

sports & recreation

Inuvik swimmer tops in Yellowknife



Athletes capture spots at championship

by Brodie Thomas
Northern News Services
Somba K'e/Yellowknife

The Inuvik swim team left other swimmers in their wake at the Northwest Territories Championship swim meet in Yellowknife.

It was the first time Inuvik had sent swimmers to the championship. Before the races, Coach Lisa Hill wasn't sure how her team would compete against the Yellowknife swimmers.

"It's a town of 3,500 versus a town of 25,000," said Hill. "I really don't know how they'll stand up. I just want them here to have the experience and to show them that this is what real competition swimming is all about."

By the end of the day, they had exceeded all expectations.

Richard Phillips, 16, captured first in the 100 metre back crawl with a time of 1

minute and 24 seconds. This was a bit of a surprise for Phillips, who feels that his specialty is the breaststroke.

Raven Firth, 10, won first place in the 100 metre backstroke and the 50 metre breast stroke in her age category.

Tessie Chinna, 11, came in eighth and seventh in the backstroke and breaststroke respectively, although she recently moved up into a new age category.

"Just getting here has been amazing."

"She probably would have been first in everything if she hadn't just celebrated her 11 birthday," said coach Hill.

Just getting to Yellowknife for this meet was no small task for the team.

"We had to raise \$8,600

to get here," said Angela McInnes, chair of the swim team and the mother of Firth.

"We did bake sales, a haunted house, a rummage sale, a raffle, and even just knocking on people's doors," said McInnes.

She said everyone in the community was very supportive.

This is only the third year for Inuvik's year-round pool.

Coach Lisa Hill is new to Inuvik herself, having just moved there from Ontario eight months ago. She came to work as a lifeguard and swim coach for the pool.

"I love Inuvik," said Hill. "Everyone is so community-oriented."

Impressed by swimmers

She coached in Ontario for the past four years, and has been a competitive swimmer since the age of eight. Hill said she is especially impressed by the learning curve of the three Inuvik swimmers.

"They have progressed so much in the last six months. They had to learn how to dive off the block and do flip turns."

All three swimmers will continue to train in the coming months. Chinna and Firth are making plans to attend the National Aboriginal Indigenous Games in Duncan B.C., this August.

Coach Ian Legaree of the Yellowknife Polar Bear swim club had to get special permission for the two to participate. The youngest age category for swimming is 13 to 14, and the girls will be 11 and 12 at the time of the games.

"We're going to focus on one goal at a time," said McInnes. "Just getting here has been amazing. Our next goal is the August games."

Inuvik swimmers Richard Phillips, 16, Coach Lisa Hill, Tessie Chinna, 11, and Raven Firth, 10 at the NWT Swimming Championships.

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