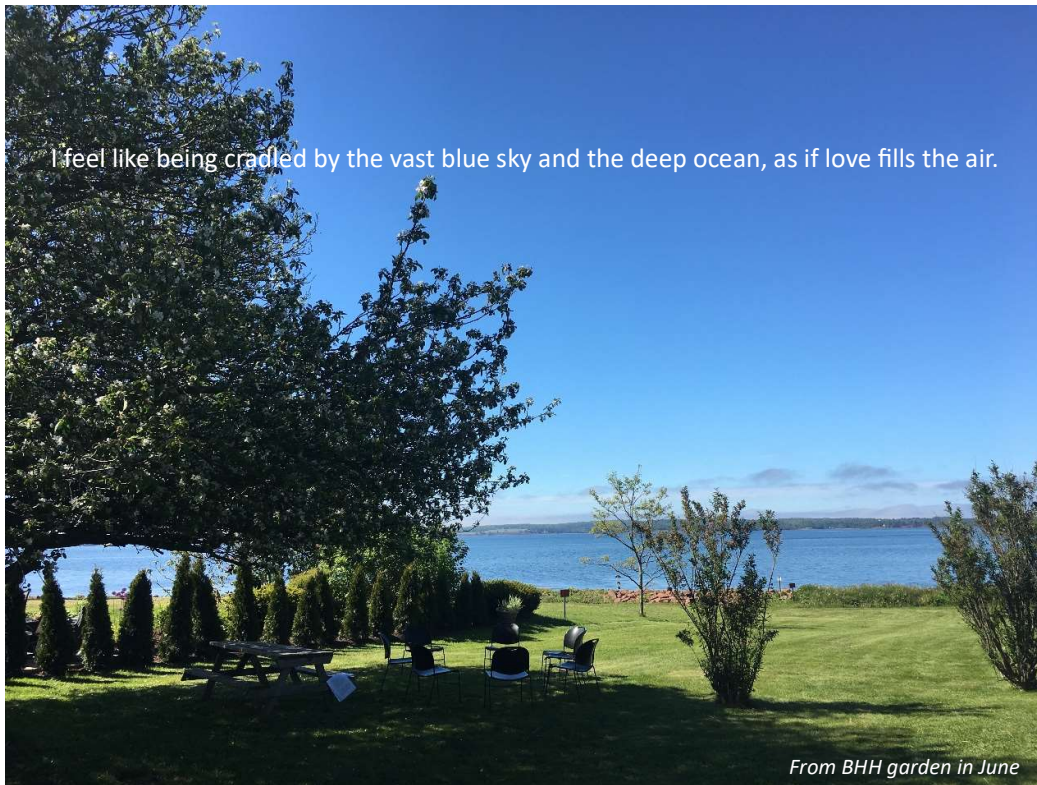
My favorite walk starts at Beaconsfield Historic House (BHH) and follows the Victoria Trail toward Victoria Park in the summer of 2024. I set out along this path, enjoying the stunning views of the Hillsborough River and taking its beauty in photos. However, when I walked the same trail again at the end of January 2025, the scenery felt completely different, and even my thoughts changed.

Throughout the summer of 2024, as a full-time volunteer tour guide at BHH, I spent over 130 days admiring the Hillsborough River from different times. My work continued until December, but each time I arrived at BHH, I was captivated by the ever-changing beauty of the view from its entrance. That sense of wonder never faded, and the river always revealed something new. *(Right picture taken from BHH hallway in*

July).



Despite PEI's popularity in the summer, it's always quiet, whatever the time or how many visitors visit. On the morning, when I saw it, I thought I were lost in a dream.

