



# FINAL REPORT

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## REMOVING BARRIERS TO ACCESS IN 2023

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This is a EPA funded project.

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

This project was funded by an agreement awarded by EPA to NEIWPC in partnership with the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2023, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum continued to expand and deepen its commitment to build a healthier future and community for Lake Champlain by removing barriers to access. Since removing admission costs, introducing pay-what-you-can programming and expanding free digital content, we have seen a tremendous response from the community and a continued, significant need for these ongoing services. The prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of providing our programs, exhibits, and research to everyone equally, without restrictions or barriers to access. What we do – connect people to their history, to Lake Champlain, and to each other – is critically important to the communities of the Champlain Basin. The goal of this project, and all our work at the Museum, continues to be creating a healthier lake and healthier communities.

In 2023, we had over 10,300 visitors onsite at the Museum. Nearly 1 out of every 5 visitors said they specifically came because the Museum was free and 66% of visitors were first-time visitors this season. We had 98 campers enrolled in our summer camps and of those, 60 campers received reduced or free tuition. We also expanded our pay-what-you-can model into other on-water public programming, including our fleet of Split Rock Dinghy sailboats and other canoeing and rowing programs. We launched our replica canalboat *Lois McClure* archive online, hosted the Museum's second Revolutionary War-focused Virtual Archaeology Conference, and promoted our Collections online via 5 blogs and 16 social media posts. We also saw 4,703 visits to our digital Museum pages, a 56% increase from 2021 as well as 56,975 unique visitors to our website, which increased by 3,000 from 2021 and 2022!

Thanks to Lake Champlain Basin Program support, the Museum achieved its goals – and then some! We look forward to continuing these critically important initiatives in 2024 and beyond. Thank you for making this work possible.

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## **1. PROJECT SYNOPSIS**

In 2023, Lake Champlain Maritime Museum continued to expand and deepen its commitment to build a healthier future and community for Lake Champlain by removing barriers to access. Since removing admission costs and introducing pay-what-you-can programming, we have seen a tremendous response from the community and a continued, significant need for these ongoing services. The prolonged impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the importance of providing our programs, exhibits, and research to everyone equally, without restrictions or barriers to access. What we do – connect people to their history, to Lake Champlain, and to each other – is critically important to the communities of the Champlain Basin. By removing financial barriers to admissions and programming, we make the Museum accessible to everyone and provide opportunities for people to make personal connections with Lake Champlain and become stewards of the lake.

The Museum connects visitors to the Champlain Valley's history, ecology, and archaeology through interactive exhibits and on-water experiences. Visitors and students can see how people historically overcame challenges of everyday life within the broader social, political, economic, and environmental context of their times, and apply that knowledge to their actions in the present. In 2023, we especially focused on experiences that reflect LCBP's Opportunities for Action. Discussing subjects like microplastics, aquatic invasive species prevention, climate change, and clean water developed better lake stewards and a healthier watershed.

We are proud to report that the Museum met or exceeded all deliverables for this LCBP-funded project according to the approved project timeline. Removing admission, introducing pay-what-you-can-programming, and increasing digital access has had a tremendously positive impact on the Museum. For the third year in a row, we have maintained our 10,000+ visitors a year (30% increase from when we last charged admission in 2019). Of those visitors in 2023, 1 out of 5 said they came specifically because the Museum was free and 66% were first time visitors to the Museum. We enrolled 98 students in our summer camp programs and 60 of the students received reduced or free tuition. We also saw 4,703 visits to our Digital Museum pages, a 56% increase from 2021.

Thanks to Lake Champlain Basin Program support, the Museum achieved its goals – and then some! We look forward to continuing these critically important initiatives in 2024 and beyond. Thank you for making all this possible.

## 2. TASKS COMPLETED

We are pleased to report that we completed or exceeded all deliverables according to the approved project workplan. Below is a summary of this work:

**Task 1 Promotional Materials:** A key part of removing barriers to access was direct outreach to underserved communities using a variety of different communication methods. The Museum undertook a promotion campaign including a [press release](#) and media outreach. We exceeded our original goal of 3 printed ads with two ads in the Addison Independent, as well as ads in each of the following: Community News Group, Addison Country Visitors Guide, Discovery Map, Kids VT Summer Issue, and Vermont Vacation Tourism. We also met our goal with three digital ads in the Addison Country Visitors Guide, Vermont Vacation tourism, and Google ads. Multiple e-newsletters about free admission, camps, expeditions, and the digital Museum reached 138,297 users, and we saw 55,194 engagements with that content.

