

buffalochronicle.com

A website covering New York State, U.S., and Canadian politics that has frequently published false and unsubstantiated conspiracy theories, often aimed at left-leaning politicians.



Proceed with caution: This website severely violates basic standards of credibility and transparency.

Score: 7.5/100

Ownership and Financing

The Buffalo Chronicle appears to be owned by area businessman Matthew Ricchiazzi, who is named as the site's publisher on a page titled "Support Independent Journalism." A copyright statement at the bottom of the site names The Buffalo Chronicle Media Group, but no company with that name appears to be registered in New York or elsewhere in the U.S. or Canada. The domain is registered through a service that keeps the identity of its owner anonymous.

The site's Contact page lists a Buffalo street address. However, according to a report by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, that address belongs to an abandoned building.

The site appears to run advertising. However, in an interview with The Toronto Star, Ricchiazzi acknowledged that he does not always charge for ads and in some cases, did not inform the businesses that he was running ads for them. "I give most of the ad space away for free to small locally owned businesses whenever I see someone doing something worth celebrating or promoting, or come across a locally owned brand that I like," he said.

- ✗ Does not repeatedly publish false content (22 points)**
- ✗ Gathers and presents information responsibly (18)**
- ✗ Regularly corrects or clarifies errors (12.5)**
- ✗ Handles the difference between news and opinion responsibly (12.5)**
- ✗ Avoids deceptive headlines (10)**
- ✗ Website discloses ownership and financing (7.5)**
- ✓ Clearly labels advertising (7.5)**
- ✗ Reveals who's in charge, including any possible conflicts of interest (5)**
- ✗ The site provides names of content creators, along with either contact or biographical information (5)**

Criteria are listed in order of importance.

[More information.](#)

Content

The Buffalo Chronicle publishes some news about the city of Buffalo and New York state. Most of this content appears to consist of re-published press releases or stories that were rewritten from other news sources. The site's original content primarily covers U.S. and Canadian national politics. According to BuzzFeed News, "Eight of the Buffalo Chronicle's 10 most popular articles on Facebook are about Canadian subjects and were published in the last eight months. Collectively,

they were liked, commented on, and shared on Facebook more than 200,000 times by accounts with a total of 4.4 million fans.”

Content is organized into sections including Breaking, Buffalo, Niagra, Albany, New York City, Washington, and Canada. Typical articles have run under headlines including “Schumer helps land a \$410 million deal for a Rochester defense contractor,” “Clinton may face deposition in Benghazi lawsuit as early as November,” “Schools could raise millions through advertising,” “National Federation of Republican Women elects Schockett to lead,” and “Trudeau accuser lands a seven-figure NDA to keep quiet about West Grey departure.”

Credibility

BuffaloChronicle.com has published numerous stories about significant events and figures in U.S. and Canadian politics based on false or unsubstantiated rumors and conspiracy theories. Moreover, the site often includes no named sources in stories that include serious allegations. The Buffalo Chronicle does not appear to attempt to confirm such information through other parties or by contacting the subjects of stories.

The site has published false information about the COVID-19 virus. For example, a March 2020 story falsely reported that New York Governor Andrew Cuomo “is considering a temporary six-week ban on the sale of combustible cigarettes in order to reduce the State’s Coronavirus death count, a source familiar with his thinking tells The Chronicle.” In a follow-up story, the site claimed that the ban was “expected to be announced Monday morning [March 30, 2020] and take effect at 11:59 pm Monday night” and would also “include a delay to new restrictions on e-vapors.” In fact, no such ban went into effect at the predicted time, or any time thereafter.

The fact-checking organization Lead Stories investigated the site’s claims about a ban on cigarettes in New York state and found them to be baseless. Lead Stories reported that the president of the New York Academy of Family Physicians called for a ban on

tobacco products in a March 22 statement, but Governor Cuomo's office denied that any such ban was under consideration.

