

Gay Okay

Will Cooper
News Editor

In light of all the talk of revisiting the issue of gay marriage and the fuss being kicked up over recent films with underlying homosexual themes, it might seem to some people that progress toward equal rights for and universal acceptance of gays and lesbians is undergoing something of a setback. According to Christopher Gillis, president of UPEI's sexual-minority support group, Rainbow Alliance, this is not the case.

"Canada has moved in leaps and bounds in this regard," said Gillis. "In ten years, it won't even be an issue."

In 2005, Canada became the fourth country in the world to recognize same-sex unions, after Denmark, Holland, and Belgium. Although a considerable number of Canadians were opposed this move, recent polls reveal that over 65 percent of Canadians are currently happy with it. The picture is not so bright in the States, which as Gillis puts it "seems to be lagging somewhat." But even big, bad-boy USA is moving forward, he believes — albeit at a snail's pace.

So, what about us? Where does UPEI and Prince Edward Island stand on this evolutionary ladder? Well, that question brings us to my initial reason for writing this article:

I was in class the other day when a student remarked how he felt the material we were discussing was "gay". The professor, it seemed, wasn't even slightly rattled by the comment. My thoughts, on the other hand, went immediately to the student in class who is homosexual. I wanted to speak up and point out the fact that it is really no more appropriate to use

the word "gay" in a derogatory sense than it is to say "nigger" or "rag". It is hateful and discriminatory. But the truth, I realized, is that I too sometimes use this word in a negative way without even being aware of it.

When asked what his thoughts are on the derogatory use of the word "gay", Gillis responded: "Oh, I hate it," he proclaims. "Being gay" isn't a *bad* thing, and using the word as though it *is* a bad thing is just wrong. It's not cool." I went on to ask if he felt disciplinary measures should be taken against students who use such language in class, to which he responded *no*.

"What we're striving for is something I call 'waveless integration,'" said Gillis. "There's no need to stir things up. Already, I think, it's wildly politically incorrect to speak against homosexuality [here at UPEI]. The walls are already down. Now, it's just a matter of stepping over the line."

That said, there is still something each of us can do to help make the movement toward a gay-friendly university/world swifter and easier. We can each watch what we say, and make sure whatever words we use do not belittle or alienate people around us. It might take a while, but the word "gay" attached to any negative connotation can be erased from the English language. Just keep reminding yourself and other people what gay really means:

Gay *a.* Lighthearted, sportive, mirthful; showy, brilliant; (sl.) homosexual.

...it ain't a bad thing.

Popsicle Stick Bridge Competition



Pete Grandy
Reporter

The popsicle stick bridge contest concludes

If you had the privilege of visiting the Charlottetown Mall on an early Friday evening, you may have experienced its delightful little quirks. From the greasy food selection to the greasy teens whose charming lingo astounds even the most illustrious intellectuals, the Charlottetown Mall provides you with more than just a spendthrift shopping experience. This past Friday, however, shoppers had the opportunity to witness the highly esteemed popsicle stick bridge building competition. This annual event challenges third year engineering students to construct a bridge using only popsicle sticks, white all-purpose glue and their keen wits. Students were judged according to the total weight their bridge could withstand divided by bridge's total weight.

The Association of Professional Engineers of Prince Edward Island (APEPEI) hosts the competition. This year the APEPEI invited junior and senior high school students to compete in the competition. This meant the engineering student had more than just their marks to lose. Don MacEwen, the Chair of the Engineering Department and professor of the Strength and Materials class in which the competing students belonged to, organized the event. He also took the liberty to point out how dumb some of the designs were to the crowd.

The contest commenced with preliminary tests to determine whether

the bridges met the competition requirements. The bridges had to hold at least 10 kg before they were displayed on a projected screen and broken using a weight-measuring device. I recall an incident that involved a grade 7 student and his bridge. His whole family from Montague was present to see their son's bridge crushed in the preliminary test, along with his dreams and ambitions. Looking too distraught for an interview, I gave him the old wink and finger gun but it unfortunately this didn't resolve his anguish. Despite many disappointed faces, several high school students were quite successful, including an individual whose bridge held up a hefty 207 pounds. This caused many of the engineering students to drown their worries at the beloved sports bar *Cheers*.

Following the junior and senior high division, the university students took the stage. None managed to match the 207-pound record. The closest was Logan Horton's bridge with a weight of 174 pounds. At the end of the competition, the engineering students collected their dignity and damaged bridges and headed back to cheers. Minimal cheering occurred.

Bridge breaker Tobin Stetson cranked a wrench for 3 hours with help from his colleague Matt Nicholson. When asked to comment on the competition, Stetson reluctantly stated "A bit of a disappointment, but otherwise quite good."



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