

FINAL REPORT

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CHAMPLAIN LONGBOATS: CONNECTING STUDENTS BY CONNECTING TO THE LAKE

CONTACT INFORMATION

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This is an EPA funded project.

**Note: Please see your executed MOA/contract/subaward with NEIWPCC for exact appropriate language to be include. Sample language below:*

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the 2022-2023 school year, students in Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's flagship boatbuilding program, Champlain Longboats, took a building project from tree to boat while making personal connections to Lake Champlain that inspired them to care for the future of the lake. Project activities included a lumber milling day and field trip with a forester; four sessions of Lake Ecology learning experiences; two presentations at the mid-year Open House Day and Launch Day; and a culminating Launch Day event when students launched their completed four-oared pilot gig, *Charlie Burchard*, into Lake Champlain.

This project provided area youth with a collaborative, hands-on experience that connected them to their unique environment and to each other. Students increased their team-building skills and self-confidence; felt accomplishment in completing a project; felt connected to Lake Champlain and took action to ensure the lake's future health.

Now in our 24th year of Champlain Longboats programming, this most recent group of students made the boatbuilding project a success. The Museum team is incredibly proud of their efforts and thankful to the Lake Champlain Basin Program for making this project possible.

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1. PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Champlain Longboats is Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's flagship boat building program for students. The Museum partners with schools, students, and teachers to build a wooden boat each year, and those boats are used in a community rowing league for students and adults. The program connects students with the rich tradition of boat building in the Champlain Valley, with the science of our forests and lake, all while building teamwork, self-confidence, and community. The boat building program is an intensive year-long project with up to 20 diverse students from two area high schools participating several days a week. Champlain Longboats focuses on problem solving, team building, increasing self-esteem, and building healthy connections between peers, adults, and the environment.

Champlain Longboats serves middle and high school students who may have had a hard time finding success in traditional academic settings but can thrive in a more hands-on learning environment. The engaging and varied curriculum creates safe and supported learning opportunities that meet kids where they are and help them grow from there. A key part of Champlain Longboats is building an inclusive environment where students can connect with each other, adult mentors, and the community.

Young people participating in the Champlain Longboats boat building program experience success and the pride of having accomplished something together with their peers, often for the first time in their lives. Through hands-on and experiential learning, students are given the opportunity to lead, and to create something together—opportunities that every child deserves as part of their educational experience.

2. TASKS COMPLETED

We are pleased to report that the Museum team completed all tasks as outlined in the project workplan according to the approved project timeline. These tasks were:

Outreach/Recruitment (Task #1): The Museum worked with partner schools (Middlebury Union High School and Addison Consortium Program) to confirm students for the boat building program. In total, 15 students participated throughout the program. The Museum also sent a [press release](#) announcing the program and its supporters.

Wood Products Experiences and Forestry Field Trip (Task #2): Student boat builders accompanied forester David Brynn, of Vermont Family Forests, for a day on a timber lot. Students used a Biltmore stick to measure and select timber for upcoming boat projects. David focused the trip on the connection between healthy forests and clean water, sharing the impact that trees have on the health of Lake Champlain. After the trip, a local sawyer brought a portable band sawmill onsite and students assisted the sawyer to cut between 5,000-10,000 board feet of lumber. Students gained an appreciation for the patience and foresight needed to ensure that next year's students have air-dried planking stock, and that green white-oak bending stock is on hand for this year's boat. At the mid-semester Open House Day, students demonstrated their knowledge by presenting to their teachers and families what they learned about forestry

and wood products. This Open House Day was a particularly successful part of the program and educators were pleased to support several particularly quiet students in sharing an engaging, educational, and informative presentation with all in attendance.

Lake Ecology Experiences for Students (Task #3): Student boat builders met with the Museum’s Education Programs Manager Meghan Hill four times during the project. Meghan led them in hands-on activities on topics including water sampling, microplastic pollution, and diatoms. Students were encouraged to see the role that they play in keeping Lake Champlain clean.

Boat Building and Launch Day (Task #4): The student boat builders worked with staff and volunteers in the Museum’s boat shop several days per week over the course of the project. Students learned to use woodworking tools, collaborate with peers and program staff, and understand what it means to function effectively in a working environment. Along the way, students researched and gave presentations on boat building topics. Our talented team of educators created an environment which fostered mutual understanding, respect, and teamwork, and helped these young boatbuilders grow as students and as people. At the end of the project, the team publicly celebrated their collective accomplishment on Launch Day. Everyone – teachers, family, friends, supporters, neighbors – was invited to see the new boat and hear the student boat builders share their experience to great applause.

3. METHODOLOGY

N/A

4. QUALITY ASSURANCE TASKS COMPLETED

N/A

5. DELIVERABLES COMPLETED

We completed all deliverables according to the approved project workplan. Below is a table showing completed deliverables.

