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the prevention
of violence

BUILDING AWARENESS, SEEKING SOLUTIONS

*Extremism & Hate Motivated
Violence in Alberta*



organization for the prevention of violence

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Forward

Canada as a whole, and the province of Alberta in particular, may have experienced less dramatic manifestations of hate motivated violence and terrorism than other parts of the world, but with the mounting number of incidents in Canada and abroad, few think this issue can be discounted any longer. Since the roots of violent extremism are inevitably local, as well as international, the response must be local, as well as international. Every community in Canada needs to devote some careful attention and significant resources to countering this type of social harm, and as is widely acknowledged, the best approach is preventative. In doing so, however, we need not start from scratch. On the contrary, as efforts at preventing violent extremism world-wide have realized, the most reasonable and effective approach is to understand the phenomenon as being analogous with other public health issues. The methods used to address the problems of addictions, domestic violence, youth gangs, and crime in general can be adapted and augmented to counter violent extremism as well. Many of the relevant causal factors will be the same; many of the protective factors will be the same; and many of the techniques that can be employed to ameliorate the problems are the same. Intuitively, as this report documents, both community members and leaders, and human service providers, realize this is the case. Yet they lack the specific knowledge and training to act on their insights, and they are wary of becoming engaged with such a controversial and consequential social issue. Assistance is needed, and in a comprehensive and coherent way. Such is the mandate of groups such as the Organization for the Prevention of Violence in Alberta, and with this report they are laying the foundation for the pursuit of that mandate.

The strengths of this report are manifold. First, it provides an effective and concise introduction to the nature and study of violent extremism for those less familiar with the subject and literature. Second, it provides a typology of the forms of violent extremism present in Alberta (as well as Canada and much of the Western world): groups affiliated with Al Qaeda in various ways, anti-authority extremists, left-wing extremists, patriot and militia groups, single-issue extremism, and white supremacy and associated groups. Informative overviews of each type of extremism are provided. Third, data is provided on the history, presence, and trajectory of each of these types of extremism in Alberta, based on fieldwork conducted throughout the province. No similar field research project – in nature or scope - has ever been completed in Canada. Fourth, the authors uncover many important findings. For example, they argue that the most likely source of potential violence are the socially isolated individuals operating on the margins of extremist movements that are scattered across the province. In ever more opaque ways the extremism of these individuals and movements is being fostered by encrypted online forums and social media. Fifth, the report provides an excellent and concise summary of the nature, strengths, and weaknesses of the “first generation” of programs designed to counter violent extremism. An emerging consensus on best practices is highlighted, while calling attention to the contentious nature of the language used to address the problem (e.g., the term “radicalization”) and the inadvertent, but very real, stigmatization of certain communities (e.g., Muslims). Sixth, and most importantly, the report documents how the reality of these strengths and weaknesses may play out in the local context of Alberta. We gain an insight into that context through interviews with human service providers engaged in similar types of prevention work and focus groups with community members and leaders. The data is, once again, unique, and enormously helpful in securing a sense of the real working environment in which programming to counter hate-motivated violence will

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The blind rage and horror of the Christchurch attack and Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, the Daesh fighter wallowing in an Iraqi prison camp, a van jumping a sidewalk and striking pedestrians in downtown Toronto, these are some of the images that come to mind when we think about extremism today. Extremism and violent extremism are global problems that are impacting our increasingly interconnected world and technology is an essential element in facilitating these kinds of events. The ideologies that foment extremist violence are varied and grounded in online communities and social networks. Today, individuals from any community, any walk of life, from any part of the world, can become inspired, indoctrinated and mobilized to conduct violence in the name of a cause. These globalized problems have local impacts and gaining a better understanding of those impacts is the first essential step in pursuing prevention. It is exactly this idea that underpins this report.

Canada and Alberta are peaceful and prosperous - home to a liberal, democratic and multicultural society. The impacts and manifestations of extremism outlined in this report are surprising to many of us and are further evidence of the growing diffusion of extremism globally. These impacts are not unique to Alberta; there are no characteristics that make the province more susceptible to extremism.

Drawing on more than a year of research and hundreds of interviews with community leaders, human service pro-

fessionals, victims and perpetrators, and members of law enforcement, this report provides a holistic and highly localized understanding of the problem and represents both a historical overview and a snapshot of extremism in Alberta during 2018. From the findings, the following central conclusions can be drawn:

- There is a diverse array of ideologies and movements that are driving extremism and violent extremism in Alberta. This includes Al-Qaeda, its affiliates and splinter groups, anti-authority and anti-government extremism, the far-left, patriot and militia groups, single issue extremism and white supremacism.
- The most likely source of violent extremism in Alberta today is individuals and small networks who are inspired by larger extremist social movements online, rather than formal organizations that are situated locally or transnationally. These inspired individuals can come from any ethnic, cultural or religious community. They tend to be socially isolated and situated on the margins of extremist groups and movements, and have been previously described as “lone actors”.
- The online extremist communities and groups that are inspiring and driving extremism and violence are increasingly opaque and inaccessible to agencies, investigators and analysts who are responsible for counter-terrorism. The online space has created an environment where extremist communities are

more accessible and anonymous than ever before. A growing number of extremist movements are promoting lone actor, mass casualty terrorism as a means of addressing grievances and achieving ideologically defined goals.

- There is a need to think more broadly about the impacts of extremism, beyond fears over terrorism and threats to public safety. Hate, extremism and violent extremism are inter-related phenomena that exist along a continuum of behaviours and beliefs that are grounded in an us vs. them mentality. Extremism, and associated hate, can undermine the social fabric of society by increasing social polarization and reducing social cohesion.
- Effective prevention of extremism and violent extremism and associated issues like hate crimes and hate incidents, requires a “whole-of-society approach” where impacted communities, human service professionals and law enforcement work cooperatively towards prevention. This approach is only possible when all forms of violent extremism are targeted. Collectively, government, agencies and stakeholders who are responsible for prevention must meaningfully address the stigmatization and targeted security approaches that have occurred since the world-altering events of September 11th, 2001.

The second section of the report draws out findings from a province-wide research project that identified how impacted communities and human service professionals understood the problems of extremism and violent extremism, how they felt about the language we use to describe these issues, what factors they see as respon-

sible for both driving the problem and preventing the problem, and their views on potential longer-term solutions. The ultimate goal of this research was to inform the design, deployment and function of prevention programs and empower stakeholders who are involved in prevention. The section’s main findings are:

- There is considerable baggage and stigmatization that exists around key terms and descriptions that are used to describe processes related to extremism and violent extremism. In particular, “radicalization” is understood by community members and human service professionals to mean one thing – namely terrorism that is associated with Muslim communities.
- Both community groups and human service professionals focused on the role of identity-based factors (e.g., absence of a sense of belonging among youth and inter-generational divides within newcomer families) as creating an opening to extremism and comparable negative outcomes (e.g., involvement in a gang). These factors were seen as creating a window or “cognitive opening” to exploitation of alternative identities and ideologies via recruiters or self-exploration. Trauma and mental health issues were also viewed as important drivers of extremism and violent extremism.
- Protective factors and solutions to the problem of hate motivated violence identified by both community members and human service professionals include culturally relevant youth mentorship services, family-centred interventions that address risk beyond the individual-level and improved access to mental health services that are attuned to cultural sensitivities around mental health and associated barriers to access.

Recommendations

From these findings, the Organization for the Prevention of Violence offers the following recommendations. These recommendations aim at furthering multi-stakeholder and multi-agency prevention efforts in Alberta:

- Agencies responsible for investigating and preventing hate crimes, violent extremism and terrorism require ongoing and iterative training on how to access and monitor areas of the Internet where individuals are being engaged and mobilized to action. This would include, inter alia, Telegram, Signal, WhatsApp, Gab, Discord, and Minds. Given the ever-changing and dynamic usage of the Internet by extremist movements and groups, this training should be updated regularly.
- Agencies responsible for investigating and preventing hate crimes, violent extremism and terrorism should seek to further increase the ethnic diversity, cultural-awareness and linguistic skills and training of their employees, especially in areas related to outreach and investigation.
- Create a consistent and improved protocol and training on identifying and handling anti-authority extremists. This training should be offered to all government agencies (e.g., criminal justice, by-law, fish and wildlife, regulatory) and non-government (i.e. utility workers) who have consistent interactions with these individuals. This is of particular importance for law enforcement given the danger these individuals pose during routine encounters with members.
- Implement responsible awareness building workshops and standardized training for stakeholders who are best positioned to identify and direct (to appropriate prevention programs and law enforcement agencies) individuals and families impacted by hate crimes, extremism and violent extremism. This would include school boards and administrators, teachers, service providers engaged with at-risk groups, and appropriate front-line staff at Alberta Health Services. Training modules should be designed based on established research findings, international good practices and local knowledge of manifestations and drivers of extremism and violent extremism in Alberta. First and foremost, modules must outline the diversity of ideologies and beliefs that can drive extremism and violent extremism and avoid further stigmatization of impacted communities.
- Formalization of interagency collaboration of prevention efforts (i.e., community-programs, non-government agencies, government agencies and law enforcement) through the Government of Alberta.
- Non-government organizations, inter-cultural initiatives and youth and women-led community groups, with the support of governments, should formulate programming that aims to undermine the alarmist and xenophobic rhetoric and conspiracy theories that

are furthering the growth of extremist movements in Alberta. Programming should focus on building greater resilience to extremist narratives and messaging and mobilize positive elements of Canada's national identity (e.g., pluralism and inclusiveness).

- Awareness and public education modules should be offered to media companies that provide an evidence-driven overview of the diversity of threats present in the province and outline the impacts that

reporting can have on group recruitment and growth, and the psychological impacts of violent extremism.

- Existing multi-agency/multi-stakeholder models that are already familiar to service providers in the province, including wrap-around models of gang prevention, "hub" crime prevention models, and community-based mentorship programs for youth-at-risk should be employed to develop effective "upstream" prevention of violent extremism.

The report begins with an overview of some key terminology and trends related to violent extremism. Subsequently, each of the six forms of extremism identified in Alberta are discussed, with a historical overview and contemporary assessment of each movement's presence and activity. Recognizing that hate and hate crimes are linked to the continuum of extremism and violence, a sub-section on this topic is included in the first section of this report, after an assessment of the different forms of extremism. Key findings from the first section are as follows:



AL-QAEDA, ITS AFFILIATE & SPLINTER GROUPS

Alberta has been disproportionately (relative to the rest of Canada) impacted by recent trends associated with AQAS, such as foreign fighters leaving to fight in conflict zones abroad. Roughly 30-40 foreign fighters associated with AQAS have left Alberta for various combat zones since 2012. A majority of these fighters are deceased and roughly ten per cent have returned to Alberta from conflict zones abroad. Today, there has been a noteworthy drop-off in public cases related to AQAS across the province. This decline cannot wholly be linked to a reduction in activity, but rather can be attributed to a lack of visibility and awareness of activities as individuals and groups migrate to anonymous and encrypted online platforms like Signal, Telegram, and WhatsApp. As shown in the September 2017 attack in Edmonton, AQAS has an ability to inspire violent extremism locally.



ANTI-AUTHORITY & ANTI-GOVERNMENT EXTREMISM

There are roughly 175-200 active members of anti-authority groups like Freeman on the Land (FOTL) present in Alberta. FOTLs are currently experiencing declining membership in the province. This would suggest that previous estimates of FOTL numbers in Canada, which range from 5,000 to 30,000, are grossly inflated. A small minority of these individuals (roughly 15%) show tendencies towards violence, which is primarily reactive in nature and targeted on law enforcement or other individuals situated in government agencies and the criminal justice system. The murder of Edmonton Police Service Constable Daniel Woodall in 2015 is an example of this kind of violence. The most frequent “extremist activity” in Alberta comes from anti-government extremists and individuals who hold semi-structured belief systems and grievances which leads them to fixate on and levy threats against politicians (e.g., the Prime Minister, Premier, MLAs and MPs), other government officials and the police.



THE FAR LEFT

The Far Left is primarily a reactive movement that responds to manifestations of far-right extremism. The recent emergence and growth of more assertive Patriot and Militia groups in the province has spurred a reciprocal response from the far left, which has become more active at protests since 2018. The movement’s most active period in Alberta occurred when the white supremacist group Aryan Guard/Blood and Honour was at its peak of public activity and violence in Calgary (2008-2012). Violence from the far left is associated with “black bloc” tactics and tends to be reactive and targeted. When violence occurs, it is during a confrontation between the Far Left, law enforcement and far-right groups at organized protests. The Far left in Alberta does not currently pose a known threat to public safety (i.e., through carrying out planned or organized violence against members of the general public) and there are limited examples of reactive/protest-based violence over the last three years.



PATRIOT & MILITIA GROUPS

Patriot and militia groups grew rapidly from 2015 onwards in Alberta. By 2017 the groups had roughly 600-700 active members. Today that number is roughly 300-500. This growth in xenophobic groups has not been seen in the province since the emergence of the Klu Klux Klan in the 1920s and 1930s. After a brief lull in activity in late 2017 and early 2018, the groups began actively protesting in relation to various issues (anti-immigrant/refugee and anti-government grievances) in the summer of 2018, primarily in Edmonton: this trend extended into 2019. To date, there has been no known planned and organized violence among the groups and their membership. There are individuals associated with the groups who display more explicitly white supremacist belief systems. The presence of these individuals, together with ongoing feuding over leadership and shared goals, has led to infighting and splits among the groups. The most likely source of violence, should it occur, would be from individuals who are on the margins of the groups or movements.



SINGLE ISSUE

Single Issue remains a threat to the province, although activity amongst movements most commonly associated with this typology (i.e. environmentalism, anti-abortion, and animal rights) is extremely limited, but may increase if political or economic factors change. For example, construction of major energy production or infrastructure projects, especially in areas deemed to be environmentally sensitive or close to communities that are opposed to activities, may prompt renewed activity. One subtype bucking this trend is the rapid growth in the number of individuals associated with the involuntary celibate movement (Incels) who are either engaged in or supportive of violence against women. The 2014 attack involving Elliot Rodger in California and the 2018 van attack in Toronto are examples of terrorism associated with the Incel movement. A small number of Incel members who support violence and use violent rhetoric are active in Alberta.



WHITE SUPREMACY & ASSOCIATED IDEOLOGIES

White Supremacy and Associated Ideologies have been present in Alberta since the early 20th century; however, significant and organized groups have existed for only relatively brief periods. The most important factor in explaining the growth and decline of organized white supremacy in Alberta is the capability of their leadership. From 2006-2018 the Aryan Guard/Blood and Honour/Combat-18 network, based in Calgary, represented the largest and most active and violent group in Alberta. A majority of the violence from the movement, which occurred primarily between 2008-2012 and included a number of assaults and homicides, was randomly targeted on visible minority communities, targeted on opponents in the anti-fascist movement, or internecine in nature. The recent departure of more capable leadership in the province heralds a period of uncertainty for more traditional “White Power” groups; however, the new generation of white nationalists, identitarians or the so-called “alt-right” have experienced growth and attracted younger, educated and more “mainstream” adherents.



HATE CRIMES

Hate Crimes are on the rise in Alberta, especially since 2014 in the context of an increasingly polarized political and social climate. Jewish, Muslim, Black and LGBTQ Albertans are the primary targets of hate, with most physical violence directed towards Muslims and members of the LGBTQ community. Hate remains a poorly understood phenomenon, as data on victims, perpetrators and the nature of attacks are inadequate. Communities most directly affected by hate lack resources and tools to deal with victimization, even as non-government responses are emerging. There is considerable frustration among victims and communities that are impacted by hate and a number of hate crime investigators, over the consistent inability to levy hate crimes charges after incidents occur.

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Extremism and Hate Motivated Violence in Alberta provides an overview of issues that are pertinent and impactful in Canada and Alberta.

There are increasing worries among many Canadians and Albertans over the impacts of hate, extremism, and terrorism in our society. A poll conducted in 2017 found that terrorism ranked as a top fear for Albertans - out ranking snakes and falling victim to a violent crime.¹

Since 2014 there has been a steady rise in police-reported hate crimes in the province. From 2014 to 2015 Alberta experienced a 40 per cent increase in this area. More recently, from 2016 to 2017 the rate of police-reported hate crimes increased by a further 38 per cent.² These are separate but interrelated issues that can not only undermine national security and the public safety of Canadians, but also the social fabric and cohesiveness of our society.

Violence and hate are of particular concern for a democratic country like Canada. Internationally, Canada is less impacted by these issues when compared to other societies. However, the increasingly globalized nature of extremism and the easy access to extremist ideas and networks found today on the Internet, means that no community is immune. Recent deadly attacks in Canada, that were motivated by an ideology; for example, the 2017 shootings at a Mosque in Quebec City that resulted in six deaths, and the April 2018 vehicle-ramming of pedestrians in downtown Toronto that resulted in ten

deaths, have reinforced a need to be vigilant and proactive in preventing ideologically motivated violence in Canada. In Alberta in September 2017, an attack took place in downtown Edmonton and underscored the reality that these types of events can take place locally. Based on some of these recent incidents, Canada experienced a rise in the Institute for Economics and Peace's Terrorism Rankings and the *Global Terrorism Index*. In 2018 it ranked 57th in the global rankings, nine places higher than the previous year.³

In order to better understand some of these issues, the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) has conducted unprecedented research in Alberta around the topics of hate, extremism and violent extremism. To date, the organization has interviewed more than 350 informed Albertans from all walks of life, including police officers, community leaders and social workers. Research has been conducted from the farthest southern reaches of the province to the remote north. The evidence collected during these activities will aid Albertans, not only in understanding the nature of threats and hazards we face but also to identify solutions to critical issues. Philosophically, this report is grounded in Benjamin Franklin's adage that "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure".

Developing proactive solutions requires the inclusion of new stakeholders and listening to the voices of those who are best placed to understand how and why extremism, violence and hate occurs. Teachers, parents, fami-

lies, communities and those who work with youth-at-risk have an innate understanding of the kinds of factors that lead young people astray. Individuals who experience violent extremism first hand (both as perpetrators and victims), and their friends and family members, can offer first hand testimonies about how individuals come to identify with and act on extremist ideas. Police officers and national security professionals can speak to their understandings and direct experience with the problem. Accounting for all of these perspectives is an essential element of this report.

