

# Countering Right-Wing Extremist Radicalization

## Where to take our policy toolkits next: In-formed and re-formed perspectives of a former violent extremist



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## Introduction

This paper focuses on my interest in policy options that I have identified through experience with my own radicalization and de-radicalization; academic research on creative reformation and analysis of law; counselling others; and supporting the friends and families of those affected by extremism. This experience strengthens my role as an advocate and my ongoing participation in monitoring and responding to right-wing extremism in Canada.

This paper also identifies issues related to the recruitment, radicalization and activity of right-wing extremists captured by observation, anecdotal insight (including references to past or current cases I work with), and possible solutions. It is not possible in this paper to offer an expansive series of case studies, nor a legal analysis of all of the moving parts in a particular case.

I hope that these observations will serve as a call to Canadians to be proactive in responding to right-wing extremism. People have been requested by authorities to come forward in matters related to extremism. Unfortunately, many of those who do report right-wing extremist activity are not offered appropriate resources or responses. I say this because, for many years, I have had to advocate for action to be taken in many instances. I have had many interactions with law enforcement wherein right-wing extremism was not taken seriously, something that has been restated by law enforcement experts.<sup>1</sup> In my discussions with law enforcement and security agencies, I have at times met with similar responses. This is an unfortunate fact.

Law enforcement is often the first point of contact, with few (or no) outside referrals made to those affected by right-wing extremism, especially in relation to recruitment and radicalization. While Canada is calling out to citizens to report such matters, those receiving reports do not and cannot respond effectively to such reports. It is my hope to help tip the response scale towards engagement. We need *action*.

The onus is not wholly upon authorities. We, as a society, must be alive to the fact that we are all responsible, including people such as myself, a professional practitioner who was once part of the problem. The government and authorities must offer communities mechanisms to respond effectively to extremism, and there are several ways this can be done. I have been doing this counter work for many years, and have often met with resistance from professionals and authorities. Furthermore, when I was recovering from radicalization, several practitioners refused to work with me due to the degree of threat I posed combined with the fact that they did not have the required skillset; thankfully these practitioners were upfront about this when asking me to find another practitioner. This gap should not exist. I am now pleading with policy-makers and experts to take notice before it is too late. These issues are complex, and I have dedicated my life to undoing what was done to me and what I did to others, and offering my service to Canadian society in any way that I can.

## Informed & Reformed Perspective

My personal experiences with radicalization allow me to offer an informed, intimate perspective and analysis on the right-wing extremist movement. I was deeply involved in the extremist movement in western Canada, entrenched in right-wing doctrine and extremist violence. I actively recruited and indoctrinated others, bridged different groups/networks together, and was involved with people who can best be characterized as terrorists due to their commitment to carry out bombings, murders and attacks upon property and people for a political purpose. In fact, one of the individuals I recruited has been

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<sup>1</sup> Stewart Bell, *Extremist far right were monitored but not considered violent, former national security advisor says*, (Canada: National Post January 17, 2017) [Bell].

convicted twice in relation to explosives—once for a failed bombing, and once for possessing a box of bombs. The Internet emerged around the time of my being recruited and radicalized, and I used it to recruit and radicalize others.

Many people believe that Canada has essentially been free of right-wing extremist violence, which is not true.<sup>2</sup> I contend that the unacknowledged and growing trend of right-wing extremism is partially due to systemic issues.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the recent January 2017 attack upon our neighbours at a mosque in Quebec has demonstrated that some elements of the right wing may not be as benign as some thought. I believe that this tragic event calls to all Canadians and demands appropriate responses to a dangerous growing ideology that results in violent behaviour.

My own personal experience as a researcher, counsellor, social worker and soon-to-be lawyer allows me to observe and respond to right-wing extremism in a way not typically done by law enforcement, government, academics and activists. As a result of my unique perspective, I have initiated a strategy to respond to right-wing extremism in Canada (without support or resources), which I will summarize below.

## Transformative education

The changes in my life were made possible thanks to two particular practitioners, albeit ones who were not equipped to handle the intensity of my particular case. Thus, I was referred to post-secondary education as a form of treatment for my ideological politics and violent action. These details are expanded upon in my graduate thesis.<sup>4</sup> Neither of these practitioners knew how to handle my case. However, they did look at my core needs, which did help.

The first counsellor who met with me offered near daily contact for some time, as he did not want me to hurt others and heard my request to help me stop hurting other people. Eventually he got me into an addictions treatment centre that dealt with federal prison convicts, dangerous offenders and active gang members. In that treatment centre, a second counsellor stated, at the end of my stay, that I was obviously intelligent and that there were no resources or help for people in my particular circumstance. He suggested that I attend college and take either Women's Studies or Social Work in order to challenge my belief structure. Admittedly, I was reluctant.

Once my options ran out, I did seek the suggested path. However, I did not have appropriate supports and essentially had to learn to process my angst and volatile behaviour myself. Fortunately, I was able to get what I needed from my academic environment and community healing circles. However, not all people exiting right-wing extremism have the opportunity to access healing communities. Thus, here is the first identified gap: a lack of professional supports for those who may be ready to leave extremism.

