

By Jon Smith  
Reporter

## Opinion & Commentary Continued

### LACK OF CAMPUS GREEN SPACE: PROBLEM OR NO?

Anyone who has been at UPEI for more than a year (and that includes most people) has probably noticed the dramatic changes that have occurred to the property in that time. When I personally arrived the Barn was still around, albeit in its final week. There was a soccer field in between Bernardine and Blanchard. There was another one beside the Classroom Centres. There was no CARI centre, the new student centre was being hailed as the best thing since sliced bread, and it seemed like there was like a lot more parking (or perhaps it was my new student naivety that only gave this perception).

That was then. Seemingly overnight (or over many, many nights), development on the campus has begun in earnest. Where there once was a green sports field is now a rather large muddy hole with the promise of a brand new residence attached to it. Another field has been overtaken by an enormous parking lot that is only about half to a quarter full at any one time. Another new building is going up on what once was another batch of parking spots. This is great for UPEI on an efficiency level. The university is providing more services, and will be better able to keep up in the increasingly competitive post-secondary institution world.

But questions have arisen about any aesthetic cost that comes with such progressive development. Namely, how are the changes to the campuses layout affecting the green spaces that people on campus have long been attached to? How are the sports teams being affected by this mass paving and building upon of what was once green grass?

Ron Annear, athletics director of the UPEI Sports Centre, says they're not being affected very much to be truthful. He feels the growth for the campus has been fantastic, and at the moment there is sufficient space for the sports teams. Admittedly, there are always room for new opportunities, and he would be interested in seeing the development of a state-of-the-art soccer field with conditioned grass and a lighting system for after-dark activities. There's also the idea of turning the patch of volleyball sand into something more structured and useful for more than one month of play in the fall if such an opportunity should arise.

Despite this official positive perception, there is grumbling about the challenges of booking time when there's just enough space available. There's also the sentiment questioning whether it should be necessary for the UPEI Field Hockey team to practice on the sports fields of Charlottetown Rural High School. For any non-official users who simply want to use the UPEI field space for games and what-not, the fact that the official teams fit just so leaves them little opportunity. Often left with little choice, they are forced to venture into Charlottetown in search of space, a task that is often an odyssey in itself.

For the moment, the green space that adorns the centre of the campus has been left untouched. There seems to be no hints of any major developments happening there anytime soon. Walking through it, one can ignore all the signs of construction and progress around them, and just bask in the natural feel of the trees and the sweet sounds of the traffic coming from University Avenue. Perhaps it will remain a final green outpost against the constant reminders that in the name of growth and progress, a little urbanization chaos goes a long way toward making a more efficient and intellectually, if not physically, attractive institution.

### Island University and Life

By Sean Molloy  
Contributor

I have been on PEI now for three months and I find the Island's charm lies not only in the geography and the hints of yesteryear found in small towns and rural farms, but also in the people that populate the island. I have, until recently, spent all of my life living within a 100 km radius of Toronto and the gravity that such a metropolis imposes on surrounding communities is strong. If one is not inclined to travel he/she might be under the assumption that Toronto is the centre of the universe or at least the Canadian universe.

Economically, it is hard to dispute the importance of Canada's largest city, but when it comes to culture—the culture that makes up everyday life—the farther you get from the city the better. I am not talking about refined overly processed displays of what it is to be Canadian, but the charm that exists in the everyday moments of people "being" in their social context, not necessarily "becoming."

There is an implicit courtesy and understanding of the reciprocal nature of respect, not a contrived sort that is extended on a condition. An example of this can be seen daily in the town of Montague where I live: cars routinely will stop to let pedestrians cross even if they are not a specified crosswalks and even when the cars are up to speed and have full right of way. This was strange to me at first being from Ontario where there is a different set of assumptions for what it means to be civil and being civilized is only a characteristic that exists when time allows.

Other examples of this genuine citizenship can be observed at the post office where sharing a laugh and getting caught up on all the latest news is just as important as getting the mail. The importance of a tight knit community, one where every thread is as important as the next, is not lost on these people.

This altruism seems to spill over into life at the university as well. There seems to be a climate around campus of tolerance, and tolerance is probably the most fertile condition to cultivate learning and personal awareness. Examples of this are ubiquitous, from informal conversations between students overheard in the student centre, to the approach that the professors take to their lessons in the classroom. The message is clear, the pursuit of knowledge is important in its own right, but when fortified with the virtue of unconditional service that university experience takes on a dimension that is positively life changing.

Being a 'from away' mature student and having been out of school for a long time, I have benefitted from Island culture and nowhere is it better showcased than UPEI; but, it remains to be seen if I will ever carry a fondness in my heart for the simple yet life giving lessons I have learned from PEI — lessons available to everyone if they are willing to stop for a moment and consider their place in a community.