Developing pro-active solutions requires the inclusion of new stakeholders and listening to the voices of those who are best placed to understand how and why extremism, violence and hate occurs. Teachers, parents, families, communities and those who work with youth-at-risk have an innate understanding of the kinds of factors that lead young people astray.

“There are worries among many Canadians & Albertans over the impacts of hate, extremism, and terrorism in our society.”

Provincial Report Structure, Methodology and Key Terms

STRUCTURE & COMPOSITION

This report is divided into two main sections. The first half is composed of assessments of different ideologies, groups and movements that have been associated with hate, extremism and violent extremism in Alberta. In all, six types of extremist movements are examined. This includes Al-Qaeda, its affiliates and splinter groups (AQAS), Anti-Authority, Far-Left, Patriot Groups, Single Issue, and White Supremacy. These tailored and local assessments consider the ideas, composition and historical and contemporary activities of groups and movements in Alberta.

The goal and importance of these assessments are two-fold. First, they clearly demonstrate the diversity of ideologies and types of movements that can generate extremism and violent extremism in the province. Second, these assessments contribute to public knowledge and awareness of issues that are often mischaracterized and misunderstood, for example through social and mainstream media.

It is important to note that these sub-sections *do not represent formal threat assessments* comparable to what a national security or government agency may produce. Rather, they act as an educational resource designed to be useful to stakeholders, partners and the general public, which considers a wide array of potential impacts of extremist movements. This includes the impact of groups

and movements in driving hate and negative impacts on the social fabric of Alberta.

The second half of this report is focused on identifying practices and resources that can be employed in preventing violent extremism in Alberta. Building off the research and evidence provided in the assessments, the second half is solution-oriented. Here, identifying effective solutions requires knowledge of “good practice” in countering violent extremism (hereafter, countering hate-motivated violence (CHMV), both nationally and internationally. It also requires an understanding of how communities and service providers in Alberta perceive not only the problem of violent extremism but also the measures that have been used by police, national security agencies and governments to address it.

The OPV recognizes that effective prevention can only be established when it is ethical, attuned to community sensitivities and accounts for the missteps and negative impacts of some post 9-11 security practices on Canada’s multicultural communities. Recognizing the diversity of ideologies and movements that can drive violent extremism in Alberta – an undue targeting of specific ethnic, cultural or religious communities is not only unethical but also impractical if the goal is effective prevention. Another recognition is that some ethno-cultural communities are experiencing a pronounced increase in police-reported hate crimes and incidents in recent years. This is most especially true among religious minority communities,

Jewish and Muslim communities in particular. Given the interconnectedness of hate, extremism and violence this report includes research and testimonies from communities and community members that are the primary targets of hate crimes in Alberta in recent years.

With these priorities in mind, the second half identifies good practices in prevention from programs that are separate but relatable to countering violent extremism (CVE). From the insights of Alberta’s social workers, psychologists, youth workers and community leaders who are engaged in violence prevention in areas like gang prevention, domestic violence and work with youth-at-risk, our research imports knowledge from other similar areas of violence and risk prevention. An important recognition among CVE practitioners today is that although ideology is a distinguishing factor when it comes to violent extremism, similar risk factors and processes can be found in areas like gang violence. Rather than seeking to “reinvent the wheel” it is important that practitioners look to what has worked, and conversely what has not worked in other areas of risk and violence prevention.

Evidence of the problem, community and practitioner knowledge and areas of good practice collectively inform the final segment of the second half of this report. All this work is used to inform the design and operationalization of a multi-agency, multi-stakeholder and multi-disciplinary approach to prevention of violent extremism in Alberta. Ultimately to be effective, to create more holistic solutions to these issues, we require a “whole of society” approach that can address complex and inter-related issues of hate, extremism and violent extremism.

APPROACH & METHODOLOGY

To produce a comprehensive and multi-faceted provincial report the OPV has looked to four sources of knowledge and information: law enforcement, community members, human service professionals and individuals

and families impacted by violent extremism. Within these categories, the organization has sought out individuals and groups in Alberta that are best placed to understand threats and risks related to hate, extremism and violent extremism and other comparable forms of violence. In addition, organizational researchers have identified protective factors and solutions that can be used in the pursuit of prevention. As shown by the results, all the sources of knowledge have their strengths and weaknesses – insights and blind spots.

The Provincial Report uses a “mixed methodology” approach to generate its findings. It makes use of qualitative data (interviews and focus groups) and quantitative data (surveys). Community and human service interviews were conducted in Alberta’s larger population centres - including Edmonton, Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Fort McMurray and Brooks. Law enforcement research was conducted throughout Alberta and included all municipal police departments in (e.g., Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Lacombe and Camrose), and Royal Canadian Mounted Police Detachments in Southern, Central and Northern Alberta. These interviews were conducted between December 2017 and September 2018 and represent a “snapshot” or moment in time; events that occurred subsequent to these dates were not discussed by interviewees and are therefore not the primary focus of this report. Where possible, we sought to incorporate some commentary on newer developments.

Roughly 120 interviews were conducted with members of communities that are impacted by hate, extremism and violent extremism. Fifty human service professionals engaged with areas related to violence and youth-at-risk were interviewed. 21 “formers”, or friends and family members of individuals engaged with violent extremism provided their valuable insights for this report, and more than 170 interviews were conducted with law enforcement in municipal police services and the RCMP. Each of these sources provided specific insights.

Law Enforcement

As the agencies responsible for gathering intelligence and investigating crimes related to terrorism and hate, law enforcement in Alberta is more attuned to the problem of violent extremism. These agencies have tangible “real world” experience in investigating and preventing criminal activities related to hate and extremism. There are, however, specific gaps in the knowledge of police. First, police are not omniscient and are only attuned to threats that are referred to them by the public, national security agencies (e.g., Canadian National Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), and international and “Five Eyes” partners) or encountered during routine day-to-day operations and investigations.

Second, law enforcement at its core is an investigative and enforcement profession. In relation to terrorism and violent extremism, the overriding priority for police is to prevent terrorist events from taking place. However, prevention for law enforcement is conceived of differently than prevention amongst grassroots community groups or human service professionals. While the former uses investigative tools such as surveillance, intelligence, investigation and detention to prevent or disrupt specific acts, the latter is more attuned to longer-term prevention and the risk factors that drive violence. Human service professionals and community groups are more likely to be engaged in preventative work further “upstream” in the process of engagement with extremism and violence, whereas law enforcement tends to detect threats further “downstream”, in large part through criminal behaviour and association with individuals who are already participating in and supporting terrorism.

Third, law enforcement is directed by different levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) that prioritize certain types of threats. Internally, law enforcement agencies have different cultures and personnel that direct investigations and assessments of different threats and assign resources appropriately. Undoubtedly, in the post-September 11th, 2001 environment this has equated

into a focus on violent extremism and terrorism associated with al-Qaeda, its affiliates and splinter groups (AQAS). However, aside from this threat, law enforcement may also be attuned to direct threats to their members, such as individuals who adhere to ideologies that are grounded in anti-authority and anti-police beliefs. Further, today there are strong indications that government ministries and agencies, and law enforcement, are more attuned to threats that are emerging from different extremist groups and movements.

Threats generated from white supremacy, patriot groups, far-left groups, and single issue (e.g., environmentalism, animal rights, anti-abortion, misogyny) are not wholly overlooked by law enforcement as potential violent extremist threats – but they do not receive the same level of attention as AQAS. Again, these priorities are shaped by government priorities; for example, as dictated by relevant federal ministries like Public Safety Canada; intelligence acquired by national security agencies, and the workplace culture of policing agencies. Priorities are also often reactive in nature as they respond to unfolding trends and threats to public safety. For example, the overriding priority from 2014-2017 for policing and national security agencies was responding to the rapidly evolving drama of individuals and groups departing Canada to fight in conflict zones in places like Syria and Iraq.

The research conducted with law enforcement for the purposes of this report is arguably unprecedented in terms of scope and size in Canada. As a non-government organization, the OPV was granted significant access to law enforcement agencies in Alberta. Generalized questions were used to produce non-identifying and anonymized information on different extremist movements and groups. Coverage of rural areas, smaller population centres and major cities allowed for the identification of different trends throughout Alberta. The ability to draw on the knowledge of law enforcement and related government agencies, some of who do not necessarily share and communicate threats outside of their jurisdiction, provided broad and in-depth information.

Community

Recognizing that hate, extremism and violent extremism are a societal issue that cannot be associated with any given religious or ethnic group there has been a historical association (i.e., through media, national security practices and political attention) with some communities. In turn, this association has driven a variety of national security measures (e.g., surveillance, investigations and no-fly lists) that can disproportionately target and impact communities.

Specifically, the focus of governments and security agencies on the wider AQAS movement after the terrorist attacks of 2001 has led to the centring of security practices and measures on Canada's diverse Muslim communities. Subsequently, the line between viewing these communities as partners vs. seeing them as suspects in national security practices has sometimes been blurred. This is not a situation that is unique to Canada – but rather the result of the significant expansion of post 9-11 security measures and public spending internationally.

With this in mind, some communities may be impacted in multiple ways by hate, extremism and violent extremism. For example, impacted in that there are a small number of individuals from Canada's diverse ethno-cultural communities who have been directly involved with violent extremism. Impacted through being the target of hate groups and the hate crimes/incidents that they generate, and finally, these same communities may be negatively impacted by focused and targeted national security measures. These multiple impacts should be considered when engaging with impacted communities around the topic of violent extremism.

There is some reason to believe that impacted communities have innate, grassroots knowledge of risk and threats related to violent extremism. The small portion of these communities that experience the phenomenon first hand can speak to the vulnerabilities and risk factors that drove the process of engagement. Further, individuals and families can speak to the victimization, which

can and does occur during and after this process. As communities that are targeted by extremism and hate, in particular by white supremacist groups, they can provide insights on other forms of extremism. Recognizing this, communities that have been historically targeted by hate groups – including Jewish, South Asian, Black and Indigenous communities can relay valuable first-hand experience.

This report includes information gathered from a diverse array of community leaders. It accounted for their views on the vulnerabilities, risks and routes into and out of violent extremism. It also focused on experiences with hate crimes and incidents. It is in this area of research around hate that communities and community members were able to offer the greatest insight. Community leaders are attuned to the experiences of the wider community itself and are sought out by community members in times of stress and crisis. As such, they can relay stories and experiences that are both personally impactful and shared within the broader community. These testimonials provide a window into how communities are victimized, affected by and resilient to occurrences of hate.

The research conducted with community members produced grassroots knowledge and insights. Aligning with other studies that have looked to impacted communities, this report reveals that while impacted communities conceive of risk and vulnerabilities to violent extremism in ways that generally adhere to previous academic and non-academic study, they do not possess novel ideas on these subjects. Leaders will also never be able to fully account for the diversity of life experiences, opinions and views of all segments of diverse communities. However, what community members and leaders can do is embed their knowledge of drivers, vulnerabilities, risk factors and protective factors within the wider lived experiences of community members – within a specific time and place. In the absence of community-based research, these kinds of insights are unavailable to analysts and researchers.

Individuals & Families Impacted by Violent Extremism

Building on observations made in the community section above, individuals, peers, friends and families with more direct and first-hand experience with violent extremism can provide detailed accounts of vulnerabilities and risks related to violent extremism. Families and peers can identify the risk or “preconditioning” factors that create vulnerabilities to engagement. Individuals who experienced the phenomena first hand can speak to the process that mobilized them to violence and, importantly, the process that facilitated their disengagement, or departure from groups and movements.

As shown by previous research in this area, notably that of Georgia State psychologist John Horgan, it is important that interviews with former extremists focus on the tangible mechanisms and processes that facilitate processes of engagement and disengagement.⁴ Put more simply, this requires a focus on “how questions” – or behavioural questions - rather than asking former extremists *why* – ideological questions - they got involved and disengaged. This is because while the former may provide information on the concrete pathways, lures and “pull factors” involved in the process, the latter can often elicit a series of after-the-fact justifications that are used to frame involvement with violent extremism. These justifications and “pull factors” may provide little practical knowledge for researchers and practitioners focused on preventative strategies – in part because individuals who have disengaged from groups and movements might retroactively ascribe a series of justifications for their involvement that may have little bearing on the conditions and experiences that facilitated their mobilization in the first place.

Even with this specific approach to research, there are some limitations to research in this area. First, families, friends and peers of individuals who have first-hand experience cannot provide a complete picture of the engagement and disengagement process and the risk factors that are at play at the individual level. Individuals who undergo the process directly are commonly

estranged from family and friends prior, during and after the process. For a variety of reasons family members may, similar to former extremists, retroactively ascribe a series of justifications and risk factors to the process. By comparison, individuals who personally experience this process can speak more directly to the process of recruitment (or more self-driven engagement), indoctrination, and in some cases, experiences with violent extremism.

Employing a variety of sources in this area the OPV has been able to develop in-depth case studies. This more in-depth qualitative data provides useful information related to engagement with extremism, recruitment, risk factors and disengagement.

Human Service Professionals

Individuals and agencies engaged with risk and violence prevention can provide insights into the vulnerabilities and factors that can drive processes related to extremism and violent extremism. Local government and non-government agencies situated in cities and neighbourhoods who work with “youth-at-risk” and individuals and groups displaying violent behaviour have knowledge about risk and good practices that promote disengagement from violent behaviour. Practitioners engaged in prevention programs that are focused on gang involvement may have particularly useful knowledge and insights on the problem of violent extremism. While there are some variations in risk factors and profiles among individuals involved with gangs and those involved with violent extremism, there are similar processes of engagement and disengagement, and shared risk factors at play.

For example, both gangs, extremist networks and groups can and will exploit vulnerabilities related to social isolation and social identity. Social networks, whether extremist or gang-based, can offer a sense of belonging and meaning for young people who are dealing with questions of who they are and where they belong in the world. Where these experiences can and do diverge is the presence of an ideology that frames, justifies and facili-

tates behaviour. While gangs can offer a social grouping and a sense of belonging and security to those involved, their behaviour and activities, including violence, tends to be centred on criminality and monetary gain. By comparison, violent extremism and associated terroristic acts are committed, at least ostensibly, in pursuit of ideologically framed goals. It is worth noting that these distinct differences in motivations may attract a different subset of individuals.

Human service professionals, similar to impacted communities and the public at large, may view violent extremism as an entirely unique phenomenon, in no small part because of its national security element and media coverage. Similar to impacted communities, some human service professionals may display a degree of discomfort with the topic. Despite their experience with prevention and intervention programs; much like law enforcement, there may be an inability to see countering violent extremism programming as simply another area of crime prevention and risk. Recognizing all of this, there is variation in understandings of the phenomenon among human service professionals depending on their own personal views, skill sets and professional experience.

As shown in this report, human service professionals colour their understanding of violent extremism with their professional knowledge and experience. Some demonstrate a deep discomfort with the topic and prevention-based work in the area. The national security framework surrounding the problem of terrorism and violent extremism, and unfamiliarity with the role of ideology in driving behaviour (in no small part because there is little to no exposure to the topic during their educational or professional experience) can create uncertainty and confusion around the topic. On the other hand, human service professionals may conversely view violent extremism as a phenomenon that is driven by very familiar processes and risk factors, and in doing so, at least to an extent, normalize the issue. These findings indicate the need for individuals engaged in CHMV-related work to explore the good practices and knowledge in comparable areas of crime prevention and to generate better awareness of the problem among human service professionals. This is most especially true for front line officials who by virtue of their work with young people and communities may encounter individuals and families impacted by hate, extremism and violent extremism.

Understanding the Problem: Extremism, Ideology, Radicalization, & Violent Extremism

Hate, extremism, “radicalization”, and violent extremism are inter-related but separate terms that tend to be used and misused in our everyday vernacular. Today, we have become all too familiar with scenes of violence and terror in online and mainstream media - on our television screens and laptops. In these kinds of events, we see how hatred and extremism can be rooted in fear and disdain of certain cultures, religions, ethnicities or genders. Given the concerns many of us have around these issues, it is important to develop clear understandings of the terms we use to describe them. For example, it is important to understand how extremism and associated violence are dependent on a specific sort of worldview. As one of the leading experts on extremism and terrorism J.M. Berger has written, “extremism is a belief system,” and within that belief system there are some essential components.⁵

Extremism, or an extremist belief system, is characterized by a rigid and unquestioning understanding of political, social and/or religious issues. From this standpoint, there is little willingness to challenge opinions and consider alternative perspectives. Extremist beliefs may promote the idea that is acceptable to impose views upon others, curtail the rights of those you disagree with, or in some cases (but not all), promote the use of violence to promote an agenda. In an extremist belief system, there is little in the way of “grey areas”, rather there is black and white, right and wrong. An important facet of extremism is how belief systems are structured and passed on to others. Extremism, especially forms of extremism that encourage vi-

olence, are structured around “in-groups”, or an “us”, and “out-groups”, or a “them”, together with a negative framing of relations between these groups or communities.

Communities are formed around shared ideas, experiences and cultures. In order to distinguish and define themselves, groups compare and contrast to others. These comparisons are not necessarily negative. In a healthy, culturally diverse society, we can respect, have dignity in, and even celebrate the differences between cultures and communities. However, not all comparisons between groups and communities are positive. As even the most basic review of human history reveals – the way in which human beings have distinguished and compared themselves to others through their race, religion, culture, tribe, ethnicity and so-on, can lead to destructive and abiding conflicts.

According to J.M. Berger’s definition of extremism, which is constructed around negative framing of relationships between in-groups and out-groups, us and them, we can add one more critical element to this equation – a sense of crisis. If an in-group identifies a crisis around the actions, behaviours and characteristics of an out-group – especially a crisis that represents what is understood to be a threat to the very existence of the in-group, their cultures and traditions, the makings of extremism are firmly in place.⁶ In this context, violence and conflict may be suggested as necessary and legitimate measures for addressing a crisis. When rigid notions of divided and

opposed communities, and a sense of crisis, is combined with prescribed measures to address that crisis, we encounter another key term used in this report - ideology.

Ideology is an essential feature in the definition that governments and academics use for terrorism. Ideology may distinguish violence, which is understood to be terrorism, from violence that is seen as merely criminal and selfish in nature. Under section 83.01 of the Criminal Code of Canada, terrorism is defined as “an act committed in whole or in part for a political, religious or ideological purpose, objective or cause.” What matters for law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and judges then – at least when it comes to terrorism – is the ability to identify a coherent ideological *motive* behind a criminal act. Additionally, as suggested in the Criminal Code definition, ideology can be framed through political, religious or other objectives.

