



Swim lessons a must

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A recent research by the Lifesaving Society said when it comes to drowning when boating and swimming, immigrants are at a higher risk. The study— believed to be the first of its kind in Canada – reveals new Canadians are four times more likely to be unable to swim than those born in Canada.

Tiernan Murphy, owner of Brampton's Making Waves Swim School, is not surprised by the findings.

He grew up in Ireland where swimming lessons were not part of life for young children. Upon their arrival in Canada, Murphy's parents enrolled him for swimming lessons. He has never looked back.

The report said in Ontario, 82 people lost their lives between Victoria Day and Labour Day weekends last summer as a result of drowning accidents.

This year, since the end of June, 13 people have drowned including a recent incident involving a Scarborough teenager Deep Engineer, 14, who died after being pulled from a Scarborough condo pool. The boy didn't know how to swim, friends say.

"These deaths are preventable," said Murphy. "In a backyard pool, it takes only seconds for a panicked child to go under and often, they have simply fallen in from the deck. Had those children had even a few lessons, they might have survived the incident."

In Brampton, only 3 per cent of school age children take up swimming lessons each year, said officials from Making Waves Swim School. According to the 2006 census, visible minorities accounted for over 57 per cent of Brampton's overall population.

Murphy said many of these new Canadians who don't know swimming place themselves at great risk when they're exposed to either the backyard pool or various water bodies such as lakes, rivers and waterfalls. The groundbreaking study also indicates drowning is one of the leading causes of accidental death among Canadian children under the age of four and the number two cause of preventable death for children under age 10.

"I am a first generation Canadian and I feel that it is extremely important for children to learn this life skill," said Renu Sehmi, a parent whose daughter is enrolled at Making Waves. "First and foremost, it is the only extracurricular activity that may save my daughter's life one day. Aside from the safety aspect, I always felt



Life saving lessons. A recent report by Lifesaving Society reveals immigrants are at higher risk for drowning when boating and swimming. Elise Lagtapon is seen here learning backstroke with a Making Waves instructor. The school offers classes in two locations in Brampton. *Submitted photo*

that learning to swim provided additional opportunities to my daughter like becoming a lifeguard, a coach and a mentor.”

Making Waves runs two schools in Brampton: Kings Cross Road location (near Bramalea City Centre) and Rosedale Avenue in west Brampton.

“Being able to swim enables our children to safely enjoy summer fun in and around water. There is no substitute,” said Murphy, “We know that every child can learn to swim if they are given the opportunity.”

For more information, visit: www.makingwavesswimschool.ca.

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