



A brave and crazy New Year's Day tradition

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Armours Beach shows a typical winter snowfall, c. 1950. The old beach cottage at the left is now gone; the building on the right was the original Gibsons Town Hall, most recently known as the Pigs Rugby clubhouse. As the Town prepares to upgrade access and facilities in the park, this building is slated for demolition. For more information on the future of this beach park, attend the Armours Beach Conceptual Design Open House at Gibsons Municipal Hall, 474 South Fletcher Road, on January 8 from 3 to 7 p.m. Photo courtesy Sunshine Coast Museum and Archives (photographer unknown)

You brave souls, we don't know whether you are brave or crazy, but whichever, it is great to watch." ~ **Jean Robinson**
~ *Coast News, 1986*

There is something about diving into freezing cold water that rejuvenates the soul. Since the mid-1980s, hearty Sunshine Coast residents have been taking part in the Canadian New Year's day tradition known as the Polar Bear swim. Plunging into shockingly cold water while the snow-capped peaks of the North Shore whisper with an arctic wind, this tradition makes me cold just thinking about it. In Gibsons, the swim takes place at historic Armours Beach, and it makes me wonder what the early homesteaders of the region would think of the event. Would George Gibson don his best swim suit and plunge into the chuck, just for the sheer fun of it all? Did George Gibson even have a swim suit? Hard to say. But from looking at archival pictures of the silly events at the Howe Sound Regatta over the years, I think that many of the early homesteaders would be the first in the water. And they would probably stay in much longer than many a modern day swimmer! Take part in a brave and crazy Sunshine Coast tradition – Polar Bear swims are held in communities all along the Sunshine Coast.