At their core, ideologies contain systematic ideas and beliefs that justify and create the basis for action. For example, a liberal-political ideology contains principles of individual freedom, rights of free association, religion and speech and rights to the ownership of private property. These ideas have been the basis of political actions and reforms for centuries in the western world. Ideologies like liberalism have driven social and political changes, and these changes have been pursued through violent and non-violent measures. For instance, it was liberal idealism and revolutionary fervour that drove the French Revolution, the overthrow of the *Ancien Régime* and King Louis XVI and the establishment of the First Republic of modern France. This kind of idealism also helped to drive the American War of Independence against the rule of the British Crown, which led to the founding of the United States of America. Together, these events gave birth to the constitutions and democratic values that shape our day-to-day lives today. There are also numerous examples where liberal reforms have occurred through non-violent means. It is important to note that when ideologies are layered with extremist worldviews, with ideas of crisis and social division, it is more likely that it can be used to justify violence.

In all countries, especially democratic societies like Canada, there is a strong desire to address and prevent ideologically motivated violence or terrorism. Law enforcement agencies like the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), and national security agencies, such as the Canadian Intelligence Security Service (CSIS), prioritize and actively seek to detect and prevent threats and acts of terrorist violence before they occur.

Increasingly, Canada and other governments around the world are looking beyond intelligence-led counter-terrorism strategies to develop preventative programs that can address early stages of risk well before threats turn into violence. Out of this desire, an area of policy and programming has emerged known as CVE. While CVE will be carefully outlined in the second section, briefly, the premise that underlies CVE is that a gap exists within current national security practices. The goal of CVE is to move “upstream” in the problem – in other words, to address early warning signs and risk-factors that drive terrorist violence before it goes too far “downstream” – to the point where violence occurs. To understand and conceptualize this process, governments and academics have become intently focused on what is referred to as “radicalization”, or alternatively, “radicalization to violence” which identifies a specific endpoint to the process.

Radicalization has been used to describe a process through which individuals adopt a worldview or ideology that is opposed to the social and political standards, or “status quo” of society. Through the process of becoming “radical” individuals internalize a belief system which, by its very nature, calls for significant or profound changes in the political, economic, and/or spiritual life of a society. This process can vary significantly depending on the individual who experiences it. Individual’s experiences with radicalization are shaped by their life histories and the ideology that is adopted. However, there are some important shared elements in the process of radicalization; for example, we know that radicalization is a highly “socialized” process – that the adoption of radical ideas that are opposed to the social and political status quo does

not take place in a vacuum. Rather, this process requires the transmission of ideas within a like-minded group or community, either online or offline in nature, which shares grievances, a sense of injustice and a desire for change.

Today, radicalization is largely seen in negative terms – something to be suppressed and stamped out – primarily through the use of law enforcement and national security measures. Yet, even a cursory review of history shows that individuals considered radical in their day and age can drive positive and desirable changes in society. Whether it is John Locke opposing the abuse of authority by European monarchs, George Washington confronting the power of the British Crown, Mahatma Gandhi resisting colonial subjugation in India, or Martin Luther King spearheading the civil rights movement in the United States, today we celebrate individuals who were seen in their time and place as radical revolutionaries.

The realization that radicalism or the adoption of radical views is not necessarily negative for society, that in fact, it can be a positive and dynamic force, calls into question many of our common associations with the term. As seen in the above examples, radicalism can be violent or non-violent in character and this recognition demonstrates some of the problems we encounter when neat equivalencies are drawn between radicalization and terrorist violence. Put simply, radicalization does not necessarily capture a process that ends in violence. By comparison, terrorism is widely understood to be a *method of political violence*, which aims to achieve a set of goals. Whatever the contentiousness around the term terrorism, few would dissociate violence from terrorism, overlook its psychological impacts (namely to terrorize), or the political goals which drive that particular form of violence. The idea that terrorism is a form of political violence is widely accepted.⁷

These are important distinctions to make, especially in a democratic society that values the rule of law and freedom of speech. Too often the radical label has been used to suppress and persecute peaceful and legitimate

political opposition in non-democratic and illiberal countries. In a liberal-democratic society, individuals and groups are free to express their ideas, beliefs and political opposition insofar as that expression does not result in violence, criminal support for violence (e.g., through financial support), or through violating the rights of other citizens (e.g., through speech, violence or “mischief” that constitute a hate crime).

Hate can be more difficult to define and link to violence. On the surface, hate is, in and of itself, raw and unstructured. For most of us, hate simply refers to an emotion that is rooted in fear or strong dislike. We hate cold weather, visits to the dentist or brussels sprouts. However, the type of hate that is of issue here is the kind that takes place between groups of people. Returning to the definition of extremism offered above, hate can be seen as a by-product of negative in-group (us) and out-group (them) relations. Alternatively, hate can be seen as the foundation of this kind of belief system. As with terrorism, looking to legal definitions of hate, hate crimes and hate speech can provide more clarity.

As with terrorism, the criminal justice system of Canada distinguishes hate crimes from other crimes based on motive. Sections 318 and 319 the Criminal Code of Canada describe what is considered a hate crime. These crimes involve types of speech, acts of “mischief” or violence. It is specifically around the promotion of violence where Section 318 comes into play. Here a criminal act involves advocating for genocide and encouraging the killing of individuals on the basis of their belonging to a specific race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Section 319 of the Criminal Code is focused on the incitement of hatred; for example, through the production of hateful materials (e.g., pamphlets, online posts and websites, telephone calls etc.). Finally, subsection 4.1 of section 430 (mischief) includes acts of vandalism, graffiti etc. that are motivated by hatred. A good example of this is a hateful message or symbol, like a swastika that is scrawled on a religious place of worship.

As seen in these legal definitions, hate crimes can be clearly linked to a central aspect of an extremist belief system, namely negative framing of an out-group. As also seen in this definition, hate does not necessarily equate into violence. To understand when and how violence enters the picture requires an understanding of how belief systems and processes like “radicalization” combine to bring us to that very rare point in Canada where someone commits a violent act or engages in violent extremism.

Violent extremism is a term that combines extremism with specific behaviour – violence. A belief system is an essential component of this equation. When relationships between communities are seen in negative and hostile terms, and a crisis is perceived within this relationship, violence can be seen as an answer. Violence can become the method or means to address an impending threat, an abiding sense of injustice, or the perceived ills of society. Violence can be a tool that is justified within an extremist ideology and its associated ideas, slogans and writings. In this sense, violent extremism draws together many of the terms and descriptions outlined above – an endpoint where hatred, ideology and a process of engagement and indoctrination combine to precipitate violence.

The point where ideas become violent actions, where an individual commits a criminal act in the name of a cause, is both very difficult to predict and the primary concern of Canada’s national security agencies and offices. While we know that there are important psychological and group-based factors that lead to acts of terrorism, the precise

process that brings a group or individual to that point is less well understood. The problem here is that there is no “one size fits all” predictable pathway that analysts can identify when it comes to becoming a violent extremist. Having said, there are certain *risk indicators*, experiences and behaviours that are common among those who carry out violent acts. For example, communicating ideological convictions, arguing with members of your community who do not share your viewpoint and publicly stating your intent to act on your beliefs (sometimes) violently, are well-known risk indicators for violent extremism.⁸

Within CHMV programs, the challenge is to understand the complex drivers and risk factors that generate violent extremism at the individual and group level. Since the goal of these programs is prevention, it is also important that practitioners understand the contravening role of “protective factors” that help to inoculate individuals. When examining the separate but interrelated issues of hate, extremism, ideology, “radicalization” and violent extremism, it is increasingly clear that we need a more holistic understanding of the problem of terrorism. Until very recently, this is a problem that has been dealt with by law enforcement and national security agencies who prioritize the detection, investigation and disruption of threats. However, increasingly policymakers are recognizing that effective prevention requires the knowledge, wisdom and professional skills of individuals and communities that exist outside of the world of national security - in the realm of crime prevention.

Understanding the Impacts: Individuals, Groups & Movements

To reiterate, violent extremism and the process of engagement with extremism does not occur within a vacuum. In the media today, we often hear the description “lone wolves” in reference to acts of mass murder and terrorism. The image this produces is of an isolated and angry individual who directs their rage on society. However, when we look at prior cases of violent extremism, we quickly discover that the idea of a lone wolf is largely a myth.

In Canadian society, in our families and in our schools, we are born and raised in environments that teach us that violence, especially terrorist violence, is a bad thing, an evil. Norms, or socially accepted ideas like that of non-violence, are instilled in us at a young age. These are powerful barriers that are only overcome through psychological processes and indoctrination within a social environment.

In these social environments, peer pressure and “group think” can be used to reduce and eliminate barriers to violence. Within groups and social movements, violence can be portrayed as both necessary and legitimate to address injustices, satisfy grievances, or act on an unfolding crisis.

Human service professionals, like social workers and psychologists who seek to prevent and address violence associated with extremism, or other comparable issues like gang violence, seek to understand how individual-level risk-factors interact with larger social environ-

ments. Anti-social behavior, divides and conflicts within families, social isolation, experiences with childhood and adult trauma, and having relationships with friends and family members who are already engaged with violent extremism, are all important factors and experiences that can create vulnerabilities among individuals. Many of these experiences are connected to social experiences.

Human beings desire and seek out social bonds, a sense of belonging to a family, group of peers, or community. Young people, especially as they transition away from adolescence and their dependence on their family, look to develop friendships and romantic relationships as they move into adulthood. These are experiences we collectively share.

Individuals can establish relationships that promote what psychologists refer to as “prosocial” behaviours. Positive relationships can encourage feelings of empathy and responsibility for ourselves and those around us. Positive and healthy relationships help to make human beings more resilient in the face of adversity – for example by helping us cope with personal and financial hardship, experiences of loss, victimization and trauma. On the other hand, the absence of these kinds of social ties can create an opening to other, less positive outcomes.

Groups and networks that promote extremist ideologies can help to fill a social void for some individuals. This is not unlike the experience of some individuals in gangs

and cults. Extremist groups can provide a tangible sense of being wanted and valued, empowerment and a feeling of adventure for individuals who may feel lonely and directionless. Since extremist groups often frame themselves around profound feelings of injustice and grievance – these ideas can also be appealing to those who feel as though they have been wronged in their life.

Within extremist groups, individuals may see a reflection of their own personal experience and find clear black and white answers to their questions.

At a broader level, social movements can play an important role in driving extremism, hate and violent extremism at the individual and group level. A better understanding of the nature and structure of social movements provides some clues to how they can generate these issues. At their core, movements are formed around shared concerns, grievances and goals. Movements are less formal than an established group or organization, in large part because there are fewer barriers to membership. Social movements, including those that promote extremism, collectively mobilize around opportunities and a shared identity.

Providing examples of social movements can be instructive. In recent years, concerns over the negative impacts of globalization and financial practices among governments and international organizations have generated protests (like those seen at the World Trade Organization meeting in Seattle in 1999, for instance) and a series of identifiable social movements. Occupy Wall Street, which appeared in the United States in 2011 before becoming a globalized phenomenon, is an example of a social movement that drew on collective concerns and grievances related to some of the negative impacts of globalization and financial practices. As a social movement, it was less organized than a formal group, lacked clearly defined leadership and had (essentially) open membership, but a sense of shared purpose and some shared goals. The Arab Spring is another example of a social movement - one that drew on goals related to liberalization

and democratization and shared grievances related to government corruption and nepotism. Extremist social movements have formed around anti-authority perspectives, anti-immigration perspectives, populism, nationalism and religious interpretations.

The success of social movements is often dependent on the capacity and charisma of leaders and members who become involved and their ability to frame the movement in a way that maintains a sustained and broader appeal.⁹ With the evolution of the Internet, the emergence of social media, messaging applications and other online environments that replicate social experiences for individuals, social movements are more accessible than ever before. The Internet has created a space that is more anonymous and less risky to explore movements, ideas and identities related to extremism.

When it comes to the transmission of hate and extremism to individuals and groups, social movements can play an important role. As with a group environment, social movements can legitimize and normalize behaviours that go against the grain or norms of society. Particularly in the online environment, extremist social movements can collectively create a sort of “echo chamber” effect where individuals and networks repeat, reinforce and support slogans, sayings, teachings and narrow “black and white” views on social and political problems. Within these echo chambers, dissent and contending opinions are policed, isolated and largely ignored.

The changing nature of social movements and the connection between individual and group-level processes related to violent extremism and engagement with extremism need to be understood if we want to pursue effective prevention of these problems. Even the most seemingly isolated “lone wolf” terrorists today will see themselves as connected to a larger social movement – even if that connection is largely imagined. In turn, groups and movements can be influenced by individual leaders – especially those with charismatic qualities who can capture and (re) frame popular feelings of anger, fear and discontent.

Understanding the Impacts: National Security, Public Safety & the Social Fabric

Hate, extremism and violent extremism can impact Canada and Alberta in multiple ways. When it comes to terrorism, the use of premeditated, ideologically motivated violence is usually framed by the government as a threat to national security. However, these kinds of acts also have meaningful impacts on public safety; for example, through causing injuries and fatalities among the public. And then there is the less measurable, but arguably no less concerning, impact of extremism and violence on the social fabric of Alberta and Canada. Terrorist violence, but also non-violent extremism and hate crimes, can undermine feelings of mutual belonging and trust in Canadian society.

The difference between impacts to public safety versus impacts to national security can be imagined in terms of scale and scope. At the most basic level, threats to **public safety** can negatively impact our collective sense of security, welfare and the physical wellbeing of Canadians. For governments, public safety is an area of public policy - a responsibility to ensure the safety of the citizens and residents of the country. Crime, natural disasters and terrorism can all negatively impact the public safety of Canadians. Multiple levels of government (municipal, provincial and federal) undertake measures to address and mitigate these threats. Police and government agencies focused on justice and disaster preparedness prioritize public safety. In Canada, a government ministry (Public Safety Canada) has responsibility for these issues at the federal level.

By comparison, threats to **national security** have impacts beyond the public safety of Canadians. These kinds of threats are generally conceived of having negative impacts on the “strategic interests” of the country and its government. This may include the ability to defend borders, protect critical infrastructure, or even the ability to maintain Canadian values in the face of serious threats (e.g., as defined under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and other constitutional documents). Traditionally, governments viewed the idea of national security as closely intertwined with the sovereignty of the country. It was threats posed by other countries, their militaries and clandestine activities of foreign intelligence agencies that were viewed as the greatest threats. In Canada, countering these kinds of threats is primarily the responsibility of the Canadian Armed Forces and the national intelligence agency, CSIS. Today, while the threat of foreign military invasion has largely dissipated, Canada remains attentive to the threats posed by foreign intelligence agencies. Since the mid-to-late 20th century the Canadian government has also recognized the activities of “non-state actors” like terrorist groups and extremist movements as potential threats to national security. This is especially true after the September 11th 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States.

An emergent threat and a good example of a trend that has multiple negative impacts on Canada and its allies, is the activities of hostile states that aim to influence and interfere in our democratic processes, undermine the cohesiveness of our societies and thereby violate our sover-

eighty. Since at least the early 2010s some countries, their governments and security agencies have actively used the Internet, social media and other online platforms to their advantage. As the public migrates in increasing numbers away from acquiring news and information from traditional mainstream media outlets, there is an opportunity for hostile governments and extremist movements to get their divisive message out to a broader audience.

Many of us today are aware of the term “fake news”, which has been used in part to refer to media articles that misreport and manipulate information on the Internet. Increasingly, there is recognition over how impactful fake news can be, and how vulnerable many states are. For example, in 2018 the Canadian government, cognizant of what occurred in the American election of 2016, expressed public concerns over the influence of the Russian security and intelligence apparatus on the upcoming 2019 federal election, in part through their abilities to sow division and misinformation through the Internet.¹⁰ While it is difficult to fully measure and quantify the impacts of these trends on Canada, it is clear that hostile countries and extremist movements now have a new tool through which they can spread misinformation that seeks to undermine our democratic and constitutional values (and therefore impact national security) and the social fabric of our country.

The impacts of terrorism, non-violent extremism and hate on the **social fabric** of Alberta and Canada are more difficult to conceive of and measure. When we speak of a “social fabric” there are several attributes that come to mind. Perhaps most important among these is the cohesiveness of society. Cohesive societies are generally thought of as socially integrated societies, which in part, can be measured through feelings of mutual trust and

a shared sense of belonging to a national community. Conflict and divisiveness that comes from ethnic and social divides can considerably undermine these essential features of a healthy society.¹¹ Hate, racism and violence that is aimed at minority communities can represent further significant threats to social cohesion. This is particularly true in a plural and diverse country like Canada.

Since 1971, Canada has officially recognized its multicultural identity. This recognition represented a shift from the bi-cultural model (English and French Canada). In 1982 the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (under section 27) recognized the importance of the “multicultural heritage of Canadians”. In 1988, under the Progressive Conservative government of Brian Mulroney, Canada passed *the Multiculturalism Act*, further instilling the importance of multiculturalism as a central element in Canadian public policy and national identity. Canada retains its bi-lingual character; for example through the *Official Languages Act* of 1969 and recognizes the importance and status of First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples – but the national identity of the country is, today, constitutionally defined as multicultural.

The social fabric of Canada, then, is made up of a diverse mosaic of peoples and communities that share a set of values which rest in our constitutional documents and multicultural identity. Subsequently, extremist groups and movements that spread divisive notions of us versus them and use violence to undermine the values we share as Canadians, are a *significant threat to who we are as a country*. While it is difficult to measure the impacts of extremism on the social fabric of Canada, it is not difficult to imagine how extremism and hate can threaten what Canada represents as a country.

Extremism in Alberta, An Overview of Six Types

In the following section of this report, six portraits of different types of extremism in Alberta are presented. The primary purpose of these overviews is to build public awareness and stakeholder knowledge; for example, of the diversity of ideologies and movements that can drive extremism and violent extremism in the province. Each section outlines the nature of the extremist movement, provides some historical background, and an overview of how it has impacted Alberta in the past, and today. The information provided here aims to create *responsible awareness* of these issues. This means creating awareness that is measured, built on evidence and cognizant of the kind of fear and profiling that can take place around discussions of extremism, violent extremism and terrorism. This aim of disseminating this knowledge is to enhance the ability of a broad range of stakeholders, including human service professionals (e.g., social workers and psychologists), law enforcement, educators, community agencies and others who are best placed to recognize and respond to these issues.