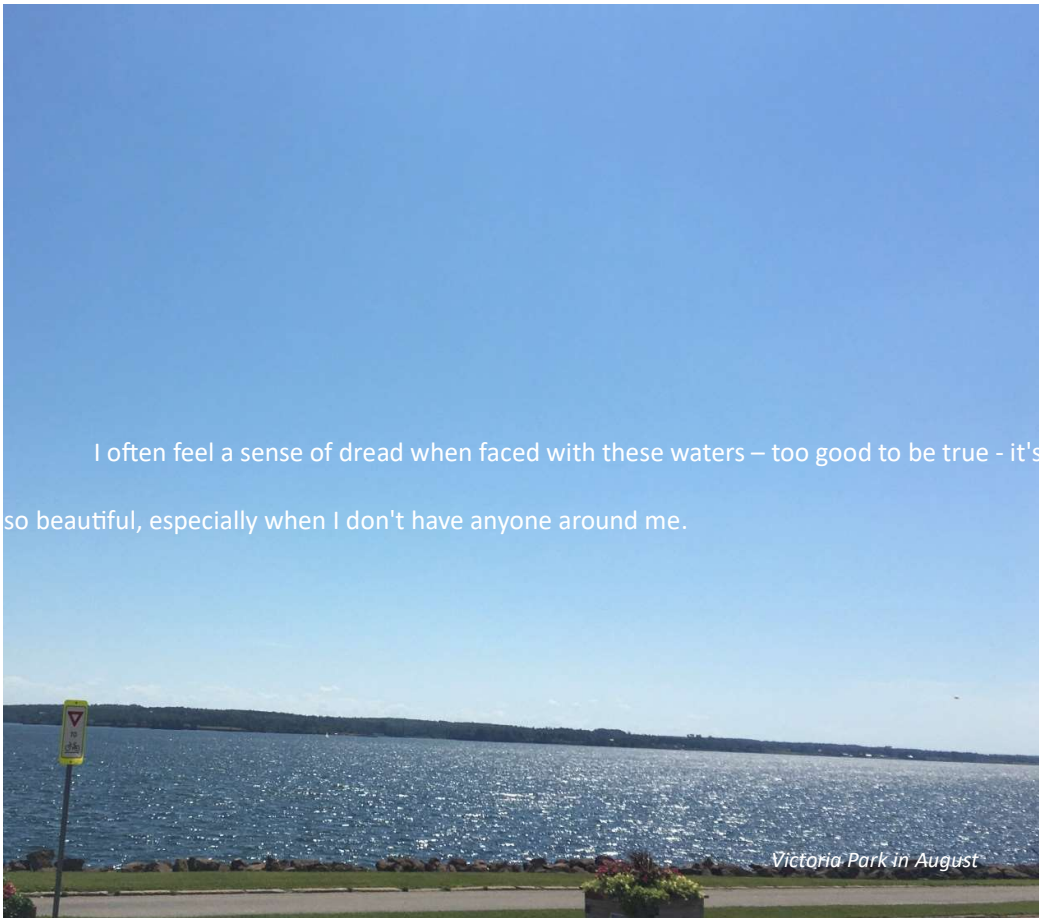




August, the weather on the island was changing quickly. It was going to rain.

In that day, when I decided to turn around and head back, I met a runner head-on.

