



## LESSON PLAN

<b>Level:</b>	Grades 9 to 12
<b>About the Author:</b>	Matthew Johnson, Director of Education, MediaSmarts
<b>Duration:</b>	1 to 1 ½ hours, plus time for the assessment/evaluation activity
This lesson is part of the <a href="#">Reality Check</a> lesson series.	

# Reality Check: Authentication and Citizenship



This lesson is part of *USE, UNDERSTAND & CREATE: A Digital Literacy Framework for Canadian Schools*: <http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework>.

## Overview

In this lesson, students consider the ways in which misinformation can have an impact on history and politics. After discussing a number of historical examples of misinformation, they examine the ways in which news sources may be biased and use an interactive online game to practice skills in getting more context on a story. Finally, students read a current news story and use what they have learned to find the context they need to understand it.

## Learning Outcomes

Students will:

- Learn the importance of news and information to a healthy democracy
- Learn how to get essential context about online information
- Recognize bias and point-of-view
- Compare coverage of news stories in different sources

## Preparation and Materials

Photocopy the handout *5 for 5: Five Things You Can Do to Get the Whole Story (in Under Five Minutes)* and the assignment sheet *The Big Picture*

Photocopy or prepare to project the *Fake News That Changed the World* slideshow

Make sure students have internet access and are able to connect to *Reality Check Mission Two: Authentication and Citizenship* (<http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/mediasmarts/files/games/reality-check/index.html#/>)



## Procedure

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### Fake News That Changed the World

Start by asking students how many of them have heard of the terms “fake news” or “misinformation.” Ask how long they think these things have been around, but don’t give an answer. Ask whether (and why) they think misinformation can have an impact on the world but, again, don’t identify any answers as right or wrong.

Now show the slideshow *Fake News That Changed the World* and go through the examples with the class.

Point out that most of the examples are related to politics, or had an effect on political decisions. Why is misinformation a particularly big issue when it comes to politics? (*Point out that when we participate in politics we form opinions, and make decisions, based on the information available to us. If that information is false or misleading we may make poor decisions; if we feel like we can’t tell what’s true, we’re more likely to listen to whoever tells the best story, or that confirms what we already believe.*)

Tell students that misinformation can originate from many sources, but can also come to us in many different ways, including from sources we trust: many people have seen misinformation shared online by friends and family, and sometimes legitimate news sources fail to double-check possible misinformation (such as the *Toronto Sun* in the last example).

- As well, *partisan* media (which takes a specific political stand) is often more willing to report on possible misinformation that supports its position (as in the *Toronto Sun* example, this was not a news article but an opinion piece by a columnist who had written previous articles criticizing Canada’s refugee policy).
- Finally, not all misinformation is clear-cut or obvious. Sometimes it will be a mix of things that are true and false, or things that are true but are placed in a misleading context (for instance, the *Maine* really did blow up, but there’s little or no evidence to support Hearst’s claim that Spain was responsible), or facts that would give a more accurate picture may be left out (for example, the person who confessed to Hugh of Lincoln’s murder was tortured by order of the king, an important fact that speaks to political interference, and renders the confession less reliable).

### Getting the Whole Story

Explain that because today we often get our news from many different sources, what’s often most important is getting more *context* about a story. Distribute the handout *5 for 5: Five Things You Can Do to Get the Whole Story (in Under Five Minutes)* and go through it with the class. Point out that some of these steps are useful for finding out whether a story is for real at all (the first point in particular) while others give you a sense of whether the story you’re reading is not only *true* but also *accurate* (rather than misleading).

Have students use the handout to help them complete [Reality Check Mission Two: Authentication and Citizenship](#). Students may do this alone, in pairs, or as a whole class at your discretion.

