

RACE ROCKS CHALLENGE



Hayley Touchburn is one of seven students taking on the first ever Race Rocks Challenge that will have students swimming six kilometres through open water from the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve to the Pedder Bay dock at Pearson College UWC. (Facebook/Pearson College)

Students train for open water swim in 'chilly late-spring waters of the Salish Sea'

Pearson College's Race Rocks Challenge 6 km swim set for May
25

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Seven brave students take on a long-distance ocean swim to raise money and awareness for Pearson College UWC in what is being called the Race Rocks Challenge.

The challenge is an open water swim from Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, located at the eastern entrance of the Strait of Juan de Fuca, to the college's main dock on Pedder Bay. It will be the first of its kind.

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“These seven students are training hard and are keen to meet the challenge of a six-kilometre swim in the chilly late-spring waters of the Salish Sea,” said Corey Teramura, seafront activities coordinator. “The students involved are all experienced and strong swimmers. Their stamina levels are high, their enthusiasm is inspiring to the entire campus and they are all experienced swimmers who have trained long and hard in both the winter waters of the North Pacific and in calmer waters at the college pool.”

Local ultramarathon swimmer Susan Simmons volunteered her experience to mentor the group. Last summer, Simmons was forced to stop her attempt to swim across the Strait of Juan de Fuca after developing hypothermia. In 2017, she became the 7th swimmer to have ever crossed the Strait of Juan de Fuca from Port Angeles to Victoria without assistance of a wetsuit.

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First-year student Hayley Touchburn, from New Brunswick, conceived the idea and swims with six peers: Mara Bohm (Manitoba), Mikella Schuettler (Canada), Tess Casher (Yukon), Andrew Littlejohn (Newfoundland and Labrador), Sarah Lewis (Newfoundland and Labrador) and Dvir Maimon (Israel).

Unlike mentor Simmons, the young swimmers will wear full-body wetsuits. They'll also be surrounded "every metre of the way" by a flotilla of safety personnel and observers in powered craft and certified guide-staffed kayaks.

The students hope the initiative raises money for new pool equipment, alumni relations and generates "positive attention for the college."

While the swim is scheduled for the morning of May 25, it is dependent on water and weather conditions and may be cancelled, delayed or adjusted to accommodate anything that is less than ideal.

Touchburn, who has been swimming since her childhood in New Brunswick, said she was attracted to open water swimming because of the "challenge, the excitement [and] the beauty of the area."

"I want to leave my mark at Pearson and I think The Race Rocks Challenge is a way to do that," she said. "I want to bring a team together, raise money for this place that has meant and given me so much over two years, and leave with a