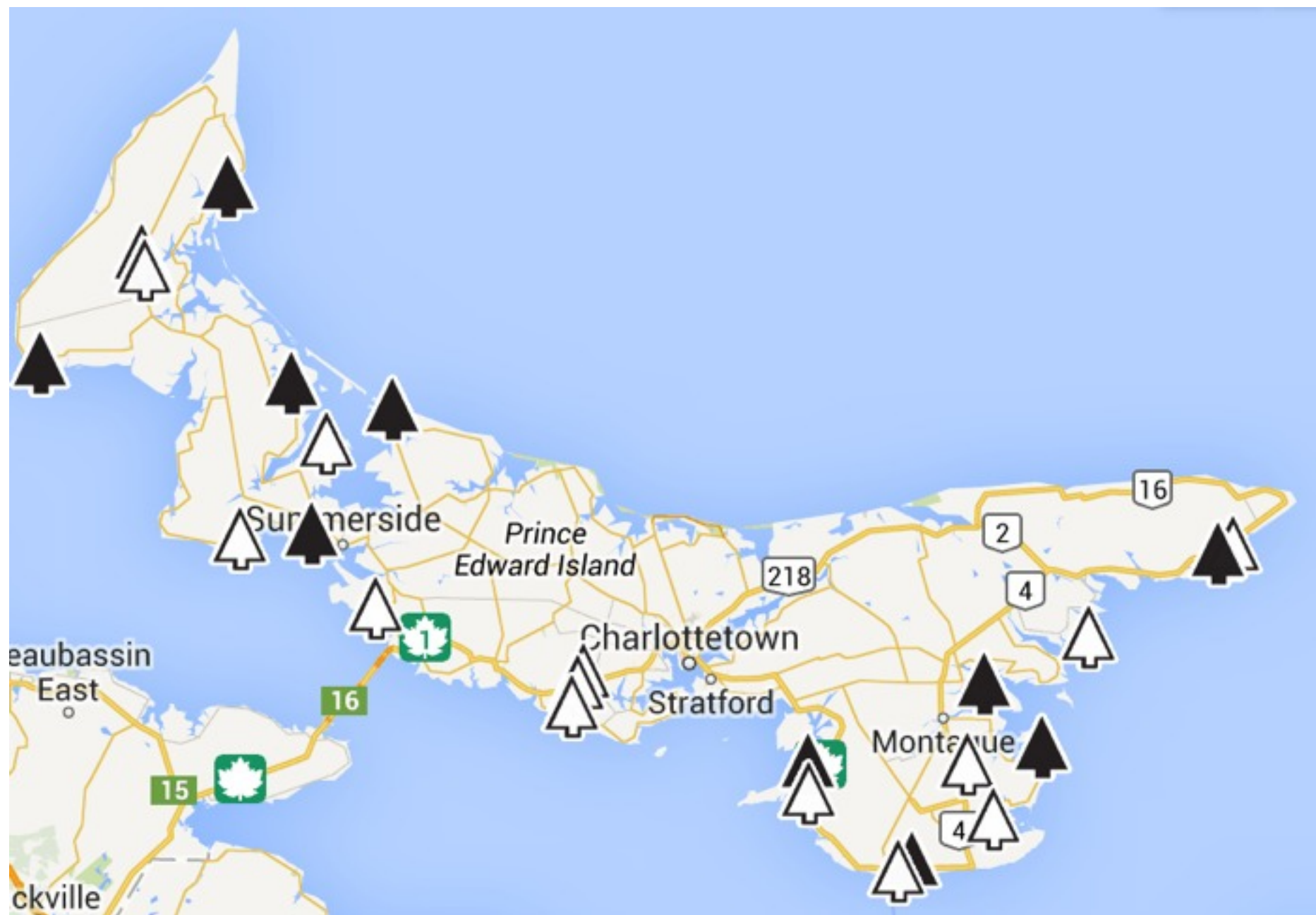


# Les Îles de la Madeleine

The Magdalen Islands

1961, 1972 and 2018





# Getting there is half the fun

– at least for a sailor. Souris PEI to Magdalen Islands is 70 nautical miles or about 130 km. Typically the CMTA ferry averages about 18 knots and allowing for slower speeds in the approaches takes about 5 hours.