When students have completed the mission, ask them how close their judgment of the story’s reliability was. (*This story is rated a 2, “Probably False,” with the corresponding action “Leave a Debunking Comment.”*)

What were the most important clues, and how did they find them? (*Doing a reverse image search showed that the photo, while real, had been cropped to make it misleading. The source that published it was an opinion site, not a news source, and nobody else had covered the story except other sites that had the same political position.*)



What might have been some misleading clues? (*First, the friend who shared it with you had mostly shared reliable things. As well, the photo was real, and it did show Grantwood and Lithgow together – but it had been cropped and misrepresented to suggest that they were closer than the real story would suggest.*)

### Assessment/Evaluation: The Big Picture

Distribute the assignment sheet *The Big Picture* and tell students that they are going to be looking at how to get the “big picture” of a news story. Have each student select a different newspaper (if you wish you may restrict them to Canadian papers) and pick a story that made the front page. Have them use the assignment sheet to analyze the paper’s coverage of that story and then compare it to two other sources. If you wish, you may have students then share their findings with the class.

### Assessment/Evaluation Activity: The Big Picture

For this assignment you will be looking at how to get the “big picture” of a news story.

Start by selecting a newspaper from one of these sources:

- <http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/>
- <https://www.thepaperboy.com/canada/front-pages.cfm>

Pick a story that made the front page, then go to the paper’s website and read the article. Make notes of the following:

- What pictures are used to illustrate the story? What impression do they make?
- What details are given *first* in the story? Which are given later?
- Who is quoted in the story? Who is mentioned but not quoted?
- What words or phrases with *positive connotations* are used in the story? What words or phrases with *negative connotations* are used? (For example, is a speaker described as being *forceful* or *strident*? Is an artist *creative* or *weird*?)

Now find two other sources (newspapers, news websites, etc.) that covered the same story. Make sure that none of them are members of the same chain of newspapers. Check the list of the largest newspaper chains in Canada to be sure:

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmedia\\_Network](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postmedia_Network)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metroland\\_Media\\_Group](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metroland_Media_Group)
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunswick\\_News](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brunswick_News)

Also make sure that the different sources are not running the same article from a *syndication service* such as Reuters or Canadian Press.

Read the articles on the same story in these sources and compare:

- Where in the newspaper is the story placed? If it is not the front page, how does that change your impression of the story?
- Do they use the same picture as the first story? If not, what do they use? How is your impression of the story different as a result?



- Are the same details given as in the first story? If not, how are they different? How is your impression of the story different as a result?
- Are details given in the same order as in the first story? If not, which appear earlier in the story and which later? How is your impression of the story different as a result?
- Are the same people quoted as in the first story? If not, how is it different? Are the same quotes used? If not, how is it different? How is your impression of the story different as a result?
- What words or phrases with *positive connotations* are used in the second and third story? What words or phrases with *negative connotations* are used? Are these different from the original story? How is your impression of the story different as a result?

Now consider:

- How complete a picture does each of the three sources give you?
- Are there any key pieces of information that were not included in any of the three sources?
- Are there any significant examples of bias in any of the sources? If so, what were they?
- What did the writers or editors of the three sources do to avoid bias? Find at least three examples.





## Assessment Task Rubric

	<b>Learning Expectations</b>	<b>Achievement</b>
<p><b>Use</b></p> <p>Skills and competencies that fall under “use” range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email, and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines and online databases, and emerging technologies such as cloud computing.</p>	<p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i></p> <p>applies digital tools to gather, evaluate and use information</p> <p>locates, organizes, analyzes, evaluates, synthesizes and ethically uses information from a variety of sources and media</p> <p><i>Community Engagement:</i></p> <p>uses digital media to be part of a community</p> <p>exhibits leadership as a digital citizen</p>	<p>Insufficient (R)</p> <p>Beginning (1)</p> <p>Developing (2)</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
<p><b>Understand</b></p> <p>“Understand” includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us.</p> <p>“Understand” also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.</p>	<p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i></p> <p>compares, contrasts, and synthesizes information from diverse sources (triangulates information) before it is used in a knowledge-making process</p> <p><i>Community Engagement:</i></p> <p>understands how meaning is produced through multimedia (text, images, audio, video) and how culture is produced through the Internet and social media in particular</p> <p>understands the wider context of digital tools in a 'digital age' characterized by globalization and networks</p>	<p>Insufficient (R)</p> <p>Beginning (1)</p> <p>Developing (2)</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>
<p><b>Create</b></p> <p>“Create” is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. It includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; to create and communicate using rich media such as images, video, and sound; and to effectively and responsibly engage with user-generated content such as blogs and discussion forums, video and photo sharing, social gaming, and other forms of social media.</p> <p>The ability to create using digital media ensures that Canadians are active contributors to digital society.</p>	<p><i>Finding and Verifying:</i></p> <p>uses a variety of searching strategies to conduct effective and efficient online searches</p> <p>uses digital technology to identify and define authentic problems and significant questions for investigation</p> <p>understands how meaning is produced through the news media (text, images, audio, video) and how culture is produced through the news</p> <p><i>Community Engagement:</i></p> <p>identifies and participates responsibly in online networks that foster positive community</p>	<p>Insufficient (R)</p> <p>Beginning (1)</p> <p>Developing (2)</p> <p>Competent (3)</p> <p>Confident (4)</p>