"These ridiculous claims are 100 percent bullsh--, and the website should be ashamed of spreading misinformation and panic during this pandemic," Cuomo's senior spokesman Rich Azzopardi told Lead Stories on April 2, 2020. "There is no truth to any of it. It's all fiction, all garbage."

In an email to NewsGuard commenting on this article, Ricchiazzi, the site's publisher, raised questions about Cuomo's spokesman's denial. "As you can imagine, policy deliberations inside the administration, among public health officials especially, often take place behind the scenes before communication staffers are brought into the loop (and often they are brought into the loop only if a particular policy position prevails)," Ricchiazzi said.

In September 2019, the site published a story headlined "Bolton contacted whistleblower prior to filing complaint, suggesting an attempted coup." The article claimed that former U.S. National Security Advisor John Bolton was behind the whistleblower complaint that sparked the House impeachment inquiry into U.S. President Donald Trump. The article stated that its unnamed source "alleges that the whistleblower was given the information that comprises the contents of his complaint from Bolton himself."

The story did not provide any information about the basis of the purported source's knowledge on the subject, and there was no indication that the site sought to contact Bolton or anybody else about the claim, for which there is no known evidence.

In October 2019, BuffaloChronicle.com published a false claim about Sen. Elizabeth Warren, in an article headlined "Ty Whelly, former Marine, says Elizabeth Warren paid him for sex." The story reported the baseless claim that Warren has sexual encounters with Whelly, through an escort service — a claim Whelly

made in early October in a press conference held by a right-wing conspiracy theorist, Jacob Wohl. Wohl has repeatedly leveled allegations of sexual assault or affairs against his political enemies, including former special counsel Robert Mueller, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and Sen. Kamala Harris.

According to The Daily Beast, Whelly lied about being deployed to Afghanistan. Although Whelly claimed that a scar on his back resulted from his claimed experience with Warren, NBC News reporter Brandy Zadrozny revealed on Twitter that a photo from Whelly's Instagram showed that the scar came from an injury that he sustained doing yard work. Rolling Stone reported that Whelly never applied to or worked for the male escort service through which Whelly claimed Warren contacted him.

The Buffalo Chronicle made no apparent attempt to verify Whelly's allegations. The article refers to Wohl as a "political operative," but does not mention his long history of bogus political stunts or provide any reason to doubt the story.

The Buffalo Chronicle has also published anonymously sourced and unsubstantiated stories targeting Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, ahead of national elections. For example, at least two articles in October 2019 alleged, without evidence, that Trudeau left a teaching job at West Point Grey Academy in 2001 after having a sexual relationship with a student. One article stated that "rumors of an explosive sex scandal are percolating at the highest echelons of Canada's media establishment." Referring to an unpublished article, the site claimed that "Sources are now telling The Chronicle that Trudeau is in private talks with the principal source of that piece to suppress explosive sex allegations that, if made public, would likely force Trudeau to resign his office."

In another anonymously sourced story, the site claimed, without evidence, that a settlement between Trudeau and the former student had been reached, stating that a "non-disclosure and an accompanying non-

disparagement agreement were signed last night, according to the source, for more than \$2.25 million CDN.”

Trudeau has denied having a sexual relationship with any student when he worked at the school, and has stated that he did not sign any nondisclosure or nondisparagement agreement.

The claims have been investigated by multiple news organizations and found to be baseless. For example, The Toronto Star reported in an October 2019 story that it had been “approached several weeks ago by a right-wing activist” about Trudeau’s departure from West Point Grey. The paper stated, “The Star thoroughly investigated Trudeau’s tenure at West Point Grey — devoting multiple reporters over multiple days — and found nothing to corroborate the tip.”

The fact-checking organization Snopes, wire service AFP, and the digital outlet Canadaland all published similar stories stating that no known evidence substantiates The Buffalo Chronicle’s claims.

Additionally, BuzzFeed News reported in October 2018 that Ricchiazzi received a total of \$8,000 in 2018 and 2019 from Political Action Committees supporting the campaigns of two New York politicians. The Buffalo Chronicle itself received \$1,000 from one of the committees. Campaign finance disclosures reviewed by NewsGuard confirm the donations.

