

SWIMMING

Channel monster challenge

By Daily Courier Staff

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That 15 per cent of children are living at or below the poverty line has inspired a group of local swimmers to choose the YMCA Strong Kids Campaign as its charity when taking on the challenge the English Channel next summer.

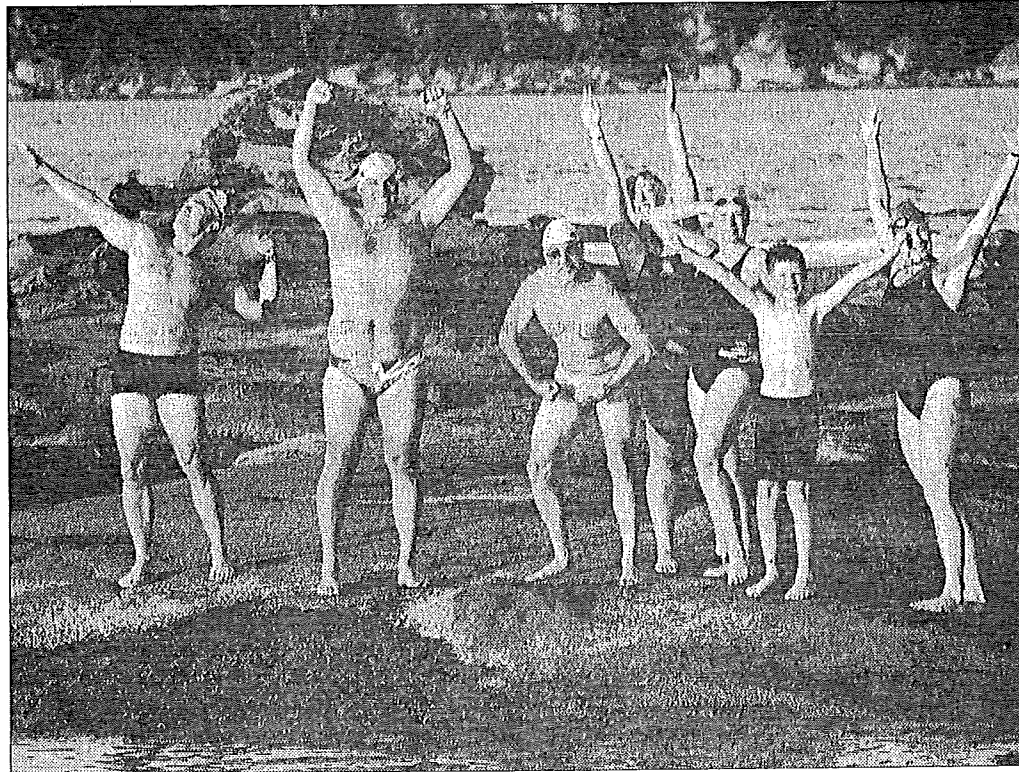
"I know the difference recreation has had in my life, so I hope that, as a result of our collective efforts, more kids in the Okanagan will have access to programs that will improve their well-being and give them a safe place to belong during hard times," said **Leora Dahl**, an Okanagan Masters Swim Club Lake Monsters member.

The Monsters team has already begun fundraising and training in preparation for its attempt to conquer the famous channel swim in July of 2013.

Accompanied by boat captain **Ann Clemence** and navigator **John Dafoe**, the OMSC members swam across the Georgia Strait on Aug. 11. The six-person relay team swam from Sechelt on the mainland to Nanaimo on Vancouver Island — a distance of about 35 kilometres. The group swam without wetsuits (according to English Channel rules) and battled strong currents, wind, and waves.

Dahl, Denise Cesselli, Paul Duffield, Phred Martin, Mike Stamhuis, and Tracy Sutton completed the relay swim in 10 hours and 46 minutes.

The Georgia Strait swim (held once a year and known as the Salish Sea Swim) proved good practice for next year's English Channel attempt, as the distance is similar and the team swam it according to English Channel tradition, with each team member swimming for an hour at a time in rotation.



ANGELIQUE DUFFIELD, BRIGHT SPARK MEDIA/Special to The Daily Courier

Members of the OMSC Lake Monsters celebrate the completion of their relay swim across Georgia Strait recently. From left are Phred Martin, Paul Duffield, Mike Stamhuis, Leora Dahl, Denise Cesselli, Connor Hobbs (son of team coach Brent Hobbs) and Tracy Sutton.

"It was a real learning experience for us to see how we could get through such a mentally and physically exhausting swim," said Dahl. "We learned that we have some things that we need to work on before next year's English Channel attempt, but we all had fun and look forward to swimming the Channel."

Some members of the team competed in the past weekend's Apple Open Water Swim

Invitational, held before the Apple Triathlon, and the entire team will continue to swim in Okanagan Lake until November.

The English Channel is only about 15 degrees, so the team needs to remain acclimated to cold water.

To make a donation, go to the Okanagan Masters Swim Club Lake Monsters online at www.YMCAstrongkids.ca.