## 5 for 5: Five Things You Can Do to Get the Whole Story (in Under Five Minutes)

Checking online info doesn't have to be hard, and it doesn't have to take a long time – but you do have to do it every time you want to share something, or you might make a decision based on it.


Especially when it comes to things like politics, a lot of online information sources only give you one side. That may not necessarily be *wrong*, but it doesn't give you enough info to make a good decision.

Here are five things you can do in less than five minutes to get the whole story. (Most will take you less than two minutes!)

1. Open a new tab or a new window. The first thing that experienced fact-checkers do when they want to check out a website is *leave it*: while there may be useful clues on the page itself, it's usually faster to find out what other people are saying about it. That's even more true if you're trying to get more information about a story, not just find out if it's true or not.

Next, highlight key text from the article, copy it and paste it into a search engine. (Or you can just type key words yourself if it's easier.)

Nigeria's president has had to take the unusual step of denying that he has died and been replaced by a clone.

Nigeria's president has had to take the unusual step of denying that he ha 

Now you can see if news outlets or other sources that you know are reliable are covering it.

2. Wikipedia is an effective way to find out what the *consensus* is on a topic: what does (almost) everybody agree on?

The consensus isn't *always* true or accurate, but you need to know what the consensus is in order to judge arguments for or against it. Knowing the consensus is especially important in topics where experts' opinions hold a lot more weight, like science or medicine.

What makes Wikipedia most valuable for this is its *transparency*: you can see every edit that was ever made to an article (click the "View History" tab), see what grade the editors have given it (click the "Talk" tab) and see if editors are arguing about anything in the article (also the "Talk" tab.)

3. You can also *start* by going to a source you have a good reason to trust to see how they're covering the story. A good place to start would be with what are considered to be the "newspapers of record" of different countries. (You can see a list of newspapers of record here: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newspaper\\_of\\_record#Examples](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Newspaper_of_record#Examples)) These are considered to be more reliable sources because they cover the whole country, not just a single city; they have more resources than smaller sources; and their reputation for accuracy is a big part of why people buy them, so it would cost them a lot to be wrong on a major story. While (like any source) they sometimes have a bias, they work hard to make sure that doesn't affect their news reporting.



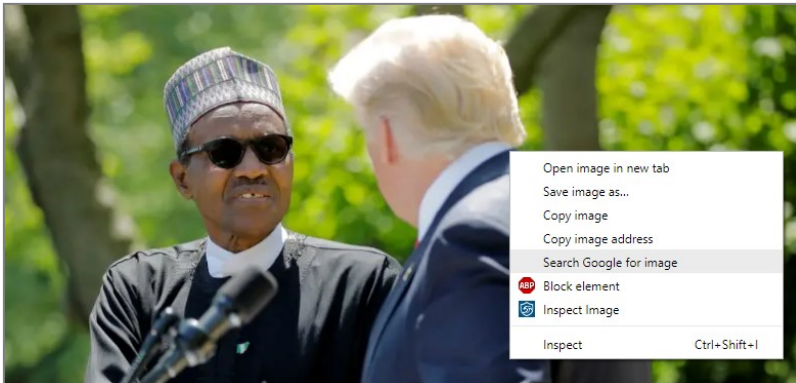
Here are few newspapers of record you will find useful:

- *The Globe and Mail* ([www.theglobeandmail.com](http://www.theglobeandmail.com))
- *La Presse* ([lapresse.ca](http://lapresse.ca))
- *The New York Times* (US) ([www.nytimes.com](http://www.nytimes.com))
- *The Washington Post* (US) (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/>)

4. It can also be useful to look at things in a completely different context. One of the best ways of getting a different perspective is to read newspapers from another country: see what English-language sources like the British Broadcasting Corporation website (<https://www.bbc.com/news>) or the *Times* of London (<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/>) are covering. If you read more than one language, reading newspapers of record in other languages is useful too.

