

**Interviewee Name:** Tyler Childers and Anson Kelley

**Project/Collection Title:** Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum 2018

**Interviewer(s) Name(s) and affiliations:** Natalie Springuel (Maine Sea Grant) and Kaitlyn Clark (College of the Atlantic intern)

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**Date of Interview:** March 2, 2018

**Interview Description:**

**Tyler Childers and Anson Kelley**

Jonesport, ME

Commercial Lobstermen and High School Students

Interviewed by Natalie Springuel with Katie Clark

Tyler Childers and Anson Kelley, lobstermen and high school students enrolled in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program in Jonesport, ME, are old friends who speak about their experiences in the Eastern Maine Skippers Program, their current work trying to improve bait quality and pricing, their current fishing locations, and the locations they plan to fish in the future.

**Collection Description:**

Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum 2018 is a project of Maine Sea Grant, The First Coast, College of the Atlantic, and the Island Institute, with support from the Maine Fishermen's Forum Board of Directors.

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**Transcription by:** Natalie Springuel, Maine Sea Grant

Start of TYLER\_CHILDERS\_ANSON\_KELLEY\_VMF2018\_AUDIO

TC: Tyler Childers

AK: Anson Kelley

NS: Natalie Springuel (Interviewer)

KC: Katie Clark (Intern)

[0:00:00.0]

NS: Ok, let's start by having you guys say and spell your names, and I am just going to hold the mic up.

TC: You want to go first?

AK: You can go first.

TC: My name is Tyler Childers. That's Tyler and Childers.

NS: Great, thank you Tyler.

AK: My name is Anson Kelley.

NS: Great, So I just have to read this to you guys, cus it is kind of part of the protocol, and then we will start. So Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum is a project by Maine Sea Grant, The First Coast, and College of the Atlantic. The stories you share will be archived with NOAA Voices from The Fisheries in an ongoing effort to preserve fishing stories and Maine's fishing legacy.

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NS: And then we will probably use some of the stories in broadcasts or presentations and the idea is to let people know about Maine's fishing heritage. Does that sound good to you guys?

TC and AK: Yeah.

NS: Great, so um, tell me where you guys live. So Tyler and Matthew,

AK: Anson.

NS: Anson. OK. Tyler and Anson. So Anson, tell me where you live.

AK: We are from the Moosabec area, Jonesport, Jonesport Beals.

NS: And you are both from there?

AK and TC: Yeah.

NS: And you both go to the High School there?

AK: Yeah, Jonesport Beals, yup.

NS: And Anson are you a fisherman?

AK: Yeah, I am a three generation fisherman.

NS: Great. Tell me a little bit about your fishing story, so when did you start?

AK: I started as a little boy, I went fishing with my father quite a bit, we've enjoyed our time together on the lobster boat, it is where most of our bonds have come from.

NS: How about you?

TC: Yeah, I am a fisherman too. I started out, my dad worked as a sternman for my uncle offshore, and I'd go with him every day when he went out and then

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TC: Eventually I just got my own license, got my own boat, and started hauling my own gear.

NS: So you have your own license?

TC: Yep.

NS: And is that a student license?

TC: Yes.

NS: how long have you had it?

TC: Oh, about eight years.

NS: How about you?

AK: I've got a student license and have my own boat, a 28 footer. Uh 50 traps.

NS: I am so impressed that you guys basically have your own businesses already.

TC: Yeah.

NS: Yeah. What do you love about it, Anson?

AK: I just enjoy being on the water. Being on the water is, it's something else. Being able to wake up in the morning, seeing the sunrise, it is just, uh, beautiful place to be.

NS: Nice. Nice. Can I be a pain and ask you to put the pen down because the squeekyness gets picked up.

AK: Oh, sorry.

NS: Thank you.

[0:02:59.6]

NS: What about you, what do you love about it Tyler?

TC: I just love getting up, starting up the boat, taking off the mooring, and when you get down the Reach, where we live, just give it all you got, so you can get out big, you can get your gear hauled, picking lobster out of traps, then coming home, making money.

NS; That's great. Have you guys grown up in the same community?

AK: Yeah.

NS: So you have known each other for a long time.

TC: Yeah, a little bit.

NS: Do you see each other out on the water?

TC: Uh, not very often.

NS: So, Tyler, tell us a little bit about the Skippers Program.

