



Bowers reaching the north end of the lake. Photo: Aerin Bowers

Rossland resident Aerin Bowers completes 19-km swim along Christina Lake

Bowers said her dad inspired her to complete the epic adventure

[CONNOR TREMBLEY](#) / Sep. 23, 2020 8:00 a.m. / [LOCAL NEWS](#) / [NEWS](#)

On the morning of Sept. 12, 46-year-old Rossland resident Aerin Bowers was gearing up for the swim of her life.

Bowers dived into the south end of Christina Lake at 7 a.m. to try and complete a 19-kilometre swim along the entire length of it.

An avid swimmer from a young age, Bowers said the idea for the challenge came about during the COVID-19 crisis.

“I was supposed to go to Zurich, Switzerland to complete the Lake Zurich swim this August. While I was accepted into the race last December and had a coach in Kelowna to help

prepare me for it, the event got cancelled due to COVID-19,” said Bowers.

“Despite the setback, I really wanted to keep up my training and to do something really epic this summer.”

Another inspiration for Bowers to complete the swim was her dad, who recently passed away a year ago in September.

“My dad was a physical education teacher and coach and he always really supported my swimming,” said Bowers.

“With the anniversary of his passing coming up, I thought completing this swim would’ve been something he’d really been happy about.”

Stroke by stroke, Bowers made good progress as she completed the first half of the swim in the morning.

As Bowers attempted to complete the swim, her friends, Sue McBride, Robin Hethey and Ali Meredith kayaked alongside her for security purposes. They also supplied her food and water every 30 minutes to keep her nourished during the swim.

“They threw me a bottle from their kayak that was attached to a string. I took a few slurps, threw the bottle back to them and went on my way,” said Bowers.

“They also played music in their kayaks and were super motivating for me along the way.”

Shanna Tanabe and Andrea Winckers acted as observers during the swim to help get it ratified by the Marathon Swim Foundation (MSF), which creates and maintains records of successful open water swims. From their boat, they took photos of Bowers every hour and documented the weather conditions during the swim to help complete Bower's submission.

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Even with all of the support from her friends, thick smoke from the fires blazing across the border created challenges for Bowers during the last half of the swim.

"The smoke started to get really close to the water in the afternoon and it wasn't ideal at all," said Bowers.

"Even though it was quite thick, I was still able to see the kayakers and the boat."

Seven hours after diving into the water and swimming through the smoke, Bowers finally reached the north end of the lake at 2 p.m.

A small and physically distanced crowd greeted and cheered Bowers on as she took her first few steps out of the water.

"While I was super happy to be finished, it was so nice to have them all be there. It ended up being a great day," said Bowers.

Bowers hopes to complete a six-hour swim in Okanagan Lake in October. The swim will help her to qualify for an international swim event across the English Channel in the

future.

Bowers also plans to complete the Lake Zurich swim next summer when the COVID-19 situation improves.

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connor.trembley@castlegarnews.com

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