CMTA also runs a 7-day 220 cabin cruise Montreal to the Magdalens

Planes from Montreal; Quebec; the Gaspé etc. are available.





You might meet some  
characters enroute – like this  
1972 “hangover” from the  
1970 FLQ October Crisis



But he was actually quite harmless and entertained crew and passengers.





And had a long chat with the Captain.

Travel in 1972 was very different from the post 9/11 era.





# What do you do for 5 hours?

You can lounge around the decks, eat in the spacious cafeteria, or rent a cabin or a sleeper chair.



# Ecoregion: One of Canada's Smallest

- The Îles-de-la-Madeleine ecoregion is one of the smallest and most isolated of Canada's 194 ecoregions.
- An archipelago of 230 square km in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, it is part of Quebec and is the fifth most densely populated ecoregion in Canada. In 2006 - 57 people per square km.
- 31% forests; 21% grasses and herbaceous plants; 20% is beaches, sand dunes; 13% croplands; 13% wetlands, water and shrubland; 2% developed land.

- 65-kilometer-long fishhook-shaped archipelago      SW/NE direction
- 6 main inhabited islands are interconnected by long, thin sand dunes joined by paved roads and bridges
- Quebec but 1 hour ahead – Atlantic time
- 12,000 inhabitants - speak French and/or English (120 English only; 9,100 French only; and 2,670 are bilingual)



# Water, Water Everywhere

But not a drop to drink or spare – the sailor's conundrum

Magdalens not quite that bad

- BUT there are limits
- 2017, leaks in reservoir and aqueduct – melt snow for toilets, no baths etc.

## **Longterm Impacts**

- sea-level rise,
- decrease in groundwater recharge
- coastal erosion.
- over a 28-year period, these combined impacts would cause the saltwater–freshwater interface to migrate inland destroying shallow coastal wells

# Water, Water Everywhere and Wind

- Mail in sealed cask
- Entry Island cut off in storms – winter
- Not self-sufficient in food, fuels, other supplies – storms
- Largest diesel-fired generating station in Québec



Cap-aux-Meulles (Grindstone) is the port of entry and *de facto* commercial and tourism center of the archipelago. A few decent restaurants, hotel, coffee shops, Quebec liquor/wine/beer store, great bakery and a Tim Horton's but with patisseries instead of only donuts and muffins.







# Wind

You heard about the near constant wind in the Island Diaries video. Gales and storms with 50 knot winds are a winter treat.

It shapes bushes, trees and landforms. It can make cycling a challenge – and a great workout. Be visible. Overlooking the port from Grindstone Hill.



Marie-Claire can tell you  
about the wind!!! [Her  
exclamation marks!!!]

Visible but chic!



Island Diaries' also talked about the erosion of the islands. Caused by winter storms, the relative lack of ice cover in recent winter storms, rising sea level, and wind, EROSION can undercut cliff faces. So a cautious Marie-Claire doesn't stand too close to the edge.





# Light and Water



# Caves

The force of wind, wave and water create huge caves under the cliffs. This one seems to have collapsed since I took this photo 50 years ago.





# Tunnels

Looking out the end of a 100  
meter tunnel in 1972 ...