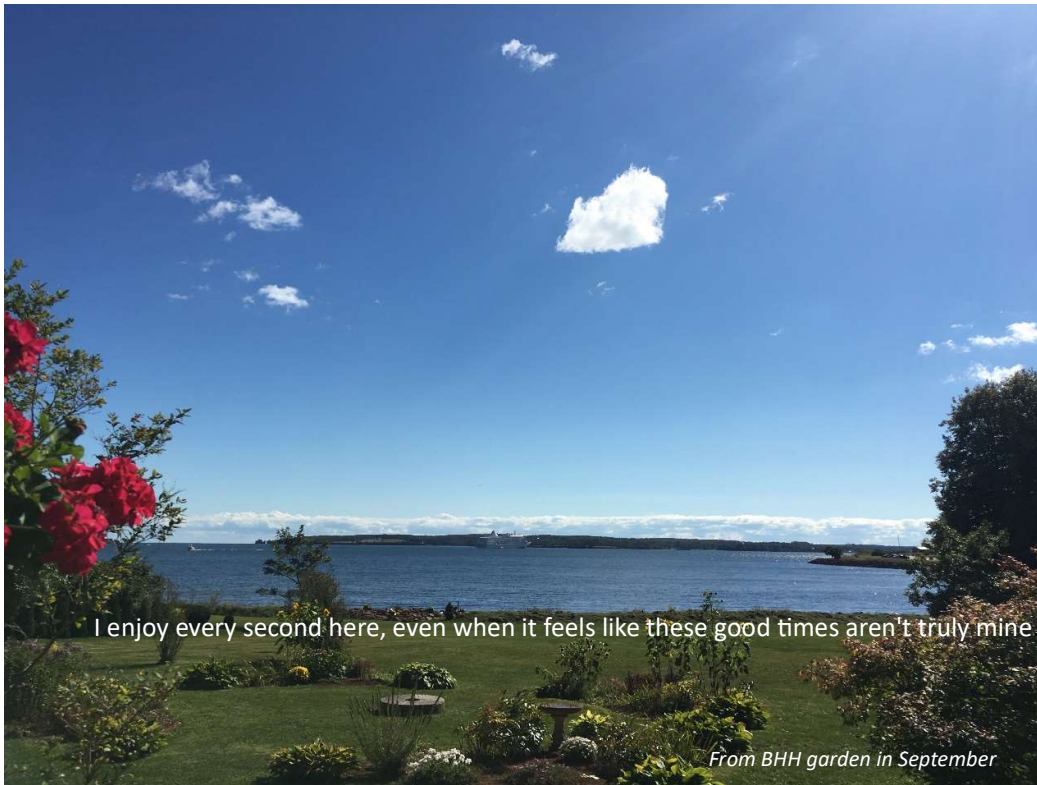
Victoria trail in August



I often feel a sense of dread when faced with these waters – too good to be true - it's so beautiful, especially when I don't have anyone around me.