As the history of extremism in Canada clearly demonstrates – there is an inherent unpredictability in the kinds of threats that can generate violence. The largest terrorist incidents since the late 20th century have originated from a broad spectrum of groups and ideologies, including ethno-nationalist movements (e.g., the 1985 Air India Bombing), Al-Qaeda, its Affiliates and Splinter groups (AQAS) (e.g., the 2014 attack on Parliament Hill and vehicle-ramming of members of the Canadian Armed forces

in Quebec that occurred the same year), anti-Islamic beliefs (e.g., the Quebec City mosque shooting in 2017), and the Involuntary Celibate (Incel) Movement (e.g., 2018 Toronto vehicle-ramming).

In Alberta, more recent incidents involving violent extremism also speak to the diversity of threats that we face. For example, the 2015 murder of Constable Daniel Woodall perpetrated by an individual with an anti-authority belief system and the 2017 stabbing of a police officer and vehicle-ramming attack on members of the public in downtown Edmonton that was carried out by an individual who professed his support for Daesh. As shown by this list, terrorist violence can be justified through different and varied ideological belief systems.

Understanding the impacts of extremist movements and the individuals and groups that adhere to their belief systems requires balancing knowledge of historical and contemporary activity, the numbers of local adherents within movements, and their level of organization and commitment. Knowledge of the movements themselves – the ideas, teachings and grievances that define them, and the types of tactics they justify as appropriate or necessary in the name of the cause (including violence), are also important areas of understanding.

When it comes to acts of violence, extremist movements can glorify those they view as heroes to the cause and emulate their actions. Past attacks associated with a

movement creates precedence, sets parameters for what is seen as appropriate forms and levels of violence and can inspire like-minded individuals. For example, within the Incel movement some adherents look to the example of Elliot Rodger who carried out the mass-casualty terrorist attack in Isla Vista, California in 2014. Rodger and his actions are seen as an example of how a deep sense of injustice and humiliation felt by some Incels, can be addressed through deadly violence. As seen in the Toronto Van attack in April of 2018, this kind of glorification can inspire mass casualty terrorism in Canada.

By comparison, individuals of an anti-authority bent – such as violent Sovereign Citizens and Freeman of the Land have historically targeted police and other symbols of authority. In the example of the murder of Constable Daniel Woodall in Edmonton, we see a manifestation of this type of violence in Alberta. Subsequently, violence within extremist movements is shaped by past actions, shared ideas and grievances and the will and capacity of adherents.

ACTIVE GROUPS & TRAJECTORIES OF MOVEMENTS IN ALBERTA

Where possible, the sub-reports provide rough estimates of the number of adherents within specific extremist movements in Alberta. *These numbers do not represent estimates of violent individuals or the number of potential terrorists in Alberta.* Rather, they represent an estimation of individuals who are actively engaged in on and offline environments within movements locally. Types of “engagement” can be varied and include attending protests, in-person meetings and other offline activities (e.g., training, hate-based activities, organizing study groups). This can also include active engagement within online networks; for example, through commenting and exchanges on forums, messaging applications and social media. In on and offline environments, individuals through their collective actions create a kind of extremist community or milieu which helps to propagate the message and

teachings of the movement, transfer skills and tactics and recruit a new generation of members. Extremist movements and the groups and individuals that are involved therein tend to prioritize anonymity and secrecy. Subsequently, there is not a insignificant margin of error in the estimates that are provided and the *estimates must be understood with these limitations in mind.*

The **primary active groups** listed in the descriptions below represent the identifiable, organized and semi-organized networks that can be found within extremist movements in Alberta. It should be noted that listed groups display varying degrees of leadership, organization and cohesion. Some are characterized by defined hierarchical organizational structures and formal membership, whereas others are more “horizontally organized” (i.e., lack defined leadership structures) and diffuse. What defines these groups is shared symbols (flags, banners, styles of dress, uniforms, patches etc.), slogans, teachings and goals. The groups listed in this report have the largest known presence (within the specific movements) in Alberta at the time of publication of this report. A number of groups listed in this report have been characterized by continual fracturing and re-branding and are subsequently highly transitory in nature.

The overviews of the movements are also accompanied by a decreasing, static or increasing description. These descriptions indicate a trajectory or vector of activity and size within a specific movement. For instance, a **decreasing trajectory** may indicate a decline in active adherents and organized groups within a specific movement. There could be changes in the leadership of groups - such as the departure or death of a more capable and/or charismatic leader. The movement and its ideas may be losing resonance among a formerly sympathetic audience - perhaps based on the perceived failures of groups and adherents to meet specific goals. Persistent in-fighting and an inability to agree upon priorities and leadership may also precipitate a decline in activity. Alternatively, there may be an inability to appeal to a new generation or exploit new technologies that aid in recruitment.

Groups engaged in criminal activities can also be curtailed through the punitive actions of law enforcement.

By comparison, a **static trajectory** indicates some stability in the number of adherents and the resonance of its messaging and ideas. Organized groups and leadership could be relatively consistent in their presence and appeal. The ideas that underpin the movement may maintain a steady level of support within a sympathetic audience – but the movement, its messaging and leadership may be unable to attract a significant number of new adherents.

Lastly, an **increasing trajectory** may be marked by grow-

ing membership and support. The ideas and goals that define the movement can have increased resonance, for example, within a younger generation or growingly sympathetic audience. As in all three trajectories, this could be driven by the influence of global and international political trends, such as periods of conflict and war, or the growth of populism and ethnic tensions. New, capable, more organized and dynamic leadership can be a particularly important factor. Groups within movements can alter their tactics and messaging to attract new adherents. This may involve the adoption of a more appealing or softened message, or the ability to effectively exploit new technologies (e.g., social media and forums) which aid in the identification and recruitment of new members.

Extremism in Alberta: Three Noteworthy Trends

The overviews of extremism in Alberta reveal a highly varied portrait of the movements and ideas that have historically driven extremism and violent extremism in Alberta. Some of these movements, for example, White Supremacism, have deep roots in the province going back to the activities of the Klu Klux Klan in the 1920s and 1930s. Others have been present for only a few years – as seen amongst Patriot and Militia groups. All are subject to and shaped by political trends that take place inside and outside of the borders of the province and country and are all moderated within our local environment.

Within all six of the movements, the key components of an extremist belief system can be found: the identification of an in-group and an out-group and a sense of crisis around the actions and characteristics of the identified out-group. All of the movements display shared grievances, identify heroes and martyrs and a desire for change in our society. All of the movements have the *potential* to generate threats to public safety and undermine our social fabric.

Of particular note are three key trends that link the movements together. These centralised findings have important ramifications for the way we think about hate, extremism and violent extremism in Alberta today. These key findings should be accounted for and acted upon within our prevention efforts.

The first of these key findings is the recognition of the

diversity of threats that we currently face in Alberta. Since shortly after the world-altering events of September 11th, 2001 Canadian national security and law enforcement agencies and the Public Safety Ministry, have consistently identified Al-Qaeda, its Affiliates and Splinter groups (AQAS) as the primary terrorist threat to Canada. For example, this has been an ongoing conclusion of Public Safety and CSIS reports on threats stretching back to the early 2000s. During this period reports have recognized the changing nature of this threat; for example, from the direct threat posed by an organized, transnational terrorist group (al-Qaeda after 9/11), to the threat of “homegrown terrorism” (i.e., Canadian residents who are inspired by the wider AQAS movement to carry out domestic attacks), to the issue of foreign terrorist fighters (also known as extremist travelers) fighting in conflict zones abroad, to the most recent emergent threat of violent extremism occurring among inspired lone actors that are connected to (sometimes nominally) “virtual” extremist communities.

In some ways, this threat assessment is justified. AQAS has proven to be an incredibly deadly, resilient, unpredictable and versatile movement that displays longevity and diversity in the types of threats it generates. Despite the inordinate counter-terrorism response that has been mobilized from countries and agencies around the world, the movement has evolved and created a new generation of groups and adherents. In particular, the emergence of Daesh and the foreign fighter trend from 2012 onwards

has only further solidified the importance of this threat for governments and their security agencies.

The demonstrated ability of AQAS to generate mass casualty terrorist attacks internationally also underscores the importance of the threat. Canada and Alberta have not gone unscathed by AQAS with the 2014 attacks on Parliament Hill and on members of the Canadian Armed Forces in Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu in Quebec, together with the Edmonton attack of 2017. These events underscore the ability of AQAS to inspire like-minded individuals to carry out acts of violence in Canada and Alberta. However, in other ways the focus on AQAS may distract us from other extremist movements and legitimate threats that can generate violent extremism.

As Canada's recent history with violent extremism demonstrates, there are a diversity of threats that counter-terrorism and counter violent extremism agencies and programs should be attuned to. To emphasize this point it should be recognized that the largest loss of Canadian life in a terrorist attack occurred in the Air India Bombing of June 23rd, 1985. In that bombing of a commercial airliner by members of the ethno-nationalist "Khalistan" movement, 280 Canadians were killed. Since that time; for example, in the September 11, 2001 attacks, 26 Canadians were killed. In more recent years, acts of violent extremism that have generated the highest death toll includes the 2017 Quebec City Mosque shooting where six worshipers were murdered, and the 2018 van attack in Toronto where 10 individuals lost their lives. Subsequently, we must recognize that a majority of "mass-casualty" terrorist attacks *have not originated from AQAS since the late 20th century onwards in Canada.*

As shown in the overviews of the six types of extremist movements in this report, threats related to violent extremism can originate from a highly diverse spectrum of ideological movements in Alberta. Individuals and groups associated with White Supremacism and the Incel movement have the potential to plan and carry out mass casualty terrorist attacks. The anti-authority movement

has a demonstrated record of creating threats against law enforcement, the judicial system, politicians and government employees in the province. This recognition of the diversity of threats does not detract from the potential threat posed by AQAS adherents, including returned foreign fighters and individuals inspired via virtual communities; however, it does challenge the wisdom of underestimating threats from other ideological movements.

Associated with the recognition of the diversity of threats that are present in Alberta is the identification of the nature and composition of the threats that come from different ideological movements. Returning to the list of recent terrorist attacks in Canada, especially from 2014 onwards, it is evident in the attacks that have been carried out and the plots that have been detected and prevented by national security and law enforcement agencies, that a majority of the threats that Albertans and Canadians face are *not* emerging from organized local or transnational groups, *but rather from the margins of ideological movements.* What is seen in Canada and Alberta today is that these **threats on the margins**, in other words, individuals who have been described as so-called "lone wolves" or "lone actors" are the most likely source of violent extremism and terrorism today.

From the Parliament Hill attacker (Michael Zehaf-Bibeau) to the individual who carried out the attack on Canadian Armed Forces members at Saint-Jean-Sur-Richelieu (Martin Couture-Rouleau), the Quebec Mosque shooter (Alexandre Bissonette), the sole suspect in the 2017 Edmonton attack (Abdulahi Sharif), and the suspect in the more recent Toronto Van attack (Alek Minassian), these individuals do not represent formal members of terrorist groups. Rather, they were inspired, self-identified with and sought out extremist movements and communities. These cases are instructive for agencies engaged in prevention efforts as they demonstrate some significant challenges that national security and law enforcement agencies face in detecting and preventing terrorist violence. Building off of the first key trend identified above, these examples further underscore the point that there

is a diverse set of extremist movements that have the potential to generate mass casualty terrorist events in Canada and Alberta.

The research conducted in Alberta supports this conclusion. Rather than originating from formal groups, most of the individuals who pose a threat to the public safety of Albertans today exist on the margins of extremist movements, lack physical contact with groups and networks associated with the movements they identify with, yet demonstrate the necessary ideological conviction and capacity to conduct violent attacks. Many of these individuals are only engaged with wider extremist movements nominally and online. As seen in previous cases of violent extremism locally, engagement by these individuals within extremist communities can be minimal and insufficient to draw the attention of national security investigators and agencies.

The final pertinent trend identified in this report can be clearly linked to the diversity of threats and threats on the margins outlined above. Virtual extremist communities and online radicalization are established and highly concerning features in violent extremism today. The ongoing evolution of the online space from an ecosystem made up of static websites in the 1990s, to the highly social and interactive experience of today's Internet, has dramatically impacted the nature of violent extremism. Much in the same way that terrorist organizations and extremist movements have exploited the evolution of technology previously – for example, the commercial air-hijackings that marked the late 1960s and 1970s,

these groups and movements have fully exploited a new set of tools and tactics.

As a result of this online evolution, extremist movements are increasingly **going dark** through migrating to areas of the Internet, applications and platforms where *they are more difficult to detect, measure and understand*. For example, the emergence of encrypted end-to-end messaging applications (e.g., WhatsApp) and social media platforms where users are more anonymous and Internet companies are less willing to engage in information sharing with national security agencies (e.g., Telegram), has created a challenging environment in which the detection of individual and group-level threats is increasingly difficult. Extremist movements and terrorist groups that are subject to the greatest scrutiny from national security agencies (e.g., AQAS) are the most likely candidates to migrate to these platforms. Elements of single-issue extremism (e.g., Incel) and the new, emergent generation of White Supremacist groups (e.g., so-called alt-right White Nationalists and Identitarians) are also taking advantage of these online environments and tools. These kinds of movements and groups have a demonstrated record of being reflexive and responsive to countermeasures.

Cumulatively, these three inter-linked trends create significant barriers for national security, government and non-government agencies that seek to prevent acts of violent extremism in Canada and Alberta. Recognizing these challenges and responding appropriately to them is an important first step in generating a more holistic and effective approach to prevention.

Endnotes

¹ Insights West, “Across Canada, Alberta Is ‘Dream Province’ for Halloween Trick-or-Treaters,” 2017, <https://insightswest.com/news/across-canada-alberta-is-dream-province-for-halloween-trick-or-treaters/>.

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⁴ John Horgan, “From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalization into Terrorism,” *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 618, no. 1 (2008): 80–94.

⁵ J.M. Berger, *Extremism*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018, pg. 31

⁶ *Ibid.*, pg. 76

⁷ See Alex Schmid, ed., *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London and New York: Routledge, 2011).

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¹⁰ Joan Bryden, “Feds Refuse to Disclose Details of Russian Meddling in Canadian Elections,” *CTV News*, November 23, 2018, <https://www.ctvnews.ca/politics/feds-refuse-to-disclose-details-of-russian-meddling-in-canadian-elections-1.4188942>.

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**AL-QAEDA,
ITS AFFILIATES &
SPLINTER GROUPS**

AL-QAEDA, ITS AFFILIATES & SPLINTER GROUPS

Activity Level (2018):

- Static

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Daesh (ISIS)
- Al-Shabaab
- Al-Qaeda

WHAT IS AL-QAEDA, ITS AFFILIATES & SPLINTER GROUPS?

Al-Qaeda, its Affiliates and Splinter groups (AQAS) represent the most well-known violent extremist movement in the world. Grounded in a specific interpretation of political Islam, AQAS contains a patchwork of groups, networks and inspired-individuals. Under this banner can be well-known splinter groups like the so-called Islamic State (hereafter referred to as Daesh), which has its roots in Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI); Al-Qaeda affiliates like Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP); and affiliate groups that are more focused on regional and domestic grievances (e.g., al-Shabaab in East Africa and Boko Haram in West Africa)

These groups coalesce around narrow theological beliefs, which are opposed to mainstream interpretations of Islam. What they share is the idea that their specific, narrow interpretation of the faith should be the basis of political, legal and social organization in the Muslim world. Collectively, the AQAS movement shares the belief that there is a crisis within Islamic societies and that their vision for a new society must be pursued through violence. While the emergence of AQAS can be tied to both endogenous (domestic/internal) and exogenous (foreign) influences, in many ways the movement is reactionary - a response to what is seen as the corruption of Islamic faith and the culture and politics of the Middle East and North Africa region (MENA) by external forces (i.e., through colonialism, military invasion and the spread of western cultural norms).

The Historical Evolution of the Movement

The key to understanding the AQAS' threat to Western states, is understanding the evolution of the original organization (al-Qaeda) from a fractious network that organized and facilitated the movement of Arab foreign fighters from the Middle East into the bloody Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989), to a group that sought to carry out mass-casualty terrorist acts in Western States: none more infamous than the events of September 11th, 2001.

Historically, al-Qaeda, and many of the other affiliates and offshoots associated with AQAS today emerged as geographically isolated networks oriented around specific, localized conflicts. These groups were focused primarily on targeting what they referred to as the “near enemy”, specifically corrupt regimes in the Middle East and North Africa. In many ways, the precursors to AQAS looked very much like other forms of post-colonial struggles. In Egypt, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad formed in opposition to what it perceived as a secular, nationalist government. In Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood launched an insurgency in response to the brutalities of the ruling Ba'ath party. These conflicts were internal to the state, and for the most part, the grievances of these groups were focused primarily on authoritarian and despotic governments. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a catalyst for change within the movement.

The charismatic scholar Abdullah Azzam, considered by many to be the “founder” of the modern movement, first created the Maktab al-Khidamat (MAK), with the support

of Osama Bin Laden in Peshawar, Pakistan. Not wholly dissimilar to what took place in more recent years in Syria and Iraq, MAK encouraged and organized the travel of foreign fighters from the MENA region to a conflict zone – Afghanistan in the 1980s. In encouraging individuals to travel to Afghanistan, Azzam advanced an argument that the struggle against the Soviets was a religious obligation and that travelling to participate in the conflict represented an *individual responsibility* for Muslims.

The evolution of the movement, from its focus on regional politics to more global ambitions, took place in the aftermath of the Soviet-Afghan War when the al-Qaeda Central organization (AQC) altered its tactics and scope of operations in response to failures to meet political objectives (e.g., the overthrow of corrupt political forces in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region). Additionally, elements of the movement were enraged by what was seen as American interference and occupation in the region, Saudi Arabia in particular, after the US-led First Gulf War (1990-1991).

