

Activity 3.2: Be the Editor

Imagine you are the editor of *The Yourtown Times* news website. Choose which four of the following stories to run on the homepage based on news values (current, important, famous people, unique, close, competing views) and explain your choices. Select one lead story and come up with a headline and image.

Severe storm on the way, residents advised to stay indoors

City officials are recommending that residents stay in their homes tonight, as a storm bringing hurricane-force winds moves toward the city. Freezing rain and golf-ball sized hail are also expected.

“We want everyone to be safe tonight,” says mayor Gail Strong, “please stay home until the storm passes. And definitely stay off the roads.”

Officials are reminding residents to ensure they are stocked with flashlights in case the lights go out, and emergency supplies such as food, water and a battery-powered radio. Yourtown airport is rescheduling all flights in and out of the city.

Llamas escape Capital City Zoo — find snacks and Instagram fame on parliament lawn

Commuters on Regional Road 6 were treated to an unusual sight this afternoon, as a pair of llamas strolled single-file alongside cars, causally heading away from their Capital City Zoo home.

Officials received initial reports of the escaped animals shortly after 10 a.m., by which time the pair had their own Instagram account, @lloosellamas, with more than 2,000 followers.

The llamas, identified as Lizzie and Larry of the Capital City Zoo, were picked up on parliament lawn shortly after 6 p.m., where they were found grazing on grass, and posing for selfies with tourists.

Movie star Guy Silver hospitalized following car crash

Police are reporting that Guy Silver, the star of such recent blockbusters as *Action Train* and *Stop, Kidnapper*, was admitted to hospital early this morning with potentially life-threatening injuries.

Hospital officials refused to comment on the specifics of Silver’s condition or his treatment. The officials only confirmed that the actor had been admitted shortly after 4 a.m. today.

While the cause of the crash remains unknown, eyewitnesses reported seeing Silver leave a local restaurant “looking intoxicated,” before driving away. He is also known to have a rare seizure disorder.

MPP resigns following financial scandal, RCMP investigating

Kim Skimmer, a Member of Provincial Parliament, stepped down today following allegations reported last week by the Yourtown Times.

A former colleague has come forward with evidence that suggests Skimmer stole over 1 million dollars from clients at an investment firm. She worked at the firm from 2010 to 2014.

The MPP for Othertown South maintains her innocence, but said she is resigning for the sake of her party. "I will take this time to fight these allegations," Skimmer said in a statement, adding, "I will be back once I have cleared my name."

An RCMP spokeswoman confirmed a criminal investigation has been launched into the matter.

New development pits city against nature advocates

City council voted 11-4 in favour of allowing commercial development on 100 acres of previously protected Riverside Park. The news was very upsetting to local neighbourhood groups.

The city says the project will be an economic boon to Yourtown. "This is a great day," said councillor Priyanka Planner, "everyone will benefit from the jobs, retail and new housing this project will bring."

Bumni Greene, a volunteer with Neighbourhood Nature, who organized opposition to the project, believes the move is a mistake. "What we need is green space where our kids can play," she said, "and a protected home for the wildlife that live in that park."

Leader of Blueberry party criticizes Strawberries' 'underhanded' election ad

The contest to become the province's new premier heated up this week, as party leaders got personal. Yesterday the Strawberry party released an attack ad targeting the Blueberry leader, specifically his abilities as a parent.

Last week, what appears to be leaked store security footage of the Blueberry leader's 16-year-old daughter shoplifting was released online.

"The Blueberry leader can't even lead his own daughter," the ad begins, "how can we expect him to lead the province?"

When questioned about the ad, Blueberry's leader said, "This is a personal family matter, and I think the citizens of this province are too smart to fall for these underhanded tactics."

Youth unemployment reaches five-year low, government says

Young people aged 18-24 are heading to work in greater numbers than any time over the past five years, according to recently released government statistics.

The job market can be difficult to crack for those seeking their first skilled jobs. A spokesperson credits several job-creation programs launched under the current government for changing numbers and is optimistic for the future.

“Youth employment is a priority of this government,” said Farik Hires, the lead for the Student Jobs Program. “We will continue to find innovative strategies to connect young people with employment opportunities that can be starting points for a career.”

Bus crash in Peru kills 11

A bus accident in the Peruvian Andes mountains has killed 11 visitors to the country, including seven members of a tour group from Mexico.

The accident occurred today when the driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle, which rolled off the edge of a steep road in the Huancavelica region. Six others sustained injuries and were taken to hospital.

Cellphone video taken by a crash survivor shows a harrowing plummet, and paramedics loading the injured into ambulances. There were no Canadians onboard.

Two people killed in B.C. mall collapse

Two people are confirmed dead following the dramatic cave-in at a mall in central British Columbia. The mall is under construction, and the victims are a builder who was working on the site and his friend.

According to family, the construction worker was giving his friend a tour of the job site, when the roof collapsed, killing them both.

The mall’s construction has been plagued with problems, including flooding from a burst water main earlier this month, and halted construction due to problems with inferior building materials.

