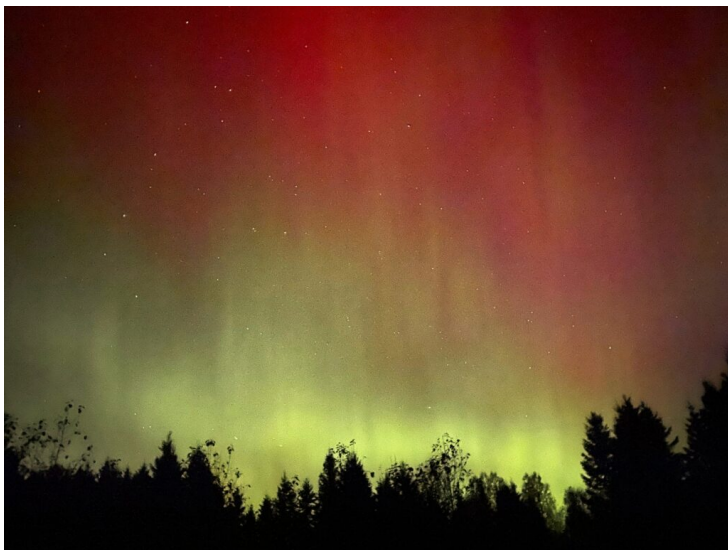


A lowercase 'g'?



By Nate Smelle

While watching the Bancroft Jets put on a show at the North Hastings Community Centre last weekend, I found myself thinking about all the letters to the editor that came in during the last seven days. Anyone who follows this column is aware that from time to time I share my thoughts, as well as the thoughts of others regarding the controversial former president and now President-elect of the 'Divided States of America', Donald J. Trump. Because we are a community newspaper, thus reflecting the diversity of interests and views possessed by our local population, every time I weigh in on this circus sideshow, I do so knowing that whatever it is I have to say is going to piss off a certain fraction of those reading it. Some of this ever-angry bunch will attempt to criticize my work and call me names, while others—the most hateful among them—will threaten and curse me in the name of 'their god.' For an example of this, look to comments on the 'Angel of Death' shared in last week's editorial, 'Threatening free speech.' To be completely clear, when I say 'their god' using 'their' in quotations and 'god' with a lowercase 'g', it is because the God I am aware of through my own experience of nature, eight years of Catholic schooling, attending Church on occasion, and four years of studying the philosophies of world religions at university, is a God of love, not a god of hate. The first time I was exposed to individuals preaching such loathsome garbage was while attending a peace rally outside the National Mall in Washington, D.C. on Jan. 18, 2003. The demonstration was organized in opposition to the heavy push to invade Iraq by the Republican former U.S. president George W. Bush. Standing there in the shadow of the Washington Monument, camera in hand, listening to American civil rights and social justice activist, Reverend Al Sharpton Jr. passionately calling for peace, I turned my lens on the crowd estimated to be approximately 200,000 strong. Focusing in on people's signs, I realized that almost everyone gathered on the lawn that day was there to send the same message: peace and love are more valuable than war and hate. 'PEACE NOW!' read one sign. 'STAND AGAINST WAR AND RACISM,' proclaimed another. Sadly, as war rages on around the globe, signs sending the same or similar messages can still be found decorating the crowd at peace rallies more than two decades later. Even more depressing, so can another sign I observed on that cold day in Washington so long ago. That sign, poking up from behind four cops on horseback protecting a group of six pro-war counter-protesters asserted: 'GOD HATES F@GS!' Recognizing the stark contrast in the tone of this sign and its intent to the others standing out among the crowd of 200,000 or so demonstrators at the peace rally, I thought to myself, 'God? hates who? Why? Isn't God supposed to be a God of love and compassion? The Bible clearly states: 'Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.' What about loving your neighbour as yourself? God's good book also declares, 'But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them (John 2:11).' What about Trump's promise of mass deportations, which he said could see anywhere from two million to 21 million refugees rounded up and sent back to the dangerous living conditions and circumstances they were seeking sanctuary from in the land of the not so free or brave? Already, only days after Trump's reelection, a group of white supremacists

carrying a banner exclaiming, "MASS DEPORTATIONS NOW" were photographed marching outside Jackson Square in Hamilton, Ontario. So I ask you this, knowing his stance on immigration, would Trump and his MAGA cult on both sides of our shared border have turned away Jesus's pregnant mother Mary and her husband Joseph if they arrived at the border today? We all know the answer to this question. Thankfully, at least I learned something from this abhorrent misinterpretation of the Bible on display by a tiny faction of warmongers in Canada and the U.S. That being: unlike a God of love like the one in the Bible, a "god" of hate can be used to manipulate others into believing false prophets that will say and sell you whatever it is they need to say and sell you to get whatever it is they want. This same evil intent has been up front and centre on the campaign trail south of the border, courtesy of the new and "improved" messiah/shoe salesman of the far right, Donald J. Trump. Well, by now, anyone who hasn't opted to combat the high cost of groceries due to worldwide inflation by purchasing a pair of \$300 gold spray-painted sneakers, digital playing cards, or a Chinese-made MAGA Bible knows that Trump's middle initial "J" sure in hell doesn't stand for "Jesus." By running against U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris—a candidate offering a message of hope for all Americans, no matter their gender, race, colour, creed, ethnic origin, place of origin, ancestry, citizenship, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression—not just Americans but the entire world got to see that there is another more peaceful alternative to the politics of hate being espoused by far right extremists worldwide. Don't get me wrong, Harris's platform was far from perfect. If someone had told me back in 2003 that Dick Cheney and I would be supporting the same candidate in 2024, I would have had two words for them, and they wouldn't have been "Merry Christmas." If another Trump term wasn't the alternative, I likely would have rallied behind a candidate that took a stronger stance on the climate crisis and ending the genocide in Palestine. Nevertheless, none of this really matters at the moment in the U.S. with Trump getting ready to move back into the White House. I hope I am wrong about everything and Trump will rule as a benevolent leader that truly cares about all people and the planet that gives us life. However, if common sense derived from an honest observation of his past and present behaviour has any value at all, I fear that Americans are about to get the government they deserve. And, if history rhymes, as the American writer Mark Twain once professed, then so are we here in Canada. But, despite the apparent doom and gloom of this worst case scenario for North America and our home planet, when we take a step back and have a look at the big picture, there is still hope. While the MAGA cult and its Maple MAGA followers show their true colours by gloating about Trump's "landslide victory" remember this: it only took Harris, the daughter of two immigrants—an Indian-born mother and Jamaican-born father—107 days to get 48.1 per cent of the vote in the 2024 election. If it took Trump two years of campaigning and groveling to his billionaire oligarch backers just to earn him a mere two per cent more than Harris, imagine what she could do in 2028 with the extra time he had to campaign in 2024.