TC: I joined my Freshman Year, which was three years ago, and I learned about it because we had this think at School called step up day, and my science teacher told me about the Skippers program, and I was interested in eighth grade, and when I got brought up to High School I joined, and ever since then, I have been having fun, just joined every year.

NS: What made you interested in joining it?

TC: Mostly because, uh, looks good on college applications and you get to work with your community more, and get to solve problems about the ocean, and, that's about it.

[0:04:11.1]

NS: Yeah, that's great, that's great. How about you Anson?

AK: This is my freshman year, I joined this year, I just enjoy helping out the community and doing, its involved with things that I love to do out on the water and right around our fishing community.

NS: Great. Great. So what are you guys doing this year, with the Skippers?

TC: We are working with bait prices and quality and availability this year because past two three years bait quality has not been good. We've been getting little chunked up pieces, and prices have been way too high for what they cost because of shortage.

NS: and um, you have personal experience with bait challenges.

TC: Yep

[0:04:58.7]

NS: So what, on your boat, tell us about bait, how do you use bait, where do get it, what do you use?

TC: I get it at my local co-op and every time you put it in the pocket, you come out two days later, haul, none of it will be there, just goes in little chunks. Just doesn't stay on the pockets long enough.

NS: Oh it falls out? Or it is getting eaten?

TC: It is getting eaten, it wont stay on long enough.

NS: So you are looking for a way to make it last longer.  
TC: Yeah.

NS: How about you, what's your bait experience in your boat?

AK: Same thing, I go through three - four cans a day. I get it from my local bait dealer, where I sell my lobsters. I have noticed that quality and prices don't match up. The price is way too high for the quality, just like Tyler said, getting chunked up ground up pieces, and not staying on the pockets as well as a whole herring would.

NS: And you said that you use two or three cans?

AK: three or four.

NS: Three or four? and what's a can?

AK: A five gallon bucket.

[0:06:02.9]

NS: OK. OK. So, what are you trying to, to do with new bait options?

AK: We'd like to see a good quality, lower price, and little better availability. Maybe being able to fish herring closer to where we are from, instead of needing to get it shipped from Portland.

NS: Uhuh. So right now you get your herring from your local bait dealer who gets it from Portland?

AK: Yea.

NS: Yea, same as you?

TC: Yeah, and the bait dealers also go to Massachusetts and Gloucester, bring it up the next day, and sell off, and it just don't, like he said, quality and prices aren't matching up.

NS. Yea. And so in your Skippers program, there is a group of you working on this topic?

Both: Yes.

NS: So are you talking with dealers, what are you doing?

[0:06:57.2]

TC: Yea we contacted the local dealer, Ben Dirkee, who owns Dirkee Lobster Bait out of Jonesport, and we pretty much got the run down on how he gets the bait. How much he pays for the bait, and how much he charges when the bait gets off of his truck and into someone else's hands, and all of that.

NS: Cool. And then what happens?

AK: It is a very long process. Like he said, they go to the boat, they get it pumped off the boat and into the truck, and then they bring it home, they salt it into Xactics and, after that, when they need it, they take it, dump it out and dished out in the buckets. Then it comes to us.

NS: OK. What is an Xactics?

AK: It is a big plastic bin, that holds quite a bit of bait.

NS: Uhuh. And so for the project, what do you hope achieve by the end of the year?

[0:07:56.6]

AK: Some, one group is working on alternative bait. I'd either like to see a good alternative bait come out that works with the herring, works same way the herring does, or just see a good quality come out even if the price stayed the same, see a good quality of the bait come out. For me, good quality is good fishing.

NS: Uhuh. Great. Great. Um, so let's talk a little bit more about your fishing, if that's cool with you guys?

Both: Yea.

NS: Show us on the map, so in front of us we have the charts, we have a chart that goes roughly from Mount Desert Island east to about Great Wass. Um, does this show where you guys are?

TC: Yea, right up in here.

AK: I'm, I work, I...

TC: He fishes over in there.

AK: I fish more this way.

NS: You are a little off the chart.

AK: Yeah.

NS: Ok.

TC: I fish right in this area right here.

NS: How did you decide where to fish?

[0:09:04.5]

TC: Growing up, my dad worked for my uncle as sternman, he would fish in the Bay and I couldn't imagine going anywhere else. One year I fished in a different spot and I didn't really care for it, so I moved back in the Bay and I have been doing good there since.