To get a different political perspective, you can look for sources that are coming from a different political view than the one you started with, or look at a site like AllSides (<https://www.allsides.com>) that collects articles from different parts of the political spectrum.

5. Sometimes things like pictures aren't *false*, but are used in misleading contexts. (For example, during a big storm sometimes people share photos from other storms.) You can find out where a picture came from with a reverse image search. In Google Chrome, you can do this by right-clicking any picture; you can also do it in any browser by copying the picture's Web address and pasting it at [tineye.com](http://tineye.com).



## Reverse Image Search

Search by image and find where that image appears online

↑

Q

**6 results**

Searched over **33.3 billion images** in 0.8 seconds for: [img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/2018-12/3/8/asset...](https://img.buzzfeed.com/buzzfeed-static/static/2018-12/3/8/asset...)

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**THE OLD POST**  
ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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Est. 1869 Wednesday, November 24, 1892 Price 6d

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## FAKE NEWS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD!

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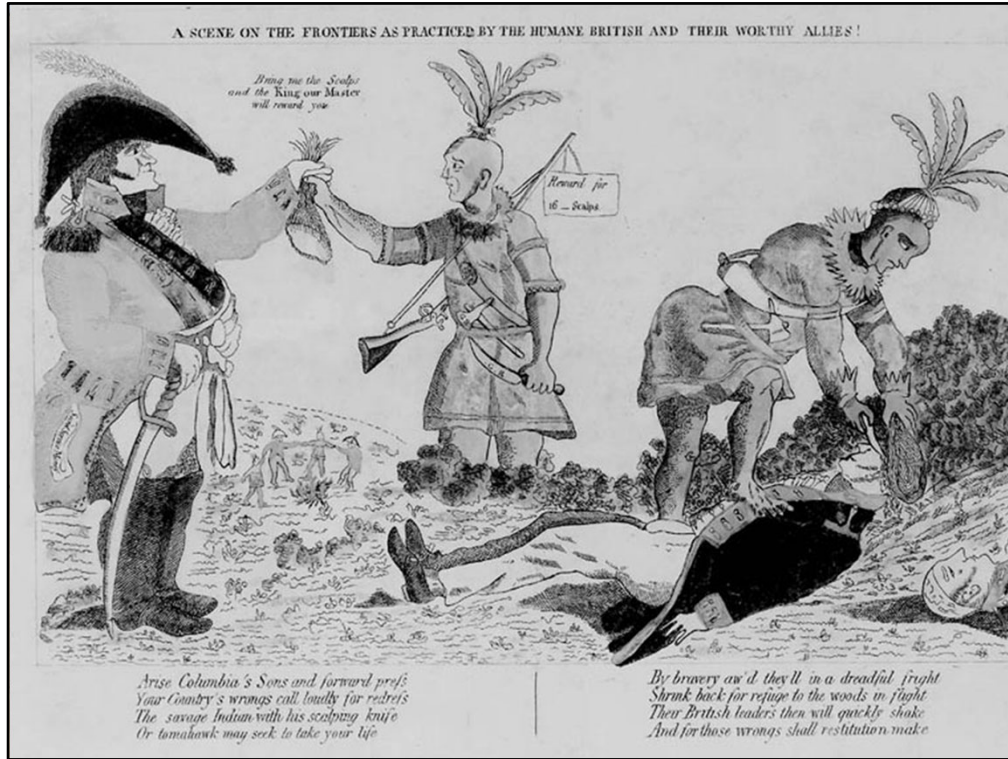


The death of “Little Saint Hugh of Lincoln,” spread by medieval chroniclers such as Matthew Paris, was blamed on the Jewish community of England and used to justify the confiscation of their property, their expulsion from England in the 12<sup>th</sup> century and continued antisemitism for hundreds of years after. The story was kept alive by writers like Geoffrey Chaucer, who refers to it in *The Canterbury Tales*.