This strategic change within AQAS' goals and tactics has been described as a shift from targeting the “near enemy” (e.g., autocrats and dictators in the MENA) to the “far enemy” (e.g., superpowers like the United States and its western allies that were seen as supportive of the near enemy). There was a belief that until western states stopped interfering in the domestic affairs of Arab states, focusing on local leaders would never result in a systemic

change. It was through this shift that the movement became a distinct threat to Western states, including Canada.

The diversity of goals and groups within AQAS can cause a degree of confusion for outside observers, and it poses challenges to law enforcement and national security agencies that are trying to ascertain potential threats to public safety and national security in countries like Canada. Since at least 2013 onwards, the overwhelming focus of security agencies has been Daesh, especially in light of its ability (albeit temporary) to establish a formal territory, the foreign terrorist fighter (also known as extremist traveller) trend and a series of attacks that were organized, sponsored and inspired by the group in Western states - including Canada. Outside of Daesh, there are additional elements within the wider AQAS movement that retain their desire to inflict violence on Westerners and Western states.

A second important evolutionary trend in the movement has been structural in nature. While the original AQC organization may have, at one time, represented a vertically organized and more traditional hierarchical terrorist

group, today it is more loosely structured. This model has been referred to as “centralization of planning and decentralization of execution”.¹ AQAS today is a series of social networks, franchises, organizations and individual supporters. Threats from AQAS often originate from small cells and inspired-individuals who operate from a “leaderless” model of organization. This is not always the case, as elements of AQAS (e.g., Daesh, AQC and AQAP) retain some organizational capacity to plan and execute attacks. In some ways this structural evolution has been a purposeful strategy to avoid destruction in the wake of the massive, punitive security response that followed 9-11.

While challenging to conceptualize as a clear and coherent movement, understanding the evolution of AQAS is important. It has proven to be highly dynamic and resilient in the face of an unprecedented security response from Western states, and it remains a primary threat to public safety and national security in Alberta and Canada. Outside of its structure and early evolution, it is also important to understand the strategies, ideas and ideologies that shape the tactics of the movement.

Understanding Al-Qaeda, its Affiliates & Splinter Groups: Teachings, Beliefs and Tactics

Contemporary AQAS groups and networks – regardless of their internal ideological debates and political priorities, draw inspiration from many of the same writers and jurists. There is a long line of scholars who have influenced the movement dating back to the 13th-century theologian Ibn Tammiyah. Many of these writers shared something in common – they lived during periods of invasion and external interference in the MENA region, identified invasion and occupation as a crisis and prescribed emergency measures to address it. For example, Tammiyah lived during a period of Mongol invasion and occupation of the Middle East. More recent influences like the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, who was executed by the Egyptian government in 1966, was focused on what he saw as the harmful spread of American and Western political, economic and pop-cultural influences in Egypt and the Arab countries. Qutb had a particularly impactful influence on AQAS and its founders.

The theological and political writings of figures like Tammiyah, Qutb, and others, have become central to the justifications employed by AQAS adherents and their violence. Most simplified, a core argument that is drawn from these thinkers is the idea that apostates and culturally corrupted Muslims can be justifiably targeted with deadly violence. And, taking this line of reasoning to its logical conclusion, since it is external cultural forces that are corrupting the Islamic faith and Muslim political leadership, these external forces can be legitimately targeted with violence as well.

The leaders and ideologues of the broader AQAS movement have taken these core tenets and expanded them to fit with their own priorities and reasoning. Ayman al-Zawahiri (the current leader of al-Qaeda), Abu Musab al-Suri (author of the influential Global Islamic Resistance document and proponent of “leaderless jihad”), Anwar al-Awlaqi (an American-born deceased AQAP propagandist, ideologue and attack planner), Abu Musab al-Zarqawi (the deceased leader of AQI), Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (the current leader of Daesh) and Osama bin Laden (deceased leader of AQ), have all used the writings of historical jurists to justify their political programmes and violence. For example, these teachings have been used to challenge and reject the core tenets of Islam, such as the prohibition of suicide and attacks on non-combatants.

Taken to their most murderous and destructive endpoint, these ideas have been expanded into so-called “takfirism” or takfiri arguments, which in effect can equate into unrestrained charges of apostasy and justifiable murder of fellow Muslims. AQI leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, and later Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (leader of Daesh) used this line of reasoning when engaging in their genocidal practices against Shi’a Muslims and other minority groups in the Middle East. This brand of violence is now widely associated with the al-Qaeda splinter group, Daesh. The embrace or rejection of takfir continues to be one of the major points of internal dissension within the broader AQAS movement.

A central reason for Western governments and security agencies viewing AQAS as a significant security threat is the movement's innovative approach to modern terrorism. These innovations first became apparent when al-Qaeda Central (AQC) employed suicide bombers to devastating effect in the African Embassy Bombings of 1998. The attack targeted American embassies in East Africa and resulted in the deaths of more than 220 individuals in Kenya and Tanzania. Here, AQC employed multiple, closely timed suicide-bombers to magnify the destructive and psychological impact of their violence. Subsequently, what was witnessed in East Africa at that time is what amounts to a tactical evolution in modern terrorism, as these kinds of attacks became a sort of hallmark for AQC and its affiliates. On September 11, 2001, AQC displayed further innovation when it employed commercial airliners in coordinated suicide attacks resulting in the deaths of 2,977 individuals.

In the years that followed 9/11, AQC was subject to unprecedented counter-terrorism measures, including direct military retribution. This onslaught led to tactical changes within the movement as it struggled to replicate the destructive impact of earlier attacks (with some exceptions: the Bali nightclub bombings in 2002, in which 202 individuals were killed; the Madrid transit bombing of 2004, in which 193 individuals died; and the 2005 "7/7" bombings in London where 52 were killed in coordinated suicide bombings). During the period between 2001 and 2010, AQC continued to demonstrate tactical innovation – evidenced by a number of disrupted plots that involved advanced explosives designed to avoid detection. Additionally, during this period AQC evolved into AQAS. Beginning in the early to mid-2000s, based partially on the strength of its brand, the movement began to gain pledges of loyalty from regionally situated groups. Later some of these "franchise" groups (e.g., AQI) splintered off into formidable, independent entities like Daesh.

Part of AQAS' innovation in the post-9/11 environment is a strategy that represents a direct response to the pressures the movement faced under the War on Terror

(WoT). Driven by figures like Abu Musab al-Suri (also known as Mustafa Setmariam Nasar), AQAS developed a leaderless resistance model that is not unlike what was first proposed by White Supremacist leaders (Louis Beam and Tom Metzger) in the 1990s. Contained in documents like al-Suri's 1600 page "Call for Global Resistance" this approach called for a shift away from AQC's hierarchical organizational structure to a more individualized, small-cell model of operations.² The hope was that such a model would allow individuals and cells to plan and execute attacks without detection from security services and would allow inspired individuals and new leadership, to find a clearer path into identifying and engaging with the movement. Al-Suri wrote that:

Hence, our method should therefore be to guide the Muslim who wants to participate and resist, to operate where he is, or where he is able to be present in a natural way. We should advise him to pursue his everyday life in a natural way, and to pursue jihad and Resistance in secrecy and alone, or with a small cell of trustworthy people, who form, an independent brigade for Resistance and for the individual jihad.³

Al-Suri's writing was the most cogent expression of a strategic shift that some members within the broader AQAS movement had been advocating for several years. For example, in his 2001 treatise, *Knights Under the Prophet's Banner*, Ayman al-Zawahiri wrote about how "small groups could frighten the Americans" with "a single bullet, stab, or a device made up of a popular mix of explosives or hitting them with an iron rod".⁴ What al-Suri did was make a convincing argument that this mode of attack planning and execution was both more effective and less risky. Subsequently, these "lone actor" or small network attacks have become the hallmark of AQAS-linked attacks in the West. Prospective "homegrown extremists" have been further aided with organizing and planning terrorist violence with readily available advice on carrying out effective plots in the movement's maga-

zines like AQAP's *Inspire* or Daesh's *Dabiq*.

Since this shift in tactics and structure, the threat posed by individual adherents, networks and groups associated with AQAS has expanded to include the massive wave of foreign fighters that entered the Syrian Civil War and Iraq starting in 2012 (with estimates of up to 40,000-50,000 fighters entering the conflict zone between 2012-2016, and more than 5000 of these from Western states). Groups associated with AQAS have also continued to plot, inspire and facilitate homegrown attacks in the West during this period.

Some of these trends have had more detrimental effects on global security and regional security in the MENA region; for example, driving and perpetuating a series of failed or failing states (e.g., Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Somalia and Libya). These failed states have created a number of "safe havens" for AQAS groups and networks, allowing them to establish some territorial presence, recruit new members and pursue operations. Other groups and networks in AQAS have retained a focus on the "far enemy" (i.e., the West) and have employed a variety of methods and tactics in their attacks.

In an attempt to spread terror and undermine a sense of security among their enemies, AQAS adherents today

not only use the trademark suicide bombings but also far less costly and arduously planned gun and knife attacks as well as more unconventional methods, such as vehicle-ramming. In recent years, these tactics of violence have been employed in attacks on a variety of locations, primarily public gathering places (e.g., cafes, bars, concert and sporting venues, places of worship, government buildings and military installations). In some cases, these less conventional (in terms of tactics) but planned attacks have resulted in high numbers of casualties. For example, in Mumbai in 2008, attackers used a combination of AK-47 rifles and explosives to kill 166; in Paris in 2015, 130 individuals died in an attack that similarly involved the use of suicide bombers and automatic weapons; and in Nice in 2016, 86 individuals were killed in a truck ramming.

Recent events indicate that AQAS' tactical innovations and ability to inspire homegrown attacks has impacted Alberta. The 2017 attack in Edmonton, which essentially mirrors the "playbook" of groups like Daesh and other elements of AQAS, affirms Alberta is not immune to these trends. The attack provides a good example of how a devolved and largely inspirational political movement employing rudimentary and low-cost tactics can generate a significant threat to public safety in Canada.

The Emergence of Daesh & the Foreign Fighter Trend

The destabilizing effects of the War on Terror, specifically the American invasion and war in Iraq (2003-2011), together with the impacts of the Arab Spring democratic uprisings (which began in 2010), created the backdrop for sectarian violence and heightened regional rivalries in the MENA region. The resulting political unrest created a vacuum in political authority and territorial control in countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen. This vacuum allowed segments of AQAS to contest territorial and political control and establish, for the first time, a functioning state that represented their vision of political and religious authority. The Syrian Civil War opened up space for a severely depleted group (formerly known as al-Qaeda in Iraq) to enter Syria and establish a territorial presence. By 2013, after a period of rapid recruitment and territorial expansion, a new leader (Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi) declared the formation of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) and in 2014, the establishment of a “caliphate” or “Islamic State” in the Syrian and Iraqi territory then controlled by the group.

These unprecedented events (in modern times) sparked the largest migration of foreign fighters (approx. 40,000-50,000) to a conflict zone ever known. Thousands of these fighters came from western states and (at least) 180 had some nexus with Canada. The foreign fighters joined a myriad of groups including Daesh, Syrian Rebel groups, AQC affiliate groups and Kurdish groups. For some, the declaration of the caliphate in Mosul, Iraq in 2014 by al-Baghdadi became a powerful beacon. This event drew

in a diverse array of individuals with varying motives and degrees of commitment to the cause. Understanding what drove and motivated these foreign fighters is critical to understanding the kinds of threats that returned foreign fighters or “returnees” pose to countries like Canada.

Daesh and other segments of AQAS have recruited from two relatively distinct waves of foreign fighters that migrated into the territories they controlled. The first of these waves took place in between 2012-2014, and the second wave from 2014 onwards. Both were shaped by the changing landscape and nature of the Syrian civil war and war in Iraq, where a string of stunning initial victories by Daesh culminated in its territorial expansion.

In the first wave, the civil war that began in Syria in March 2011 enticed some westerners to travel and join the fray in a rapidly escalating conflict. While by no means uniform in their motives, the events and narratives that drove the early wave of fighters were often framed as an altruistic desire to come to the defence of the Syrian people. This could be framed in religious terms as a humanitarian intervention, or more generally as a just war against a despot.

Before June 2014, you had a different group going over [they had] a sort of romantic idea.

– Law Enforcement Member

A lot of travellers didn't want to do something in Canada, they didn't hate Canada, they just didn't want to be here...initially they thought of themselves as the good guys fighting the Assad regime...but later on... when they got there this was confusing...I believe a lot of them did not go over with the intention of fighting, but difficult to disagree with the barrel of a gun.

- Law Enforcement Member

While overlap exists between the two, the second wave of foreign fighters from 2014 onwards displayed some different characteristics. The narrative of humanitarianism and the urgent need to defeat the al-Assad regime remained a draw for some foreign fighters, but some other motives came into play. Of note, at this stage, the plainly evident genocidal violence perpetrated by groups like Daesh was difficult to ignore. Subsequently, Daesh's declaration of a state and establishment of a harsh version of religious law attracted a new, more extreme type of foreign fighter.

Daesh's development of increasingly sophisticated online propaganda further enticed foreign fighters and their families to the region during this period. Drawing on the innovations of the wider AQAS movement in the 2000s, the group took full advantage of the spread and popularity of new social media and video-sharing platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In these materials, Daesh tailored its messages to specific countries, cultures and audiences and drew in newcomers to the false promise of the caliphate.

Subsequently, what drove these waves of foreign fighters to travel and fight in the conflicts of the MENA region is inexorably tied to the dynamics of the region's conflicts and the ways in which those conflicts and its actors were presented to a global audience. Today, foreign fighters are often uniformly branded as "foreign terrorist fighters". The reality is more complex: foreign fighters displayed different motives for travelling and had varied roles in the conflict among the myriad of active groups in the region.

There are significant legal and security challenges for law enforcement, security agencies and legal authorities who are grappling with these realities and the issue of returnees. But, if the goal is to create an objective assessment of the threat these individuals pose to public safety and national security, so too is it necessary to distinguish the various elements that were involved in the region's conflicts. This process will allow for appropriate resources (intelligence, law enforcement, legal and prevention-based) to be mobilized around returnees.

PROPAGANDA: ENGAGING WITH A GLOBAL AUDIENCE

The wave of foreign fighters that entered the MENA from 2012-2016 was mobilized by a number of factors – perhaps none more important than the sophisticated and integrated online propaganda and recruitment strategies of Daesh. Since at least the mid-2000s, AQAS has been a consistent innovator in these areas, and the achievements of splinter groups like Daesh must be seen as a continuation, expansion and improvement of techniques established by groups like AQC and AQAP. Collectively, what the wider AQAS movement has demonstrated is an ability to exploit evolving technologies and mediums.

The priority which the movement assigns to propagandist activities can be traced back to the early-to-mid 2000s. In 2005, then second in command of AQC (Ayman al-Zawahiri) wrote a letter to AQI leader al-Zarqawi where he outlined his belief that: "We are in a battle, and more than half of this battle is taking place in the battlefield of the media."⁵

By 2010, AQAS was regularly using online magazines and publications that expressly targeted Westerners. The primary purpose of these activities was inspiring sympathetic audiences to offer various supports (financial assistance, spreading its messages online and carrying out violent attacks). Appropriately, a particularly important

publication published by AQAP at this time was entitled *Inspire* magazine. Part of the strength of the publication was the content produced by a new generation of AQAS writers and propagandists that demonstrated an ability to connect and develop an empathetic connection with Western audiences. Most important among these individuals was Anwar al-Awlaki. One study that examined ten investigations into terrorist or attempted terrorist acts in the United Kingdom found that Awlaki's publications, sermons etc. were most commonly found during investigations: "Anwar al-Awlaki dominated the list of most popular authors, in both old and new cases, and material by Abdullah Azzam also featured prominently. Output from ideologues thus continues to be sought-after even after they have died."⁶

What al-Awlaki established in his messages and sermons was an ability to mobilize groups that the AQAS movement had failed to meaningfully attract in the past. Materials exploited widespread negative sentiments about the U.S. invasion of Iraq and foreign policies of other Western states, together with the negative experiences of some Western Muslims in their countries of residence (e.g., through experiences with discrimination). Al-Awlaki embedded these kinds of experiences and grievances in sermons that were layered with history, religious scholarship and contemporary events to create a compelling and relatable narrative for a new generation of adherents.

More recently, the message developed by AQAS is increasingly sophisticated and tailored. From 2012-2014 social media platforms like Twitter represented a critical tool for the proliferation of AQAS material and recruitment techniques online. During their peak, groups like Daesh used Twitter to reach millions as they adapted hashtags, embedded links, images and videos to spread tailored messages to receptive audiences.⁷ One 2014 study of 59 Daesh linked Twitter accounts demonstrated the sheer level of material that could be disseminated via the platform. In total, during the period of study (January to March 2014) those accounts generated 154,120 tweets that reached 29,000 followers (who then were able to

"retweet" to a wider audience).⁸

Daesh's media centre and associated publication named *Dabiq* (rebranded as *Rumiyah* in 2016) became the natural successor of *Inspire* and the work of al-Awlaqi. Out of its well-equipped media centres, the group produced videos, images and audio files that have been distributed via sharing websites like YouTube. It produced thousands of bulletins and pieces of propaganda. The group dispersed these messages from its strongholds throughout the MENA region and Central Asia and translated its message into (among other languages) English, French, Russian and Turkish. In effect, they globalized their message and reach in a manner that was previously unseen among violent extremist movements and groups.

As private social media companies began to crack down on AQAS materials in platforms like Facebook and Twitter – and national security and military agencies have become more attuned to the usefulness of these platforms for intelligence gathering, the movement has shifted its strategy again. Today, Daesh and AQAS are using more secure and alternative social media platforms and anonymous peer-to-peer communication apps to facilitate networking among its established community and to recruit new adherents, for example through WhatsApp and Telegram. As shown in the quotes below from members of law enforcement in Alberta, this migration of inspiration, recruitment and mobilization activities has caused some challenges.

Recruiting is textbook – usually starts online, PalTalk, Twitter, back and forth, then moves onto skype, [which] gives it that person to person contact, and then it moves to Telegram...they don't want to go offline, they were rock stars on social media, feeding into that machine, posting pictures with guns...people are like 'wow look at these guys'

- Law Enforcement Member

We couldn't get the information because these guys [private technology companies] are in Russia...they are all on Telegram.

