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Muskrats swim hard in Yellowknife

Inuvik swimmer Tessie Chinna finishes third

Samantha Stokell

Northern News Services

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INUVIK - When all is said and done, even Inuvik and its team of five swimmers can compete against the big city competition in Yellowknife.

The Mackenzie Muskrat team sent five swimmers to the BHP Billiton Kimberlite Classic Swim Meet in Yellowknife, which closes the competitive swimming season for the NWT. Of the five swimmers – Kyra McDonald, Kierra McDonald, Maya Krizan, Ally Engram and Tessie Chinna – all achieved personal bests and four received medals.

Not bad for a team that has a third of the practices of any Yellowknife swimmer and one-twentieth the number of teammates.

"I'm very happy and extremely proud," said coach Vince Brown, although he did not attend the meet. "They put a lot of work into it and they did as good as I hoped. They swam all the races they entered and it was good to see the results."

The team practises four hours a week at the Midnight Sun Recreation Complex. Though it doesn't seem like enough, it worked well for Tessie, who finished third overall at the competition.

"We feel pretty small compared to the Yellowknife team. We look up to them in a way," she said. "We did really

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good and I'm so proud of our team."

Tessie, the senior team member at 15, has been swimming for seven years at the behest of her mother, but now simply loves it.

"The water is a peaceful place and I enjoy competition," she said. "It's something to do besides sitting on the couch."

Although she enjoys swimming and wants to keep it up, her goals are realistic. She wants to continue pursuing swimming at a competitive level, but doesn't want to end up at the Olympics.

"I don't want it to take over my life," Tessie said. "I want to do other things with my life and live a normal life."

This year the team had Jane Mooney, head of the Yellowknife swim club, visit in April to provide instruction and fine-tuning before the swim meet.

With coach Brown joining the club this year, he needs some instruction as well to make sure the team can compete at its best.

"It's good to have a coach like Jane to come in and give definite tips for improvement," Brown said. "This way we can encourage them to a competitive level. She can cement skills and improve certain aspects of their strokes."

While the swimming season has finished, the team will continue practising in preparation for next year.



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Tessie Chinna of Inuvik comes up for air during the 15-and-over girls medley relay at the BHP Billiton Kimberlite Classic Swim Meet in Yellowknife on May 15. - James McCarthy/NNSL photo