The Buffalo Chronicle published multiple stories about the two candidates without disclosing the financial ties between the campaigns and the site. According to BuzzFeed, Ricchiazzi stated that the payments were for consulting and did not affect the site’s content.

Because BuffaloChronicle.com has repeatedly published false or baseless claims, with no apparent effort to verify allegations made by unnamed sources, NewsGuard has determined that the site has repeatedly published false news, does not gather and present information responsibly, and does not avoid deceptive headlines.

The Buffalo Chronicle does not disclose a political or ideological orientation, yet its articles frequently take aim at left-leaning figures such as Trudeau and Clinton. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that the site does not handle the difference between news and opinion responsibly.

BuffaloChronicle.com does not state a corrections policy and NewsGuard did not find corrections on the site.

Ricchiazzi initially agreed to a phone interview with NewsGuard but did not provide a phone number or attempt to contact NewsGuard at the proposed time. Subsequently, Ricchiazzi did not respond to three emails seeking comment about the site's publication of false and misleading information, its approach to corrections, and its handling of opinion.

Transparency

The site mentions The Buffalo Chronicle Media Group in a copyright notice — which does not meet NewsGuard's standard for disclosing ownership in a user-friendly manner. Ricchiazzi states in an article published on BuffaloChronicle.com in October 2019 that he funds the site, but that information is not posted in a standing location where readers would likely look for ownership details.

The site does not identify its editorial leaders. Terrence Robinson was named in a 2016 story as the site's Managing Editor. However, in a March 2019 interview with the news site Canadaland, Robinson claimed that he did not "know anything about" the site and thought it was only a Facebook page.

Many articles on the site do not include the name of the writer, and the site does not include biographical or contact information for many of its content creators. Therefore, NewsGuard has determined that BuffaloChronicle.com does not meet the standard for disclosing information about content creators.

"Many of the folks who write for me would lose their jobs immediately upon it being discovered." Ricchiazzi said in an October 2019 interview with the Star.

The site does not appear to run sponsored content. As mentioned above, some if not all of the apparent display advertisements on the site were not purchased, or even authorized, by the advertiser. However, NewsGuard has determined that the site meets the standard for clearly labeling advertising, because ads would not be confused as editorial content.

After agreeing to a phone interview that did not materialize, Ricchiazzi did not respond to three emails seeking comment about the site's lack of disclosure relating to its editorial leaders and content creators.

History

The Buffalo Chronicle was created in 2014, "out of a dissatisfaction with the establishment media in New York State, and in Western New York in particular," Ricchiazzi told the Star.

Editor's Note: This Nutrition Label was updated on April 3, 2020, to include information about the site's false report that cigarettes were being banned in New York. The label was updated on April 8, 2020, to include a comment from the site's publisher.

Written by: [Kendrick McDonald](#)

Edited by: [Eric Effron](#)

Send feedback to NewsGuard:[Click Here](#)

Sources

Ownership and Financing

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/17/toronto-star-interviews-buffalo-chronicle-publisher/>
<https://buffalochronicle.com/donate/>
https://opencorporates.com/companies?jurisdiction_code=&q=The+Buffalo+Chronicle+Media+Group&utf8=%E2%9C%93
<https://www.facebook.com/buffalochronicle/>
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/the-national-election-interference-fake-news-social-media-1.5179838>

Content

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/12/schumer->

[helps-land-a-410-million-deal-for-a-rochester-defense-contractor/](#)

<https://www.schumer.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/schumer-announces-following-his-push-new-and-highest-ever-5-year-4099-million-work-agreement-between-rochester-laser-lab-and-federal-dept-of-energy-senator-says-agreement-is-critical-for-lab-to-continue-groundbreaking-national-security-research>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/12/langworthy-president-trump-is-under-attack/>

<https://www.facebook.com/queensnyyr/posts/1843718419107185>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/12/schools-could-raise-millions-through-advertising/>

<https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/report-schools-could-raise-millions-through-advertising/>