- Law Enforcement Member

In particular, Telegram's messaging service has been favoured in recent years since it is less accessible (to security services) and offers secure and anonymous

content and chats, although this application is only one of many used by violent extremist organizations.⁹ In recent months, the use of WhatsApp groups is becoming increasingly popular, as well. These encrypted services have significantly reduced the visibility of AQAS activities, creating noteworthy challenges for security and law enforcement agencies around the world.

Al-Qaeda, its Affiliates & Splinter Groups in Alberta

Developing an accurate picture of the presence of AQAS in Alberta is challenging. Even the most informed individuals can (at best) offer educated guesses on the number of active adherents and activities in the province. As shown in the sections below, which review some previous cases and clusters in Alberta, there have been both intimate and established networks in the province and some highly isolated cases that are connected with AQAS networks wholly online. Today, the trend is very much towards the latter.

HISTORICAL PRESENCE

The majority of AQAS activity in Canada in the late 20th and early 21st century was isolated to Eastern Canada, notably Quebec and Ontario. From the late 1990s, limited fundraising, money laundering, and propaganda/promotion-based activities took place in the province. Specifically, these activities supported the travel and activities of fighters in the MENA region, Afghanistan and Bosnia.

A notable case with a direct connection to Alberta during this period is that of Faruq Khalil Muhammad 'Isa. He pleaded guilty to U.S. charges that involved the financial support and encouragement of Tunisian foreign fighters who operated in Iraq and carried out a deadly suicide attack in 2009. The case is noteworthy in that it demonstrated the ability of local adherents to remotely promote

and financially support acts of terrorism. The case foreshadowed trends that emerged in the 2010s – specifically the facilitation of travel to conflict zones and distribution of propaganda online.

RECENT YEARS

From 2012 on, with the establishment of the foreign fighter trend, Alberta experienced a significant increase in AQAS-based activity as groups began to call for Westerners to travel to conflict areas, including Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Libya, to serve as foreign fighters. These events left national security agencies and investigators scrambling to monitor and prevent the travel of Albertans. On a per capita basis, with a population of roughly 4 million, the province was responsible for generating a disproportionate number (approximately 30-40) of the Canadian foreign fighters who left to fight in the MENA region during this period. Speaking directly to the role of social networks in driving the radicalization to violence process, the individuals who participated in this trend were overwhelmingly connected through kinship or friendships ties.

During this period, several notable waves of fighters left the province, primarily from the two urban centres of Calgary and Edmonton. For example, cousins Mahad Hirsi, Hamsa Kariye, Heri Kariye, and Omar Aden from Edmon-

ton travelled to Syria between October and November 2013. Prior to their departure, Hamsa and Hersi Kariye had groomed relations based in the United States. Once in Syria, they were joined by their cousin Hanad Mohallim and friend Douglas McCain, both Americans.¹⁰ The Program on Extremism at George Washington University has suggested that the cousins from Edmonton were part of a larger kinship and friendship network that linked as many as 14 individuals in Alberta, Minnesota and Southern California. This network underscores both the transnational dimensions of contemporary recruitment, as well as the importance of kinship-based networks. All of the fighters from Edmonton were understood to have died in the war by the end of 2014.

Out of all the examples of Albertans who have been involved in AQAS, the cohort of foreign fighters that left Calgary between 2012-2013, is arguably the most unique and of the greatest importance. Existing assessments of how many individuals travelled from Calgary to Syria or Iraq vary. Based on the research conducted for this report and a review of open source data, it is estimated that roughly 20 individuals with a nexus to Calgary travelled to fight in Syria and Iraq. Of that 20, roughly 10 came from a group that originated at a specific mosque in Downtown Calgary (hereafter referred to as the 8th & 8th group).

The 8th & 8th group, including Damian Clairmont, Salman Ashrafi and two brothers – Collin and Gregory Gordon, were among the most highly covered (by the media) cases of foreign fighters in Canada. Tamim Chowdhury, who eventually went on to become a leader of the Daesh group active in Bangladesh (that carried out a notable attack on a café in Dhaka) also spent time in Calgary with members of the cluster.¹¹ Similarly from Calgary, Farah Shirdon was featured in Daesh's propaganda but was not – based on evidence gathered to date – connected to the 8th & 8th cluster.

The fighters who travelled from Calgary underscore the demographic diversity of individuals who become involved with AQAS. For example, Salman Ashrafi was

university educated, an active anti-racism activist during his time at the University of Lethbridge and after graduation secured a lucrative job at an energy firm in Calgary. After leaving his life behind to become a foreign fighter, Ashrafi went on to carry out a suicide attack – driving a vehicle-borne explosive device into a Shi'a mosque in Iraq, killing 46.

Damian Clairmont, a religious convert, faced adversity growing up – but initially found his conversion to Islam to be a centering force in his life. Damian eventually emerged as the intellectual leader within the 8th & 8th group. Brothers Gregory and Collin Gordon also converted to Islam and travelled to Syria in 2012, around the same time as Farah Shirdon and Clairmont. Prior to their radicalization, Collin attended SAIT and Thompson Rivers University where he played varsity volleyball. He was noted to be highly social and an active member on university campus.¹²

The recruiters are looking for people who are turning to the religion, they're looking for lost young men.

- Law Enforcement Member

The Gordon brothers were killed in airstrikes around 2014. Later they were eulogized in a three-page article that appeared in Daesh's *Dabiq* magazine: "They were known for being fierce in battle and were also very generous towards their brothers. They would buy equipment for their fellow mujahidin when they saw them in need and allow them to borrow their expensive weapons for use in battle".¹³

Farah Shirdon was also prominently featured in Daesh's propaganda. He rose to prominence when a video of him surfaced in 2014, in which he burned his Canadian passport and threatened attacks in Canada. Shirdon travelled to Syria in 2012, and built a prolific Twitter profile (@MuhajirSumalee), which had over 11,000 followers prior to its suspension in the summer of 2014. It is worth noting that the propaganda value of not only Western fighters, but especially converts to Islam, was not lost

on Daesh, and the Gordon brothers and Shiridon were among a number of Canadians to feature in their articles and videos.

The social dynamics of the 8th and 8th group clearly played a role in creating an environment where individuals were susceptible to recruitment. Despite all of the attention these cases received, some details remain unclear (even among close family and friends) on how they found each other, how they were radicalized and why they decided to take the final step of leaving the country to fight and die in Syria and Iraq. Interviews with individuals who knew members of the cluster provide some insights on these questions:

Right around that time that he decided to convert to Islam... [there was] self-exploration [he] studied on his own...he started looking for another religion that fit, stopped coming to Church and said the Bible was contradictory... [that there was] hypocrisy within the church and within the members.

- Family Member of Foreign Fighter

The hardest part for him was what he questioned a lot... he could clearly see the intellectual side, the importance of being kind to others – he would stand up to others, stand up to bullies. He understood the human connection piece. What really bothered him was that people with money and power who were in a position to help others were the ones who were corrupt. It really irritated him... he could see all the deficiencies in government as well. You didn't want to talk to him about politics... [he was] very strong-willed, and sensitive, and empathic.

- Family Member of Foreign Fighter

When he moved to this other place downtown, he started mingling with different people and moved into this boarding room house for a while...pretty shady...started mingling with even stranger people, really angry and bitter...frustrated he wasn't getting ahead.

- Family Member of Foreign Fighter

[The] dynamic changed [at 8th and 8th] – [it was] more sectioned off, [they] found it harder to acclimatize to the group down there, it wasn't as welcoming and warm, almost segregated a bit...at the time, the Imam that was there was never around.

- Family Member of Foreign Fighter

Outside of the foreign fighter trend, Alberta was impacted by other elements of AQAS. For example, in 2015, AQAS affiliate al-Shabaab issued threats in a video posted to YouTube of a future attack on West Edmonton Mall (Mall of America in Minnesota was also named). The threat was made two years after the September 2013, attack on Westgate Mall in Nairobi, Kenya. As al-Shabaab likely lacks the capability to finance, train and deploy a Westgate Mall-style attack in Alberta, the likely aim of the group was to motivate and inspire locals to conduct the attack on their behalf.

The Contemporary Picture

With the dramatic slowdown in foreign fighters leaving the province after 2016, the primary concern related to AQAS became returning foreign fighters and the inspired individuals who may carry out a homegrown attack.

We went from a concern over travelers, and now we've switched to the homegrown thing.

- Law Enforcement Member

Between 2014-2017 we couldn't keep up, in the last year it has dropped off quite significantly.

- Law Enforcement Member

There's recruiters trying to get people to stay home... [it is] easier to stay, get your vehicle, get your knife...that's actually a larger concern than recruiting to go abroad.

- Law Enforcement Member

On the 30th of September 2017, at least one of these fears was realized. On that date the sole suspect in the incident, Abdulahi Sharif (currently charged with five counts of attempted murder, among other charges) is accused of purposely ramming a car into and stabbing an Edmonton Police Service (EPS) constable and later using a rented U-Haul moving truck to swerve and strike pedestrians (four were injured) in a popular entertainment area downtown. In many ways, the incident reflected the kind of incident that the AQAS movement has been trying to inspire among its adherents and sympathizers. The attack - carried out in two stages, involving a knife attack

and a subsequent vehicle ramming, used a large rental truck closely following methods of violence prescribed and called for in propaganda magazines like *Dabiq* (authored by Daesh) and *Inspire* (authored by Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula).

Despite terrorism charges not being laid in the case, there are strong indications of an ideological motive in the attack. Most glaringly, a Daesh flag was recovered in the vehicle used to ram the EPS constable. Additionally, the suspect was investigated by law enforcement in Alberta in 2015, after a co-worker filed a report with police alleging that he had expressed support for Daesh and made comments generally supportive of genocide. At the time of the investigation, the suspect had not yet engaged in criminal behaviour or risen to the level where a peace bond could have been pursued. It is cases such as this one that put into clear relief the need for sustained and tailored intervention programming in Alberta.

Reflecting on what has been seen in the rest of Canada and much of the Western world, fears over large numbers of returned foreign fighters coming to Alberta have been, to date, unrealized. By the end of 2018, roughly 10 per cent of the foreign fighters who originally left the province had returned and no public details were available on their activities. Of those still abroad, there is a significant amount of information that suggests the majority have been killed. That said, there are still a number whose location and activities are unknown.

The collapse of Daesh's territory has also created a new problem – namely, how to manage Canadian women and children whose husbands have either been killed or separated from them. This has already occurred in February 2019, when a number of Canadian women, including at least one from Alberta, were identified by reporters on the ground in recently liberated areas of Iraq and Syria. As Daesh's final territorial holdings collapse, it is likely that there will be more such cases. Good practices in as-

sessing the threat posed by returnees have yet to be fully developed, and if handled poorly, could create national security issues in the future.

What is clear is that the mechanisms and mediums that have driven recruitment and fundraising in the province, for example, in support of the foreign fighter trend, retain an ability to inspire a new generation of AQAS adherents.

Endnotes

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ANTI-AUTHORITY EXTREMISTS

ANTI-AUTHORITY EXTREMISTS

Activity Level (2018):

- Freemen on the Land
– Declining
- Threats against politicians – Increasing

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Freemen on the Land /
Sovereign Citizens

WHAT IS ANTI-AUTHORITY EXTREMISM?

Anti-authority extremism captures a number of different belief systems that promote, directly and indirectly, the critical importance and primacy of individual freedom and rights over the power of government and its representatives whom they view as oppressive and overreaching. The varied belief systems, arguments, writings and structured and semi-structured beliefs employed by adherents engaged with this form of extremism can cause a degree of confusion among outside observers.

More than other categories discussed in these reports, anti-authority extremism has a somewhat fuzzy definition, and encapsulates a wide range of belief systems, with varying degrees of sophistication and consistency. Adherents may make use of historical constitutional and legal documents - including antiquated forms of maritime law, sections of the Constitution of the United States and the *Magna Carta* to make their arguments for individual freedom and limited government, or they may develop their beliefs from less structured and highly individualized grievances and arguments. It is from these beliefs, writings and grievances that Anti-Authority adherents identify their enemy and develop tactics, including in rare instances the use of violence. The most commonly targeted group (with violence) by anti-authority extremists are members of law enforcement; however, politicians, judges, lawyers and other representatives of government or large corporations have also been targeted.

Anti-Authority extremists may view themselves as connected to movements such as Freemen on the Land (FOTL), the Sovereign Citizens, or as isolated and independent individuals. Arguably, anti-authority extremism is the least understood and studied form of extremism that heavily impacts Alberta. The lack of a unifying, coherent ideological goal and the general absence of formal network's between anti-government actors makes their inclusion in a report on violent extremism – as conventionally delineated – somewhat problematic. However, as discussed elsewhere in this report, the rise of isolated “lone actor” violent ex-

tremists, the previous occurrence of associated large-scale serious attacks (e.g., James Roszko’s murder of four RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe), and the social media-aided decentralization of extremism, necessitates inclusion of these threats into broader considerations about violent extremism and national security. As society witnessed in the Las

Vegas shooting where Stephen Paddock appears to have harbored some ill-defined anti-government sentiment, individuals do not necessarily need to have an explicit, well-thought-out ideological frame in order to carry out massive acts of violence.¹

What are Freeman on the Land?

Freemen on the Land (FOTL) have historically been the most commonly identified sub-type of anti-authority extremists in Alberta. Based on our research, we estimate there are between 150-250 FOTL in Alberta who demonstrate some degree of meaningful affiliation and commitment to the movement. While accurately assessing numbers is challenging, this estimate is significantly smaller than other open-source assessments (media or academic) of the size of the movement.² As the most commonly identified form of anti-authority extremism in Alberta, it is important to understand what motivates and drives FOTL adherents.

As opposed to anti-authority adherents who possess less structured beliefs, FOTL adhere to a more well-defined and all-encompassing ideological frame, which does not necessarily lead to violence. FOTL language and ideas have attracted individuals from a broad spectrum of political beliefs that lean towards the right or left and include those focused on Indigenous and “Moorish” sovereignty. Despite the variety of interpretations found in the movement, as a whole FOTL assert that modern government is a corrupt fiction, whose sole purpose is to dispossess individuals of their rights, freedoms, and property. These beliefs and assertions can sometimes be embedded within a series of conspiracy theories about government and society.

FOTLs do not believe that they are required to interact with the state or its agents, and place great value on their

narrow interpretation of common law, specifically areas that pre-date contemporary jurisprudence. Essentially, they believe that the social contract (i.e., where individuals consent to the surrendering of certain rights and freedoms in exchange for protection of their remaining rights by the government) requires individual consent, and by limiting interaction with the state and thereby not entering into contracts with the state, they are not required to abide by most laws. The origin of many of these beliefs for Canadian FOTLs is the *Magna Carta*, a document signed by the English King John in 1215.

Subsequently, acting on these beliefs, FOTL will frequently destroy, replace or refuse to use paperwork and identification that is linked to government regulations. Driver’s licenses, automobile registration and insurance and other forms of personal identification and “contracts” are often rejected by FOTL, who split their identity between their physical entity and separate “legal person”. Instead, they will obtain licenses and identification issued by any number of organizations claiming to have some sort of universal jurisdiction or simply make something themselves. In doing so, adherents believe they are *not* giving their consent to be governed under modern government and law.

Adherents of FOTL in Alberta demonstrate a pattern where interest in and initial exploration of the movement begins after a negative interaction with the legal system, often involving child custody, divorce, or taxation issues. Faced with an inability to succeed in or navigate society

and their own personal challenges (especially the court system), individuals may seek out or encounter the FOTL ideology (e.g. online or through acquaintances), which offers both a clear understanding of whom to blame for their problems, and a potential solution to their challenges. As one law enforcement member noted:

An interaction with authority prompts them to look for something that allows them to fight back against that authority. What better tool than something that says: 'you have no authority, so how can you implement these things against me?'

- Law Enforcement Member

In rare cases, FOTL will employ violence, primarily reactive violence, against representatives of government, the criminal justice system and large corporations. Out of the total 150-250 adherents in the province, a very small minority (10-15 people) have demonstrated a behavioural propensity for violence. Put simply, the FOTL movement is not uniform or cohesive; the differences that are encountered in FOTL beliefs and behaviours necessitate careful classification that can better equip us to understand the movement.

Typologies

There is an ever-expanding array of analyses, assessments and ideological and behavioural typologies that have been developed to explain the movement.³ In the interest of simplicity, the OPV has developed a typology that focuses on behaviour. This approach allowed us to delineate three distinct categories:

Instrumentalists are individuals who use FOTL ideology in an opportunistic fashion. For them, their knowledge - and perhaps belief - in the ideology is largely superficial. They may have encountered information online or

through a friend and will attempt to deploy it during interactions with law enforcement or government officials. However, unlike other categories, the use is instrumental and they are unlikely to engage in violence or harassment; compliance is generally obtained.

Believers are individuals who genuinely and earnestly try to enact the FOTL principles in their day-to-day lives. Believers will often refuse compliance with direction and orders that come from members of law enforcement and other officials. These interactions can be physical and involve the forceful assertion of rights and physical resistance.

Extremists display a similar ideological commitment to Believers, but display more confrontational behaviour (e.g., with law enforcement, justice or government officials) and actively seek opportunities to assert their self-identified rights using a variety of tactics. They will confrontationally assert their rights and engage (violently and non-violently) with those they believe have wronged them. It is this category that is of particular concern.

A fourth potential category is that of the 'gurus', individuals who seek to innovate new tactics and arguments for the movement. These individuals are in many ways the lifeblood of the movement - their seminars and conferences attract new adherents and promote new methodologies. A number of previous studies have listed these individuals as a separate type, however, based on our research, there is a significant degree of variation between how these individual gurus *behave*. For some, promoting the FOTL ideology is little more than an instrumental revenue-generating scheme, while for others their adherence is seemingly genuine and pacifistic. For an even smaller group, the ideology offers a justification for engaging in violence. For this reason, we believe it is prudent to focus on behaviour rather than rhetoric.

Differentiating Freeman from Other Anti-Authority Extremists

In Alberta, there are roughly an additional 175-200 individuals who have a specific, identifiable grievance against law enforcement (generally) and government representatives (most especially the Premier and Prime Minister). While these individuals do not employ the language and teachings of FOTL adherents, they often draw on less structured anti-authority beliefs. Gun rights, anti-taxation and hatred for police are common ideas that drive this more generalized typology of anti-authority extremists. A minority of these individuals have some demonstrated capacity for violence. In rare instances, these individuals may also pose a significant risk – as evidenced by the murder of four RCMP officers in Mayerthorpe in 2005, or the Moncton shooting of 2014, where three members of the RCMP were murdered. Today, the most common behaviour ascribed to these anti-authority extremists are threats directed towards either Prime Minister Justine Trudeau or Premier Rachel Notley.

