

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: 2018 Summer Musings

By Stephen Somerville

Before this column returns to the local themes of people, politics and public affairs, below are some unconnected, stream-of-conscious and (most likely) incoherent musings and observations regarding the end of the summer season in Aurora. First, the race for the Aurora Mayors' chain of office should be an interesting one and will begin in earnest after Labour Day. With election-day slated for October 22, the four candidates, including incumbent Mayor Geoff Dawe, Councillor John Abel, Councillor Tom Mrakas, and former councillor and provincial cabinet minister Chris Ballard, have all been on the barbeque circuit this summer in search of votes.

Each of the candidates is of high profile, and has sufficient depth, experience and knowledge of the issues to mount an effective campaign.

I expect a close election and I look forward to writing upcoming columns about the mayoralty race. I will also be participating as a panelist at one of the debates this fall. Please send through any questions that you might like me to ask the mayoralty aspirants.

Second, I am not really a big fan of social media.

Our society is very fortunate that the communications industry has made such great leaps that we today have individual cell phones and devices that let us keep contact with one another virtually where ever we are in the world.

You would think that this communication would draw us together but it seems to only drive us apart; hiding behind our electronic devices.

And I have not really found anything much good or productive to come from social media. To me, for the most part it is just an outlet for mean spirited rants from usually anonymous individuals and crazies.

I also expected the President of the United States to tame his use of Twitter once he was inaugurated!

My third point is about litter in the park after Aurora minor house league soccer games. As I leave the field I continually find plastic water bottles and wrappings from chocolate bars/fruit rollups that have been discarded. Please pick up your trash and at least one piece of other trash as you leave the park. Our community has many beautiful parks and fields; let's keep 'em that way!

Fourth, dismantling statues or trying to erase/alter history has been in the North American news quite a bit lately. Whether it is removing a statute of Robert E. Lee in the American south or teachers unions wanting to remove the name of Canada's first Prime Minister, Sir John A. Macdonald from schools in Ontario, or the elected Council in Victoria BC actually removing a statute of our first PM.

CBC news reported back in July that 'Victoria (BC) city council voted to remove the statue as a gesture of reconciliation last week. It noted the role of Canada's first prime minister in establishing the residential school system, which tore some 150,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis children away from their communities and families.'

'Days later, the statue was removed, wrapped in foam and carted off on a flatbed truck to a storage facility.'

An editorial in Maclean's magazine a while back summed my feelings up quite well on the subject:

'By contrast, Macdonald's towering reputation is about so much more than reducing his legacy to a racist taint?serious as it is?isn't reasonable. His name still stands for a sweeping vision of Canada that he largely brought about, although his stature is seriously debated these days by historians'

'There is no simple way to draft up an acceptable pantheon of historical heroes. Each biography calls up a unique response. We should start by relying on judicious historians to sift what a man or woman who lived long ago said and did, which is no easy undertaking. Then we should ask why they were deemed worthy of recognition, and whether that motivation still feels right to us.

And if that's the test, there will be no need to start dreaming up new names quite yet for schools named after Sir John A. Macdonald.'

From another news story:

'Not everyone is on board. A survey conducted last year by the Angus Reid Institute found that most people 'albeit by a slim margin' oppose renaming school buildings that bear Macdonald's name. John Baird, the former Conservative minister, also dismissed the motion as an attempt 'to erase Canadian history in the guise of an extreme and radical political correctness' at the time.'

My recommendation is to keep any statues of the former PM in place and instead affix an adjoining plaque that states Sir John A's deplorable role in the development of the residential school system.

To end this column on a sunnier note, you won't hear me complain about the tremendous weather that we have had this summer. I

like all this heat and sunshine.

Although, as someone employed in the hydro-electric business, some more rain in northern Ontario would be good for business!

I know that soon enough, the October and November chilly winds will be here and that the snow will soon follow.

Enjoy this weather while you can!

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