

FAKES AND HOAXES

Lots of people in Canada's past have claimed things about monsters, ghosts and the paranormal that turned out not to be true. Can you tell which of these tales were actual fakes and which we might have invented?

MYSTERY LIGHTS

This is less of a hoax and more of an accident that people got way too worked up about. After a huge country music show in Fredericton, N.B., in 1998, thousands of concert-goers just dumped their glow-in-the-dark bracelets on the ground. Birds picked up the bracelets and used them to build nests in nearby Wilmot Park. At night, the trees glowed, drawing people from as far as the northeastern United States to check out the eerie trees. Eventually someone from the city's parks department ended the mystery by climbing a ladder at dusk and discovering the discarded bracelets.



Brendan Hong



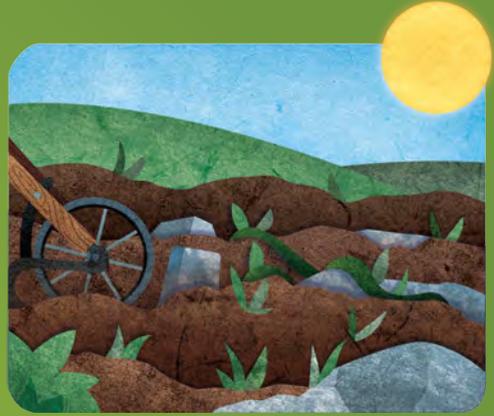
LAKE MONSTER

Where there's water, there's usually a story of a monster living under the waves. As early as 1829, people reported seeing a blue or brown serpent measuring anywhere from 10 to 50 metres long around the harbour at Kingston, Ontario. It seemed there was proof of "Kingstie" when several swimmers saw a creature with a dragon-like head, but many years later, three men said they had created the monster as a prank. They had floated its body on empty bottles and attached a long line that allowed them to make it bob up and down.



ANCIENT GIANT

In 1912 a farmer who was ploughing a field near Lillooet, B.C., ran into something solid. When he stopped to check out the obstacle, it was a giant, three-metre-tall person who had been turned to stone — “a solid petrified early day resident of the province” as a later newspaper story put it. An American who ran sideshows bought the supposed giant . . . which turned out to be made of plain old cement.



SKULL STORY

A young Ontario woman, Anna Mitchell Hedges, and her father returned from a trip to South America in 1924 with a skull carved from rock crystal. She told people it was thousands of years old and had been created by Mayan sculptors. By the late 1950s, she had changed her story, saying the skull came from outer space and could growl and chant and even had the power to kill. Investigators said the skull was made using tools common in Europe, and decided that the pair had probably just bought it at an auction in 1943.

SOMETHING'S FISHY

The skeleton on display at a tourist gift shop in Banff, Alta., appears to have a human head and a fish's body. The merman, as it's known — like a mermaid but male — is about a metre long. It's more than a century old, but experts who've seen it say it's pretty obvious the skeleton is a mishmash of human and animal bones, not a real creature.



WESTERN GORILLA

A “half man, half beast” captured near Yale, B.C., in 1884 must be “A British Columbia Gorilla”, according to a Victoria newspaper. When curious people went to the jail where it was being held, though, there was no such thing. Although the “gorilla” wasn't real, some people still insist that this story shows Bigfoot exists.



Answer on page 34.

