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Written by David Douglas

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Colton Yee dives into a race during the weekend-long swim meet. *David Douglas Photo*

Last weekend the Hay River Lions Swim Club hosted the 111th Annual Elks Invitational Swim Meet at the Hay River Aquatic Centre. Since the event was sanctioned by Swim Alberta (N. W. T.'s competitive swimming operates under Swim Alberta and Swim Canada), clubs from both Northwest Territories and Alberta were invited to the event.

The event was attended by the Hay River Lions, the Yellowknife Polar Bears, and the Peace River Steamers swim clubs. This year marks the first time Peace River's swim team has come to Hay River to compete.

Kelvin Yee, head coach of the Lions, commented "They [were] kind of infamous for not coming up to Hay River for our swim meets. ... This is the first time an Alberta team has come to Hay River."

The coaches were very pleased to have Peace River athletes come north to compete rather than head south.

This Elks Invitational Swim Meet is a mix of recreational and competitive swimming - athletes of eleven years and older are competitive. Since the event was sanctioned by Swim Alberta, swimmers can use their times from the event to qualify for other competitions. Last year, three Hay River Lions qualified for the Canada Summer Games.

Yee has been coaching the Gold and Silver swim teams for seven years. Gold swimmers are slightly more competitive and are generally older at about 14-17 years old, while the Silver team swimmers are about 13-14 years old. During the competition he watched the stroke and kick of the athletes to see where improvements could be made for maximum efficiency. He has more training planned to make sure his swimmers expand their potential.

"Lots of drills, more training, and weights," said Yee on helping his swimmers perform at their best.

"I think the kids are doing well," said Michael St. John, president and coach of the Lions Swim Club. "It's been busy, we've had some good times."

Lyndon Yee and Mason Hachey, Gold swimmers, seem to improving their times.

"My time was five seconds off - a lot better," said Lyndon about the 100 meter back stroke.

"I improved a little bit," Hachey reports about his times. He competed in the 400 meter freestyle, 50 meter breast stroke, and 100 meter back stroke. He plans to keep training four times per week to improve for the next swim meet.

The Peace River Steamers brought five athletes to compete, scoring a combined total of 547 points; sixteen of Yellowknife's Polar Bears swam, scoring a combined total of 1,692 points; and twenty-one Hay River Lions raced to a combined total of 2072 points.

"There were sixty-six records broken and over 60% personal bests achieved at the meet," Yee reported. "Next up for the Hay River Lions is the JP Fiset meet in December." The JP Fiset Invitational swim meet will be held December 3-6, 2009, at the Kinsmen Sport Centre in Edmonton, hosted by the Olvmoian Swim Club.