Credibility

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/the-national-election-interference-fake-news-social-media-1.5179838>

<https://www.canadalandshow.com/the-buffalo-chronicle-is-not-reliable/>

<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/trudeau-sex-scandal-school/>

<http://archive.fo/VWUcc>

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/09/26/us/politics/whistle-blower-complaint.html#g-page-10>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/06/ty-whelley-former-marine-says-elizabeth-warren-paid-him-for-sex/>

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/jacob-wohls-bogus-warren-accuser-exaggerated-his-military-service-record>

<https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/far-right-conspiracy-theorist-tried-smear-elizabeth-warren-her-response-n1062211>

<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-news/elizabeth-warren-accuser-not-up-to-caliber-to-work-for-gigolo-agency-894637/>

<https://twitter.com/BrandyZadrozny/status/1179833719902760960?s=20>

<http://archive.is/2DadM>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/07/trudeau-is-rumored-to-be-in-talks-with-an-accuser-to-suppress-an-explosive-sex-scandal-that-may-force-him-from-office/?fbclid=IwAR0f7P95sMvysxljKONbYjITPniRcXQaVNEGUL5W8ZKOMeMOTFcm2OLB4wo>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/10/trudeau-accuser-lands-a-seven-figure-nda-to-keep-quiet-about-his-west-grey-departure/>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/12/costumes-roleplay-wet-a-young-trudeaus-sexual-appetite/>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/15/rcmp-source-says-security-risk-against-trudeau-was-contrived-by-pmo-staffers/>

<https://www.canadalandshow.com/rumours-of-suppressed-trudeau-affair-story-are-bullshit/>

<https://factcheck.afp.com/canadas-national-newspaper-was-not-barred-publishing-scandal-involving-pm-trudeau>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/03/feds-are-reviewing-cuomos-fidelis-deal/>

<https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/feds-reviewing-cuomos-fidelis-deal/>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/08/25/buffalo-detective-highest-paid-municipal-worker-in-wny/>

<https://www.empirecenter.org/publications/buffalo-detective-highest-paid-employee-worker-in-wny/>

<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/12/jacobs-announces-state-funding-for-new-soccer-mini-pitches-along-scajaquada-creek-in-black-rock/>

<https://www.nysenate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/chris-jacobs/senator-jacobs-mayor-brown-announce-state-funding-new-soccer>

<https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/janelytvynenko/matthew-ricchiazzi-buffalo-chronicle-trudeau-claims>

https://cfapp.elections.ny.gov/ords/plsql_browser/EXPE_NSESA_county?ID_in=C22250&date_From=&date_to=&OFFICE_in=ALL&AMOUNT_From=&AMOUNT_to=&ZIP1=&ZIP2=&ORDERBY_IN=N

[https://cfapp.elections.ny.gov/ords/plsql_browser/EXPE_NSESA_county?
ID_in=C11071&date_From=&date_to=&OFFICE_in=ALL
&AMOUNT_From=&AMOUNT_to=&ZIP1=&ZIP2=&OR
DERBY_IN=N](https://cfapp.elections.ny.gov/ords/plsql_browser/EXPE_NSESA_county?ID_in=C11071&date_From=&date_to=&OFFICE_in=ALL&AMOUNT_From=&AMOUNT_to=&ZIP1=&ZIP2=&ORDERBY_IN=N)
<https://leadstories.com/hoax-alert/2020/04/fact-check-15.html>
<http://archive.vn/aBuXO>
<http://archive.vn/AePna>
<http://archive.vn/LOPy9>

Transparency

<https://buffalochronicle.com/contact/>
<https://buffalochronicle.com/writers/>
<https://buffalochronicle.com/2016/01/04/ricchiazzi-resigns-names-robinson-managing-editor/>
<https://www.whois.com/whois/niagrafallswelcomecenter.com>

History

<https://www.whois.com/whois/buffalochronicle.com>
<https://buffalochronicle.com/2019/10/17/toronto-star-interviews-buffalo-chronicle-publisher/>