Potential Topics

Cyber bullying- in its most simplistic definition, cyberbullying is a form of bullying or harassment by electronic means. The intent of cyberbullying is to embarrass, humiliate, harass, torment or threaten the target. Cyberbullying can take many forms, including direct messages or content sent to the target, or posts that are publicly shared amongst a large online audience. The Government of Canada Department of Public Safety reports that 35% of Canadian teens have seen mean or inappropriate comments about someone they know online. Common cyberbullying tactics include sending mean or threatening direct messages via text, email or messenger apps; spreading embarrassing rumours or gossip through social media sits; and posting embarrassing or illicit images of individuals online.

Social media algorithms- are a means by which social media companies sort and prioritize posts that appear in a user's information feed or homepage. Each social media company will use different algorithms, but all serve a basic function of "feeding" the user information that the algorithm dictates based on the user's activity history. The goal of social media algorithms is to make posts or information most relevant to each user easy to access and view. The algorithm, at its base form, is simply a mathematic formula and therefore cannot account for the full relevancy criteria of each user and can also be manipulated by malign actors to feed information they want the user to view as opposed to what the user may want themselves.

Digital citizenship- includes the individual and societal use of technology (hardware and software) to engage in society, politics, and government. The digital citizenship phenomenon is led and influenced by both government policy as well as grassroot citizen movements and culture. It includes the means by which citizens obtain information, communication platforms, interface with government institutions and political leaders, voting mechanisms and processes, etc.

Cyber security- is the protection of hardware, software systems and networks from theft or damage including disruption from the services they provide. As it relates to democracy, cybersecurity includes the protection of voter identity, the integrity of the voting and vote-counting system, the protection of government servers and information communication networks, as well as the overall digital sovereignty of a nation-state.

Click Bait- is content whose main purpose is to attract attention and encourage visitors to click on a link to a particular web page. Click bait can come in many forms but is typically a paid advertisement at the bottom of another web page, a social media post, or a pop-up advertisement.

Click bait can usually be identified by the use of stand-out images and controversial headlines that capture the viewers attention. This is exactly the purpose of the content- to attract or bait your intention so you click through to the linked page.

Fake news- is made up, false information that is packaged and shared as real news with the intent to trick the viewer into believing the message or opinion presented as fact.

Fake news can come through many mediums such as blog posts, social media, or even traditional media. And it may range from small omissions of important data to outright lies or misleading headlines.

The fake news phenomenon not only impedes our own ability to innovate from trusted information sources, but also can make it more difficult to get 'buy-in' for your ideas from other individuals who may be operating from a set of untruths that they falsely believe to be fact.

A digital footprint - is a trail of data you create (knowingly or unknowingly) while using the internet. It includes the websites you visit, emails you send, and information you submit to online services such as social media. Some components of your digital footprint are quite obvious and easy to find- these include any social media profiles you create and posts you make on them, a blog or website you may have published, or email addresses that are hosted online. Other aspects of your digital footprint are more difficult to track and identify- these include the tracking cookies that follow your internet movement from site-to-site allowing merchants collect data on your likes and dislikes and send you targeted advertisements.

Confirmation bias- is the tendency to search for, interpret, and favour information that would already align with one's existing beliefs or theories.

Think back to the last argument you've had with a friend, family member or colleague. Did you stop, listen to, and digest the opposing facts and opinions being presented. Or did you state your side and deliver all the supporting evidence, ignoring contrary information, to prove you were right? In this instance, you may have fallen victim to confirmation bias.