

## The other 'F' word



By Nate Smelle

Freedom is not a word to be used or taken lightly. Nor are words such as fascism, or terrorism. So why is it that they are being tossed around with such ease these days? Certainly the increased frequency of their use and misuse is degrading their meaning and lessening their value. Through this often intentional abuse of the words that shape our world, our potential for an accurate understanding of the nature of things is diminished. Fortunately, there is a book designed carefully to add meaning to all of our lives; a book that some consider to be sacred. This book, we call the dictionary. In simply taking a few moments out of our day to consult this unparalleled collection of basic facts, we have the opportunity to enhance our comprehension of the truth, and scout out when such loaded words are being fired off to manipulate us. Upon opening this good book, one has a chance to gain insight into the power of loaded words and their potential to be weaponized. The word, 'fascism' for instance, is defined as 'a political philosophy, movement, or regime (such as that of the Fascisti) that exalts nation, and often race above the individual and that stands for a centralized autocratic government headed by a dictatorial leader, severe economic and social regimentation, and forcible suppression of opposition.' Turning the page, one learns that the word 'terrorism' is defined as 'the unlawful use or threat of violence especially against the state or the public as a politically motivated means of attack or coercion; violent and intimidating gang activity street terrorism.' Freedom, my favourite word among the big three, is commonly understood as 'the quality or state of being free, such as: the absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action; liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another; the quality or state of being exempt or released usually from something onerous.' With this knowledge we can tune into the news on any platform, no matter the level of bias from which it was created, and find truth in the messages being conveyed. Let's get the ball rolling here with the three loaded words mentioned above - terrorism, fascism, and freedom - words that will soon undoubtedly be abused by many of the politicians vying for your vote, and the reporters documenting their efforts. Simply knowing the definition of words is not enough though; for knowledge without the wisdom to use it is as a building block in the temple of truth and understanding is as meaningless as flying Canadian flag that was made in China on your pick up truck, and calling yourself a patriot. In possession of such elevated and useful awareness one begins viewing the news with a keener sense of vision - carefully discerning the actual facts from what those intending to mislead us have previously labelled as alternative 'facts.' Watching the news of the so-called 'Freedom' convoy invade the nation's capital and take over Parliament Hill, I decided to take a trip to Ottawa to see which type of 'freedom' this Trump-worshipping, swastika-touting, Qanon flag-waving herd was fighting for. Hold your horses, before you pick up your pen to start writing your Letter to the Editor informing me of the fact that there were only a dozen or so of these flags and symbols spotted among the convoy, keep in mind that in more than two decades of marching for environmental and social justice I have not seen a single swastika, confederate, or Trump flag in the crowd. Maybe there is a Nazis for a Sustainable Future faction somewhere out there, however in my experience I have yet to stumble upon them. Nevertheless, I think you get my point. Rolling up on the crowd gathered in the middle Rideau Street for a portable hot tub session and a few of what should be buck-a-beers, the first sign I noticed was a sticker on the back of a truck that read 'Welcome to Canada, Fit in or 'F' Off.' Could the mysterious 'F' stand for freedom? I pondered as I navigated through the litter of empty Budweiser cans and cigarette butts decorating the pavement. Taking in the sounds, sights, and odours of the slow motion insurrection as I made my way through the filth, I soon realized that this was not the only sign bearing such a hatred message. Driving back to Bancroft after a couple days of filming the frontlines of this sinister tailgate party, I found myself with more questions than when I began my journey. Now when I

see a Canadian flag, I sadly no longer feel a sense of pride. Instead, I find myself asking: why the self-professed 'patriot' is feeling compelled to let their freak flag fly? What definition of 'freedom' are they proudly defending? Is it the freedom for all people on Turtle Island to have access to clean drinking water? Or, is it the 'freedom' that takes no issue with allowing the people of the Neskantaga First Nation to live under a boil water advisory for some 27 years? Is it the freedom for Indigenous people to set up a blockade along one of Canada's mainline train routes to protect their ancestral lands from the destruction of pipelines built for the profits of the few? Or, is it the 'freedom' to disrupt the economy of the nation's capital, and cost taxpayers \$11 million a day ? \$264-million in total ? to fight for their right to party without a mask and put people's health in jeopardy? From my experience on the frontlines of the convoy protests in February, it is clear that these domestic terrorists were there for one reason, and one reason alone ? to further their fascist agenda.