NS: And the Bay that you are talking about is...

TC: Is from Great Wass Island to Head Harbor, and goes out to Mistake Island, which is where the lighthouse is.

NS: OK. You're lobstering in one of the most beautiful parts of the coast of Maine.

TC: Oh yea.

NS: Yea. Do you love it?

TC: I do.

NS: Yea, it is gorgeous in there. I have had the opportunity to be in, in between those islands, and boy was in beautiful.

TC: Oh yea.

NS: Yea.

TC: You can't get any better than that.

NS: So your dad lobsters in the area too?

TC: Yea, he used to lobster with my uncle and then he got another job on another boat, down towards Winter Harbor, so he'd fish offshore with uh, his captain, right off in offshore.

[0:10:00.5]

NS: Ok. Do you think that, like if you picture yourself as the fisherman that you want to be in 15-20 years, do you want to, where do you want to be fishing?

TC: I want to be fishing offshore, down towards the Grey Zone Canadian Border, and work my way back towards in to the Bays, as I get older.

NS: OK, OK. Tell, you seem really clear about that, tell me more about that. How did you come to that?

TC: It was about 2-3 years ago, when my mother asked me, she goes "What do you want to do when you grow up?" I said "I just want to lobster fish, and then ever since then, I have been thinking about, now I can work my way up, get a bigger boat some day, hopefully get my full license, then come out to the Canadian border, where my uncle fished, and work my way back in, cuz most older people in the Jonesport area, they don't really fish offshore anymore, they fish down the Bay.

NS: And what makes someone decide to fish offshore or in the Bay?

TC: Offshore you got a better chance to catch more lobster, where it is wide open, than in the Bay which is closed, and

[0:11:00.6]

NS: Ok. But offshore might be a little bit more intense?

TC: Yea. Yea, a lot more rough weather,

AK: Big seas.

TC: Big seas, a lot of big seas.

NS: OK. So you want to get some time under your belt.

TC: Yea.

NS: And what's interesting about the Gray Zone?

TC: I've just grown up with my Uncle and my Dad fishing, and they've always fished out there, and I've kinda liked it our there.

NS: Can you explain what the Gray Zone means?

TC: Uh, it's kinda, I can't really explain it, like but, that's where you can fish closest to the Canadian Border,

NS: great.

TC: on the water, but, that's it.

NS: How about you Anson?

AK: uh

NS: So you fish, show, tell me again where you fish?

AK: I fish out here, around this area, we have to sail out by here, and then there is a place "The Black Rocks."

NS: You know what, let's pull out the charts. I am going to lift this and Katie's going to help us find that chart. Yea.

KC: This one?

NS: Nope, not yet. Keep going, and there you go.

[noises]

[0:12:11.4]

[noises]

NS: so we are pulling out the Downeast chart, that goes from Great Wass to Grand Manan.

AK: yea, right here is where I fish. Right here, we sail down the Moosabec Reach in the morning and then there is a place here called The Round House, we go out through here by Mark Island, fish right there in the Bay.

NS: Where is Mark Island?

AK: Right here.

NS: Oh yea, ok.

AK: Then, my father, he fishes offshore once in a while. My uncle does. That's where I fish right now, is in the Bay. When I get older and get a bigger boat, I am planning on moving out a little bit, into the deeper waters. My opinion is the lobsters stay in the cold, dark, deeper waters, and

inshore, they come in, but they are not as hard shelled, and I don't know, they seem to catch better out here than they do inside.

NS: Uhuh

AK: inside.

[0:13:06.6]

NS: And would you say that, um, the guys in your community and maybe girls, there might girls in your community who want to grow up to lobster more, are, do most people want to sort of move sort of move outside, as you get more into it.

AK: I am sure most people want to move outside once they get the timing under their belt.

NS: yea, yea. How much time do you spend on the water now?

AK: Almost every day of the summer.

NS: Yea.

AK: Every day but the weekend.

NS: And not in the winter.

AK: Right.

NS: But if you go offshore later, you might go in the winter.

AK: Yeah.

NS: That's a lot of hard cold work. Yea. Um. What's, what are some your favorite memories of being on the water, with your family.

AK: Just going out with my father and fishing with him, and getting that closer bond of working with him.

