

# Rugged east coast living



Fishermen are about to depart for an expedition. A shift normally ranges between 15 and 20 days. The most remunerative catch is the snow crab but this time of the year, it is not uncommon for them to come back with some seals. Seal hunting is a traditional Inuit practice that recently has sparked debate and criticism.

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"We are allowed to deploy only a certain number of pots, according to the size of the vessel. Most of the boats in Newfoundland do not exceed 20 metres. Life is pretty boring while we wait to recover the traps, unless the weather conditions change and get really bad... We don't have much time to relax on board. There is always something to do or take care of to ensure the safety of six people."

Most of the fishermen in Newfoundland co-own the co-operatives that process the fish. Once the crabs reach the port, they are packaged and shipped to their final destination.

Canada is one of the leading global producers of snow crab, its second most valuable fishery export. Between 2011 and 2014, the average value of the export was an estimated \$500 million per year.

The island is also famous for its seal hunt, a traditional Inuit practice adopted by the European settlers that has sparked

worldwide debate and criticism.

"Maybe you don't want to hear that, but when we are out there in the ocean on a crab expedition, it's not unusual to bump into some seals. While I know most people consider that inhumane, for us it's a blessing and a very rewarding day," said Payne.

Most of the fisheries on the island do not allow visitors. Officially, authorities claim this is due to safety reasons, but the restrictions are more likely to do with increasing tensions brought about by clashes between animal rights activists and seal hunters.

J.M.S., a fisherman who asked to remain anonymous, shared his perspective on the seal hunt:

"Most of the seals we find out there would die of starvation; hence to shoot them is basically relieving their suffering. Is there anything called suffering in nature or is it just an urban paranoia? At the end of the day, Newfoundland does not grow its own veggies and it's been like that ever since."



(Above) Brett Payne, a Fogo Island native, is the skipper of the family fishing boat. He attended the Marine Institute in St. John's to obtain his maritime licence. Brett is the man behind all the instruments necessary to be safe out in the subarctic Atlantic Ocean.



(Left) Ludovic Gignac and his nephew Hubert are originally from Tadoussac, the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. They navigate on a regular basis to Fogo Island to fish crabs. The crew of four spend roughly 25 days per shift out in the ocean. Ludovic is busy cooking a meal, while his nephew relaxes with some video games.

Photos by Giovanni Capriotti



Gavin Richards's grandfather moved to Newfoundland from Wales at the beginning of 1900. A family of fishermen, they have always lived off the sea. Gavin currently works for the Fogo cooperative a fish plant owned by the local anglers.



Roger Payne and his cousin Terry mending the crab pots. Every time they come back from a fishing trip, the crew has to check all the traps.



Spring is approaching when the ice pans get close to the shore of Fogo. A new busy season is ready to start for the crabbers of the island. Crab is the most remunerative catch of these frigid waters and is one of the most lucrative exports for Canada.