There was one guy here in town...he spoke about Trudeau and Notley as well.

- Law Enforcement Member

During the research conducted for this report, interviewed law enforcement officers noted that there had been a marked increase in the occurrence of threats since the election of Rachel Notley and Justin Trudeau; as opposed to a few threats a year, they were now receiving threats on a weekly basis. Since taking office in 2015, then Premier Notley faced at least 11 serious publicly

known death threats, although the actual number of threats is significantly greater.⁴ There have been several instances in Alberta (Edmonton, Medicine Hat and Leduc) where criminal charges were ultimately laid against individuals, and many cases where investigators conducted interviews but did not lay charges.^{4,5} It is important to note here that expressing disagreement with the policies of any politician or government does not constitute extremism, nor does organizing or attending protests – which are both protected activities in Canada. Rather, it is when disagreement or criticism begins to suggest, encourage, or overtly threaten violence that it becomes potentially criminal behaviour.

Many of these incidents were coming to law enforcement's attention via comments made in popular social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. In virtually all of the subsequent investigations, a warning or formal charge led to individuals ceasing their threatening behaviour. Most of the individuals approached by law enforcement were unaware of the level of visibility of their social media posts and the potential legal implication of engaging in this type of behaviour. Many of these individuals were also identified as being middle-aged males, socially isolated and in many instances, indicated some type of mental illness.

Aside from politicians, law enforcement members in the province have frequently been the target of more sustained and focused anti-authority activity, some of which

represents the most significant threats detected during the organization's assessment. These cases demonstrate the diversity of grievances and beliefs that can generate anti-authority extremism.

A guy with a site dedicated to Justin Borque – you find out he's following a guy from Mexico who is preaching and writing about the anarchist movement – you can see the pages and pages of research he's doing into this cause, and then we find out he's got a bunch of guns... 16 guns, all loaded, installing a metal door with three gun slots...two silencers, two banana clips.

- Law Enforcement Member

We had a guy last fall...he threatened to run the members over with a tractor, resisted arrest and caused a physical altercation...he's had a long history with hating police, he has fixated on members before... threatened the detachment commander...When you say Mayerthorpe – that is this guy. He drove through our parking lot two weeks ago.

- Law Enforcement Member

These threats are on the highest end of the threat spectrum and have been primarily motivated by a prior interaction with law enforcement. Although the basis of these interactions is highly varied, in many cases the threat of violence is fixated on a specific member of law enforcement.⁶

General anti-authority extremism can be highly volatile and variable and represents a significant threat to law enforcement and government officials. Individuals who harbour anti-government and anti-police views have a history of significant violence in the province and have been actively engaged in preparing for and planning larger scale violent acts in recent years. Unlike other forms of extremism which are more directly linked to, and influenced by, global events, anti-authority extremism tends to be far more localized and fixated on specific individuals.

In these kinds of cases of anti-authority extremism, the

threat to the general public is assessed as unlikely. Rather, the primary potential for violence is reactive or targeted towards law enforcement, politicians, other agents of the government/legal system (judges, bylaw officers), or large corporations (utility workers, bankers, etc.).

Throughout our research, it became clear that interviewed law enforcement members had varying understandings of what constituted a FOTL and how to distinguish FOTL adherents from those who hold more general, less coherent, anti-authority views. For example, officers observed:

We have had an individual that we dealt with that had similar ideologies, but he is more just anti-government, or anti-police.

- Law Enforcement Member

There's maybe half a dozen in our area that don't cause problems – I would classify them as anti-authority, not Freeman.

- Law Enforcement Member

The issue you have is are they Freeman or are they just idiots? You get these people at a traffic stop who do the 'am I being detained?'...well they're not Freeman, they've just seen a 30 second YouTube video and think they're cool.

- Law Enforcement Member

They'll voice their opinion about anti-government or anti-establishment, but typically they're still putting a license plate on their vehicle that's valid.

- Law Enforcement Member

It's kind of a blurred line between [Anti-Government individuals] and Freeman.

- Law Enforcement Member

The assessment made clear that there is a need for a standardized and commonly understood definition of what a Freeman is, or at a minimum, what is required for

an individual to be identified as such. A starting point for distinguishing these individuals is the following four questions:

1. Does the individual self-identify as a Freeman?
2. Does the individual possess valid identification, licensing, insurance, etc.?
3. Does the individual ultimately comply (i.e. paying a ticket, producing identification, showing up for court)?
4. Does the individual deploy FOTL dogma/arguments and is this rhetoric supplemented by pseudo-legal physical documents?

These kinds of questions, which seek to identify specific behaviours and beliefs, will aid individuals who come into contact with anti-authority extremists and allow them to better assess threats. Through establishing a clear typology for these individuals and employing recognized threat assessment models, the criminal justice system can gain a better understanding of this often-misunderstood form of extremism, which has a demonstrated record of producing deadly violence in Alberta and Canada. Outside of FOTLs and more general anti-authority extremists, there are other forms of anti-authority extremism that have had a significant impact in North America.

The Sovereign Citizen Movement

In the United States, the Sovereign Citizen (SovCit) movement has its roots in the *Posse Comitatus* that emerged in the 1960s with strong beliefs around the appropriate and limited role of government in American society. Members used the *Posse Comitatus Act* of 1878, and a series of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories to argue that a Jewish controlled US government was intent on destroying the individual rights of American citizens. Specifically drawing on the Act, members believed themselves to be only accountable to local law enforcement (e.g., Sheriffs). It is worth

recognizing that *Posse Comitatus* represents an important antecedent of a number of subsequent extremist-political movements that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in the United States – everything from the U.S. Christian Identity movement to the American Militia movement.

Similar to FOTLs, SovCits draw on these traditions and perspectives on individual freedom and limited government as contained in historical documents like the *Magna Carta*, and layer these beliefs with various conspiracy theories related to the true nature of the American financial system and its currency. For example, one popular idea holds that the American departure from the Gold Standard in the early 20th century was a purposeful strategy that aimed to use the citizens of the United States as a form of collateral or “backing” for the US currency. SovCits believe that birth certificates and social insurance numbers issued at birth are used to establish a trust and secret accounts for American citizens. In turn, these accounts and the future earnings of American citizenry provide backing for the US dollar. For the adherents of the movement, the result of this deception is a form of modern financial slavery.

There are several features of the SovCit movement, and its evolution over the past decades that mirror trends and are seen in Canadian Freeman on the Land. One of the more notable alignments is around the degree of ethnic diversity that is often absent in other areas of “right-wing extremism”. Despite its roots in the anti-Semitic and white supremacist tendencies of *Posse Comitatus*, today’s movement displays some racial and religious diversity. However, the movement’s primary demographic is middle-aged, mostly white, men.

Today there are varied estimates on the size of the SovCit movement in the United States, ranging from the tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands, even as high as the alarming figure of 300,000 (inclusive of both “hardcore” and more casual adherents). Some of these estimates, for example those at the higher end of the range, use the number of “tax protestors” identified by the Internal Reve-

nue Agency as a baseline and are therefore likely inflated.

For the most part, individuals in Alberta tend to not refer to themselves as Sovereign Citizens, sticking instead to the more uniquely Canadian “Freemen on the Land” label.

There are some notable exceptions, particularly in Southern Alberta, as some individuals with this belief system have moved between Canada and the United States and in doing so, aligned themselves more closely with the American movement’s rhetoric and proclivity for firearms.



Contemporary Trends in Anti-Government Extremism

An Increasingly Atomized, Unattractive FOTL Movement

After reaching a high-point in terms of organization and activity in the late 2000s and early 2010s, the FOTL phenomenon, as an organized movement, is in pronounced decline. The justice system initially moved slowly and unevenly in dealing with FOTLs. However, beginning with the 2012 *Meads v. Meads* decision, wherein Justice John Rooke offered a thorough assessment and refutation of the Freeman ideology, judges and other justice officials began to effectively and efficiently dispense with these individuals in the courts. This was paired with the exposure of some “gurus” as little more than financial opportunists. Fundamentally, the movement in general, and gurus in particular, were unable to ameliorate the underlying tension caused by the amalgamation of individuals with diverse and often contradictory ideological views under one banner. Some leaders managed to do so temporarily, but these alliances were always unstable and fleeting.

On a cautionary note, however, absent the continued investigation and prosecution of individuals who confrontationally assert their perceived rights, there are relatively few deterrents to pursuing this type of behaviour. As a result, in certain areas of Alberta, there is persistent FOTL sympathy and activity. Even minor victories can have a significant knock-on effect and re-embolden a sympathetic and curious audience.

The rapid decline in the FOTL movement runs somewhat

contrary to the SovCit phenomenon in the United States, where adherents continue to demonstrate a proclivity for violence and the movement shows no signs of decline, rather many SovCits are finding common cause with other fringe or extremist groups. Events like the 2016 Oregon Standoff, where SovCits and militia members occupied a government building for over a month after a rancher’s dispute over grazing permits became framed as an example of government overreach have kept the movement salient. An interesting point here is that, while there has been a degree of overlap between the SovCit and militia movements in the United States, the same phenomenon has not been seen in Alberta as of yet, however, there is evidence of some gurus making overtures to members of patriot groups.

REACTION TO A CHANGING POLITICAL CLIMATE

The following observation more specifically pertains to general anti-government views than to FOTL, but the pronounced increase in threats against politicians at the federal and provincial level was undoubtedly spurred by a backlash to the election of more “liberal” or “progressive” parties. This issue was then amplified by an economic downturn in Alberta that was at least partially responsible for the growth in both anti-government and patriot/militia activity in the province. It is unclear

whether further electoral victories will drive individuals towards either acceptance or deepen their sense of crisis. This point remains speculative.

With respect to violence targeted against law enforcement, this too is somewhat related to the broader

political climate wherein law enforcement members are increasingly subject to public criticism. It is conceivably easier for a personal grievance to be subsumed and in a way legitimized by this broader discourse.



Anti-Government Extremism in Alberta

HISTORICAL PRESENCE

The Canadian FOTL movement emerged in part from earlier Detaxer movements in the late 1990s. The Detaxer movement as defined by “gurus” would – for a fee – show individuals how they could opt to not pay income tax and not face any legal penalties. This phenomenon was relatively short-lived, and the movement died off until it was reinvigorated by the emergence of a new cadre of gurus who layered their own ideological predispositions into the ideology and began to organize and recruit new members.

As the Detaxer movement both predated the widespread adoption of the Internet and relied on training sessions, individuals within the movement commonly conducted in-person meetings and seminars. In the early days of the FOTL movement, this preference for in-person interaction persisted.⁷ Up until at least late 2013, there were larger local seminars in the Edmonton and Calgary area and smaller urban centres and the leaders within the movement, for the most part, managed to cooperate with one another.

The extent of this cooperation was missed by many analysts and media stories of the phenomenon at the time, with Donald Netolitzky’s work being one of the notable exceptions. For example, individuals involved in the takeover of a trappers’ cabin in the Grand Prairie area, and subsequent standoff with the RCMP, were associated with

the Tacit Supreme in Law Court (TSILC) and an Edmonton-based affiliate, the North Watchmen People’s Embassy.⁸ The leader of the TSILC in Alberta was Mario Antonacci (also known as Andreas Pirelli) who was involved in one of the higher profile FOTL-related incidents in Alberta, where he declared a rental suite he was occupying to be an embassy, and resisted attempts by law enforcement to remove him.⁹ The TSILC itself was based in Montana and led by individuals formerly associated with the Montana Freeman – the group responsible for the infamous Jordan, Montana standoff with the FBI in 1996.¹⁰

The TSILC is an especially interesting movement because it demonstrated an ability to unite ideologically diverse clusters of individuals under a central authority in the province and was at least temporarily successful in maintaining unity for a period of time. Even the more fringe members of the movement tried to provide material support or encourage American adherents to travel to Alberta and support the assertion of their perceived rights. The TSILC was also able to amass enough resources to fund a relatively extensive network in Alberta and was in the process of acquiring land to build several compounds when their leader was arrested.¹¹

However, this cooperation was short-lived and its collapse ultimately contributed to the movement’s decline. The leaders and followers all possessed diverse ideological beliefs that framed their ‘brand’ of Freemanism. This ranged from anti-capitalism, biblical literalism, marijuana-

na advocacy and anti-Semitism. Eventually, the tension this created, alongside the cult of personality each tried to build for themselves, were all central to the failure of the movement to coalesce and created instability within pockets of adherents.

The most prominent and publicly well-known incident involving a FOTL adherent in Alberta is the 2015 murder of Edmonton Police Service (EPS) Constable Daniel Woodall and shooting of Sgt. Jason Harley by Norman Raddatz. Raddatz, who was 42 at the time of the incident, was under investigation by the Edmonton Police Service's Hate Crimes Unit for criminal harassment of a local Jewish family. As with many FOTL and Anti-Government adherents, he layered his anti-government beliefs with anti-Semitic ideas and conspiracy theories. Subsequent investigations and media coverage after the shooting highlighted Raddatz's use of language that is consistent with FOTL. On Facebook for example, he referred to the government as "taxation pirates" and noted that he would "not voluntarily enter a corrupt admiralty court"; he also advised a friend that "we have been brainwashed and lied to, into thinking that a natural human being is liable for fees, fines, penalties, and taxes accumulated by a corporate legal fiction".¹²

Two additional prominent examples of anti-government/authority violence are the murder of Father Gatsou Dasna in St. Paul in 2014 and the murder of four RCMP members in Mayerthorpe by James Roszko in 2005. Father Dasna, a Catholic priest, was murdered by John Carlos Quadros, a struggling business owner who engaged in "prepping" behaviour (stockpiling firearms and food), had strong – but abrasive – religious beliefs and left a note before the murder referencing "slavery and freedom".¹³ After murdering the priest, Quadros drove to the RCMP detachment, fired at the building and officers outside, before driving away and eventually taking his own life.

James Roszko's murder of the four RCMP officers occurred after they executed a search warrant on his property. While the murders pre-dated the terminology we often

use now to describe extremism, there are clear indicators that Roszko harboured deep anti-government beliefs. The fatality inquiry noted that Roszko had conducted surveillance on the local RCMP detachments, noting members' cell phone numbers, cruiser numbers, etc. He also had previously deployed a spike strip on his driveway and had been confrontational with an election enumerator (a figure of government authority).¹⁴ These two situations are quite typical of the nature of the threat posed by anti-government extremists – often reactive and generally directed towards symbols of authority, and carried out by individuals facing some form of an external stressor. Moreover, their beliefs and in some instances, their violent intent were broadcast in advance of their attacks.

THE CONTEMPORARY PICTURE

As noted above, by far the most common "anti-government" activity in Alberta today is threats involving violence that are levied against the Prime Minister, Premier and other government officials (e.g., local MLAs and MPs) or law enforcement members. Threats of varying specificity and concern are made in Alberta on a weekly basis. A majority of the threats made against public officials originate online – primarily on Facebook, although more dedicated activists will also frequently send written threats. Many of these individuals do not initially appreciate the seriousness of their behaviour and as a result, cease once they encounter law enforcement.

A typical response to research questions about the presence of FOTLs or anti-government extremists among law enforcement members situated in rural areas tended to be: "just that one guy who lived out in the hills", or "we have one of those".¹⁵ The portrait that emerges from the research is that of a highly scattered, disconnected and, in the case of FOTLs, predominantly rural movement in the province. Southern Alberta and the Edmonton area (particularly areas west of Edmonton) appear to be areas where there is still some sustained FOTL activity.

Whereas there were indications that at the height of the movement there were concerted efforts by gurus to build relationships with American SovCits and encourage them to travel to southern Alberta and support local initiatives, this no longer appears to be the case.

As repeatedly stated in this report, a sizeable majority of current FOTL adherents are non-violent and represent more of a nuisance to law enforcement, government and justice officials. While general anti-authority extremism in the province is on the rise, partially based on the diverse

nature of these adherents and their beliefs, it is challenging to attribute this increase to any single variable. Therefore, the current trend in anti-authority extremism is a decline in FOTLs (since 2012) and a concomitant rise in general anti-government extremism. This underlying trend may create the grounds upon which a new, more defined anti-authority ideology could take hold. Alternatively, anti-authority extremists, especially those situated in rural areas, may migrate to patriot or militia groups that share some similar beliefs. These last points remain speculative.

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LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

LEFT-WING EXTREMISM

Activity Level (2018):

- Increasing

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Anti-Fa
- Anarchists

WHAT ARE LEFT-WING EXTREMIST GROUPS?

The term “Left-Wing Extremism” (LWE) is used to categorize a wide variety of groups who coalesce around political ideologies and philosophies related to socialism, anarchism, Maoism, and Marxist-Leninist ideas. Historically, left-wing groups have mobilized in opposition to what they perceived as fascist, racist and oppressive tendencies in contemporary society and politics. They have drawn upon principles opposing colonial and capitalist beliefs and have gained inspiration from previous socialist leaders such as Vladimir Lenin and Ho Chi Minh. These groups employ varying non-violent and violent tactics to further their goals.

Historically, LWE is most often associated with being the “third wave” of modern terrorism, which began in the late 1960s and faded out with the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Terrorist attacks during this period were frequent; for example, in Western Europe violence peaked at roughly 1000 attacks annually around the late 1970s. Most of this violence was associated with nationalist groups pursuing an agenda of political independence and self-determination: for example, the Provincial Irish Republican Army. Some of these groups employed LWE ideas and rhetoric as part of their political programme. The Red Activist Movements, and in the Canadian context, the Front de Liberation du Quebec (FLQ), were particularly active during this time period and were imbued with LWE ideologies. These groups believed that violent revolution was the only way to bring about a just global society. Modeling their strategies after guerilla campaigns in Latin America, 20th-century groups attacked military, corporate and political targets in hopes of inspiring larger armed revolts.