from our BC canoe during a  
low tide which let us go  
through this tunnel

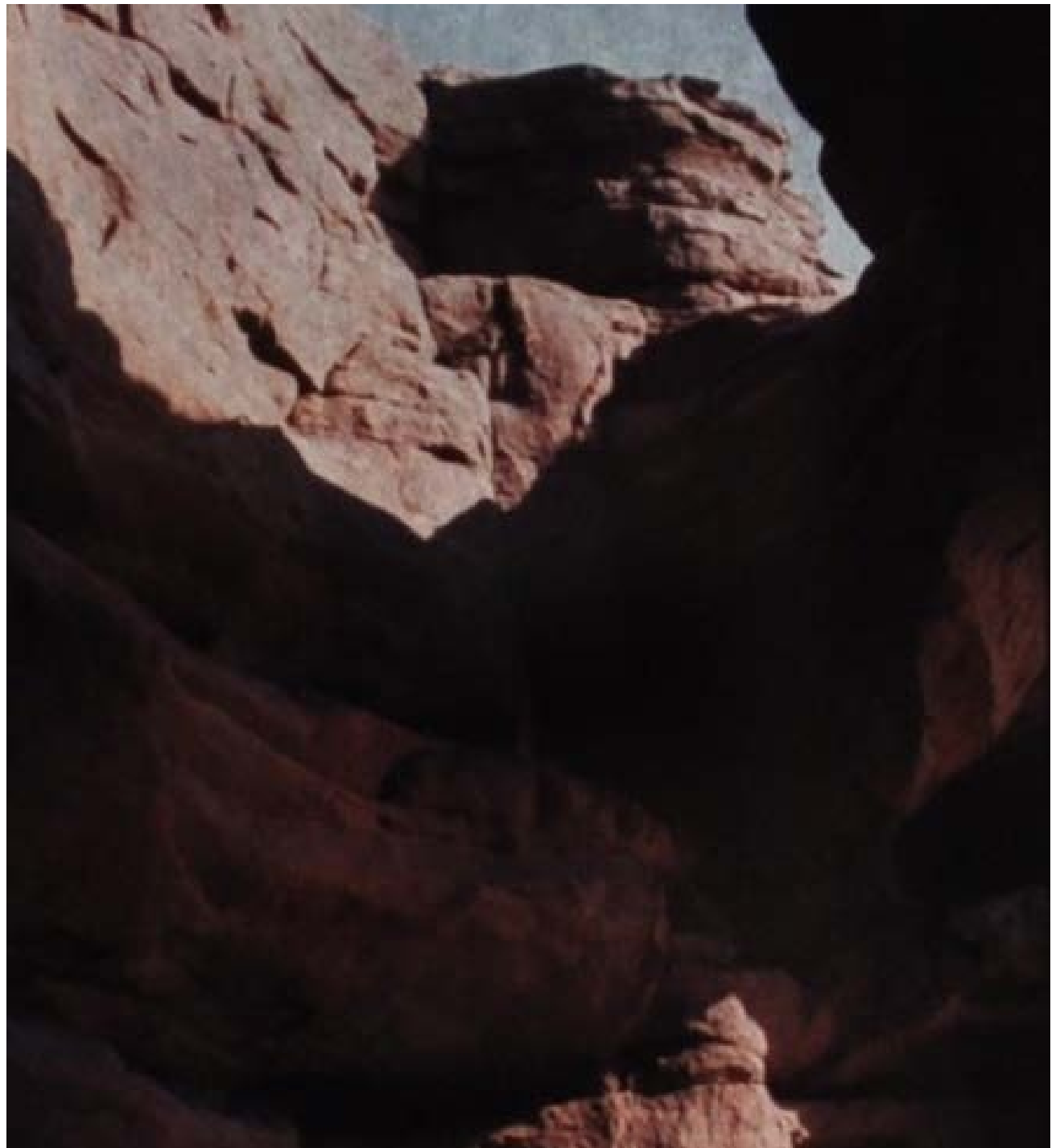


# Blowholes

A blowhole from the 1970's which has since been lost to erosion.



Another blowhole which has been lost to erosion over the last half century.



# Gros Cap Campground in 1972

Two small children my former wife and I, our home built slide-in camper on a Datsun pickup, and our canoe on top were all alone in this campground for an August week in 1972.

Wind –or – mosquitoes.









