

BROCK'S BANTER: Your smugness is showing

By Brock Weir

Well, it happened.

Despite polls showing it a near impossibility, reality TV star Donald Trump has been elected President of the United States.

Well, sort of.

Once again, despite Hillary Clinton handily winning the popular vote across the United States, the antiquated Electoral College system has put in place a candidate who more than half of participating voters didn't vote for.

It's a system that will need to be addressed to the south of us in due course ? for many, it reached its Best Before date 16 years ago ? but the fact remains it is the system in place. Time after time over the course of the arduous presidential campaign, Trump, apparently laying the groundwork of blame for his eventual loss claimed the system was rigged against him.

Although the United States turned into a sea of red on Tuesday night, it's a claim he still holds onto.

On Sunday night's 60 Minutes, the President-Elect maintained the Electoral College is still rigged, despite his win, but the fact he alluded to his own presidency being the illegitimate product of a ?rigged? system was not pressed further by Lesley Stahl and that, in itself, is unfortunate.

So, how did you spend your Tuesday night? Did you watch with eager fascination sure in the knowledge that however the cookie crumbled you were witnessing history in the making? Did you chomp on endless bowls of popcorn as you rooted the candidate of your choice across the finishing line of 270? Did you simply tune out, having reached your election saturation point a long time ago? Did you sit rocking back and forth in a corner waiting for the chips to fall?

For me, it was a combination of all of the above.

My election night consisted of covering Tuesday night's Council meeting, while keeping one eye on my laptop to see the returns come in live. After a while, however, it all became too much as that sinking feeling?well, sunk in.

Having stayed up to nearly 3 a.m. after a 14 hour workday, a combination of fatigue, disappointment, stress, and a certain degree of relief that it was all over, conspired to make me physically sick. The President-Elect's celebratory speech would have to wait until the morning.

Sleep would do me good, I thought, and I tried. That eventually came around the 4 a.m. mark, and before long 8 a.m. rolled around and it was time to come back to the office.

The speech waited for morning, but what I hadn't accounted for was logging onto social media and reading the reactions from my American friends, many of whom are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and visible minorities. To say these individuals were despondent over the results would be an understatement. Devastated is probably more on target, but this devastation was coupled with genuine terror over what the next four years will mean to them, their families, and their hard-fought rights and strides towards progress.

I am not ashamed to admit that their reactions triggered a visceral reaction in me. As a kid who experienced his fair share of bullying over the years for various ?reasons? I was always taught by my parents to pay them little heed because, one day, ?they'll be working for you.? Well, Tuesday's election results certainly blow that well-worn platitude out of the water for parents and children everywhere.

But it was interesting to contrast the reactions of my American friends to those closer to home.

While there were several examples of people sharing in the sadness expressed by so many of our neighbours there was also a degree of smugness.

Maple leaves abounded, pictures of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau were offered as ?sunny? alternatives to American turmoil, and sales pitches painting Canada as some sort of Shangri-La for all those feeling disenfranchised by the results sprouted everywhere. It provided that warm and fuzzy feeling for a little while as it was a respite from everything else, but it serves no purpose to delude ourselves that we're somehow better than our American cousins by the systems we have in place.

To all those focusing their attention on taking to the streets of Toronto this Saturday to protest against Donald Trump ? and there are, in my opinion, no end of legitimate reasons to do so ? I believe this energy and passion would be better spent keeping an eye on politics closer to home.

There is no reason to sit back, basking in our collective smugness to think what happened on Tuesday night couldn't possibly happen in the Great White North. On the contrary, the seeds are all in place.

Seemingly flying under the radar of most Canadians is the ongoing race to replace the impressive Rona Ambrose as permanent

leader of the Conservative Party of Canada and, in turn, to become leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

The race to fill the vacancy left by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper has attracted an encouraging number of highly qualified candidates who are big on ideas, brimming over with a vision for their party, who have all seemed to have learned from the beating their party took at the polls last year.

One candidate in the race, however, appears to be taking a leaf out of the Donald Trump victory.

“Tonight, our American cousins threw out the elites and elected Donald Trump as their next president,” wrote the candidate in question on social media. “It is an exciting message and one that we need delivered in Canada as well. It’s the message I’m bringing with my campaign to be the next Prime Minister of Canada.”

This past Sunday, the field of Conservative candidates gathered near Ottawa for an informal debate of the issues. Although attending a meet and greet before the discussion, the candidate in question left before the start of the discussion citing an “incident” at their Simcoe County home.

Later revealed to be a suspected break-in attempt, an unfortunate and regrettable decision for anyone, their campaign staffers are quoted by the CBC as attributing such a crime as tactics of the “left.”

Evidently some believe the fuel that propelled Donald Trump can be tapped in Canada as well. Unfortunately, there is always a possibility that that is

indeed the case, but do you want to

allow it to happen? If not, take a few minutes and consider “possibly for the very first time” the individuals hoping to be your next Leader of the Opposition, become involved, and have your voice heard well before Canada next goes to the polls in 2019.