

**Interviewees Names:** John Mitchell, Joey Evangelista, Jamie Campbell, and Steven Kenney

**Project/Collection Title:** Voices of the Maine Fishermen's Forum 2019

**Interviewer(s) Name(s) and Affiliation:** Galen Koch (The First Coast) and Giulia Cardoso (College of the Atlantic)

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**Interview Description:**

John Mitchell, Joey Evangelista, Jamie Campbell, and Steven Kenney are high school students from Mount Desert Island, ME, who were part of the Maine Center for Coastal Fisheries' Eastern Maine Skippers Program as well as commercial fishermen of their own. In this interview, they share their work done through the Skippers Program, their appreciation of island life, and their experiences in the industry as young fishermen.

**Collection Description:**

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**Transcribed By:** Giulia Cardoso

Start of  
JOHN\_MITCHELL\_JOEY\_EVANGELISTA\_JAMIE\_CAMPBELL\_STEVEN\_KENNEY\_  
VMFF2019\_AUDIO

[0:15:10.8]

GK: Galen Koch  
GC: Giulia Cardoso  
JM: John Mitchell  
JE: Joey Evangelista  
JC: Jamie Campbell  
SK: Steven Kenney

[0:00:00.0]

GK: Rolling! Okay, so I'm gonna have you all say your names on this, okay?

JM: Okay.

GK: We'll go over there first.

JE: Uhm, Joey Evangelista.

JM: Uhm, Jake Mitchell.

JC: Jamie Campbell.

SK: Steven Kenney.

GK: And what did you guys, can you tell me a little bit about, uhm, what you were presenting today?

JM: Well, today we were presenting a poster on how we wanna rebuild the groundfish industry in New England. And we just wanna get a market, 'cause a lot of the fish prices aren't worth the while for the fishermen to go catch their quota right now. So if we could build a local, fresh fish seafood market around the towns and get a good industry going with that, that'd be good for the groundfishing fleets.

GK: And I forgot to ask, can you all say where you're from? And what your occupation is, if it's student.

JM: Mmm.

GK: Or if you fish.

JM: Alright.

GK: You know.

JE: Uh, Joseph and lobstering.

GK: And where are you from?

JM: Where are you from?

JE: Uh, MDI.

JM: Uhm, Jake Mitchell and I fish out of Bass Harbor, lobstering and I do some scalloping too.

[0:01:01.5]

JC: Jamie and I sternman out of Northeast.

SK: I'm a sternman as well on a lobster boat and I, I live in MDI as well.

GK: Cool. So, okay, tell me, I'm curious about this project and how it sort of came about? And maybe explaining a little bit, too, about what it is.

JM: Mmhm. Okay. So, let's talk here, but uh (laughs). Basically, groundfish industry was a really big industry in the 80s and then in the 90s it kinda crashed and the fish stocks all went away and the fish prices tanked and selling to the co-ops now it's like one or two dollars a pound. But now people still have these licenses, and the fish stocks have come back. We actually have a lot of increases in quota this year, and you can get the quota, so if we could get these guys out catching these fish, it's just like a resource that hasn't been tapped yet recently, so . . . Get good prices form and it'd be great.

GK: Have you in your life, I mean, have you been able to catch those groundfish?

JM: I've not been on a groundfish boat, but I've been on a bunch of draggers.

[0:02:00.6]

JM: and, you, I mean, you catch the groundfish and you bring them up in the lobster traps. And my father actually just recently purchased a groundfish license, attached to his scallop license, and they're gonna be doing like, longlining. Which is a lot of what they do now, it's like with hook fishing instead of nets. Because it's easier to target fish and the fish are like, cleaner and not as scarred up by the net and things, so you get a higher price for them.

GK: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

GK: And what, can you guys tell me a little bit just about your own fishing histories? So like, when did you get on a boat? And (laughs) how did it happen?

JM: You wanna go Jamie, or . . . ?

GK: Who wants to go first? Wanna go Jamie?

JC: I'll go.

JE: Go Jamie?

JC: Uhm (coughs), I started fishing when I was three years old. Uh, I think the first place, started with like, freshwater, just 'cause, uhm, my grandfather had done a lot of fishing when he was growing up, and then I obviously grew up around the ocean my whole life, so it's been like a staple. We've, I can always remember going and having like cookouts and stuff and, uh, family friends and neighbors would take me out on their boats and, it's, just been like something I've done my whole life.

GK: And when did you start your lobstering now?

JC: Uh, freshman year of high school, during the summer. I actually had, my mom, someone my mom had worked with over the winter had lo—said he needed bus—said he was looking for a sternman. And I luckily got the job.

GK: That's awesome

JC: So I've fished out of Northeast and then I've done, I've been on other boats out of like Frenchboro or Bass Harbor a few times. Just with all kinds of different people.