Task	Task title	Deliverables	Date Completed
1	Outreach and Recruitment	Press release, number of participating students from Middlebury and Addison Consortium Program	January – April 2023
2	Wood Products Experiences	1 forest day trip with a forester; milling lumber at the Museum; mid-project presentation on lumber and environmental impact	March 2023
3	Lake Ecology Experiences	4 lake ecology learning sessions	November 2022 – April 2023
4	Boat Building Experiences	15 students, several days/week at the Museum	November 2022 – May 2023

		throughout the project period; completed boat; Launch Day event	
5	Reporting	Approved on-time quarterly reports throughout the project period. The final report is herein submitted.	January – July 10, 2023

6. CONCLUSIONS

This LCBP-funded project was a great success as we completed another successful year of Champlain Longboats programming. The Museum’s work focuses on problem solving, academic achievement, increased self-esteem, and healthy connections between peers, adults, and the environment. Especially among this cohort of students, these young people were given the opportunity to lead and create something together – not just a new boat, but a new sense of what is possible for each of them. These are opportunities that every child deserves as part of their educational experience. We are so proud to be part of their success.

7. REFERENCES

N/A

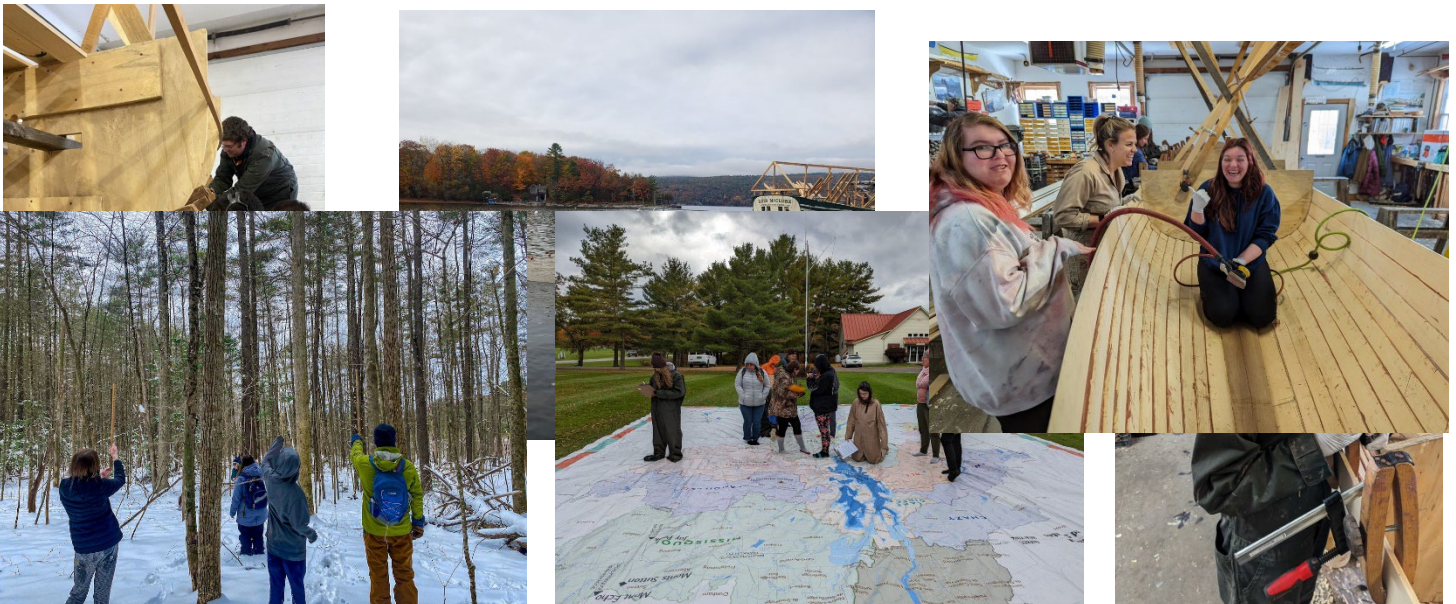
8. APPENDICES

Appended Documents:

The press release for this project is linked [here](#).

Photos:

The photos below are also included as separate JPEG attachments in the email sent with this final report to the Project Officer.





From Top Left:

Figure 1. Students add a plank to *Charlie Burchard's* hull.

Figure 2. Students practice Seine netting with Museum Education Programs Manager, Meghan Hill.

Figure 3. Students sand the inside of the boat.

Figure 4. Students learn to use Biltmore Sticks during their field trip to Vermont Family Forests.

Figure 5. Students explore the Museum's Giant Map.

Figure 6. A student attaches the final plank to the boat's hull.

Figure 7. Students pose beside lumber they will soon cut with a sawyer for next year's build.

Figure 8. A student demonstrates a boat building technique for onlookers at Open House Day.

Figure 9. Students row *Charlie Burchard* for the first day during Launch Day celebrations.