15-year-old student wins local pie eating competition

It was María Butter's proudest moment. The 15-year-old ate a 12-inch strawberry rhubarb pie in a little over two minutes, taking home the coveted title of Fastest Pie Eater in Yourtown.

The Grade 9 student handily beat her competition, including last year's champion, Nikita Baker, who finished with a time of three minutes, 10 seconds.

"It's my favourite kind," Butter explained, when asked what may have given her a pie-eating edge.

Tainted parsley recalled from store shelves

Canadian shoppers are being advised to discard any Leafy brand parsley purchased over the past two weeks, due to a growing e. coli outbreak.

The parsley, imported from the US, has been responsible for 47 cases of illness south of the border so far, and two in Canada.

Health officials are investigating how much of this parsley may have been imported. Grocery suppliers are working to ensure a bacteria-free supply of the herb returns to store shelves soon.

Most Canadian students favour debt-forgiveness: poll

Nearly 70 percent of students would support government measures to reduce the loan burdens of university students after graduation, according to a poll released today.

The research, conducted by the National Student Group, asked 2,000 students across the country how likely they would be to support programs to forgive loan debt after graduation. Sixty-eight percent said they would be "very likely" to support a move like this.

The average Canadian student graduates with close to \$30,000 in student loan debt, according to National Student Group.

Notes and Questions to Prompt Discussion (Post-Activity)

Severe storm on the way, residents advised to stay indoors

News values: close, current, important

Guiding questions:

- Would this story be newsworthy if the storm was in a different city?
- What about if the storm was predicted to be coming in a week?
- How severe do the storm's threatening effects have to be to make a story like this news?

Llamas escape Capital City Zoo — find snacks and Instagram fame on parliament lawn

News values: unique

Guiding questions:

- Is being funny or unusual enough to make a story news?
- How much do you think about balance when it comes to choosing news? If the whole website was full of stories like this one, would it be considered a serious news source?

Movie star Guy Silver hospitalized following car crash

News values: famous

Guiding questions:

- Not a lot is known about this story – the cause of the crash, or the nature of the injuries. Is it still newsworthy? Would it be more newsworthy with more facts?
- Is it responsible to report eyewitness accounts that suggest the actor may have been intoxicated, when the cause of the crash is not known?
- Would the story be more newsworthy if the actor was intoxicated? What about if the cause was medical?

MPP resigns following financial scandal, RCMP investigating

News values: important, current, competing views, famous

Guiding questions:

- Why is this allegation important?
- If the person was not an elected official, would this story still be newsworthy?
- When stories involve politicians, they are said to be in the “public interest.” Should people be entitled to know more about elected officials than other people? Why or why not?
- There is more than one timeframe in this story: the original report was last week; the allegations took place at least four years ago. Why is this story timely now?
- If the amount of money was very low (\$1,000) would the story still be newsworthy?

New development pits city against nature advocates

News values: close, competing views, important

Guiding questions:

- Would this story still be newsworthy if it were happening in a different town or a different province?
- What about if there was no opposition to the development? (This question could link to a bigger discussion about political participation, and getting involved in your community when you see things you want to change)

Leader of Blueberry party criticizes Strawberries' 'underhanded' election ad

News values: competing views, famous, important, current

Guiding questions:

- Which is the main news value of this story?
- How important is it for the public to think about the ads/messages of people who are running for office?
- Are all stories about elections / leadership candidates important?

Youth unemployment reaches five-year low, government says

News values: important

Guiding questions:

- Is this story important? Are there other news values here?
- How much news value does a report or statistics have?
- Is it possible that important stories are not told because they are not interesting enough?

Bus crash in Peru kills 11

News values: current, unique

Guiding questions:

- Would this be more newsworthy if it happened in the United States? What about elsewhere in Canada?
- What if there had been Canadians onboard the bus when it crashed?
- How does our 'closeness' to an event affect how we think about its importance?

Two people killed in B.C. mall collapse

News values: unique, important

Guiding questions:

- News tends to report deaths when they happen in unusual ways or have unusual circumstances. Is it always newsworthy when someone dies? What kinds of deaths should be reported as news?
- Does the fact that the mall's construction had had previous problems make the story more newsworthy?

15-year-old student wins local pie eating competition

News values: unique, close

Guiding question:

- Would this result be news if it were somewhere other than Yourtown?
- Did the age of the winner influence your choice? What you make a different choice if the winner was an adult?

Tainted parsley recalled from store shelves

News values: important, close, current

Guiding question:

- In the storm story, the risk was to all residents. In this example, it's only to those who purchased parsley. Does that make the storm more newsworthy than the tainted parsley?

Most Canadian students favour debt-forgiveness: poll

News values: important, current

Guiding questions:

- This story may be important, but it is not very specific and is not anchored to an event. Does this diminish its news value?
- Is this story timely? The poll was released today — is the release of a poll a news event?
- How might it depend on what else is in the news for the day? If all the other stories on a certain news day were boring, would polling results be more newsworthy?