GK: Does it, uh, I mean, does your schedule on the boat lean into your school year a little bit on either side, or you do that once the summer . . . ?

JC: Uh, yeah, there has been a few times, like, where I have to catch a boat to a different island on like, a Friday, so I wouldn't be able to go to school that day. But, for the most part no.

GK: Yeah, yeah. And what about you?

SK: Oh yeah.

GK: What's your history?

SK: My friend Josh who had a, had a little skiff and we went out sometimes.

[0:04:02.1]

And uh, we didn't make much. I only made about 100 dollars in the summer. Being a sternman and a, you know most of the money went to the boat and bait and everything. But it was a good experience, you know, I learned to do the jobs and everything, so I hope I can uh, land a better job soon.

GK: And when did that, when did you start doing that?

SK: That was last year, I was a junior and uh, yeah I started doing it.

GK: Cool.

SK: Yeah.

GK: Do you have hopes that you'll be able to keep doing it in the future? That you'll be fishing?

SK: Uh, yeah, I mean, the way the industry is going uh, I'm not sure, I've heard a lot of things, but I kinda hope people can uh, keep fishing and lobstering and everything.

JM: So I got started fishing.

GK: Maybe say your names, too, before you go.

JM: Okay, alright.

GK: 'Cause we're gonna kinda know.

JM: Alright. So, Jake Mitchell and I started fishing probably when I was, for real started fishing when I was eight, I got my student lobster license. And I fished ten traps for three summers until I was 11, and then I moved up 50 traps. And then when I was 13, I think it was, moved up to 150. Now I almost have my full license, and I'll get 300 when I get that.

[0:05:03.3]

GK: Wow

JM: And my dad also grew up, like, ever since he was like, 10, working on an offshore scallop boat out of New Bedford, Massachusetts. And uh, he runs one of those boats now. Big steel boat down there. So he's always been dragging.

GK: He's down in New Bedford?

JM: Yeah.

GK: Wow.

JM: Mmhm.

JE: So uh, I'm Joey and uh, I started fishing probably, like lobstering, and 6th —7th grade, when I moved back up to MDI. I was born there, but moved away for a while and uh, it, I uh, it's something that I feel like, 'cause it's kinda, I'm fortunate to be able to do, since it's uh, not something you can do in a lot of places and uh, something that I really enjoy. And uh, I'm hoping it stays for a long time.

GK: What are some of the uh, I'm gonna take your cup away from you (laughs). The nervous habit of like.

JC: Oh, yeah (laughs).

GK: Ticking at the cup.

JC: Alright.

[0:06:02.1]

GK: Uhm, what are some of your concerns or hopes for the future? With, that you talk about in the Skippers Program or you talk about with your families, or around the fishing industry?

JM: Well, there's a lot of different fisheries that all have different problems with them. But I mean, lobstering, which is what we seem to talk about all the time, so I get a little bored of talking about it sometimes, but, big things right now that, uh, are the whole whale thing and they wanna reduce the amount of vertical lines in the water and they're tryna do all these different crazy things to save the whales, and that can be a big problem for the fishery in the future. I mean, rope's basically like, v—one of the biggest things in it, you know, you gotta have rope and uh, the other thing would be the bait shortage. Herring got cut back a lot this year, so it's gonna be really expensive. So, see what happens with all that. There's a lotta other bait, but (coughs) it's gonna be a little bit hard. People won't be making quite as much money, so.

GK: Do you use other bait other than herring? [Inaudible.]

[0:07:00.9]

JM: Yeah, I only used herring for about half of last year. I mean, there's, there's a lotta, you can use animal hides, like pork hide and beef hide and just a lot of other fish. Like, red fish, pogies are a big, popular bait, so there's other things. Some people seem to freak out a lot about it and, I mean, it's useless.

JE: A lot of people are jigging for their own.

JM: You just gotta use something else. Yeah.

GK: What did you say? A lot of people are . . . catching their own?

JE: Jigging for their own, just trying to get as much as they can, without needing to spend penny.

JM: Yeah you gotta like, go jigging, get a tray of pollock or mackerel, or something down the wharf. Or some guys go out and do it up on the islands in the morning. Yeah.

GK: Wow. I guess I hadn't heard that people were doing that.

JM: Yeah, I mean, it's, a lot of guys are just doing it for halibut fishing. 'Cause fresh bait works really good on halibut trawls, but. Yeah, you can do it.

GK: Do you guys go halibut fishing?

JM: Yeah.

GK: Do you get tags for that?

JM: Mhmm. Yeah.

GK: That seems like a fun thing to do.

JM: It was pretty fun. I caught one last year, finally. I mean, you gotta really put in some time and I, I didn't have my big boat, like I just got a 32-foot boat, but I only had like, a 21-foot boat when we were doing the halibut fishing, and the weather's a little crappy in the spring, so it was a little hard last year, but we're gonna hit it hard this year.