The reach of this marketing campaign was extremely successful. To date we have seen 56,975 unique website visitors so far in 2023, which was approximately 3,000 more unique visitors than we saw in 2021 or 2022. An additional 66,448 people saw and interacted with posts about free admission, camps, expeditions, and digital Museum content through our social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, and X/Twitter). Below is a chart showing the monthly website visitation, highlighting the months when LCBP-funded promotions were running.

Month	Website Visitation
January	3,906
February	4,305
March	3,713
April	4,456
May	6,676
June	5,986
July	6,433
August	5,615
September	6,225
October	4,705
November	3,709
December	2,700 (projected)
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58,429</b>

Below is a listing of 2023 News & Press that mentioned Free Admission, Pay-What-You-Can, or our Digital Exhibits.

- *New York Almanack*, January 24, 2023: “Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Virtual Archaeology Conference” <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2023/01/lake-champlain-maritime-museum-virtual-archaeology-conference/>
- *Addison County Independent*, February 2, 2023: “Pay What You Can Programs” <https://www.addisonindependent.com/2023/02/02/kid-program-fees-made-flexible/>
- *New York Almanack*, March 15, 2023: “Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Opening May 20th” <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2023/05/lake-champlain-maritime-museum-opening-may-20th/>

- *New York Almanack*, June 15, 2023: “Abenaki Heritage Weekend, June 17-18”  
<https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2023/06/abenaki-heritage-weekend-june-17-18/>
- *WCAX*, June 15, 2023: “Events Planned for Abenaki Heritage Weekend”  
<https://www.wcax.com/2023/06/15/events-planned-abenaki-heritage-weekend/>

**Task 2 Free Admission for All Museum Visitors in 2023:** For the third year in a row, the Museum continued its increased visitation since removing admission costs and saw over 10,000 visitors onsite. Out of those visitors, about 1 out of every 5 reported that they specifically came to the Museum because there was no admission cost and 66% of all visitors were first time visitors to the Museum.

Additionally, LCBP funding supported the Museum to partner with consultant Tabitha Moore to offer Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) training for staff. A key piece of free admission is properly training staff to welcome all visitors. Our staff is committed to translating those values into real, measurable action as we welcome everyone to take part in stewarding our lake and our communities. We completed 4 hours of training with Tabitha over 2 days focused on the science of bias, unconscious bias, in-grouping/out-grouping, decision-making in the government, and action steps for staff to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment.

**Task 3 Pay-What-You-Can Camps and Expeditions:** Per the approved workplan, we provided 6 weeks of summer day camps and 3 overnight on-water expedition trips on a pay-what-you-can model. We aimed to reach 85 children and exceeded that goal by enrolling a total of 98 participants. As in previous years, parents had the option to pay less than full price (even zero). LCBP funding made it possible for 60 of these young people to attend camps and expeditions for free or reduced tuition.

**Task 4 Digital Exhibit Experiences:** The Museum created new digital content in 2023 by digitizing Museum collections and making them freely available online through our Collections webpages. In 2023, we completed a comprehensive catalog of our archival material relating to the *Lois McClure* project, which was published on our [website](#) and promoted via three blog posts and an extensive social media series. By late January 2024, we will complete the oral history component of the archiving project, collecting hour-long interviews with the staff and volunteers who were part of the *Lois McClure* story, and will add them to the digital exhibit.

We also highlighted our archaeologically recovered canalboat collections on social media and the blog, and our Collections team identified and began uploading data to a new collections management platform, CatalogIt, which can embed directly into our website to allow online visitors to browse our collections.

Our Digital Museum saw 4,703 visits in 2023, a 56% increase from 2021. Additional Revolutionary War-themed online 2023 highlights included our second Virtual Archaeology conference which had 272 attendees and an additional 251 views on YouTube. We also had 491 visits to our five 2023 blogs that highlighted the Museum’s collections.

**Task 5. Reporting:** The Museum team submitted quarterly reports throughout the project according to the workplan’s timeline. The final report is herein submitted.

