

## BROCK'S BANTER: Power of Words

By Brock Weir

Sometimes there is nothing better in this world than something a little bit gutteral.

Who among us doesn't get at least a small degree of satisfaction from uttering or typing a well-placed word, often of the four letter variety, more often still containing the sound of at least one hard 'K'?

I know I am one of these people.

Personally, I don't think it is something to be ashamed of. In fact, sometimes they are the only words that fit a particular situation.

When you get down to it, given the right audience it can be suitable in almost any situation or circumstance.

Everybody knows what that word is. Some are proud to let 'er rip. Others titter it under their breath in an effort to feign some degree of modesty. Some of these people, still looking for an outlet, might switch it up by exclaiming, 'Fudge!?', 'Shoot!?', 'Fart!?' or, even 'Fuddle-Duddle!?' But, let's be real here. You're not fooling anyone. Even the kids know what you're really trying to say.

And what is wrong with that? Put a swear jar on the kitchen counter ? or at an office desk ? and kids (and the young at heart) really have the potential to make a mint.

It is a wonder that these three consonants and a vowel have the power that they do.

As a kid, I still remember getting a few gasps from my grandparents when I tripped over something in the backyard and said, 'Damn!' all the while they used far worse as if it was second nature.

I am still told the story of when I was two or three when our family got back from picking up a jug of milk from Becker's, looked my mother square in the eye and calmly said, 'F?k off.'

Apparently, I picked it up from the teens outside the store in an effort to boost my toddler street cred.

Despite a scolding, the word never fully retreated from my vocabulary. It reached a zenith when I was in the younger end of a Grade 3/4 split in a stifling Newmarket elementary school during an uncharacteristic heat wave.

After about 10 minutes of being poked, prodded and otherwise harassed by a girl at the elder end of the split, I simply told her exactly what she could do with herself and was promptly packed off to the principal's office who solemnly tried to make me ashamed of myself. Although I maintain to this day that I was justified in my exclamation, the theatrics around it really drove home the point that a simple word can really drive people around the bend.

Consider the fuss that emerged this week when video emerged (videos always seem to 'emerge') of Liberal leader Justin Trudeau speaking after a boxing match.

In the clip, he said, 'I will tell you, there is no experience like stepping into this ring and measuring yourself. All that, your name, your fortune, your intelligence, your beauty ? none of that f---ing matters.'

Nobody seemed to bat an eyelid at the time, but the Prime Minister's office was quick to pounce on it saying, once again, that it was indicative of his 'poor judgement' and a barometer of his fitness as leader and Prime Minister.

This, while the Prime Minister himself being no stranger to entendres, double or otherwise. After all, he seemed to take great pleasure in re-telling Jean Chretien's 'Where the fox hat' story at a testimonial to the former Prime Minister, and came up with a very funny, and very quick, retort to the late Jack Layton's 'big gas' flub.

Trudeau then began to play into the storyline, trying a word synonymous with 'Shoot!' on for size a few days later and then giving a tongue-in-cheek mea culpa, bringing the 'scolding' he received from his wife into the equation.

Now, speculation is kicking in with pollsters questioning whether this is a deliberate attempt to curry favour with younger voters on Trudeau's part, with hints there is more profanity to come. I would like to think everyone has a healthy amount of skepticism in their marrow to give any such attempts at 'hipness' the one-over, but such is the power of a four-letter word.

Four letter words are not the only portions of our vocabulary to cause visceral reactions in people.

Just last month, Heritage Advisory Committee member Erina Kelly spoke at Council amidst the continuing debate among residents over the merits of a Heritage Conservation District noting, 'It is the word 'heritage' that gets blood pressure rising and that is where the spin begins.'

She is quite correct in that 'heritage' is a word that is often treated like a commodity in Aurora which can often mean different things to different groups of people. But, one commonality shared by each side is they are damned if they are going to let their view of heritage go down without a fight.

It is the same with 'culture' which can mean wildly different things to different people, and has caused no end of drama and debate within very limited cores of people.

As election campaigns get underway, and they truly are this week with the first challenger in the Mayor's race coming forward, more words will continue to be added to the list.

?Accountability?, is one word which is rearing its way into prominence once again as people begin to take sides.

What is one man's accountability is another man's veil.

The same can be said with ?transparency?.

What some might see as ?progressive?, others might take as a signpost in a very important fork in the road. Where some might see an ?aura? as an important barometer in Aurora, others might sense an opportunity to colour one themselves.

It is only the second week of April, the buzzwords are soaring into the atmosphere, but sooner or later they will inevitably come back down to earth for the buzzers to start putting meat on their bones.

How will the power embodied in each of these words be measured? That will be entirely up to you.

### **STRIPPING WORDS OF THEIR POWER**

It was heartening to visit Devins Drive Public School last week to meet with a very interesting group of Grade 5 and Grade 6 students who have taken a closer and proactive look at the meaning of words within their schools, particularly the word ?Gay.? All too often, these kids have heard phrases like ?That's so gay!?' on the playground, often in fun, but, unfortunately, sometimes not, but it prompted them to delve deeper into what this word means and the impact it has both on the individual or the school community.

Their insights into the power the word can have on the individual, whether they are a victim of bullying, the bully themselves, or perhaps an individual with two moms or two dads who sadly might be trying to fly under the radar, were inspiring and, in my view, will have nothing but a positive impact on the school community.

Their efforts are part of a pilot project which could be implemented throughout the York Region District School Board to foster a sense of tolerance, belonging and community, and it has the potential to break down barriers far beyond its mandate of combatting homophobia and transphobia. Kudos for the students and teacher for sticking to their guns for a much grander vision.