[0:08:06.6]

GK: Yeah. What are some conc—I mean, what are some things that are happening in the community on MDI that you're thinking about? As you, do you wanna l—do you wanna keep living there, do you have?

JM: Oh yes.

GK: Yeah.

JE: I definitely, yeah. It's, it's just like, it, it's a really short summer and it's not like a really fun winter, but having like a summer where you can be in a place like that, it's really fun .

JM: Yeah.

GK: What do you think, Jamie?

JC: Uhm, I don't really know.

GK: Do you think you wanna stay on MDI?

JC: Yeah. I, I've liked living on the island and in Maine quite a bit. It's uh, I like the different seasons, I really do enjoy fall and even winter.

JM: And the lack of people.

JC: Not supposed to swear right now, but (laughs).

JM: There's too many people (coughs) in a lot of places (laughs).

JC: Yeah.

GK: Too many people?

JM: Yeah, I like the backside of the island where there's not many people.

[0:09:04.1]

GK: And what do you like about living there? I mean, other than it's, I mean, beautiful, you said.

JM: You do, you do what you want.

JE: Yeah, there's a lot of freedom there.

JM: Yeah.

JE: And.

JM: Yeah.

SK: Yeah.

JC: And you don't, it's really hard to find like, a genuinely mean person, I feel like, in Maine. Like a lot of 'em are, really, it's like a, it's very (coughs) community-oriented.

SK: Yeah, and you know everyone.

JC: And you know that, you know everybody.

JE: You walk into a store and there's not really.

JM: You don't have to worry about locking your truck at a grocery store or something on the island, not really.

JC: Yeah, I don't think I've ever locked my front door (laughs).

SK: Well when the summer comes, then.

JM: Oh yeah.

JC: That's, that's.

GK: But how long have you had it, your license?

JC: (Laughs.) But that's the weird thing, though, they'll, they'll uhm, no I mean like to my house.

GK: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

JC: Where like, you'll spend all this money on getting these.

JM: Yeah, I've seen.

JC: Uhm, motion sensors, whites and—

JM: Out in the middle of the woods?

JC: like \$8,000 equipment out on your house and then don't even lock your front door (laughs).



JC: You know, just 'cause you know everybody that's in a 100-mile radius of you, even on different islands. Like, just going to MDI, I know people from Swan's Island, uh, Frenchboro, Cranberry Isles and everything [inaudible].

[0:10:08.5]

JM: I mean, if somebody just walks into your house, I mean you know where to find them (laughs).

JC: Right (laughs)?

JC: I mean, but you know 'em good enough that people, you don't even knock on people's door, you just open the door and walk in. Like, you can (laughs).

GC: That's true, I'm getting used to that.

JM: Yeah.

JC: In some homes.

JE: You do, Jamie?

SK: I do it at your house, Joey (laughs).

GK: That's great, yeah.

JC: Yeah, no, uhm, but it's just rea—it's really cool, 'cause like you can be friends with people that your parents' parents were friends with, like.

JM: Yeah.

JC: And there's still like, the whole, like I think community theme, but it's very, like everyone's friendly.

JM: You get a lot, a lot of opportunities too, like, didn't you have some job on like a bluefin tuna boat last summer? Going out there, Jeffrey's.

JC: I did! Yeah!

SK: Yeah! That was.

JC: So, uhm, we would, I went, I went down to uhm.

JM: See, I like tuna fishing, that's fun.

JC: Down to the Key West in Florida, I was going out on this boat and uh, this, this guy that was, he was uh, friend of my grandfather's.

[0:11:00.2]

JC: He was, he's a younger guy, he's like, maybe in his late 30s, early 40s. His name's Jeffrey, he's kinda on the crazy side (laughs).

SK: That fricking guy.

JC: So. Jeffrey. Yes, he's, he's a riot. He uhm, he goes out with Jake sometimes, on his dad's boat.

JM: Yeah.

JC: And so, yeah, but, uhm, Jeffrey decided that he just, he wanted to, he wanted to go down on this little excursion down to Florida and just go on a bluetin—Bluetin? Bluefin tuna boat.

JM: Oooh.

JC: And uh, so, we ended up staying at the uh, marina, just sleeping in his truck (laughs). So we'd like, we'd go out at like, 3 in the morning and Jeffrey being Jeffrey, we'd, we'd stay out on the water till 8:30, 9 o'clock at night, come back.

JM: Couldn't buy a hotel room for ya? I mean.

JC: Hop in the truck, throw the seats back and go back to bed. It was just.

JM: I would've slept on the boat.

JC: It was just, my life revolved around the ocean for three months and it was the most fun I've ever had. It was, we did a, we did longlining.