[0:14:02.8]

NS: that's great. How about you?

TC: Um, when I was a kid, me and my cousin would take little buoys that were wrapped up in rope, we'd put them all over the side, we'd pretend like we were having a boat race, with buoys offshore. That was fun. I can remember that, and putting food in the hot tank and just let it sit there and warm up, and drive the boat every once in a while. Then go up into the cabin and take paper towel rolls that were down there, pile them up like a pillow and take a nap. And then sit right on the, uh, I can;t think of what it's called, like dashboard kinda, right by the windows, sit up there

AK: Bulkhead.

TC: yea, the bukhead.

NS: The bulkhead.

TC: Yep, sit on top of the bulkhead and just look at the ocean and all that. Spend time with my Dad, that was fun.

NS: That sounds like great memories.

TC: Oh yeah.

NS: no wonder you guys want to keep doing it, yeah.

[0:15:02.1]

NS: um, in your time fishing, cuz you both have now fishing for

TC: quite a while

NS: quite a while if you started at... how old were you when you started, Tyler?

TC: I was 8 and 9.

NS: You were about 8 or 9, how about you Anson?

AK: Started right from when I was old enough to hop on the boat and uh, 3 or 4.

NS: So you guys have been out there, how, can I ask you how old you are? How old are you Anson?

AK: 14.

NS: 14. And Tyler?

TC: 16.

NS: So you have spent a lot of time on the water already. Have you noticed in your time on the water things that might be changing? Whether it is about the industry, or different things that you are seeing?

TC: people are getting bigger boats now, then what they had been before. You see these people coming out with big 50 foot boats, and hauling more traps.

AK: It started from a little outboard with a small small engine, now they just keep getting bigger and better I guess.

[0:15:58.7]

NS: Yea. What do you think about the future of the fishery?

AK: In some ways, I think that, hopefully, hopefully, it will stay the way it is. But also in the back of your mind, you are also a little nervous because more people are getting into it, and you know, the lobsters can only be populated the way they are for so long.

TC: Pretty much what he said.

NS: Yea. What do you guys love about living in the Jonesport Beals area?

TC: Everyone's friendly to you. There is not much drama. Everyone knows, like, what, who you are, and they will talk to you, even if you don't know them and they know you. Just a small community that

AK: One big family.

TC: yea, it is one big family.

NS: That's great. That's great. Katie did you have anything that you were wondering about?

[0:16:58.0]

KC: Do you, are you both planning, so, um, have any other fisheries that you guys have thought of fishing in, other than lobstering? Or like, to supplement that income?

AK: My father, he uh, scallop drags, and I am hoping that I can get a scallop license and scallop drag.

NS: So some part of the season scallop and other part of the season, lobster.

AK: yea you can scallop in the winter, around December or January, and fish in the summers, and springs.

NS: Great.

TC: I haven't really thought about fishing another fishery but I've thought about, like, when I get older, maybe I will go to college and get a degree in maybe mechanics and stuff, and open my own shop, in the winter time, work on vehicles then, and then summer time, spring comes around, get back lobstering.

NS: Great. Great. Any other stories you guys want to share? Anything really amazing that you have seen when you have been out on the water? Or surprising? Surprising things in your traps?

[0:18:09.1]

TC: I can't really think of anything that's surprising that I've seen in my traps, before.

NS: Yea.

AK: I haven't really caught anything in my traps that I haven't seen before.

NS: Uhuh.

AK: Well there was one day this summer that me and my father were out there and we caught a fish with legs.

NS: A fish with legs?

AK: A fish with legs.

NS: Describe it.

AK: It just looked like a regular sculpin and it had lobster legs on it, it looked like.

NS: Woah. Did you take a picture of it?

AK: I, my father did.

NS: Curious.

AK: yeah.

NS: Did you guys figure out what it was?

AK: No.

NS: Wow, that would be neat to show some people to see if we could figure it out.

AK: Yeah.

NS: Yeah. How big was it?

AK: Oh, I don't know, 6 inches maybe.

NS: Yea, yea, neat. Neat. Great. Any other stories?

Both: [silence]

NS: Well thanks guys, you guys are up to some really interesting work and the project that you are doing with the skippers, hopefully will help address the bait questions.

TC: Hopefully.

NS: Yea. Thank you so much!

Both: No problem.

[0:19:27.4]

End.