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## Humber College initiative teaches swimming to international students

Nine-week program started as part of a response following the drowning of a student from India in a Brampton lake two years ago.

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International students at Humber College now have an opportunity to learn to swim. The initiative comes after a student from India drowned in a Brampton lake two years ago.

By: **Gilbert Ngabo** Metro Published on Thu Jun 01 2017

The news was heartbreaking and its cause was too scary to simply ignore.

When Satvir Singh, a 22-year-old Humber College student from India drowned in a Brampton lake two years ago, one professor realized there could be a bigger problem beyond just the tragic incident.

"I reached out to our international students' office for a needs assessment, and found out the majority of them didn't know how to swim," said Anke Foller-Carroll, who teaches in the tourism and hospitality department at the college.

She decided to do something about it. In collaboration with Ignite, the campus student's association, she started a project to teach swimming lessons to international students. The first cohort of 10 students have just completed a nine-week program, and a new group will start in the fall.

Many of the students who need swimming lessons come from landlocked or developing countries where swimming isn't part of their culture or necessarily an affordable luxury for everyone, Foller-Carroll noted.

Humber College is home to nearly 4,000 international students, but the swimming skills issue isn't unique to that school. A study from the Canadian Lifesaving Society recently

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found that new Canadians are four times less likely to know how to swim than those born in Canada.

"All of the Canadian experiences happen somewhere on the water, in the water or beside the water," said Foller-Carroll, citing pool parties, ice fishing, cottage camping or canoeing practices as some of the everyday Canadian culture that involves the water. "We almost take it for granted but it's not available to everyone elsewhere."

She'd like to expand the program to include more students in the future, and would love to see the project incorporated into teaching material.

"I really hope other schools do the same," she said. "Every school has a pool and international students, and if they could start a similar program, that would be the best outcome."

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