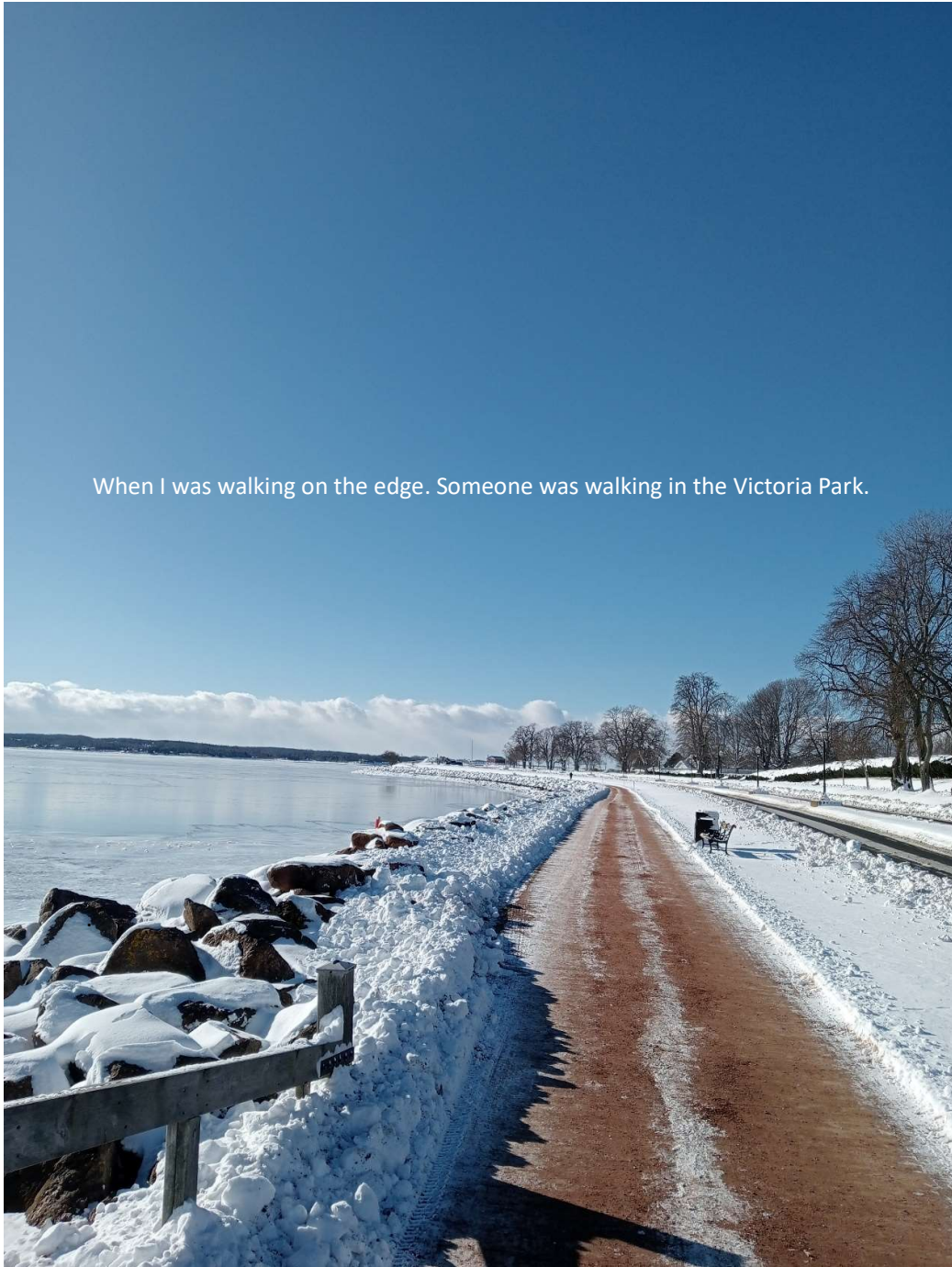
Victoria Park in August

I stood there and looked at the distant sea, where cruise ships passed and docked downtown until October. At peak, about 8,000 passengers arrived here on the same day.



I was on the Victoria trail midway between the BHH and the Government House. It was cold and everything was covered in snow - not a good idea to travel at this time of year. Accompanied by a cold that had nowhere to go.

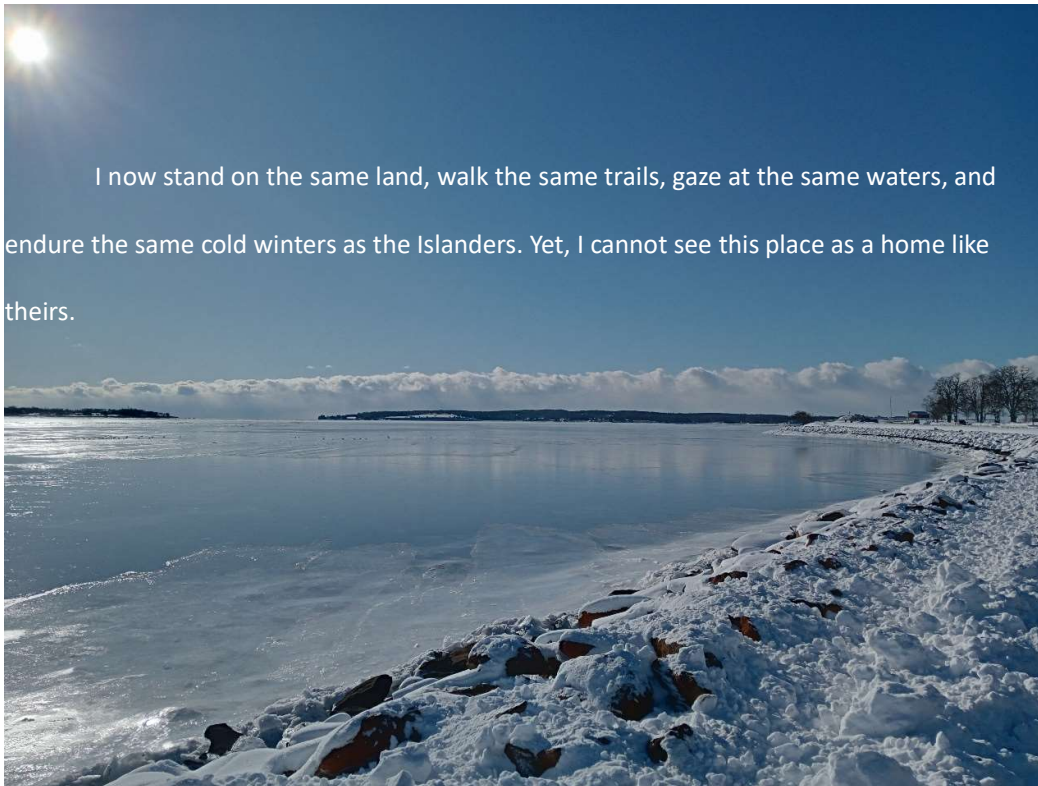
Blue sky, white clouds, and the winter sun, dry and stark. I felt completely alienated, even though I've already lived here for over a year.



