



Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership



2014 CVNHP Local Heritage Grant

Otter Creek Odyssey

Project Summary

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum (LCMM) implemented a new educational field program designed by to introduce local school children to the history, archaeology and ecology of the Champlain Basin via a day-long rowing excursion down Otter Creek. The program took place on September 16-17, 2014.

During the one-day, on-water program participants gained hands-on experience with the ecosystem by rowing to a series of stops along the river bank of Otter Creek. The LCMM and Vermont Institute for Natural Resources had experts interact with students at stations set up along the route interpreting the ecology, biodiversity, pre-history and history of the Otter Creek watershed. Participants experienced a wide variety of disciplines covering regional history, archaeology, technology, ecology, natural history, bird, plant, fish, and animal species, impacts of pollution, farm and urban runoff, and the threat posed by invasive species.

The day on the Creek was made possible by the use of LCMM's longboats; six oared rowing gigs, allowing students to gain valuable teamwork skills during the course of the program. Each boat is headed by a trained coxswain who taught the basics of rowing as a team, and provided the leadership for each teams' day on the water. Rowing a gig was the perfect venue for teaching team-building while getting physical exercise in an outdoor environment.

In addition to a broad spectrum history, archaeology, technology and ecology curriculum, this on-water program provided a personal connection to the waterways and history in participants' own backyard. The 127 school children that participated viewed the waterway and its inhabitants from water level, at a slower pace than we're used to in today's society, enabling them to have a truly in-depth personal experience and bringing them closer to the natural

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world. By encouraging recreation and exploration in low-impact, human-powered vessels, it was our objective to instill a life-long love and appreciation of our waterways, their ecology and historical significance. In so doing we hope to create a generation of environmental stewards.



The project connected 127 school children with their local waterway, many of them traveling on it for the first time.

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