

## **An account of the July 3rd 2010 Georgia Strait swim, by Jim Close:**

On July 2nd, 2010, 6 of us and our support crew were meeting at Drift Wood Inn in Sechelt contemplating our swim across Georgia Strait, part of the newly named, "Salish Sea". As we looked out from Davis Bay that night toward the distant shores of Nanaimo, our landing point being Pipers Beach, we were all very excited contemplating swimming the 30 + km , the same distance as the famed English Channel Swim.

We were swimming with two solo swimmers, English Channel Rules, no wetsuit and only grease, grease being a combination of Vaseline and Lanoline. Four of us on the relay team in wetsuits and access to a nice warm sail boat after our one hour in the water, were going to have it easy. When we arrived at the beach on Saturday morning, July 3<sup>rd</sup>, the first thing we observed was all the tugs heading for safe coverage with their log booms -- not a good sign. The water was very choppy and a balmy 16 degrees.

The two solo swimmers, Rod Craig and James Monk accompanied by Mike Stamhuis started the swim at about 7:20 am. The first three hours were very rough and had many of the relay team wondering if we would ever make it across the strait. Fortunately for me when it came my turn to swim the seas had begun to calm. That made my first leg of the relay a little easier.

Our crew consisted of three boats: a Boston Whaler, skippered by John Defoe, for the two solo swimmers and their mentor/coach Brent Hobbs and his young son Connor. Brent, a successfully 'English Channel Swimmer' offered endless encouragement to us all during the entire crossing. The relay team was following a sailboat skippered by Chris Falk and Lee-Eniss. We had a third high powered boat with us just in case a medical emergency should occur.

The seas calmed and we began to make much better progress. Wendy Burton, the sister of one of our relay team member, Bill Burton, tweeted our progress all the way across the strait. As Rod Craig is scheduled to swim the English Channel this year our swim was being followed by all the other English Channel swimmers for this year. The local TV network for Vancouver Island was also following our swim. They showed up at the end of the swim to see us come ashore and do a couple of interviews.

As the swim progressed the seas became rougher again. The wind and the waves were more consistent. This meant we could swim up one side of the wave and surf down the other side. About seven hours into our swim the solo swimmers began to get a little separated so we made some adjustments. Brent jumped in and swam with Rod Craig and Mike started to swim with James. Mike and James were now being supported by our rescue boat. By this time the solo swimmers were being fed water bottles of energy drinks every 15 minutes.

The relay team Bill Burton, Claire Booth, and myself were now in the water, as Pipers' Beach was only about 1 km away. At this point one of us told James we were only about 1 km from shore. Being a former competitive swimmer he immediately sprinted for shore. Being the senior of the group I was the last out of the water. James and the relay team reached the shore 9:35 after leaving Sechelt. A very respectable time considering the water conditions. This time makes James the second fastest time to complete this swim without a wetsuit. Rod finished 15 minutes later. We are all wishing him a successful "English Channel Crossing" later this summer.

On shore not only was there the local media but a contingency of my family, my sister's and various members of their families, waiting to meet us all.

The ending to this amazing day was a great sail back across to Sechelt. (Check out my big smile on the sailboat).

This was a great adventure for me. I am truly grateful for all the support from my family and friends and hope you enjoy the photos and brief account of this truly amazing adventure.









