

BROCK'S BANTER: A year of claws

By Brock Weir

Forward momentum can sometimes be a difficult thing to maintain, but, as we all know, it is pretty easy if someone continues to add fuel to the tank.

All too often traction can be lost as today's continually narrower attention spans move on to the next cause they find or get distracted by the next shiny object that comes along. A fight that once inspired a movement suddenly becomes yesterday's battle or, at worst, a dead horse that continues to be flogged. Other times, what was once a cause celebre can simply become a cliché, depending on the fickle perspective of the public.

Yet, there doesn't seem to be any momentum being lost in the somehow ongoing fight for women's equality around the world.

Over this past weekend, I looked back at some of our coverage of one year ago this week.

That week in particular was something of a game-changer for the world with the regime change in the United States.

Dust was still settling on a presidential inauguration speech the likes of which we, as a collective, have never seen in a supposed bastion of democracy. Well, when I say 'we' I mean those of us who watched on TV as the few and inexplicably proud gathered in Washington's National Mall were almost outnumbered by the sage brushes rolling by.

Americans were coming to grips with what for better or worse (and, one year on, I think we can make that call) was to become their new normal.

And women were behind closed doors finishing their placards, putting the final touches on their freshly-knitted pussy hats, and were set to head out the next day and spark a history changing movement

This spark, of course, wasn't limited to the likes of individuals prepared to make the trek to Washington. Here, close to home, countless women were preparing to do their bit for their southern sisters whether massing on the streets of Toronto to march and speak with a united voice, or spearheading smaller demonstrations in their respective communities to make a ripple in the turning tide.

In amidst the inspirational pictures of women and men flooding the streets, there were catcalls over the newly-minted administration's foolhardy coining of the term 'alternative facts' but, at the end of the day, the march was the message.

Aurora mother Corrie Clark took her children to Toronto's Women's March with elementary school student Lillie urging her American counterparts to 'remain positive' over the upcoming four years.

'Try not to think about it too much and just keep marching,' said Lillie.

On the flipside, local entrepreneur Jennifer Ettinger just happened to be in the United States, taking her daughter to a cheerleading competition in Indiana. There, the American-born Ettinger took in a similar march nearby.

'When I see women and men coming together to have their voices heard, I feel it is a bright light during dark days,' she said. 'I am glad my daughter witnessed thousands of people attending the rally, to see the impact one person can make. It was beautiful for the young girls to see, that women can be so powerful and have the strength in rallying together in times of need. Now the question is, 'What are the next steps'?''

Closer to the action were two university students, Brandy Davis and Alessandra Schlums, both graduates of Shelburne's Centre Dufferin District High School, who made the trek to Washington to be in the epicentre of the movement.

'This was not a one-day movement, so we will keep marching,' said Alessandra. 'Every day we all need to be making progress with these issues.'

Added Brandy: '[The President] needs to make an effort with the people and show that he cares. He can't just talk the talk, he has to walk the walk, too. He needs to go out in the community and talk to the people, and by 'people' I do not mean the rich white men of America, but everybody --- all people of colour, religions, sexualities, etc., and really get to know them, connect with them and learn what they want. I will keep marching until people are not ashamed to be who they are anymore, until people stop fearing for their lives and until equality for all is achieved, however long that takes.'

So, let's look over how far things have come over the last 12 months. Have there been efforts to go out in the community and talk to people of all colours, religions, and sexualities? Well, that will be for Americans to say.

As of this writing on Monday, under the stewardship of the Republican president, Republican majority in the Senate and the Republican majority of the House of Representatives, the United States government was in a state of near-paralysis almost three days into a government shutdown, only to fire up once again earlier this week.

While the leadership was stalled and politicians on both sides continue to engage in a staring contest to see which side will

ultimately blink first, the women ? and, again, many, many men ? were on the move, retaking the streets again, sending a message and ensuring their voices are heard.

While other things have ground to a halt, this momentum is stronger than ever, fuelled by the #metoo movement, the Time's Up campaign, and the once-brushed off accounts of the experiences of far too many people in the workplace now being taken seriously with real consequences coming into the fore.

?Just keep marching,? they said.

?This is not a one-day moment,? they said.

?We'll keep marching until people are not ashamed to be who they are anymore, until people stop fearing for their lives and until equality for all is achieved, however long that takes.?

We don't yet know how long that will ultimately take, but it now seems that as these women continue to march the rest the western world, at least in North America, is finally getting into lockstep with those looking to make a difference.

Now, what will next January hold?

If you took part in any iteration of the Women's March here at home, or abroad, please send your thoughts and observations to brock@auroran.com.