JM: Yeah but how many fish did you catch, so?

JC: We got like, five.

JM: Oh right (laughs).

JC: But I mean, tuna, bluefin tuna goes.

SK: They pay pretty.

JC: For a lot.

[0:12:01.2]

SK: Yeah, you get a lot of fish.

JC: Like, you ge—you get the fish out of the water and.

JM: Those things are like.

JC: You, you'd already be on the phone with some, someone.

JM: Yeah, back at the docks.

JC: Down in like Japan or China, and.

JM: Wow. The fish dealers are, you're on the phone with the fish dealers.

JC: Yeah, but so, uhm.

JM: Those things are like, 30 bucks a pound if they're really nice tuna fish.

JC: I caught like a, oh jeez, what was it, like s-six? Six feet? Something.

JM: Yeah, they have to be, I think they'll, 73, 74 inches is the minimum length from [inaudible]. But.

JC: I think it was around like, 78 or 80 inches. And uhm, it was, 500, 600 pounds. And I ended up getting like, \$9,000 for it, from some, some fish dealer in Japan.

JM: Mmhm.

JC: Just for one fish.

GK: That's insane.

SK: I've just.

JC: And that was after expenses.

SK: Oh, and did you just see that one on, no did you see that one on the internet? They auctioned off in Japan for like, a million dollars? It was like the, I just saw that, er, I didn't even believe that one, that was insane.

(Mumbling in background.)

GK: Wow, I had no idea.

SK: No, you should look that up about the million dollar one.

GK: Okay.

SK: Though, like, it's pretty crazy.

GK: Okay.

JC: And then uhm, what about you and Clayton, when you and Clayton used to go diving for urchins?

[0:13:03.0]

JM: No, he used to go diving. I never went in the water, I ain't going diving.

JC: Oh, you drove Clayton's boat.

JM: Yeah. No, that was scallops. It, we get scallop divers around where we live, too, sometimes and they get to go on different zones than the draggers get to go in, and, yeah. I don't like much diving, I like dragging, working on the boat.

JC: All the dive, like, hand, hand-picked scallops taste better. Like, the dive down one.

JE: They don't make a difference.

JC: They do! Dragged scallops has sand in 'em.

JE: There's no difference! Yeah, well, you wash 'em.

JC: They taste sandy.

JM: We gotta get going guys, in a second.

?: I think, yeah.

JM: we gotta be on the bus in like, 10 minutes.

GK: Alright, alright. So, I'll, I'd, I wanted to ask you.

JC: Sure.

GK: Just how, this is kind of a silly question, but, your parents, like were they just like, "Yeah it's fine for you to go down to F—bluefin tuna (laughs), fish for [inaudible]"?

JC: See, uh no, they.

JM: Well, he's 17 now.

JC: They've, they've, they've known Jeffrey his whole life.

GK: Okay.

JC: And he's on, they went to school together.

JE: A lot of the people are family friends.

JC: And everything.

SK: [Inaudible.]

JM: Yeah, and like, everybody goes down to Florida in the winters, on the coast, like all the older lobstermen, so.

JC: And yeah, so.

GK: And so did you feel like you got, you guys all have that support of your family on this?

JM: Yeah, ev—everybody's family, you know.

JC: Yeah. They were, I mean, well, you know.

JM: Except for some people.

JC: Moms are being moms.

JM: Are like, "You need to go to college and get an education" [inaudible].

[0:14:08.1]

JC: And actually, the Skippers Program really helped with that, too. 'Cause like, I was very disinterested in school coming into it.

JM: That's another thing, all these programs are really good for that .

JC: And it's like, the start of my freshman year I found out on Pathways and this is my fourth year in the Skippers Program. And I think it really, it really saved me and helped me.

JM: Yeah.

JC: Reignite the flame into wanting to go to school and I've met so many great people in the fishing community, from different, like, Rockland, here.

SK: Yeah.

JC: Like uhm, I met Tim Ryder, he does, he captains for.

JM: Oh, the Fishmonger guy.

JC: Th—the New England Fishmonger.

JM: Yeah.

JC: He has uh, 10,000 something people on his.

JM: Facebook page or whatever that.

JC: Facebook likes, yeah.

JM: No, I've read an article about him in the National Fisherman, he's bas—he's doing.

JE: A classic [inaudible].

JM: What we wanna do with the uh, the longline thing in our groundfish, like, he's basically just going out there and jigging all day, bringing in these fish every night, like, quite a bit of it too, so. We talked to him.

[0:15:02.3]

GK: Cool.

JM: But, yep.

GK: That's great. Uhm, we're gonna get a photo of you guys before you leave, okay?

JM: Sounds good.

ALL: Okay.

GK: So just stand over there, thank you so much.

JC: Stand?

GC: Alright, we can do.

[0:15:10.8]