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<sup>2</sup> James Ellis, *CIBD Right Wing Incidents* (Vancouver: Terrorism, Security & Society, 2015) [Ellis]. *Anti Racist Canada, A History of Violence: 1960 -..."* (Canada: 2011) online: < <http://anti-racistcanada.blogspot.ca/2011/10/a-history-of-violence-1970-2015.html>> [ARC]. Stanley Barrett, *Is God a Racist? The Right Wing in Canada* (Toronto: U of T, 1987). William Peter Baergen, *The Ku Klux Klan in Central Alberta* (Alberta: Central Alberta Historic Society, 2000). Julian Sher, *White Hoods: Canada's Ku Klux Klan* (Canada: New Star Books, 1983).

<sup>3</sup> Daniel Gallant, *A "Former" Perspective: An Exploration of Disengagement from Violent Right Wing Extremism*, (Prince George, BC: University of Northern British Columbia, 2014) [Gallant]. Catherine Solyom, *The Trump effect and the normalization of hate in Quebec*, (Montreal Gazette, Nov. 14 2016) [Solyom]. Daniel Gallant, *Expert on extremism says Donald Trump's association with white supremacy is alarming* (Vancouver: CBC Radio, Nov. 24 2016) online: < <http://www.cbc.ca/player/play/817014339799>>. Daniel Gallant, *A decolonial perspective on 'indigenous extremism' and state supremacy* (SFTU Press, Oct. 7 2014) online: <<https://scholarsfromtheunderground.com/2014/10/07/a-decolonial-perspective-on-indigenous-extremism-and-state-supremacy/>>.

<sup>4</sup> Gallant, supra note 3. Also see video series of Daniel Gallant on: *Extreme Dialogue* (UK: Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 2017) [Ex-D].

Education became a source of great learning and epiphany for me. It was healing and transformative.<sup>5</sup> However, my learning was limited until I entered the First Nations Studies program at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC).<sup>6</sup> The pedagogical style oriented towards First Nations students was exactly what I needed, and the reason for this was probably related to who I am as an individual and the communities I belong to.<sup>7</sup> I was encouraged by a particular faculty member and my cousin (now a prominent Indigenous scholar) to move into graduate studies as a result of my success. I believe that my success was a direct result of indigenized learning spaces—UNBC has fostered learning spaces that encourage students to bridge academics, research and storytelling in a manner that focuses on relationships as healing spaces. Educational settings can be therapeutic spaces, and education/research can be transformative; in my experience this was only attainable within a university setting that focused on bridging curriculum/research with healing communities and therapeutic relationships.<sup>8</sup> Student learning was rooted within Indigenous cultures, inclusivity and international human rights standards and principles; it was rare to hear of disputes between faculty and students in UNBC’s First Nations Studies program. Both the pedagogical style of the program and the supportive social environment allowed me to reach new heights.

Through my studies I was introduced to more networks. The anti-racist activist work I was engaged in did transform as I grew in my recovery. If it were not for my Cree family, teachers, friends, and communities, I surely would not have been as successful.<sup>9</sup> In honour of the help I have received, I offer my life story as a source of insight into countering recruitment, radicalization, racism, and right-wing extremism. At the risk of coming across as self-centred, there is a wealth of opportunity to find value in the transformation story of my life. This is explained in more detail in my graduate thesis and other published work.<sup>10</sup>

## Internet

The Internet has become a source of right-wing extremist recruitment and radicalization, which was as intended by Don Black and David Duke when they founded Stormfront.org, one of the oldest public extremist websites; this website is also one of the oldest public websites on the Internet.<sup>11</sup> I was recruited just prior to this technological advent. The leaders of the movement at that time declared they were going to shift the face of North American society by educating the masses with a new form of political right-wing messaging, which looks more like an alternative form of right-wing populism, via the Internet. Prominent Canadian white supremacists were part of this technological ‘revolution’ (or rather a devolution).

Today, we see strong evidence that these seminal violent and racist extremists were right about the Internet. Twenty years later, there are more right-wing extremists in Canada than I have seen throughout my entire life. More concerning is how normalized right-wing extremism has become, especially in a society that predominantly chases after the ‘jihadist.’ The ‘movement’ is becoming more normalized as more right-wing politicians gain footholds as national and regional leaders.

We have created yet another enemy: our Muslim neighbours. While our focus is on the evils of ISIS, which of course do need to be addressed, many right-wing extremists capitalize on media discourse trends that identify a foreign enemy as a way to recruit and radicalize new members via the Internet and through

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<sup>5</sup> Gallant, supra note 3.

<sup>6</sup> Gallant, supra note 3.

<sup>7</sup> Gallant (2014), supra note 3 at p 34.

<sup>8</sup> See: <<http://unbc.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/unbc%3A6325>>

<sup>9</sup> Gallant, supra note 3.

<sup>10</sup> Gallant, supra note 3. Daniel Gallant, *Bruise faced child* (USA: Createspace, 2016). Daniel Gallant, *Scholars from the underground* (SFTU Press, 2017) online: <[scholarsfromtheunderground.com](http://scholarsfromtheunderground.com)>. Daniel Gallant, *Academia*: Thompson Rivers University: Daniel Gallant (2017) online: <<https://tru.academia.edu/DanielGallant>>.