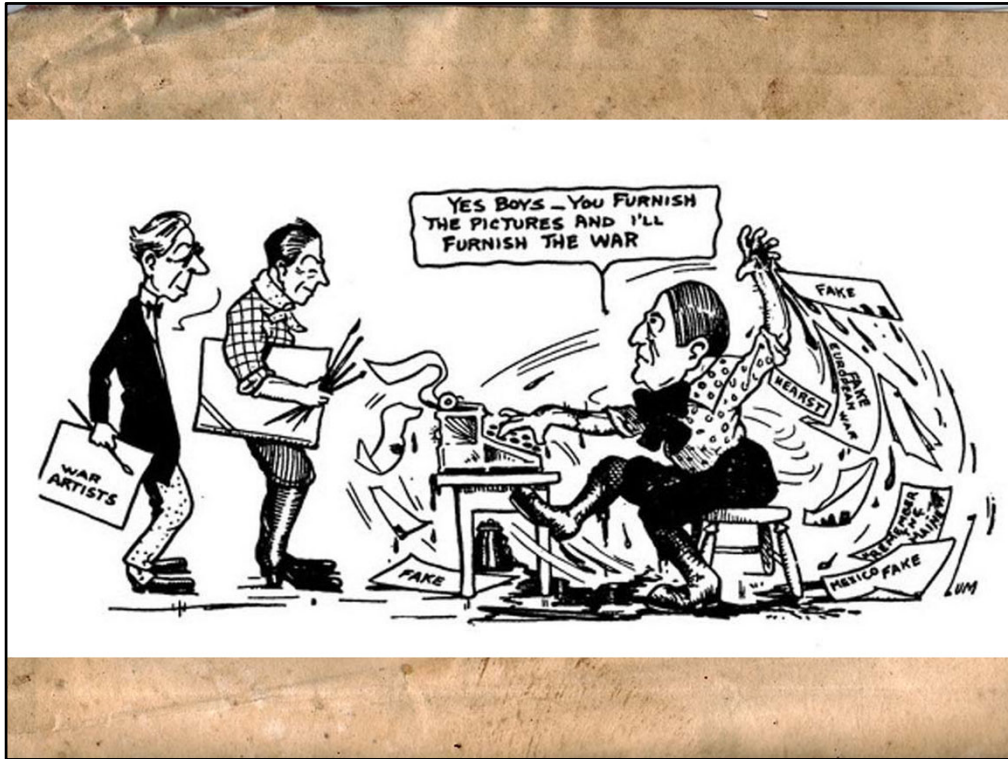


The *Travels of Sir John Mandeville* claimed to be the memoir of an English knight who had traveled to Africa and Asia, but was actually a collection of stories and legends – some based on truth, some entirely fictional like the dog-headed people seen here – probably assembled by a Flemish monk. Despite being mostly false, it went largely unquestioned for centuries and inspired the voyages of explorers such as Christopher Columbus and Martin Frobisher.