CORPORATION DU  
**PARC DE  
GROS-CAP**

# CAMPING AUBERGE NAUTISME

[www.parcdegroscap.ca](http://www.parcdegroscap.ca)  
1 800 986-4505



Passerelle / Footbridge  
Plage / Beach  
Mise-à-l'eau kayak / Kayak launch

Platier / Shallow water  
Zone de kite-surf / Kite surfing area  
Mise-à-l'eau voile / Sailboat launch

Petite plage  
Small beach

Baie de plaisance

## LÉGENDE / LEGEND

- 1** : Salines / Cabins : 1-5
- 1** : 30 amp. / 3 services / Full hook-ups : 1-6 / 11-12 / 22-23 / 72-75
- 1** : 30 amp. / 2 services bord de mer / Water and electricity by the sea : 36-46
- 1** : 30 amp. / 2 services / Water and electricity : 7-10 / 13-21 / 24-35 / 47-50
- 1** : 20 amp. / 2 services / Water and electricity : 51-55 / 117-125
- P1** : Plateformes de tente sans service / No hook-ups tent platforms : P1-P8
- 1** : Sans service / No hook-ups : 56-71 / 76-116

- A** : Accueil / Office
- B** : Abri / Shelter
- C** : Salle de spectacle / Theater
- D** : Pavillon Montreuil / Pavillon Montreuil
- E** : Auberge / Inn
- F** : Pavillon de kayak / Kayak building
- G** : Pavillon de voile / Sailing building
- H** : Stationnement visiteurs / Visitor parking
- I** : Terrasse / Terrace
- J** : Dépôt à déchets / Dumpster
- K** : Station d'égoût / Dump station
- L** : Terrain de Jeux / Playground



## Sand

All this erosion creates a lot of very fine sand like this – pure enough for glass blowing and the artistic endeavours shown in Island Diaries.



The sand has built up over millennia creating dunes that support telephone and electric poles along the sandspits that join the islands.



# Farming

Subsistence farming of the 1970's.



A part of subsistence farming in the 1970's seen everywhere – hay storage before Home Depot stores came to the Magdalens. These have all but disappeared. In 2018 we could only find one.