<sup>11</sup> Jesse Daniels, *Cyber Racism: White supremacy online and the new attack on civil rights* (USA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009) [Daniels].

alternative right-wing ‘news’ sources. We do not view foreign extremism as we do home-grown, right-wing extremism, which enables those in the right wing to align with more conservative narratives; this is expanded upon in my thesis. These right-wing news sources rely, perhaps unknowingly, on logical fallacies and generalized inferences that result in discriminative and hateful messages. I know this because I have experienced it, and I have studied it within myself and within the literature—I have had to do this in order to effect meaningful, personal, social and political transformation.<sup>12</sup> Thus, I believe it is possible for others to individually change, just as I believe that institutions, law and entire cultures can also transform.<sup>13</sup> In my view and experience, the personal is political and vice versa.<sup>14</sup>

I believe that bolstering our Canadian policy toolkits with resources, mechanisms and directives that offer individuals, communities and families an opportunity to respond to right-wing recruitment and radicalization is necessary and attainable. However, it seems to me there are missing elements within the development of such strategies that are often overlooked and under-utilized.

## Grass roots: observing Québec

Canada is ripe for a right-wing attack despite what many claim: “right wing extremism is not a threat to the security of Canadian society.”<sup>15</sup> When citizens are attacked for being who they are, surely the result is terror within communities and familial units. In Canada, it seems large-scale trends of discriminative speech is not enough for us, as a society, to take action. Now the question remains: is the violent right-wing attack upon those praying in a Quebec mosque enough of a sign for us to respond? Or is the question inversed—if this were an attack against ‘typical’ Canadians committed by a ‘jihadist’ extremist, would we have responded any differently, or would the perpetrator have been labelled a terrorist at law?

In my work, identification of flaring right-wing extremism in Canadian society often leads to frustration in practitioners, advocates and activists, because our current policies and responses to right-wing extremism are not what they could be. Often community members approach my colleagues and me as a result of a lack of appropriate courses of action to confront, respond or deal with local right-wing extremist activity, including recruitment and radicalization. The most difficult aspect of this is that our collective unresponsiveness, or apathy, does result in violence. This is not a new fact. When I was an active white supremacist, all of us in the ‘movement’ capitalized upon the fact that we had free reign. Hate crimes legislation in the Criminal Code are not an effective measure to appropriately deal with hate in Canada. I know this first-hand.<sup>16</sup>

Canada has stepped backwards by repealing a constitutionally sound provision in the Canada Human Rights Act, which in effect gives more “free speech to hate speech.”<sup>17</sup> This has since resulted in a flaring up of right-wing extremist activity and recruitment. The explanation for the repeal of Section 13 was not a strong legal argument; this was evidenced by the subsequent decision of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling a few months after the provision was repealed.<sup>18</sup> The most disappointing factor of the repeal is that the legal community was stripped of its most effective legal mechanism to counter right-wing extremist recruitment, radicalization and messaging.<sup>19</sup> It is my observation that, since the repeal of Section 13 of the Canada Human Rights Act, right-wing extremist recruitment and online activity have flared up.

The lack of effective legal mechanisms hinders communities, law enforcement and government from

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<sup>12</sup> Gallant, supra note 3.

<sup>13</sup> Gallant, supra note 3.

<sup>14</sup> Gallant, supra note 3. Anne Bishop, *Becoming an ally: Breaking the cycle of oppression in people*, (Halifax: Fernwood, 2002).

<sup>15</sup> Bell, supra note 1.

<sup>16</sup> Gallant, supra note 3. Global National, 16x9: Brotherhood of hate (Canada, Feb. 23, 2013) online: <<http://globalnews.ca/video/397331/brotherhood-of-hate>> [16x9].

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 16x9. Canada Human Rights Act, RSC 1985 c. H-6 at s.13 [CHRA]. *Lemire v Canada* (Human Rights Commission), 2014 FCA 18 [Lemire].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, Lemire.

<sup>19</sup> See Warman & Gallant: 16x9, supra note 15.

appropriately responding to right-wing extremist activity, even in the most obvious circumstances. This is partially due to the ineffectiveness of hate crimes legislation, and a lack of other courses of action to address right-wing activity.

Right-wing extremists have learned to thrive in Canada. The threat of right-wing extremism has never seen fulsome discussion in Canada; if the tragedy in Quebec does not necessitate this discussion, I fear nothing will. Those within the extreme right-wing spectrum do aspire and plan to become a political force that will use intimidation and violence as they see fit to further their cause. Right-wing extremism is dangerous because it results in physical violence—it is in itself a violent ideology, which is why North America is seeing a rise in seemingly benign individuals carrying out extremist violence.<sup>20</sup>

When I was a right-wing extremist, we were able to distribute literature, recruit members, and commit acts of violence in the name of political banners with little to no repercussions. In retrospect, the fact that Canadian society denied there was a real threat of right-wing extremism allowed us to be successful in recruitment campaigns. The apparent apathy of law enforcement, security agencies and government has directly resulted in many opportunities for the right wing to promote and grow messages of hatred in Canadian society.

