

British Columbia

## 'It makes me happy': Victoria woman with Down syndrome completes 5K open-water swim




27-year-old Meliah Motchman trained for a year

[Laura Sciarpelletti](#) · CBC News · Posted: Aug 11, 2019 10:00 AM PT | Last Updated: August 11



Meliah Motchman (right) and her swimming coach Susan Simmons (left) from the Spirit Orcas swim team. (Megan Thomas/CBC)

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After a year of training, a woman with Down syndrome achieved her goal of swimming a five-kilometre open-water swim.

Meliah Motchman, 27, swam for four hours in Thetis Lake near Victoria Monday, swimming laps back and forth.

"It makes me face it. And it makes me healthy. It makes me happy," Motchman told CBC's Megan Thomas.

The athlete had never swam that far before.

"That was a big moment for her," said Susan Simmons, Motchman's swim coach.

"I think what it helps show somebody, including Meliah, is that you can pick a goal that's not about tomorrow or the day after ... but work on something for a whole year and then pick an even bigger goal for when you're done."

Motchman has always loved to swim and has trained with Simmons for six years. A year ago, she decided she wanted to train for an open-water, five-kilometre swim at Thetis.



Melia Motchman (right) after her 5 km swim, along with swim coach Susan Simmons (left). (CHEK News)

While Motchman stopped every half an hour to eat and drink, she never got out of the lake.

"She'd pause in the water and tread water ... And then she'd carry on and keep swimming," said Simmons.

Leading up to the big swim, Motchman trained in the ocean at Victoria's Ogden Point where the temperature can get as low as 10 C.

"So she's very comfortable in cold water. It's like a bathtub," said Simmons.

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Simmons says swimming in freshwater, like Thetis Lake, is more difficult than in oceans because there is no salt to keep the swimmer buoyant. Motchman also had to navigate around many stand-up paddle boarders in the busy lake.

But Motchman carried on, and had quite the crowd of fans while she swam.

"It makes feel happy to hear people cheer me on," she said.

Next up, Motchman's goal is to work on swimming in water with heavier waves.

"I love waves," she says.

***Listen to the full story here:***

A five-kilometre open water swim is a feat for anyone. Megan Thomas meets a woman with Down Syndrome who set that as her goal ... and achieved it earlier this week. 7:03

*With files from All Points West and CHEK News.*

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