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Inuvik swimmers set personal bests

Andrew Rankin
Northern News Services
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INUVIK - They didn't come home clutching gold medals from a territorial-wide swim meet held in Yellowknife over the weekend, but the Mackenzie Muskrat swim team was beaming after achieving personal best performances.

The nine boys and girls, ranging in age from eight to 12, competed at the BHP Billiton Kimberlite Classic Swim Meet that featured seven different swimming events, plus relays.

Tessie Chinna, 12, led the squad with a second overall placing in her 11 to 12 age division. The talented youngster placed first in several events, including the backstroke and freestyle. She said she was surprised and proud of her performances.

"It was great and I'm happy for my teammates, too," she said. "I wanted to race more because I enjoyed it so much."

She was quick to lavish praise on the team's coach, Ashley Mercer, who travelled with the kids to Yellowknife and worked with them through three to five one-hour practices per week.

"She encouraged me a lot," said Chinna. "She said I was going to do well and that it didn't matter anyway. So I was relaxed. It was all about having fun."

Teammate Courtney Perry echoed Chinna's sentiment.

"She encourages us," said Perry. "She works really hard to make us better."

The soft-spoken youngster also attributed some of her speed to the temperature of the water.

"It was pretty cold," she said with a smile. "They put the temperatures down in the pool so our bodies performed better."

Emboldened by her performance, she said she's determined to do better in her next race and she's committed to developing her back stroke.

Coach Mercer said she was extremely proud of her athletes, especially since it was the first time more than one or two swimmers competed from the team this year. She said the kids' efforts at practising so hard all year-round paid off.

"A lot of kids have never seen competition like this before so it's great for them to have a chance to see what it looks like."

She said she's confident many of the swimmers can soon compete on even larger stage, including National Aboriginal Games and the Western Arctic Games.

For Chinna, she said she'll savour her victory a little longer, and possibly work harder for a first-place finish at next year's meet.



Members of the Mackenzie Muskrat swim team arrived in Inuvik Monday excited over setting personal best performances at the BHP Billiton Kimberlite Classic Swim Meet held in Yellowknife over the weekend. Front row, from left, Donovan McLeod, Devin Weitzel, Annika Krizan, and Courtney Bryant, back row, Nathin Weitzel, Maegan Weitzel, Courtney Perry, Tessie Chinna, Maya Krizan and coach Ashley Mercer. - Andrew Rankin/NNSL photo