Right-wing extremists are spry in developing diligent strategies to skirt restrictive laws, whether criminal or otherwise. Moreover, there are very few laws in society that respond directly to right-wing extremism and terrorism. In fact, white supremacist organizations and individuals in Canada actually state rather explicitly that they are terrorists.<sup>21</sup> As right-wing extremists instil fear and violence in our communities, Canada still denies right-wing extremism is terrorism. Canada also declines to appropriately respond to recruitment and radicalization in the extreme right.

## Preventing right-wing extremism

Right-wing extremism in Canada is preventable if we take proactive steps, which include adding legal mechanisms and promoting social policy toolkits. This is precisely why I decidedly sought an education in social work coupled with a law degree. Through a combination of my current work, education and training, I have discovered existing gaps in relation to right-wing extremism. I offer the following insights in three identified areas that can be viewed as gaps and conduct that boost right-wing extremist activity, which could be avoided; these solutions could be viewed as preventative measures. This section identifies gaps in: conduct of professionals and media; access to reliable information; access to justice; access to available services and resources; and policy.

### Soldiers of Odin

It has become clear to me that the Soldiers of Odin grew very rapidly in a short period of time thanks to their advertising and recruitment campaign, which manipulated and utilized Canadian media in order to garner public support. Media played a major role in the growth of this organization, but there is no current research to reference due to such rapid growth. However, I am one of a few sources in Canada who has been monitoring this group's membership and conduct.

<sup>20</sup> USA right-wing extremists: Frazier Glen Miller, Wade Michael Page, Dylann Roof. Canadian right-wing extremists: Alexandre Bissonnette, Peter Houston, Robert Dechazzal, Alistair Miller, Shawn McDonald, Kyle McKee, Matt McKay, Norman Raddatz, Justin Bourque, Marc Lepine.

<sup>21</sup> Blood & Honour (2017) in Calgary, Alberta state: "we want 13 and 14 year old white kids who are looking for a cause to join" <<http://28canada.com/membership/>> [BH].

Their numbers have exploded beyond that of any other right-wing extremist organization in Canada; by my estimate membership supersedes that of the Heritage Front several-fold. This is but one group on the alt-right spectrum, though I would not label the Soldiers of Odin with this category.

Needless to say, the media's focus on the jihadist threat in Canada is definitively a contributing factor to this right-wing frenzy. Similarly, right-wing online media sources have taken the opportunity to capitalize upon Canadians' fear of terrorism. It seems that, within social media and alternative online media sources, there is little to no liability for statements that are hateful and defamatory ever since the repeal of Section 13 of the CHRA.\* Perhaps regulation that would empower communities to effectively respond to this phenomenon would be appropriate. Mainstream media has repeatedly provided attributes and indicia that tend to demonstrate that Soldiers of Odin is merely a non-profit community charitable group. As the media becomes a go-to source of education in our social media era, in my view it offers unnecessary platforms to extremist groups without a balanced analysis of these organizations' purpose, history and conduct.\*\* Media reports become a point of information for professionals who rely on the Internet for research when they are unfamiliar with an issue/topic or have no training to deal with it. Experts are available but not always known.

\*See: CHRA, *supra* note 16.

\*\* Daniel Gallant, *SFTU: Taking Foot: Soldiers of Odin*, (SFTU Press, Oct. 5 2016)

online: <https://scholarsfromtheunderground.com/2016/10/05/taking-foot-soldiers-of-odin/>

Daniel Gallant, *SFTU: Soldiers of Odin: Exhibiting covert hatred*, (SFTU Press, Dec. 25 2016) online:

<https://scholarsfromtheunderground.com/2016/12/25/soldiers-of-odin-exhibiting-covert-hatred/>.

## Media

The media's role in reporting on violent extremism and terrorism could be improved in order to avoid offering extremists platforms for recruiting. Media could also ensure that journalists and reporters have the skills to analyze matters they report on in order to avoid plausible inferences that promote and encourage the extremist narratives by normalizing right-wing extremism.

In my work, I have approached many journalists and producers and provided them with insights that highlight how particular media pieces contribute to fuelling/promoting extremism. Unfortunately, there is no central source of education on this matter, and approaching this on my own accord, without resources, has been daunting at best. It seems that Canadian mainstream media sources and journalism schools could take measures to train journalists to better analyze such stories as a form of preventing (rather than inadvertently encouraging) extremist recruitment. There are also those who contribute directly to right-wing narratives that both normalize and encourage extremist views.<sup>22</sup> This issue can be transposed to recruitment and radicalization as they relate to misinformation and miseducation transmitted and made available by search engines, as explained by the Southern Poverty Law Center.<sup>23</sup>

Although Google is not a media source per se, it does provide online transmission for broadcast media and alternative media, which has been known to disseminate misinformation and miseducation. There is a tangled web of mainstream media, alternative media and corporate online transmissions, which could be

<sup>22</sup> Jonathon Montpetit, *After mosque attack, calls to clean up Quebec City's radio waves: Talk radio stations have contributed to sowing fears about Muslims, critics say* (CBC NEWS: Montreal, Feb. 3 2017) online: <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-city-radio-poubelle-mosque-attack-1.3964005>>.