**3. METHODOLOGY**

*Not applicable.*

**4. QUALITY ASSURANCE TASKS COMPLETED**

*Not applicable*

**5. DELIVERABLES COMPLETED**

We are pleased to report that the Museum team completed, and in many cases, exceeded, all deliverables according to the approved project workplan. Please see below for a chart showing expected and completed deliverables.

<b>Task #</b>	<b>Expected Deliverable</b>	<b>Completed Deliverable</b>	<b>Timeline</b>
1	Press release, Email promotion (3 e-newsletters, 3 print and 3 digital ads (Google, Facebook)	Press release posted to the <a href="#">Museum website</a> . Sent 3 e-newsletters, 3 digital ads, and 6 printed ads. 66,448 people engaged with our social media posts while 55,194 users engaged with email content.	October 2022-September 2023
2	Free access for approximately 10,000 visitors; JEDI training; cleaning services for public spaces	Received 10,300+ visitors onsite in 2023, completed 4 hours of JEDI Training with Tabitha Moore through Intentional Evolution, and public spaces were cleaned twice weekly throughout the season.	May-October 2023
3	6 weeks of day camp (approximately 60 kids), 3 overnight expedition trips (approximately 25 kids)	98 students enrolled in 6 weeks of summer camp and 3 weeks of expedition programs. 60 received free or reduced tuition.	June- August 2023

4	Expanded Collections webpages, 1 new digital exhibit highlighting collections, social media engagement series (5-10 posts on Instagram and Facebook)	New webpage and digital exhibit for <a href="#">Lois McClure Archive</a> , with three promotional blogs and several social media posts. Our Revolutionary War-focused Virtual Archaeology conference reached 272 attendees and 251 YouTube users. In 2023 we reached 491 readers with 5 collections-related blogs and posted 16 collections features on social media.	August 2023- November 2023
5	On-time quarterly reports submitted throughout the project period; Approved Final report w/photos, articles, project summary	Reports were submitted in a timely schedule. Final report included herein.	Quarterly Reports in Dec. 2022, Mar., June, and Sept. 2023; Final Report Dec. 2023

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

The support of LCBP has had a massive positive impact on the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum. For the last three years, we have seen that reducing barriers to access is possible and continues to be incredibly needed in our community. We look forward to continuing to provide free admission and pay-what-you-can camps and expeditions to our audiences with generous LCBP support in 2024, and plan to continue expanding our digital presence with more collections materials, blogs, and public programming in the coming years.

LCBP support has been invaluable in making this project possible. Thank you.

## 7. REFERENCES

*Not applicable.*

## 8. APPENDICES

### Appended Documents:

Press Release 2023: [Microsoft Word - Press-Release-CVNHP-LCBP-2023-FINAL.docx \(lcomm.org\)](#)

1. *New York Almanack*, January 24, 2023: "Lake Champlain Maritime Museum Virtual Archaeology Conference" <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2023/01/lake-champlain-maritime-museum-virtual-archaeology-conference/>
2. *Addison County Independent*, February 2, 2023: "Pay What You Can Programs" <https://www.addisonindependent.com/2023/02/02/kid-program-fees-made-flexible/>
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4. *New York Almanack*, June 15, 2023: "Abenaki Heritage Weekend, June 17-18" <https://www.newyorkalmanack.com/2023/06/abenaki-heritage-weekend-june-17-18/>
5. *WCAX*, June 15, 2023: "Events Planned for Abenaki Heritage Weekend" <https://www.wcax.com/2023/06/15/events-planned-abenaki-heritage-weekend/>

Lois McClure Archive linked [here](#).

Museum's Blog linked [here](#). Relevant Collections posts include: [The Musicians of the Sailing Canalboat O.J. Walker](#), [Maritime Museum donating replica sailing canal schooner Lois McClure to the Canal Society of New York](#), [Fun Facts about the replica schooner Lois McClure](#), [Renowned Local Artist Ernest Haas Donates Collection to Lake Champlain Maritime Museum](#), and [A Behind-the-Scenes Look into the Archival Process](#).

**Photos.** These photos were also included as a separate email attachment with the final report package sent to the Project Officer.



Figure 1: Campers down by the waterfront



Figure 2: Visitors onsite this summer at the Museum



Figure 1: Visitors exploring the docks at the lake



Figure 2. Intrepid Expeditioners get ready to row.

Electronic Data: N/A.