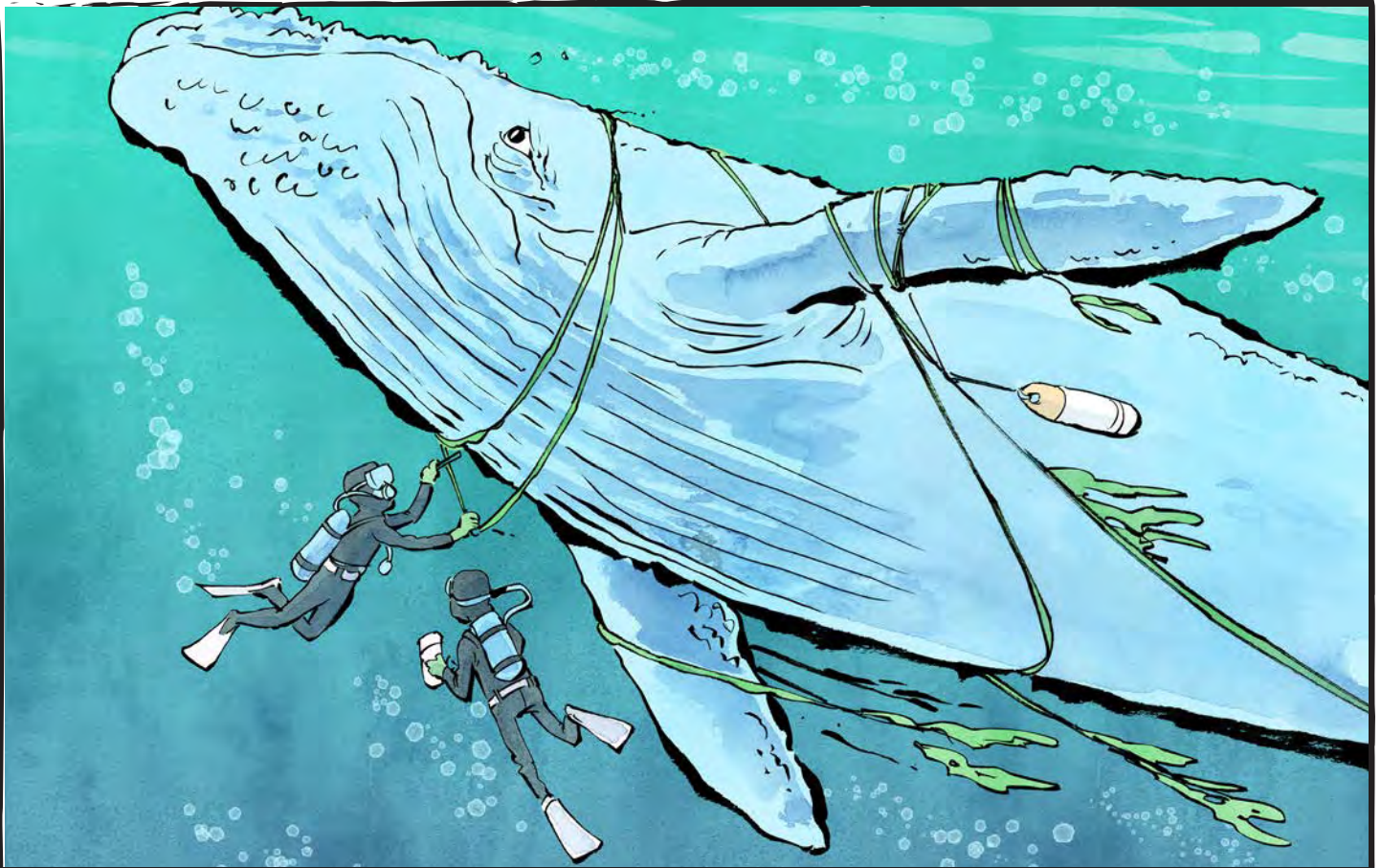


Saving the Whales



There aren't many of them. They work along Canada's coastlines. Their job is difficult and dangerous, but they love it.

They are Canada's whale rescuers.

Whales can get tangled in fishing gear. A tangled whale can become injured. It can even drown.

There are other dangers in the ocean, too. Underwater phone or Internet lines can snare the large mammals. Even a plane wreck can tangle up a whale.

Freeing a whale is a big job. It can take hours, sometimes days, to cut through all the ropes. Sometimes it's difficult to find the animal. Whales

travel great distances. The tangled whale may be far from where it was spotted.

The *Department of Fisheries and Oceans* looks after our waters and manages Canada's fisheries and oceans resources.

Rescuing whales is not easy. "These are 40-50-tonne animals," explains Paul Cottrell. Mr. Cottrell works for the **Department of Fisheries and Oceans** in B.C.



The whales are huge. They're also upset and scared. "You must be very careful and patient, and not move in too quickly," Mr. Cottrell says. Once an animal gets tired,

it is easier and safer to move in. That's when the rescuers can cut the ropes that tangle it.

Mr. Cottrell's team uses drones to help them see the whale. They want to know what it is tangled in. They also want to see how the whale is caught. Is the fishing gear around its mouth or its tail? It makes a difference.

Sharing stories

Last March, Canada's whale rescuers finally got to meet.

The town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, Newfoundland is home to a whale rescue group. It's called Whale Release and Strandings. They invited other whale rescuers to a workshop. Groups came from British Columbia, Quebec, and New Brunswick.

The workshop topic? How to untangle whales.

The whale rescuers talked with each other and shared stories. They learned what works and what doesn't.

Testing tools

The workshop took place at Newfoundland's Marine Institute. The institute holds a

1.7-million-litre tank of water. At 8 metres wide, 4 metres deep, and 22.25 metres long, it's the largest "flume tank" in the world!

The whale rescuers used the flume tank to test different tools. One side of the flume tank has a large window. This lets the whale rescuers study how the tools move underwater. They can't see that when they're out on the ocean.

Some of the tools they tested were new inventions. "We will all walk away with new ideas," said Julie Huntington of Whale Release and Strandings.

The best job in the world

Every rescue is different. Every rescue is a challenge. The rescuers try, but they can't save every whale. They give each rescue their all.

"When... you're successful, and you see those whales swim off, it's just incredible," said Mr. Cottrell. "I feel like I have the best job in the world."



What questions would you like to ask Mr. Cottrell?

