

Live long and prosper



By Nate Smelle

SITTING IN THE FOREST behind my home in L'Amable while on a week's vacation, I noticed that the black-eyed Susans and the bee balm were in full bloom. ?Halfway through summer,? I thought to myself. Hiking home smiling I reflected on how nice it was to shut down from the online world for a little while, as I always tend to do every week away from the routine. With rain starting to come down, I picked up the pace in a failing attempt to remain dry. Crossing the threshold into my house I shed the wet layers and made my way to the sofa with coffee in hand to soak in some of the news and entertainment on television. Flipping through the channels to see what's on I narrowed it down to a documentary on CBC, or a rerun of Star Trek. Now I am not usually one to resist the urge to ?live long and prosper? along with the crew of the Enterprise, but I am also a somewhat dedicated news junky. Thanks to my exceptional control of the remote I juggled back and forth between my trip to ?Organia? with Kirk and the crew, and a trek to the tar sands with Dr. David Schindler. Looking out the window when the programs had finished I noticed a ruby-throated hummingbird tuning into the tiger lilies in the front garden. Here is this bird outside making the most of its time, and there I was on the couch wasting a perfectly good afternoon. I thought of a book I had read a few years back by Neil Postman titled *Amusing ourselves to death*. At that moment I made a conscious effort to reduce my screen time and increase summer funtime by shutting down the television for the rest of the summer.

A week into this endeavour I already find myself thirsting for the 24-7 input of information that I have become accustomed to drinking in on a daily basis. As much as I miss the hearing the voices of journalists around the globe fill us in on the nature of things happening at home and abroad I don't miss the barrage of violence that unfortunately litters this steady flow of information.

Being a Generation X'er the shock and awe of seeing the gory images and reports that arise from a war zone are nothing new to me. Before the bloody carnage of war made its way into our homes via television the horrific reality of warfare was primarily reserved for those women and men who fought on the battlefield. Sadly this type of tragic scenery has become commonplace among the rest of the newsfeed. The number of dead now in places like Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine, etc. now intermingles so smoothly with

the stats from last night's game that if you are not paying close enough attention you may confuse the two.

Just saying no to TV broadcasts for a few months does not mean I have decided to crawl back into the cave and stare at the shadows on the wall. Actually it's the exact opposite. For the moment I will feed my need for information from social media outlets such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. As this newsfeed spontaneously and continuously replenishes itself at the hand of citizen journalists around the world we learn about the world we are creating through our actions. We also learn about the world we yearn to create. What we do with this daily tsunami of information will decide where we go next as a species. The problem with this gigantic wave of wisdom and ridiculousness is that like television you have to be careful not to be pulled under by its amusing undertow.