

BROCK'S BANTER: Reality Check

By Brock Weir

There are a few times every year when one has an idea for a column and ultimately sets it aside for any number of reasons. They find their way to a mental box of parboiled thoughts, loose strands, and leftovers, but every once in a while they come back to the forefront unexpectedly and it is time for these ideas to fully germinate.

I'm not yet grizzled enough at this age to park myself on the grass and give my best Clint Eastwood growl to tell the kids to get off my lawn, but I feel that creeping up a lot sooner than it should. And it would be misdirected.

This crossed my mind a couple of years ago when Council spent hours upon hours dealing with a laundry list of possibilities that could happen to little Bobby or Sally if they put a foot wrong on one of Aurora's venerable "two hump camel climbers." But that issue quickly went away.

Leave it to columnist Alison Collins-Mrakas to bring that subject back from the dead last week.

Then, this past Thursday, at a very productive Sport Aurora meeting, a conversation explored whether some parents might be stepping just a little bit close to coddling their children from the rough and tumble world out there, in the sports arena or otherwise.

I was not in a position to counter the argument. I was born in 1985 "a year whose children the fates decided must be the guinea pigs for any number of hare-brained schemes coming forward from the Common Sense Revolution.

Setting the stage for what was to come in the Harris government, shortly after stepping into Grade Two, it was ultimately decided Red Rover could cause the equivalent of a playground Iwo Jima, so that was quickly put to rest.

A few years later in Grade 6, the Harris government dictated that getting an F or an otherwise failing grade if we didn't do what was required of us would be too traumatic for our young minds to handle. So, "common sense" dictated that rather than a letter grade, we would receive a number between one and four. No zeroes were involved in case we developed an inferiority complex for inferior work, so there was the option of getting a much more palatable of "incomplete" or "not applicable."

I like to think this exercise in ridiculousness created a degree of strength of character, but that slippery slope has been increasingly greased.

We increasingly hear stories from across Canada of things going on in schools that we should apparently find outrageous and intolerable.

Locally, we had a mild case of protest with parents expressing concern about the possibility of some York Region schools instituting a uniform policy. Some families may not be able to afford meeting the requirements and that was something that needed to be addressed, but several parents were concerned uniforms somehow snuffed their child's individuality.

Previously, there was the Toronto teacher who was suspended for having the gall to give students who didn't do their work a grade reflective of their effort.

Just weeks ago, there was a controversy in Manitoba over a school showing an equally controversial video on bullying and teen suicide, a problem all-too-prevalent in today's schools. The video, which had already blown up on social media, depicts a world where the vast majority of people are gay and they bully the one straight student over her own sexuality to the point where she takes her own life.

It is an interesting, and thought-provoking video "although critics argue it is far too simplistic" that turns stereotypes on their ears. One parent, however, claimed that their child was so distraught over the video that they had a medical episode "and the teacher was suspended as a result.

Had the child not passed out, the video still would have left a lasting impression on students and provoke more thorough and lasting life lessons.

Amid the bizarre educational experiments inflicted on our year, the Board started sending us these life lessons neatly bundled "with a particular police officer assigned to each school to come by on a semi-regular basis to provide guidance on health and safety issues they had seen on the field.

The officer assigned to our school told horrendously graphic details of his own father suffering alcoholism and cirrhosis. Details of doctors removing his rock-hard liver was something that traumatized us to the point where a few dumped the bulk of their parents liquor cabinets down the sink. Complaints were received at the school from those who reached out that night for a night cap, but they ultimately came to appreciate the message.

Parents in the Winnipeg community could realise the benefit of their kids being exposed to such a video, whether they are kinder to their fellow students, hesitate before doing anything that could be construed as bullying, or seek help if they ever find themselves

considering ending their own life.

In this vein, parents should not be afraid to expose their children, even from a young age, to some of the less pleasant parts of their world out of fear it could scratch their innocence. That is good up until a point, but when kids are still wrapped up in foam rubber when they are into the double digits, that creates its own problems.