

CAMPUS

Revolution:PEI - response to a recent Island homophobic facebook group

Martha MacIntyre
Reporter

The Facebook group Revolution:PEI was started as a response to a PEI-based Facebook group called “Homophobic People.”

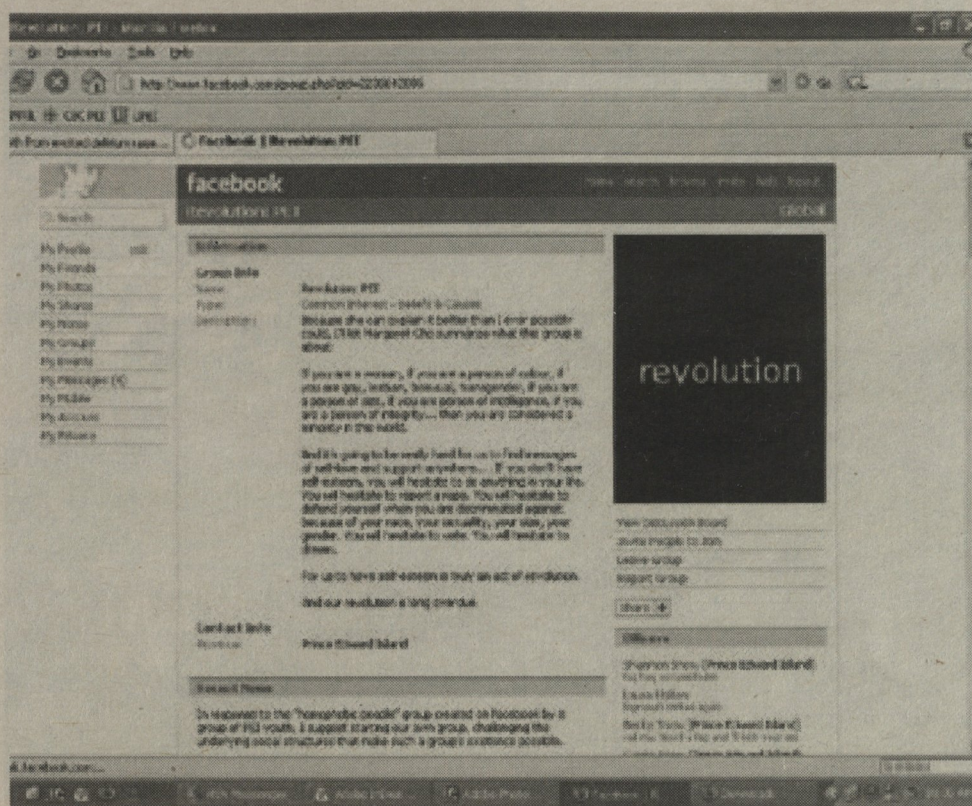
Shannon Snow, a second-year B.Ed student at UPEI, came upon the group one day and began sharing it with Ryan Woolfrey (the Revolution creator) and many others, who started engaging in intense online discussions about the group’s legitimacy and purpose.

After several days of discussion that took place over Facebook, they then decided that instead of dwelling on the negative nature of the “Homophobic People” group, they should create their own place where positive and progressive conversation could take place. It was out of these collaborative discussions that the group Revolution:PEI was born.

Ryan Woolfrey said a speech by comedian Margaret Cho encouraged him in finding a direction for the group.

“While trying to come up with ideas and a focus for the group, I stumbled across a performance by comedian Margaret Cho which featured a speech that I felt encapsulated wonderfully what our group should be about,” he said.

Towards the end of her performance, Cho said the following: “I have self-esteem, which is pretty amazing, because if



you are a woman, if you are a person of colour, if you are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, if you are a person of size, if you are a person of intelligence, if you are a person of integrity... then you are considered a minority in this world. And it’s going to be really hard for us to find messages of self-love and support anywhere... If you don’t have self-esteem you will hesitate to do anything in your life. You will hesitate to report a rape. You will hesitate to defend yourself when you are discriminated against because of your race, your sexuality, your size, your gender. You will hesitate to

vote. You will hesitate to dream. For us to have self-esteem is truly an act of revolution. And our revolution is long overdue.

Woolfrey was captivated by Cho’s idea of revolution.

“After hearing those words, I became intrigued by her idea of “revolution,” and thought it was fitting for a group who wanted to challenge ignorance and oppression in a place like Prince Edward Island. It’s also important that we recognize that cultural ignorance isn’t limited to small places like PEI- we see the devastating effects of prejudice and ignorance just about everywhere we look, no

matter where the location may be.”

The group’s main focus isn’t necessarily aimed at promoting tolerance or acceptance of those who are seen as different, and it isn’t about any one issue in particular, whether that issue be size, sexuality, skin color, or physical ability. It’s about shifting the focus away from what we see as “minorities,” and challenging everyone to seriously evaluate their own sets of privileges in society. Too often the onus is on those who are viewed as “different” to fight their way into the cultural mainstream- and what this facebook group is promoting is introspection on the part of those who, in many ways, already fit in.

“To us, this is really the only way true revolution can happen. There needs to be a fundamental reevaluation of how society is structured, and a questioning of why certain people constantly find themselves as society’s margins,” said Woolfrey.

Revolution PEI has no real vision or plan for where they want their group to go in the future. This group has already hit 370 members. Some group members come from as far away as Australia.

“It’s an exciting time for our group, and an exciting time for people on PEI- and we’re prepared to let the group take us wherever it decided to go,” said its creator.

Tuition a fuzzy issue for Student Union: Representative

Stacey Murray
Advertising Manager

A march has been planned and a committee struck to discuss possible tuition hikes at UPEI.

The committee, created at the Feb.11 student union meeting, is meant to give the union a clearer view of what students think about tuition increases.

Faiz Ahmed, the graduate student representative, said he was surprised a committee had to be formed to figure out what the union’s position was on the matter.

Gary Bradshaw, vice-president of finance at UPEI, said the administration plans to request a funding increase from

the provincial government of about \$1.4 million, or 6.4 per cent to help offset tuition increases and pay for increased energy and other costs. The government currently gives about \$22 million to UPEI.

Student union president Ryan Gallant said this funding increase would keep tuition increases to a minimum.

“If the government gives us this over three years, we wouldn’t see any increase over four per cent in tuition.”

Ahmed, who wrote a letter to the Cadre opposing some of the student union’s methods, said the union shouldn’t accept any tuition hike, even if it’s smaller than the 6.5 per cent hike students faced last

fall.

“We don’t want that to be our message to the legislature.”

The letter, which appeared in the Feb. 14 edition, said the student union was accepting tuition hikes with “very little discussion or debate.”

While Gallant doesn’t agree with tuition hikes, he said the administration is trying to make the increase as little as possible and it wants the union’s support on the matter.

“It would be counter-productive to go against the administration when they’re asking for money.”

Gallant has seen a change in the habits of students over the past year when it

comes to the financial burden of university.

“Some students choose to take less courses or take on a job.”

Ahmed said Gallant’s comment is purely speculation though, as widespread discussion hasn’t taken place.

“We don’t know what students think. We haven’t held a referendum. We haven’t polled students.”

The student union is essentially a lobby group to the administration and, while any decisions on tuition are ultimately made by the administration, the union should make its voice heard, said Ahmed.