

## True colours

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By Nate Smelle

Everything that matters most in this world requires our sincere attention. If time and human history has shown us anything, it is that when we neglect to focus on what is truly important we jeopardize our quality of life now, as well as that of future generations. There is no better time than during an election to contemplate these simple truths. Reading, watching and listening to the news, we experience a barrage of opinions from the party leaders and their candidates all aiming to convince us that their party's platform is our nation's best course of action. With every election that comes to pass, I have noticed that the biggest portion of these partisan perspectives are always aimed at one target ? the incumbent Prime Minister and governing party.

As typical and justified as these criticisms are, they must not be overlooked. In pointing out the current government's failures, broken promises and scandals as they promote their own agenda, those vying to lead also reveal to us what their party believes matters most to the people. While every party tends to make promises regarding the big issues ? environment, health care, Indigenous rights and reconciliation, and the economy ? what I find most telling is the priority each party places on these matters. A simple way to assess where a party's loyalties lie is by counting the number of times anyone representing the party addresses each of these issues when they speak publicly. Even more revealing is the number of times a candidate or leader brings up an issue without being provoked. When they do this they are speaking to their base, preaching to their own choir with the intention of retaining their support.

A strong base is absolutely essential for any party to earn the opportunity to govern, so rest assured that in these repetitions a party's true colours will always shine through. At this point it is always a good idea to fine tune your focus on their words. Everyone on the stage is going to tell you that their party's plan will save the world and bring better days for all, so an informed voter must be skeptical of every promise made during an election. Just because a candidate professes to possess red, orange, green or blue values, doesn't mean they themselves, or their party for that matter, will govern according to the values they are touting. The only real way to determine this with any degree of accuracy is through a rigorous investigation of what the party and candidate have actually done to walk their own walk.

It is also wise to pay attention to who a party's policies are aiming to please. This becomes evident in the leaders and candidates choice of venues. When they want to reach a certain audience they make it easy for that audience to attend the show. For instance, if they are seeking the youth vote, they might speak at a university, whereas if they are seeking support from a certain industry or sector they may rub elbows with wealthy oil executives at a luxury resort in Alberta.

There is a lot we need to pay attention to when pondering the political ? and during an election it is all thrown at us at breakneck speed. Nevertheless, we need to digest it to the best of our ability as conscious members of a democracy. As infuriating as politics can be most of the time, it is an essential tool in our community building tool box which we all need to learn how to use. The more we understand it and the potential it has to enhance our quality of life, the better it will serve us now and in the future.