

'Strait' success

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BORDEN-CARLETON – It took a little more than five and a half hours, but Suzanne Nicholson can now add her name to a rather exclusive list of athletes.

Nicholson, a Bedford, N.S., native, swam the Northumberland Strait on Sunday in order to raise money for her UPEI Panthers swim team.

Her goal was \$10,000 and she raised at least \$11,000, though the final tally wasn't available as of Sunday evening.

The fifth-year team member landed on the sandy shores of P.E.I. to the cheers of at least 50 people who had gathered to support her.

Landing on that picture-perfect beach was quite the feeling — and not just from the achingly sore muscles

“It was good,” laughed a visibly exhausted Nicholson shortly after coming ashore next to the Confederation Bridge.

She'd been training for the swim for nearly four months, she said, both in the pool and in open water – but actually doing it was far more difficult than she'd anticipated.

“It was crazy different — the waves, you don't expect them to be that big out there,” she said.

“The last two kilometers felt like they took forever to do, but I'm glad it's done.”

Seeing everyone standing on the beach, waiting for her, made all the difference on that last stretch, added Nicholson.

“Thank you, to everybody who came out to support me. It’s great. I’m glad so many people came out.”

One of those supporters was Rooske Wagemakers, a second-year member of the UPEI swim team and a long-time friend of Nicholson’s



“We’re buds, so I gotta support her,” she said.

Though, Wagemakers admits she wasn’t immediately on side when Nicholson announced her plan to raise money for the team.

“At first I thought she was a little crazy. It’s quite a far swim,” she said.

One person who was immediately by side was Nicholson’s father, David.

He was in one of the support boats that were swarming around his daughter for most of her trip, though the ship made a quick detour to let him off so he could watch her come ashore.

“It’s pretty awesome, actually. It’s quite an undertaking for her, especially doing it on her own. We’re pretty proud,” he said.

Beyond the emotional accomplishment of doing what few have done before there’s also the significant monetary aspect of her accomplishment, said Bill Schurman, UPEI’s athletic director.

The money Nicholson has raised will go a long way towards helping out her team, said Schurman.

“Looking out, seeing the boat and knowing that she’s out there brings goose bumps, and just goes to show that people can indeed make a difference when they put their mind and hearts to a project,” he said.

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