



Cape Jourimain (NB) to Bell's Point (PEI)

- **Jessica Fraser-Thomas (39)** 4:15, Wetsuit

Support

- **Kayakers:** Mark Campbell and Jennifer Lewandowski
- **Safety Boat - Tryon Light:** Charles and Don Doull
- **Route Planner:** Gary Pyke (Summerside Yacht Club)
- **Crew:** Jillian, Delyth, Evan and *Dad* Fraser

Times

- Start Time: 06:05 hrs
- Finish Time: 10:20 hrs

Weather

- Calm seas and warm water

Details

Friends and Family: Thank you so much for your support, inquiries and shared excitement about my Northumberland Strait to PEI – Swim for Strong Kids these past weeks and days! While 1,500 km from Northumberland YMCA, I have felt the excitement around this event grow at home in Cobourg (Ontario), and among all of my family and friends around the globe. I have basked in your enthusiasm, interest, and positive energy!

Well, we did it!

I must confess, the days leading into the swim were a little stressful and chaotic. As I crossed the Confederation Bridge on Saturday evening to start our family vacation (we were camping in the PEI National Park), it was all I could do not to completely psych myself out, given the gale force winds, driving rain, and wild whitecaps on the Strait below... Over the next couple of days I checked detailed weather forecasts obsessively, and by Monday night, I was quite certain that Wednesday would be the best day of the week to swim – but this left little time for extensive logistics and final planning. The tides, currents, and winds needed to be thoroughly researched to determine the route and start time; I had to communicate all this with the kayakers (coming from Halifax) and the crew of the local support

boat ... I also had to find accommodation, make arrangements for the kids during the swim, and plan for car and kayak transport post swim!

Perhaps in part because of this frenzied build up, I had an incredible sense of serenity and celebration of being *in the moment* when I finally stepped into the water at 6:05 am on Wednesday morning. The first hour and a half were smooth and peaceful – the water temperature seemed perfect, the sun was coming up, and I got into a great rhythm and celebrated the beauty of the sunrise, the ocean, the support around me, while being humbled by the incredible engineering feat of the Confederation Bridge as I passed by each pillar.

I started on the west side of the bridge, with a weak (0.5 knot) current pulling me slightly westward, and I was to switch over to the east side of the bridge at low tide, around 8 am.... However, at 7:40 I suddenly felt an incredibly strong current suck me directly under the bridge to the east – and during my 2 minute nutrition break, I was pulled an additional 400 metres further east ... we were quickly drifting down the Strait! As this was a little early for my switch eastward, I tried to make my way back west towards the bridge and spent the next 20 minutes essentially swimming into the current – without going anywhere! This was stressful - perhaps the one point when I wondered if I was in over my head. Fortunately, by 8 am, the strong current of the changing tides passed, and we were back on track following our plan, which allowed a gradually building current to pull us slightly eastward over the next three hours...

Following my intense stationary swim against the current, I was also hit with slightly colder waters, and the start of some fatigue. During those next 2 hours, I put my head down, and I thought of each and every one of you – your support, encouragement, kind messages, inspiration, genuine kindness, shared stories, and appreciation for this swim - for **Strong Kids**. As much as it was a tough stretch, it was also very refreshing and quite emotional to have that time to draw upon your energies, and to reflect and celebrate everything that this swim was about.

As I got close to PEI, the water seemed to warm up a bit, and I was motivated by the sight of distinguishable landmarks on shore... We landed at Bell's Point a few kilometres east of the bridge on a beautiful quiet sandy beach, with local residents coming out to take in the spectacle. According to the kayakers' GPS, the total distance was exactly 15 kilometres, and we finished in 4 hours and 15 minutes. After landing, we made our way back to our support boat to overwhelming excitement from Jillian, Delyth and Evan, as well as my dad and our support crew! ... We loaded up the kayaks, celebrated the accomplishment, took in the sunshine, and enjoyed a chartered voyage back to New Brunswick, while reflecting on the joy of the moment and the pleasure of the entire journey, eager to share the day's events with all of you, who made it happen.

I have been overwhelmed your support, which you have shown and shared in so many important and unique ways. A particular thank you is warranted to those who gave their time to make the day come together yesterday on such short notice – my route planner, Gary Pyke, a volunteer recruited through the Summerside Yacht Club, my kayakers, long-time friends Mark Campbell and Jennifer Lewandowski, and my local support crew, father-son fishermen Charles and Don Doull for captaining and sharing their boat, Tryon Light for the day.

I look forward to seeing each of you soon! Thank you.

Jessica Fraser-Thomas

Link to August 7th article in Northumberland News (Cobourg, Ontario)

<http://www.northumberlandnews.com/sports-story/4751080-cobourg-woman-to-swim-northumberland-strait/>

Link to article in Pioneer Journal (Summerside, PEI), 13th August 2014

<http://www.journalpioneer.com/News/Local/2014-08-13/article-3833742/Something-to-prove/1>

Pictures can be found on YMCA Northumberland's Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/ymca.northumberland>

You can find out more about my *Northumberland Strait to PEI - YMCA Strong Kids Swim* or make a donation on [my webpage](#)