<sup>23</sup> Southern Poverty Law Centre, *The Miseducation of Dylann Roof* (SPLC, 2017) online: <<https://www.splcenter.org/file/13925>>.



sorted out through guidelines or regulations in conjunction with mandates for these actors to develop administrative legal processes or some other remedy. All of these actors exploit such issues for profit, and in my view should be part of the solution rather than main-staying a collective problem.

Media professionals often lack an understanding of extremism and extremists, especially in regards to right-wing extremists and the threats they pose. Mainstream media has demonstrated it can be manipulated for dissemination of extremist narratives and recruitment campaigns, and is even further duped as a result. The media could explore ways to deter miseducation and misinformation from affecting vulnerable people. Moreover, government sources could adapt regulation in regards to these matters.

Right-wing extremism is a complex issue, and due to mainstream media being manipulated by a right-wing extremist group, the problem has gotten worse by way of normalization of extremist messaging. Unfortunately, the Soldiers of Odin (see Box on Soldiers of Odin) were successful in bolstering their recruitment campaign by capitalizing on and exploiting the naivety of uninformed journalists who lacked the skillset to effectively analyze the issue; seldom did media refer to actual experts on the matter they were reporting. As a result, professionals have become misled by misinformation found in media articles. I have come across lawyers and social workers who are uninformed or misinformed via media discourse. This is disconcerting, as we now have very capable professionals who are unknowingly bolstering the reputation of a right-wing extremist *group* and are not provided with reliable, factual and accurate information.

#### Access to Reliable Information

Media sources end up influencing the knowledge of professionals, as there is a gap in research on right-wing extremism in Canada. Moreover, there is a lack of open sources containing accurate and reliable information on right-wing extremist groups (i.e. which groups are right-wing extremist and which are not). There is a need for fact-based open resources. Of course accountability does not fall onto media alone, but rather onto Canadian society.

### Access to Justice

Access to justice is very limited in cases where people do not have money, even when there is an expressed concern for the physical safety of children and parents targeted for recruitment (see Box on Case in Point). In one case, involved lawyers and social workers expressed concerns about the validity of a mother's fears due to the fact that media coverage of a particular extremist group presented it as benign. It took strong advocating and coaching to elicit an appropriate concern from a legal practitioner due to the influence media coverage had on this professional. This is troubling.

In order to access the courts, a low-income parent should not have to find expert witnesses in order to receive an efficient response when it comes to extremist recruitment, radicalization and child protection. Leaving families without resources is a matter of access to justice in context of family law, and perhaps reaching into criminal and civil law realms where orders or injunctions may be needed. Without resources, a parent of low socio-economic status, left without experts, effective legal consult, or professional services with a working knowledge of radicalization and extremist groups, becomes vulnerable to many problems.

#### Case in Point

In one of my own cases, I worked with a family afraid of a particular extremist group, but which had few to no resources. The father had left the family due to fallout as the result of joining this particular extremist group. The mother was deeply troubled by her partner's sudden radicalization. The relationship became acrimonious as the radicalized man became further involved and entrenched within the extremist group. The mother was left without recourse or resources related to the impacts of recruitment, radicalization and familial fallout.

## Access to Services and Resources

In some cases, an extremist group has access to resources (financial or otherwise), or members/supporters of the group are in the legal community or are themselves prominent community members. Families/individuals affected by these groups may have no resources and are left to the whims of volatile circumstance. This is identified as a gap in both responses to extremism and access to justice in matters related to some of the most vulnerable persons— children—and a topic of utmost importance to Canadian society: extremism/terrorism.

Interactions among members of the public, the media and professionals need to be considered in relation to right-wing extremism. Professionals need more information on right-wing extremism, better resources to respond accordingly, and links to experts and consultants who are available when needed. Moreover, the media's role in the transmission of information that results in bolstering recruitment could be prevented through more meaningful analysis of these complex issues.

## Child Protection

There are two examples in Canada to date of social workers removing children due to parents' involvement in extremism. However, child protection authorities are often riddled with internal structural challenges that result in an inability to make a difference when needed, including a lack of expert resources.<sup>24</sup> Professionals and policy-makers need to be made aware of how and when it is appropriate to mechanize the authority vested in them, where right-wing extremism is of concern, and to access those of us who can assist.

Not changing these structures and attitudes will surely result in further radicalization of children within the home, and debilitate families with ongoing fear and stress that will have long-term impacts on vulnerable children. We know that right-wing extremists often view parenting as a form of political activism within their 'movement.'<sup>25</sup> I argue that using children for such a purpose, as is often discussed online in forums and social media platforms, should be analyzed by child protection workers as a form of recruitment and radicalization of children for the purposes of carrying out political outcomes.

A quick analysis could help determine any contravention of child protection laws, a violation of children's rights by both domestic and international standards, and the use of children for a political purpose. These could be unacknowledged forms of terrorism in Canada in addition to being a child protection issue. Moreover, child protection issues arise where groups are targeting Canadian youth for recruitment and radicalization, yet these matters go unattended to as the result of uninformed practitioners and professionals.<sup>26</sup>

Bolstering policy toolkits can be achieved by developing strategies/mechanisms in law/policy that enable people to activate appropriate responses to recruitment and radicalization, both online and on the ground. While many challenges do exist when designing policy, both historically and currently, we must not allow this to deter us from creatively using existing laws and mechanisms, nor to prevent us from offering new creative solutions. There are logical and practicable legal/policy mechanisms that can be designed and implemented within Canadian society without infringing upon the Constitutional and Charter Rights of citizens. It would not be difficult to appoint a committee of appropriate experts, for instance, to research and develop policy recommendations.

