

CREATIVITY WITHIN THE CENTENNIAL COMMUNITY

Centennial photographer reveals the extraordinary details hidden within the ordinary

Artist Statement

By Michelle Cleland

"My photography is inspired by the quiet beauty of the natural world. I enjoy photographing wildlife, landscapes, and macro subjects, but macro photography—capturing very small subjects up close—is where my curiosity really comes alive. I am fascinated by the tiny details that often go unnoticed in everyday life: the structure of a snowflake, the patterns on an insect's wing, or the delicate textures of a flower petal.

Through my photography, I hope to invite people to pause and look a little closer at the world around them. Nature is full of intricate designs and fleeting moments of beauty, and photography allows me to preserve and share those moments. My goal is simple: to reveal the extraordinary details hidden within the ordinary."

By Denise Bacon

Michelle Cleland spent most of her career as an Intensive Care Unit Nurse at Toronto hospitals where she specialized in cardiac and trauma-based neuro health care. She also shared her specialized knowledge through teaching doctors and nurses how to resuscitate people in cardiac arrest, using all available resources.

After retiring about a year ago, Michelle continues teaching nursing part-time at the Finch and King City Seneca College campuses. Her critical attention to minute details about her patients may have been the foundation of her photography journey!

A Hawaiian vacation in 2005 with her first digital camera opened Michelle's eyes to the wonder of photography. "Everything in Hawaii is beautiful," said Michelle, initially downplaying the quality of photographs that she took there. Soon afterwards, she realized there was something special to be appreciated through digital photography. A hobby grew into a passion which was nurtured by course after course to learn and grow in this digital field.

Through trials, experimentation and experience, Michelle narrowed her interest to »



Shortly after sunrise, the intense fog silently rolled in across the ocean to envelope the harbor at Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, creating this mystical sense of serenity.



"macro photography with a twist." She smiled amusedly as she emphasized that she "doesn't do insects!" Macro photography is extreme close-up photography where the subject itself appears much larger than life and, oftentimes, may be invisible to the naked eye.

Nurse Michelle is now reinvented as a global award-winning photographer! She won the 2024 Guru Award for Macro Photography at the renowned Photoshop World Contest. After much coaxing, Michelle shared that her proudest achievements were recognitions from Professional Photographers of Canada (PPOC) by winning National and Regional competitions for Macro Photography and for winning the 2025 Category Award for Animals.

Michelle shares her passion and continuous improvement journey with photographers from Canada and around the world. She was thrilled to meet Scott Kelby, a best-selling author and one of her early mentors. Michelle's membership in the KelbyOne Group keeps her connected with about 100 photographers globally. She has enjoyed opportunities to connect with them at annual summits to share and learn from each other.

Another strong influence for Michelle is Don Komarechka, a Canadian nature and macro photographer whose snowflake images are captured on Canadian coins. She has taken many of Don's courses which have contributed to Michelle's own fabulous macro photography. "Don has been generous with sharing his knowledge with me," effused Michelle.

Michelle is active with the West Rouge Photography Facebook group through which she has met other local photographers whom she greatly admires. It's wonderful that the circle of learning continues to go around as Michelle now shares her expertise with other photographers.

Neighbours, keep your eyes open for Michelle who lives in Centennial and who may be seen with cameras slung across both shoulders ready for the next awesome photographic capture!



Top right: Leopard captured at the Toronto Zoo, just as he was looking right at the camera

Upper left: Rouge Beach taken from the platform in the early morning sunrise

Bottom right: A mating pair of gannets

Bottom left: Early morning, at Cape Spear, Newfoundland

Michelle Cleland is a multi award-winning accredited member of the PPOC (Professional Photographers of Canada). She has enjoyed living in Centennial and raising her family there for the past 26 years.

Her online gallery including prints available for purchase can be viewed at: michellecleland.com