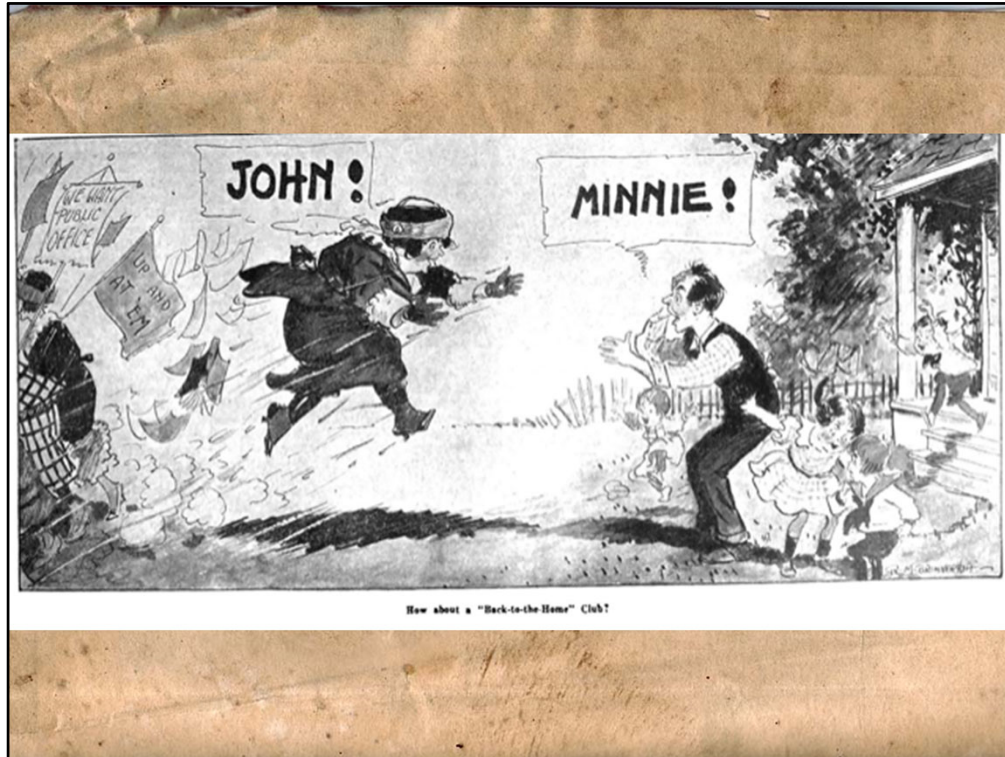


Some American newspapers ran articles and cartoons such as this one – in which a British officer is shown paying indigenous soldiers for the scalps of Americans -- leading up to the war of 1812, accusing the English of atrocities in order to build public support for the war.



The powerful newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst almost certainly never said “you furnish the pictures and I’ll furnish the war,” as this cartoon from a rival newspaper portrays, but he did present the sinking of the warship *Maine* in Havana harbour as a clear act of war by the Spanish, despite little evidence to support that idea.





Soon after women were granted the vote in Canada, the article “Confessions of a She Politician” appeared in *MacLean’s* magazine. Though the author claimed to be a woman who now regretted getting involved in politics, it seems more likely the article was actually written by one of the magazine’s editors.



In 2018, a column in the *Toronto Sun* repeated a claim from a *TripAdvisor* review that refugees were killing goats in the bathroom of a hotel in Toronto, even though there was no other evidence this had ever happened. The NewsMedia Council found that the column was “unsubstantiated and pejorative” and “represents a failure of basic, widely accepted journalistic standards... particularly given polarization around the refugees issue.”  
<https://mediacouncil.ca/decisions/2018-59-hunter-vs-toronto-sun/>



# THE OLD POST

ILLUSTRATED WEEKLY NEWSPAPER

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Est. 1869

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## FAKE NEWS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD!

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A SCENE ON THE FRONTIERS AS PRACTICED BY THE HUMANE BRITISH AND THEIR WORTHY ALLIES!



*Arise Columbia's Sons and forward press  
Your Country's wrongs call loudly for redress  
The savage Indian with his scalping knife  
Or tomahawk may seek to take your life*

*By bravery aw'd they'll in a dreadful fight  
Shrink back for refuge to the woods in flight  
Their British leaders then will quickly shake  
And for those wrongs shall restitution make*







How about a "Back-to-the-Home" Club?





# LEVY: 'Irregular' migrants continue to flock into Toronto

Sue-Ann Le  
More from

Published:  
October 3,

Updated:  
November

Filed Under  
Toronto SU  
Toronto & C



On Tuesday, one visitor from Virginia —calling the three-star hotel a “disgrace” —claimed that animal services needed to be called on the second night he was there because “some goats were being slaughtered” in the public bathrooms.

The visitor said gunfire was also heard outside the hotel that same night.

(Believe me I can't make this stuff up!)

## RELATED

NEWS



A group of women watch their children outside the Radisson hotel at Hwy 401 and Victoria Park Ave. in North York on Tuesday. (Jack Boland/Toronto Sun)