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<sup>24</sup> Cases omitted. Contact Daniel Gallant for details.

<sup>25</sup> Pete Simi & Robert Furtell & Brian F. Bubolz, "Parenting as Activism: Identity Alignment and Activist Persistence in the White Power Movement," *The Sociological Quarterly* v.57-3 (2016) online:< <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/tsq.12144/full>>.

<sup>26</sup> BH, supra note 20.

## Workplace environments

Building upon the former points, we must call out to policy-makers, social workers, lawyers, occupational health and safety officers, and medical professionals. As discussed above, these professionals can play an important role in the intervention in, or prevention of, recruitment and radicalization, or by ensuring individuals/families/communities are referred to appropriate resources, which must be formalized. At minimum, professionals should be informed by their own regulating or accreditation bodies about how they should handle clients affected by extremism, and where to refer people.

## Trades, Professions & Unions

Workplace environments are also challenged by right-wing extremism. Due to the increase of right-wing extremist recruitment and radicalization, and the normalization of extreme right-wing views, employees, employers and unions in the public and private sectors have begun to reach out to me. To date, I have been contacted by three separate unions related to such matters, and by many employees. Some presented more apparently grave concerns, while others were less obvious. This of course touches on federal and provincial Occupational Health and Safety in the workplace. If such matters are not dealt with immediately, employers, agencies and companies could become liable for not addressing such issues appropriately. While particular right-wing extremist groups have a longstanding history in particular trades and unions, we are now seeing more concerns within other workplace environments.

In my practice I have been contacted about concerns related to right-wing activity by union members and representatives in schools, universities, prisons, hospitals and trades. These concerns include seemingly normalized hate speech and conduct in the workplace. Moreover, I have partaken in and/or witnessed longstanding white supremacists and newer recruits force minorities off jobsites and harass them to establish entire work crews of right-wing extremists, which become known in the industry as the 'good ol' boys' club.' In recent years, I have become a resource for friends and family who work in trades in order to assist with effectively dealing with both right-wing extremism and discrimination in the workforce. In my experience, jobsite authorities, employers and law enforcement have not effectively responded to such matters when reported. My colleagues and I become valuable resources for those who feel hopeless within the workplace.

Professionals are able to identify policy gaps, but they need to operate in tandem with practitioners who work with extremists on the frontlines and those affected by extremism. In my work as a professional and a practitioner in the field, I am able to identify clear policy gaps. I will not be able to identify these gaps in detail in this brief paper nor provide readers with the solutions I have identified and developed through my practice, research and analysis, as doing so demands much elaboration. However, my lived experience, education in social work and law, and experience as a practitioner do offer valuable insight that policy-makers and professionals have not yet leveraged. It is my hope that this paper will serve as a point of contact for those willing to assist/support the development of effective responses to the normalization of discrimination or right-wing recruitment and radicalization.

## No Resources

Communities, families and individuals who contact me in my practice are typically perplexed that there are few to no resources or mechanisms to assist them. Yet it seems Canada's primary focus is on extremism and terrorism. While communities and families continuously hear in the media that government, law enforcement and NGOs have developed programs to assist those affected by extremism, their needs are still not met. Moreover, there are essentially no resources available to the public to respond to recruitment and radicalization into right-wing extremism; this includes anti-racist protocols that are established but fall

to the wayside due to funding and resource issues. This happened with our Extreme Dialogue initiative (see Box on Extreme Dialogue).

I have been contacted by countless Canadians across the country in need of assistance and continuous support because loved ones are affected by right-wing extremist recruitment and radicalization, and by those seeking to exit extremist networks. I offer what I can from a distance without any resources except that of lived experience, professional training and legal perspective. I am unable to offer formalized and traditional supports due to a lack of infrastructure. Nonetheless, these families are grateful for what support and resources I can offer. There are no funding resources made available to the courts, professionals or communities to access people like myself who can efficiently, effectively and professionally carry out this work. This has disabled most opportunities for appropriate responses to extremist activity. Again, there are several mechanisms that could be put into place through the legal/political system(s) to assist people attempting to prevent and respond to recruitment and radicalization, but that has not yet become a reality.

In 2017, BC Legal Aid Services did submit this statement to a lawyer as their reasons for rejecting consult of an expert on right wing extremist organization for a civil family court matter:

“Our search of the internet indicates numerous news reports regarding concerns that the Soldiers of Odin is an extremist group and is anti-immigration and anti-Muslim. This information is readily available on the internet. While we appreciate that counsel and the client would ideally like all available resources to further the client's case, however due to limited resources LSS must consider what is reasonable and be sufficient to support counsel's assertions regarding the Soldiers of Odin. In consideration of these and other criteria, we are unable to provide authorization for the requested expense. Consequently your request is denied.”