At that moment, I felt a sharp silence with external coercion. The cold white colour, the howling wind, the blinding snow, the frozen rocks, the hidden thin ice, and the silent sea. There is no enthusiasm, only coldness.



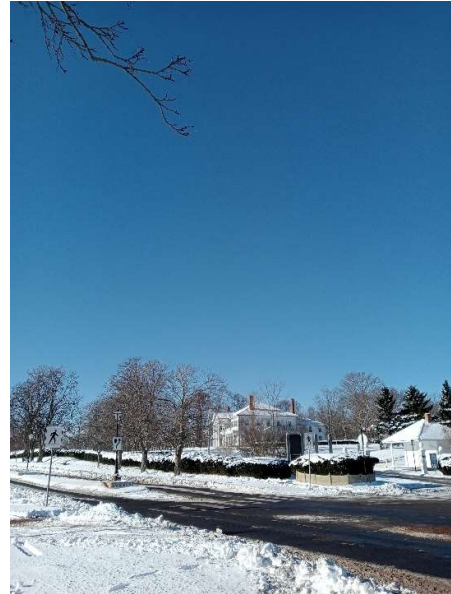
I now stand on the same land, walk the same trails, gaze at the same waters, and endure the same cold winters as the Islanders. Yet, I cannot see this place as a home like theirs.



So how did you come here? Why did you come here? I asked myself. My thoughts wandered. After a long period of wandering, I could imagine, the exhausted people finally seeing a small piece of land, a safe world to settle down, rest, and rebuild their lives. They believe that everything would be fine.

But no one could anticipate a political shift more dangerous than the winter storm.

There are two historic houses: Beaconsfield, built in 1877 by the Peake family who immigrated from England (on the left), and Government House, where Thomas Haviland, who had an English father, lived in 1879 (on the right). Today, many of PEI's Islanders have surnames that reveal their Scottish immigrant ancestry. In Epikwetk, the immigrants traveled the same path I'm walking now. But now they all are islanders and I am an outsider.



Just as my brain was rambling to itself, the person who had just been in the distance gradually approached. I subconsciously looked over - it was a middle-aged white man who looked like he'd come from October, while I looked like I'd just returned from Antarctica. Interestingly enough, he started his first small talk with, "Cold today, isn't it?" And I had to answer, "Yeah, it's cold. But it's PEI winter." He nodded and responded, "Yeah, yeah. Have a good one." He proceeded to leave down Kent Street.

The phrase "Have a good one" reminds me of a local guide who was a student at UPEI in the same place five months ago. They and I had brought along a few painted BHH shells, which we planned to place randomly in an area close to Victoria Park so that when people found them and could get a free tour of BHH. I followed local guild along the Victoria trail on an early fall morning. The rain had just ended, and the breeze was still hot and

humid. As I looked down at the road to avoid the earthworms crawling from the soil to the pavement, they suddenly said to me, "In PEI, we don't often say have a good morning or good day; we say have a good one, which can refer to many times of the day."

But I probably don't have a good memory, because not only did I forget my response at the time, but in hindsight - I had just said "Have a good day" to the stranger.