# Farming Today

Yes there's a pig farmer



But also a successful dairy









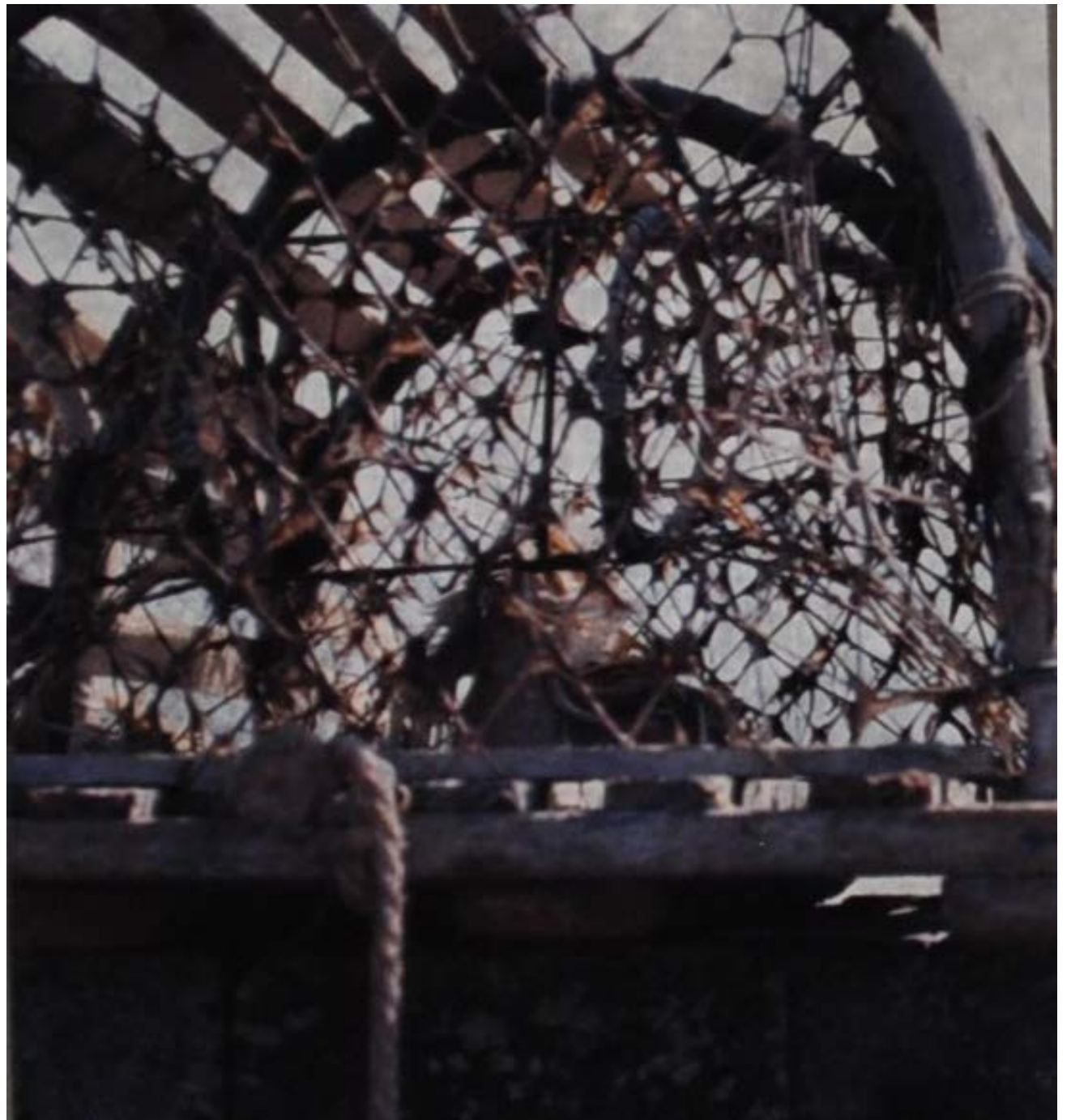


In Island Diaries this is where the fisherman/pig farmer/jack of all trades backed up his truck to load up the whey for his pigs



# Fishing

The ubiquitous traditional east coast lobster pot of the 1970's. You used to see them tied to roofs of cars heading west – souvenirs.