In my view, it is incumbent upon government to provide mechanisms for community members, NGOs and authorities to effectively respond to right-wing extremism. The federal government could reconsider repealing effective and constitutionally sound law (i.e. Section 13 of Canada's Human Rights Act). Further, provincial authorities could be mandated to effectively respond to rather than reinforce and permit the operation of extremist groups that purport to be community-based advocacy groups or charitable organizations. This could include regulation of symbols known to be affiliated with groups that promote hateful messaging in contravention of Canadian public policy, or at least a formula to determine if symbols are, at law, discriminative and hateful. Some particular symbols are intended to evoke fear in our communities without concern of others' right to live without fear. Canadians should be provided with an opportunity to report such organizations to an authority, and doing so should be simple and accessible to the public. Only then can Canadians relax their burden, which should also be on the state.

While there are creative ways to use existing law and policy, it does take significant resources and legal training in order to be able to effectively carry out such measures. Thus, it is incumbent upon governments to ensure that Canadians have appropriate means to respond to extremism; if not, we risk polarizing citizens against extremists, which will result in further radicalization of new counter-groups (e.g. opposing right-wing extremists). If the government remains non-responsive and even offers more free space for hate messaging, then surely there will be an increase in extremist groups taking matters into their own hands. There is already a growing distrust of the system (legal and parliamentary), which is why vigilante type groups are starting to flare up in Canada, with much public support. It will not be long before the violence that goes largely unreported to law enforcement (mainly perpetrated by right-wing extremists) will ignite violent responses from right-wing extremist opposition; citizens will be forced to protect themselves from right-wing extremists if government remains unresponsive (see Box below).

## Non-Responsiveness

In my work, I have facilitated meetings and community engagement to attempt to decrease the likelihood of violence. In 2011, I organized a United Nations Elimination of Racism rally in response to right-wing extremist recruitment and activity. Two years prior, government and law enforcement established a local anti-racism protocol as a result of right-wing activity. Not only was the protocol not implemented in spite of funding being allocated, local law enforcement refused to broach right-wing extremist activity. Community members became aware of my presence through my media work, resulting in reports of hate crime activity being brought to me rather than to the authorities. I became an advocate, not by choice, but through necessity. Due to a lack of responsiveness from local police, provincial government and federal government, I was forced to team up with journalists to effectively counter right-wing activity in northern British Columbia. To date this activity has fallen upon deaf ears and has increased, perhaps irreversibly so. In my view, this is the result of the aforementioned misunderstanding, misinformation and miseducation of community leaders.

As right-wing extremists capitalize upon the unregulated aspect of the Internet and the unresponsiveness of authorities in order to recruit and radicalize people, the government could effectively respond by providing mechanisms that can be accessed by families, community members, professionals, authorities and NGOs. These mechanisms could include remedies such as injunctions, damages, punishments and protecting Canadians' positive/negative rights from right-wing extremists. There is no doubt that too much regulation is ineffective, but when our neighbours live in fear that they will be kicked to death or shot simply for being who they are, this does beg for resolution.

In my work, I have developed a substantial list of policy mechanisms that would prove to be effective responses to extremism in Canada. Our focus should, in my opinion, include prevention of recruitment and radicalization, both online and in physical environments, and cessation of extremist messaging that includes the demonization and depersonalization of identifiable groups. Moreover, using fields of law that emphasize deterrence and compensation could appropriately respond to those extremists who misuse rights protections as both a sword and shield. Lastly, we must empower communities to effectively respond, through legal processes, to those who target our youth for recruitment, which must be done in our physical environment and online spaces. Offering an administrative process to individuals/communities in order to deal with hate, discrimination and radicalization in our social environments seems to be an effective and efficient option.

## Looking forward

As I move forward with my legal career, my sights are set on advocacy for effective legal mechanisms that allow community members to take actions where appropriate. Access to justice will continue to be a challenge in these situations; however, since Canada's priority appears to be to protect Canadians from extremism, there should be formal processes and resources available to citizens. Moreover, the identification of policy gaps should become a priority for government.

As I draft proposals to government officials and policy-makers featuring ideas for filling these gaps, I am limited by resources and efficient political channels. Needless to say, there is difficulty in accessing appropriate and receptive policy-makers and government officials with the capacity to consider such particular proposals. Additionally, media has also not been receptive to transmitting these ideas. Where I have been successful in garnering media platforms, specific requests for legal mechanisms are often edited

out of reports/stories by media producers. Thus, families and practitioners alike are left in a vacuum with few to no resources. Yet, we are told there are resources available to the public.

### Extreme Dialogue

The most successful initiative that I have worked with has been Extreme Dialogue.\* Public schools across Canada promised to use this prevention program. The resource is a series of films and a workshop-type curriculum that enhances critical thinking skills and works towards breaking down extremist messaging. This resource has been well received and implemented around the world, except in Canada where the initiative began. Unfortunately, government and the managing agency have effectively crippled the initiative and left it dangling in cyberspace, yet members of government boast about its effectiveness.\*\* While the resource has been effectively utilized by the managing agency in European countries, this is not the case in Canada.

\*See: \* Ex-D, supra note 4.

