

## UPEI Student Wins Award at Model UN Conference

### Racism Allegations Just Hype: Esseghaier

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Reporter



One of UPEI's own was the recipient of a prestigious award at the Model UN Conference in Ottawa three weekends ago. Zain Esseghaier, a second-year Economics student, received the award for Best Delegate from the Arab League committee – an honour he shares with his fellow Arab League members and UPEI delegates.

"[Receiving the award] was humbling and greatly appreciated, but some of the credit must go to the participants on the Arab League committee," said the first-time Model UN delegate. "These delegates represented universities from across Canada and included participants from the United States and Europe. It was this group of such friendly, brilliant individuals, who were so knowledgeable and truly interested in the subject that really peaked my interest in the conference and made it an experience I could never forget."

"The rest of the credit definitely goes to the phenomenal UPEI delegation. Their enthusiasm throughout the whole experience, from fund-raising back in the fall to the conference, really rubbed off on me and the tips and tricks they taught me helped my own experience at the conference immensely."

He said he cannot imagine what the conference would have been like for him without the assistance of his fellow UPEI delegates.

"More importantly though, I was lucky enough to meet 14 fine, fine people from UPEI and [I] cannot even imagine having the same experience had any one of those people not been there.

I think I can speak for everyone when I say that we had an absolute blast the entire time, and I must say that I thoroughly enjoyed getting to know everyone."

It was an event later laced with allegations of racism and drug usage. In true political fashion, many UPEI delegates have freely admitted to drug usage and receiving a visit from the Boys in Blue (and I don't mean Conservative MPs); but getting straight answers regarding the racism charges were harder to find for this reporter.

Bob Gibson, Director of Student Services, is carrying out the investigation. Because of due process and confidentiality restrictions, Gibson could only say that an investigation is ongoing but no other details can be released. "I can confirm that there have been reports of inappropriate conduct by some students who attended the Model UN Conference and the university has an obligation to investigate all such reports. Student Services has been speaking with the students who attended the conference to develop a

clear understanding of what, in fact, did take place. However, we will not breach student confidentiality or due process by commenting in the media," said Gibson, in a statement to *The Cadre*.

Esseghaier finds it hard to believe that any thing as negative as racism could have taken place on behalf of the UPEI delegation, or any other group at the conference. "Don't believe the hype," he said. "The mere thought that racism could occur in any form from within a group of bright, young, open, ethnically and religiously diverse students is absurd and deserves no further justification." A trip marred with police visits and racism allegations has not rained on Esseghaier's political parade, though.

"Being my first model UN, I had no idea know what to expect and came into the conference with no expectations whatsoever. I left with an experience I'll never forget. The organizers did such a fantastic job of putting the conference together, and were great hosts to all delegations during our stay in Ottawa." He has

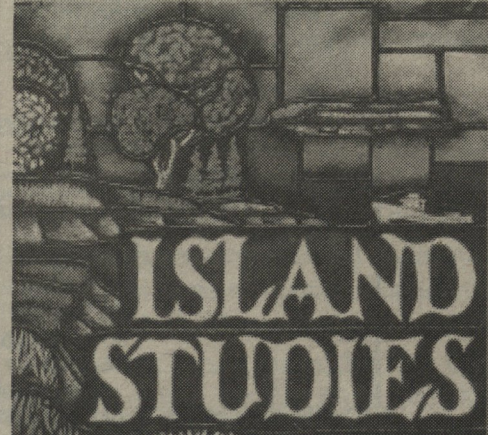
learned there is a certain rhythm involved in these conferences; strategy and preparation also play key roles if one is to succeed in the political arena.

"Timing is important with your arguments, when certain topics come up, know how and where to ride that topic to furthering your own goals. During the committee, its important that you take calculated steps in taking control, apply well-timed pressure to different parties, know the interests of all parties, and structure your arguments in such a way that you can simultaneously bring certain parties on side while applying pressure on others; that way you control the board. This makes setting your own agenda and pushing for your own interests much easier. Once your agenda is in place, it's a matter of bringing the "hold-outs" in-line by making compromises that work to your own advantage."

Esseghaier even offered pointers for any fledgling ambassadors hoping to attend Model UN conference. "My advice to others who may participate at a future UN conference: never be intimidated, keep in mind that everyone is playing a role, stick to your own, and don't back down."

You may also want to leave your hash stash and any closed-minded views at home, lest your delegation falls under investigation as well.

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