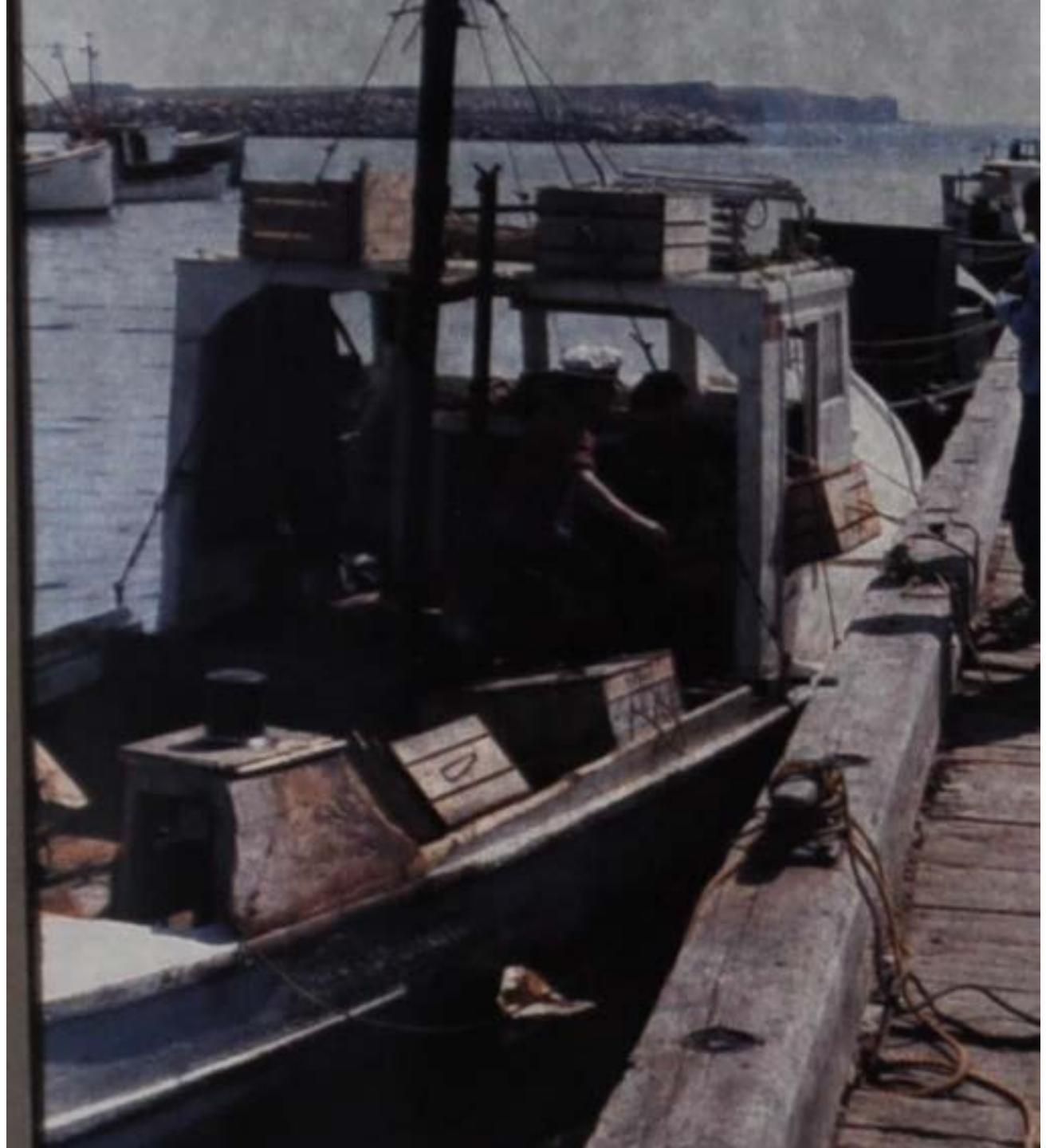








The fishery of the 1970's was largely inshore and focused on small boats like this.



# Smokehouses

In the 1970's when fishing was still king and there were more cod and other species the Magdalens boasted about 40 smokehouses – now reduced to one.





# Lagoons and Ocean



# Tourism – Modern Industry

- 2006, the 13,091 permanent residents welcomed 50,500 visitors (3.86/resident)
- 2018 – 77,000 visitors (12,100 permanent residents = 6.36/resident)
- About 24% by air
- 360 tourism businesses
  - 9 hole golf late June to mid-October
  - Numerous arts and crafts outlets
  - Sailing, fishing, hiking, cycling, kayaking
  - Hotels/motels (11); Bed & breakfasts (11); Cottages, condos, housekeeping units (112)
  - Kite Surfing 12 locations