\*\* Sec Dev Foundation, *Extreme Dialogue: Social media target audience analysis and impact assessments in support of countering violent extremism*, (Canada: SecDev: March 2016) online:

<<https://preventviolentextremism.info/sites/default/files/KanishkaSecdev%20Extreme%20Dialogue%20Social%20media%20Target%20Audience%20Analysis%20and%20Impact%20Assessments%20in%20support%20of%20countering%20violent%20extremism.pdf>>. Maria Mourani, 41st Parliament, 2nd Session, Edited Hansard: Number 188 (Parliament of Canada, March 24, 2015) online: <<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?DocId=7891249>> [Mourani]. Conservative Party of Canada, *Harper Renews Support for Kanishka Project on 14th Anniversary of 9/11: The Plan* (Sept. 11 2015) online: <<http://www.conservative.ca/harper-renews-support-for-kanishka-project-on-14th-anniversary-of-911-2/>>.

### Current Projects

My current work is summarized here, as briefly as possible, to demonstrate the primary roles I have within communities across Canada. It is noteworthy to highlight that I have received little to no resources for my work, with few exceptions. First, this paper is an important contribution in regards to identification of the need for bolstering policy toolkits in order to respond to recruitment and radicalization. The following is a non-exhaustive list of projects in development, mostly without any or very limited privately donated resources:

- Providing support, counselling and advocacy to families across Canada in matters related to right-wing extremist activity. Much of this work includes informing and educating professionals who work with families, navigating families to resources, counselling sessions, and development of legal strategies as new forms of intervention method(s).
- Providing support and strategy to those seeking a way out of right-wing extremism and gangs.
- Compiling a list of identified policy gaps, and proposing legal mechanisms and strategic use of current policy/law to effectively respond to right-wing extremist activity, recruitment and radicalization. This includes the exploration and development of universal definitions of *extremism*, *violent extremism*, and *terrorism* for all fields and applications of law.
- Undertaking ongoing research and monitoring of active right-wing extremist groups and their membership, activities and purpose. Some of this information is passed on to law enforcement, media and localized institutions, or open sourced.
- Developing manuscripts oriented towards public education on right-wing extremism in Canada, along with my ongoing pro bono consultancy to law enforcement, government and media (which has exhausted significant resources).

- Playing continuous roles within media and communities for public education purposes through the arts as a form of creative expression.
- Through a private donor, we are on the brink of securing a web developer to provide an open source database of hate groups, hate group activity and hate crimes in Canada. This project will take significant resources without support from any government, academics, nor NGOs; this is the unfortunate reality of the difficulties that I have faced in my work. Academics and government have been made aware of such projects, but remain unresponsive.

Most recently, I have launched a civil action against right-wing propagandists, which is the first in a series of actions to follow, by using existing laws creatively in order to prevent recruitment and radicalization into right-wing extremism.<sup>27</sup> This work hopes to inspire identification of further policy gaps and to encourage policy-makers and government to consider new ways to counter extremism, as a long-term goal. The policy gaps in this paper are approached through legal action in the context of the media and Google's role in the transmission of information leading to recruitment and radicalization.<sup>28</sup> This approach seems to be the only viable option until government and NGOs decide to work with policy- and law-makers to fill such gaps and identify further gaps not explored in this paper.

## Conclusion

It seems that Canada is not yet prepared to effectively counter right-wing extremism. This, in my view, is a grave mistake. We see evidence of this in the Quebec mosque incident. Moreover, one only needs to look to the not-so-distant past to find evidence of other right-wing extremist incidents that demonstrate there is a threat to Canadian society (e.g. bombings, military, law enforcement, hate crimes).<sup>29</sup> Unless we explore these policy gaps and fill them soon, people in need of help will be stuck in a vacuum and rendered helpless as our youth are recruited and radicalized into right-wing extremism, which will lead to more violence. This is inevitable.

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<sup>27</sup> Ani-hate Advocate suing man convicted of hate crimes (Prince George, BC: Prince George Citizen, March 9, 2017) online: <<http://www.princegeorgecitizen.com/news/local-news/anti-hate-advocate-suing-man-convicted-of-hate-crimes-1.11408828>>. Wade Tomko, TRU law student files lawsuit against bloggers and Google (Kamloops, BC: The Omega, March 14, 2017) online: <<http://truomega.ca/2017/03/14/tru-law-student-files-lawsuit-against-bloggers-and-google/>>.

<sup>28</sup> Bill Morlin, *Google and the Miseducation of Dylann Roof* (Southern Poverty Law Center, Jan. 18 2017) online: <<https://www.splcenter.org/20170118/google-and-miseducation-dylann-roof>>

<sup>29</sup> Names of a few right-wing extremists who perpetrated extremist, terrorist or violent actions: Alexandre Bissonnette, Peter Houston, Robert Dechazzal, Allistair Miller, Shawn McDonald, Kyle McKee, Matt McKay, Norman Raddatz, Justin Bourque, Marc Lepine.

## About the author



Photo Prince George Citizen

Daniel Gallant holds a B.A. in First Nations Studies and an M.A. in Social Work, with a focus on child protection, disability rights, institutional discrimination, radicalization and de-radicalization of right-wing extremism. Nearing completion of his Juris Doctor (Law) degree, Gallant has refined his analyses to include more fulsome legal contexts for the purpose of social policy development and the creative use of current policy/law in order to contribute to the prevention of right-wing extremist radicalization.

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