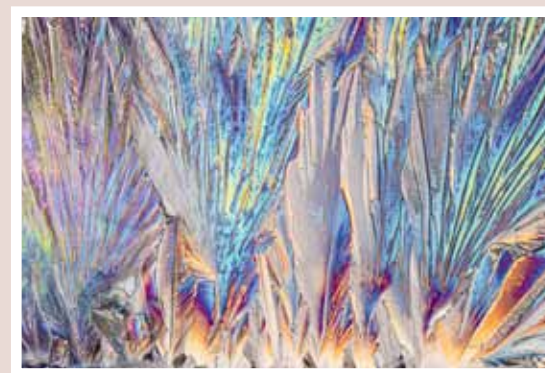
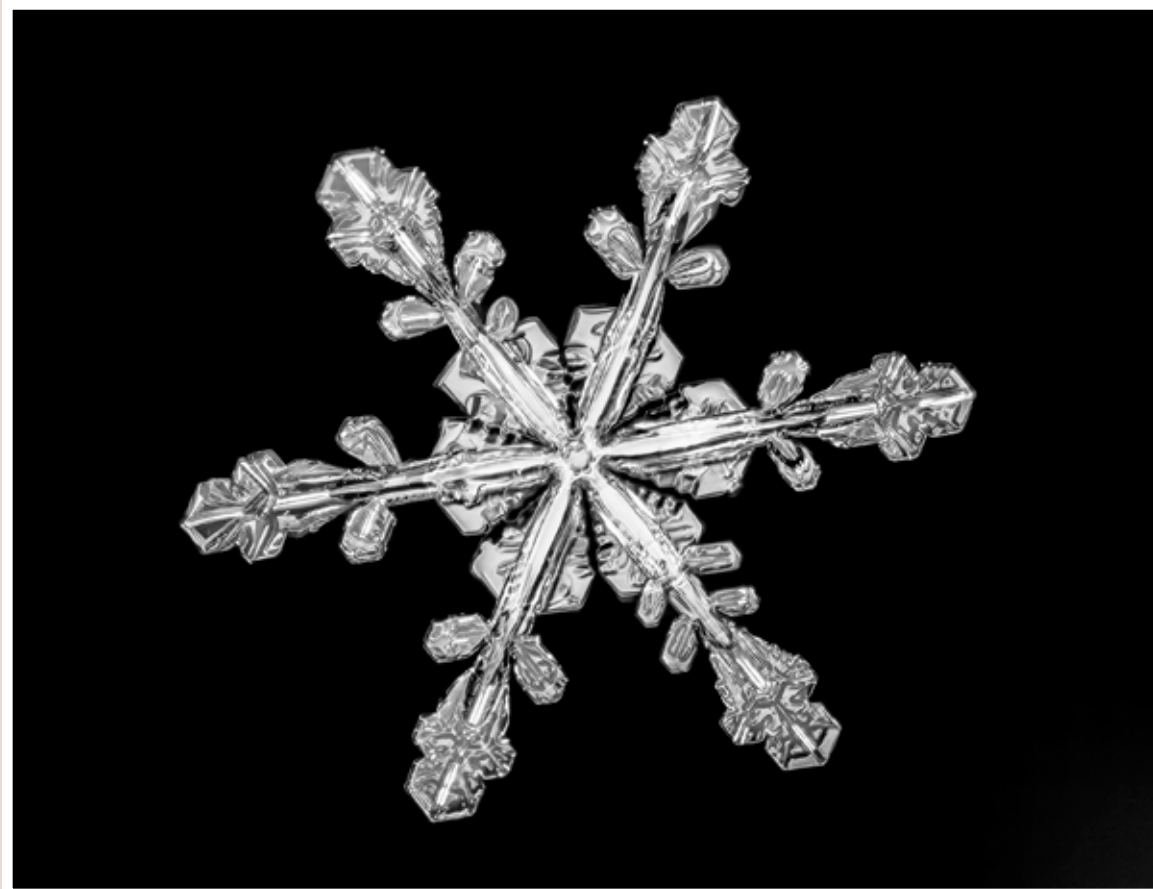
How I photograph snowflakes (macro photography)

One of my passions is photographing snowflakes. It is both exciting and surprisingly challenging because the conditions have to be just right. Temperature, humidity, and the type of snowfall all affect the shape and clarity of snowflakes.

This past January, during one of our major snowstorms, the conditions were perfect. When I stepped outside and saw the beautifully formed snowflakes landing, I actually had tears of joy—I had been waiting all season for that moment.

To photograph them, I first catch the snowflakes on a black mitten and using an extreme macro lens that magnifies the snowflake between 2.5 and 5 times its actual size, take the photo. Because the magnification is so high, only a tiny portion of the snowflake is in focus. To solve this, I take between 200 and 300 images of a single snowflake, each focused on a slightly different area.

Later, I combine those images in Photoshop using a technique called focus stacking. The software blends together all the sharp portions from each photograph to create one final image where the entire snowflake appears in focus. It is a very time-consuming process, but the results reveal the incredible geometry and detail of these tiny crystals—structures that exist for only a brief moment before melting away.



Top left: Frozen bubble dish soap and water solution; bubble created with a straw and placed on the flower. Bottom left: Sundew swirl, approximately 1 cm in size, taken with a 105 mm macro lens. Bottom centre: Mushrooms row composed from multiple original images. Bottom right: Citric acid solution on a microscope slide, allowed to dry overnight and captured with a macro lens. Top: The Snowflake was caught on a black mitten and taken with a 5X macro lens. It took approximately 200 images 'focus stacked' together to create the final image.