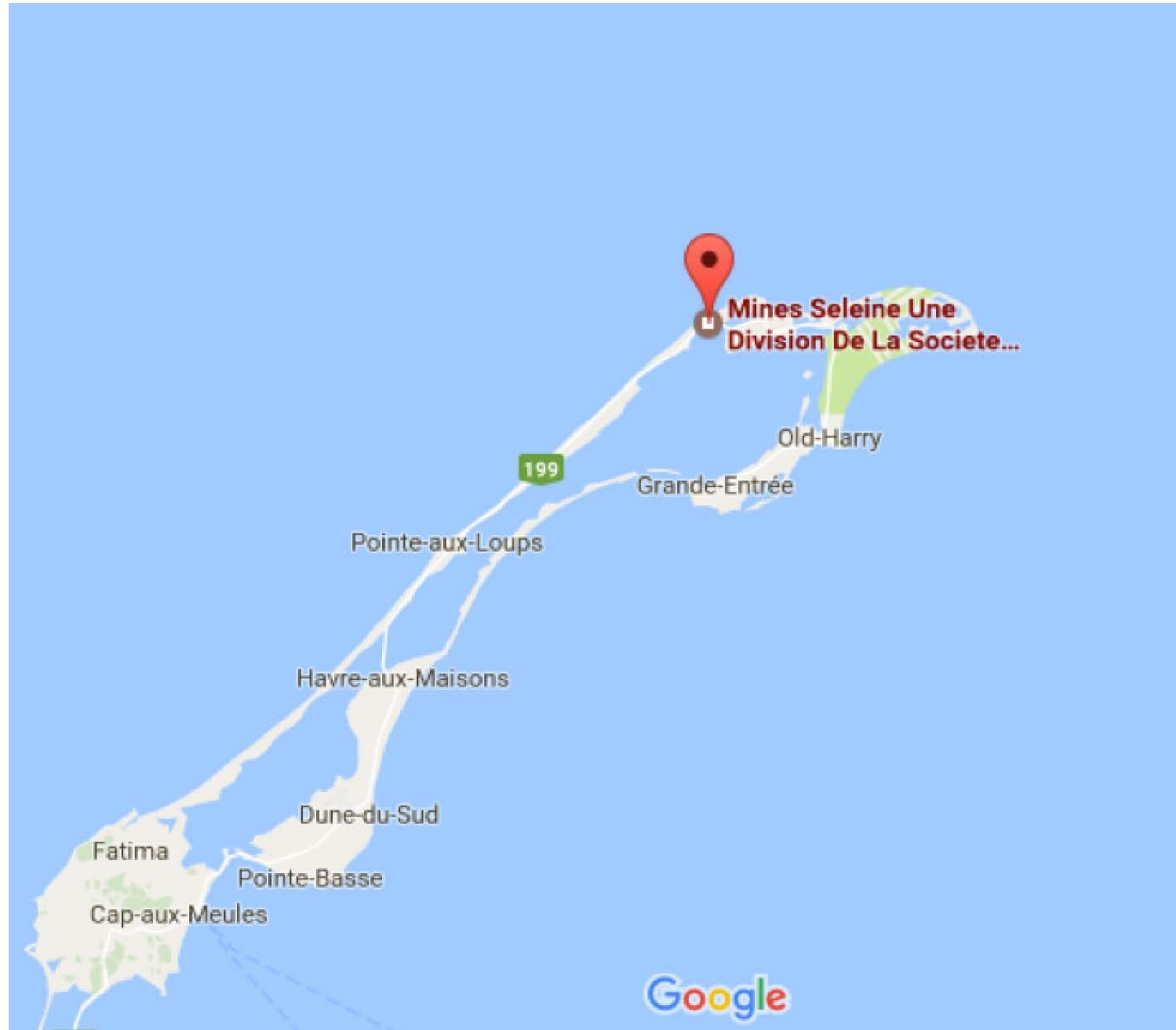
Kite surfing has become a big sport in the last decade

At least 12 locations – at least 7 “lagoons” with minimum waves and lots of wind



## Salt – as though the ocean wasn't enough

Quebec's only salt mine was discovered in 1972 and began production on/under Grosse Isle in 1982.





# SALT

- 1972 discovery
- 360 million years ago the Magdalen Shallows were at the equator
- a sunlit valley periodically flooded with saltwater
- strong sunlight caused the water to evaporate, leaving a deposit of salt.
- Over several million years, hundreds of metres of salt crystals formed, and were then compressed and hardened to form rock salt.
- As the continents drifted apart, the Magdalen Shallows left the Equator and moved to their current position in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.
- thanks to the buoyancy of the 7 salt domes beneath. the Magdalen Islands emerge from the waters of the Gulf of St. Lawrence



2018: 1.3 million metric tonnes of salt each year

Mined as deep as 489 meters using a room and pillar method

Now German owned mine employs 150



# Hiking

“Free Hiking” available lots of places

Pick a beach

Or a cliff top like these shots near Fatima on the north side of Ile de Cap-aux-Meules (Grindstone Island)



## Leads to Blowhole

These tunnels lead inland  
about 75 meters to two  
blowholes



# Blowhole





## Another Blowhole



## A “Failed” Blowhole





# Church

And then back to “civilization”  
to get ready to re-board the  
ferry and wave au revoir to les  
Iles de la Madeleine