Contemporary LWE is more frequently associated with groups such as the anarchist and anti-fascist movement (Anti-Fa) who emerged to counter and demonstrate over a broad set of grievances (e.g., anti-corporate, environmental and identity-based) and what they saw as a growing fascist threat in the late 20th century. The most common form of

violence among these groups is reactive in nature and takes place during street clashes with far-right groups, physical violence against law enforcement and vandalism during protests. While these groups draw on some of the same ideas and teachings that motivated and defined the 20th-century groups, they display a much different and diffuse structure and organizational characteristics. Decentralized chapters of groups like Anti-Fa have been successful in garnering support internationally, organizing around shared goals of socialist and non-discriminatory politics.

With the recent growth in hate-based and far-right groups internationally, LWE has emerged as a reactive counter-response. As with its opposition (i.e., far-right), it is a dynamic and ever-changing movement that has evolved with the online space. LWE has responded to the opportunities that are afforded by social media and Internet forums – allowing for the emergence of more horizontally situated networks that can recruit and organize against the enemy – most especially hate-based groups. In order to understand the pervasive nature of LWE movements and the contemporary picture, a historical overview of the emergence of the movement, including previous ideologies, tactics and motives is needed.

Red Activism

Emerging in the 1960s, Red Activist groups including Germany's Red Army Faction and the American Weather Underground formed a militarized left in hopes of fomenting revolution. This emergence represented the beginnings of what academics like David Rapaport termed the "Third Wave" of modern terrorism.¹ Using the American war in Vietnam as their rallying point, these groups believed that violence could eventually stimulate public support and participation to rise up and halt the "imperialism" of the United States and what they perceived to be authoritarian developments in their own countries.

Andreas Baader and Ulrike Meinhof created the German Red Army Faction (RAF) in 1970 in response to what

they believed was the unacknowledged but persistent influence of Nazism on West German politics. Inspired to action by events such as the killing of student protestor Benno Ohnesorg by state agents in 1967, and Germany's support of the American war in Vietnam, the RAF believed that little had changed in German values since the end of the Second World War. RAF militants built transnational linkages in their struggle including with the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which aided in military training for a number of their members. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, RAF undertook a series of violent attacks within the German state, including bombings of stores, state buildings, sniper attacks, kidnappings and assassinations. The RAF was somewhat unique among third-wave terrorist groups as they enjoyed significant popular support, especially among German youth.² As in other forms of extremism and violent extremism, Red Activist groups were shaped by the political and social conditions present in their countries of origin.

In the United States, the Weather Underground was formed in 1969 as a splinter group of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The group differentiated itself from SDS through the conviction that protest was not enough to end the American war in Vietnam and the U.S.'s other imperial endeavours. Instead, they employed an ideological frame that drew heavily from Vladimir Lenin's writing on imperialism necessitating violence - which had to be deployed in order to stimulate the American public to rise up against the violent-capitalist state. Unlike the RAF however, the Weather Underground "instituted a prohibition on lethal actions" against civilians, alternatively focusing their actions on damaging property.³ As the ideological energy of the time faded with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union, many groups lost their base of support and inspiration and these activist movements ceased to exist.

Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ)

The emergence of the FLQ militant separatist and Marxist-Leninist group in the 1960s and 1970s represents an

example of the leftist third wave of modern terrorism in Canada. During that period, the group engaged in paramilitary tactics and violence, incorporated Marxist ideas and language (i.e. ending “Anglo Imperialism”) and viewed themselves as the militant manifestation of the larger Quebec sovereignty movement. Like the Red Activist movement in Europe, the FLQ drew strong support from student groups across Quebec universities. Many universities had outward displays of support for the group in the form of campus petitions, rioting and protests during their early years of activism.

Like other Red Activists groups, some members of the FLQ were organized and trained by foreign militant groups and revolutionaries. This included instruction from Georges Schoeters, a prominent Belgian revolutionary, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organization in Jordan. Capitalizing on their military training, the FLQ carried out roughly 150 attacks across Quebec during their campaign for separatism, ranging from bombings, bank hold-ups and kidnappings, to assassinations.

Public support for the group and its violence collapsed after particularly violent attacks in the late 1960s. In 1969, the FLQ bombed the Montreal Stock Exchange and the acting Mayor of Montreal’s private residence, seriously injuring at least twenty-seven people. In 1970, the group kidnapped the British Trade Commissioner James Cross and vice-Premier of Quebec Pierre Laporte demanding the release of 23 “political prisoners” in exchange for the freedom of Laporte. Ultimately, the government of Quebec failed to meet the FLQ’s demands and Laporte was murdered. His murder in 1970, and the decisive response of the Federal Government at the time (i.e., the use of the War Measures Act by Pierre Trudeau’ Liberal government) largely marked the end of the FLQ and the dismemberment of the organization. Militant separatism in Quebec has not since experienced a resurgence.

Anti-Fa, Anarchists, & Anti-Racist Action

Contemporary LWE groups like Anti-Fa and Anarchist

groups do not draw inspiration or tactics from the Red Activists of the past. Rather the movement represents an outgrowth of protest movements that peaked in the late 1990s and a new form of anti-fascist organizing. Anti-Fa, a shortened term for ‘anti-fascist action’, is both a non-violent and violent left-wing movement. While Anti-Fa is often portrayed as an organized “group”, the phenomenon can be better described as a transnational social movement constituted by decentralized, horizontally situated, non-hierarchical and autonomous groups. Anti-Fa has historically expanded and contracted with concurrent developments in far-right politics. Today, the election of Donald Trump and the proliferation of right-wing extremist ideologies has galvanized a new generation of Anti-Fa activists, some of whom engage in reactionary, predominantly protest based, violence.

Analytically, the term Anti-Fa has been used specifically to reference the aspect of anti-fascist organizing that deems violence as both necessary and legitimate. However, Anti-Fa is also used colloquially by a range of anti-fascists themselves to self-identify their allegiance to the wider anti-fascist movement, much of which is non-violent in its philosophy and actions. This can create confusion among outside observers and authorities.

It is important to note that, as with other forms of activism, not all forms of anti-fascist organizing are to be considered militant or extremist. Non-violent forms of anti-fascism include “legal anti-fascism” and “liberal anti-fascism”. While legal anti-fascists favour the use of the legal system such as courts and law enforcement to disrupt fascist organizing, liberal anti-fascists engage politicians and the media to organize peaceful street protests to confront fascists groups. In the United States, the upcoming “Shut it Down” peaceful protest in Washington D.C., represents an example of liberal anti-fascism. The mass mobilization labels itself as a march against what they see as the growth in “Alt-Right”, fascist, and white supremacist movements in the United States. Organizers of the protest further provided legal support for counter-demonstrators at the Unite the Right 2.0 in

Charlottesville. Contrastingly in Canada, the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, similar to the United States Southern Poverty Law Centre, exemplifies legal anti-fascism. The group tracks and reports on hate groups and right-wing

extremism with the aim of providing law enforcement, politicians and the public added information to disrupt fascist activity legally.



The History & Evolution of the Anti-Fascist Movement

While militant anti-fascism first emerged at the beginning of the last century in response to fascist movements in Italy, Germany and Spain, the modern Anti-Fa movement can be traced to Britain in the late 1970s and 1980s. There, the emergence of the racist National Front as an electoral force and neo-Nazi skinhead culture associated with nascent white power music scenes galvanized the formation of groups like the Anti-Nazi League in 1977 and Anti-Fascist Action aka. “Anti-Fa” in 1985.

Drawing on the ideas of the Red movements of the time, the Anti-Nazi League was originally comprised mostly of Trotskyists – a group who supported an international “permanent revolution” and the overthrow of the ruling capitalist class by the proletariat in favour of socialism. It would later expand to include a wide range of labour organizations. The coalitional nature of the league mediated extremist ideologies, placing adherents within a broader movement that had stronger prohibitions on the use of violence. However, this alliance was unstable and resulted in a rupture within the group and the subsequent emergence of Anti-Fascist Action (AFA), a group that explicitly endorsed and engaged in violent confrontations and the use of force. The nascent AFA would itself become a coalition of radical organizations that included groups like Class War, Direct Action Movement, Red Action and non-affiliated Anarchists, Trotskyists and others. While each of these groups had different agendas and varying operational tactics (Class War, for instance, was focused on government corruption and on publish-

ing anarchist propaganda, while Direct Action Movement was heavily involved in organizing labour strikes) they came together under the umbrella of Anti-Fascist Action to confront fascist organizing through physical violence.

The contemporary association of Anti-Fa with anarchism stems from their rejection of engagement with the state as a strategy for fighting fascism: many members of this movement identify the state as part of the problem and therefore believe it cannot be relied upon to combat the spread of fascist ideas or groups. At the most extreme, Anti-Fa members believe that the state cooperates with fascists either by failing to respond to fascist threats or by directly supporting fascism through institutions such as the police.

While European Anarchists are still engaging in organized and pre-planned violent acts (for example, Italian anarchists sent two mail bombs to the embassies of Switzerland and Chile in Rome in 2010) North American Anarchist or Anti-Fa movements have not engaged with these kinds of tactics. When violence is deployed, it is primarily reactive and occurs during protests as they engage in a tactic referred to as “Black Bloc.” Donning black clothes and masks, anarchists converge to “signal a presence within a demonstration of radical critique of the economic and political system.”⁴ The symbolic destruction of property, the tearing down of security fences and violent clashes with police are all typical Black Bloc tactics, which they use to communicate their anger towards a system they view as exploitative. A minority of protestors

in Seattle displayed this strategy in 1999, in what became known as the “Battle of Seattle”. Black Bloc members protesting the WTO meeting in the city smashed windows of businesses like McDonald’s, Nike, and Gap as well as banks. This kind of violence is representative of the majority of the acts that are perpetrated by anarchists employing Black Bloc tactics.

Anti-Fa emerged in Canada and the USA in the late 1980s. Instead of calling themselves anti-fascists however, these groups called themselves “Anti-Racist Action” (ARA), believing that the North American public would be more responsive to fighting racism than fascism, as anti-black racism was a dominating societal issue. Over the 1980s and 1990s, there were a number of riots over tensions between police and black communities as police brutality against African Americans (such as the beating of Rodney King in 1991) galvanized large-scale anti-racist protests.

Demonstrating the sort of “reciprocal radicalization” that can take place between far right and left movements, in Canada, the Heritage Front (HF) – a neo-Nazi white supremacist group in Toronto, was a facilitating factor

for the emergence of ARA. The HF was actively recruiting high-school students while handing out racist flyers targeting black students. The group also appeared at a demonstration against the acquittal of the six cops charged with beating Rodney King, carrying provocative posters and intimidating protesters.

With the change in the political climate in the 21st century, ARA groups have morphed from their initial focus on combating racism into different anti-fascist factions. Despite the name changes, current networks derive their beliefs and tactics from their anti-fascist predecessors. It is important to note that not all self-designated ARA groups support violence as a strategy; many overtly condemn it. For example, Anti-Racist Canada expressly states:

We will not use or sanction the use of illegal actions (such as violence or intimidation) in pursuit of our desired aims and if we learn of anyone who does use these unethical methods we will report those individuals to the authorities.⁵

Understanding Current LWE Beliefs & Tactics

The Anti-Fa movement that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s throughout the West faded in the 2000s as members turned away from concerns over fascism and towards issues related to the uneven effects of globalization, pro-labour and union rights, concerns over the impacts of climate change and a host of issues related to racism and “post-colonial” practices. However, with the recent resurgence of far-right populist politics in both Europe and the USA, Anti-Fa has regained its former momentum. According to the New York chapter of Anti-Fa, their Twitter followers quadrupled in January of 2017 alone.⁶

Anti-Fa activists believe in using “direct action” to achieve their goals and tactics, which often mimic those employed by the patriot and militia movements across Western Europe and North America. These actions include patrolling and monitoring fascist hangouts, exposing fascists to their neighbours and communities, and on the extreme end disrupting fascist organizing through street fighting tactics and acts of targeted vandalism.

Conversely, contemporary Anti-Fa members also believe that the racist, sexist and homophobic discourses produced by the far right contribute to violent attacks against those communities. Anti-Fa members believe that the violence they practice is a kind of proactive self-defence. This belief is captured succinctly by Anti-Fa historian and activist, M. Testa:

Fascism is imbued with violence and secures itself politically through the use or threat of it, so it is inevitable that anti-fascists have to countenance some involvement in violence themselves during the struggle. That is not to say that anti-fascists should like violence or seek it out in the manner of political hooligans. Far from it, but it is true to say that for many militant anti-fascists violence is an unpleasant method to achieve a greater political goal.⁷

In relation to the state, Anti-Fa’s stance on violence is drawn from the historical failure of state institutions in Europe to prevent the rise of fascism in the interwar period. Anti-Fa believes that the state is “either actively supporting [fascists] through cross-organizational membership (e.g. police and military who are involved in [fascist] movements) or tacitly supporting [fascists] by providing them with access to public spaces and protection.” The combination of the belief that the state is unwilling to confront fascism along with the conviction that fascism is an inherently violent movement, coalesce in Anti-Fa’s belief that violence is both a legitimate and necessary strategy in confronting fascist threats.

Contemporary Trends in LWE

The early presence of LWE groups in North America was mainly associated with student and labour movements concerned with a variety of issues stemming from globalization and its perceived impacts, including environment degradation, wage stagnation and high unemployment. Contemporary groups have harnessed earlier grievances and have further employed concerns over the rights of indigenous peoples, racial minorities, colonialist policies and LGBTQ+ rights. The momentum of LWE in North America can be illustrated in the WTO ministerial meeting in Seattle in 1999 (better known as the “Battle of Seattle”) when over 40,000 protesters came out to challenge the threat of free-trade ideals and globalization. Similarly, in Canada during the 2010 G8 and G20 meetings in Toronto, roughly 10,000 protesters emerged, accompanied by 20,000 members of the military, police and security members. The event resulted in over 1100 arrests, which represented the largest mass arrest in Canadian history, with around 130 injuries (mostly among members of law enforcement). In addition to the physical violence, the protests resulted in over \$12 million dollars in damage to large and small businesses in Toronto.⁸ Much of this violence and property damage occurred when a smaller group of protesters broke off from larger marches and began to attack police and property, a tactic commonly employed by the Black Bloc.

Black Bloc

Black Bloc refers to both a subset and a tactic employed

primarily by the contemporary left in North America who wear black clothing (particularly black masks) to conceal their identity. These protesters are often armed in some way, with clubs, chains, brass knuckles and other “brawling” weapons. Their primary targets include police and security officers and members of right-wing groups whom they perceive as their enemy. They also engage in vandalism of what they see as symbols of capitalist corruption in society.

Individuals who have engaged with Black Bloc have expressed safety concerns, as they believe right-wing extremist groups could target them or their families if they are identifiable. However, in an interview with Vice Media, one Black Bloc adherent noted that it was not White Supremacist or Fascist groups they were afraid of - it was law enforcement.

If I were doxxed, I am concerned that I would be targeted by law enforcement, she told me. I have little fear that a run-of-the-mill white supremacist or neo-Nazi could catch me flat-footed, but the increasingly corrupt police force [poses] a much greater threat to my life and freedom.⁹

What is important to note here is that while different movements make use of it, Black Bloc is primarily associated with anti-fascism. It is furthermore a unique tactic employed by the contemporary left, not a belief system.

Reciprocal “Radicalization”

Contemporary LWE demonstrates a strong example of the “reciprocal radicalization” dynamic – the idea that extremist groups feed off one another in a cycle of escalating tensions, rhetoric and even violence. To illustrate this point, the recent election of Donald Trump and the subsequent irruption of far-right street organizing (e.g., rallies in Charlottesville in August 2017) have galvanized Anti-Fa activities.

The most widely reported example of this reciprocal trend includes the televised punching of White Nationalist leader Richard Spencer by a masked Anti-Fa member on Trump’s inauguration day, the fiery and violent disruption of a Milo Yiannopolous speaking event at Berkeley University, and a clash with right-wing marchers in Sacramento where 10 people were stabbed. In 2018, physical confrontations occurred between Anti-Fa and various right-wing groups, law enforcement and the media in Portland, Washington DC and Charlottesville. These violent street clashes can be categorized as reactive violence that seeks to respond to RWE organizing in the United States. In Europe, Anti-Fa members have been tied to the G20 riots in Hamburg where demonstrators hurled stones and bricks at law enforcement.

The reciprocal radicalization dynamic has also been offered as an explanation for the relative absence of left-

wing extremism in Alberta. While white supremacist and patriot/militia groups have been increasingly active in the province, they have yet to hit a point of critical mass where a violent counterreaction is viewed as necessary. Should the growth of these groups continue, a more organized, more confrontational left-wing movement may re-emerge. As one law enforcement member noted:

The only time you really see Anti-Fa is when there’s a rally – it is a response to something. We haven’t had anything that drew that much attention that Anti-Fa was drawn out.

- Law Enforcement Member

However, some law enforcement members identified what they saw as a growing level of violence among LWE groups in the province:

We know we’ve seen in a lot of other locations the far left and they tend to be as aggressive, if not more so in some cases, as the far right.

- Law Enforcement Member

They tend to be more reactionary, but that doesn’t make it less dangerous.

- Law Enforcement Member

Left-Wing Extremism in Alberta

Emergence

A relatively recent phenomenon, LWE in Alberta can be traced to the formation of Anti-Racist Action. The group has had a strong presence in Calgary since the late 1980s, although, as mentioned above, its activities have ebbed and flowed alongside the “enemy’s” growth and decline. The group organized marches to combat what they saw as a growing right-wing influence in the province; as well, they promoted socialist ideology. Conversely, they were active in counter-protesting white supremacist, patriot and militia group marches – which is often when incidents of violence occurred.

In October 2007, white supremacists protesting the recent passage of a law allowing head coverings to be worn during voting were confronted by Anti-Racist Action protestors. Scuffles broke out and two individuals were eventually arrested, one from either side. Subsequently, in March 2009, Anti-Racist Action Calgary organized a march to celebrate the UN International Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination. A week prior to the march, White supremacists had thrown a cinder block through a window of an ARA Calgary member’s home and sprayed a swastika on the door. Members of Calgary’s Aryan Guard responded to ARA’s march with their own counter-protest to support “White Pride Day.” The two groups eventually clashed, with both sides throwing stones, bottles, and signs. No serious injuries were reported. One Aryan Guard Member and two anti-racist protestors were arrested.

Similarly, in March 2010, ARA Calgary again held a demonstration at Calgary City Hall to celebrate the United Nations’ *Day to Eliminate Racial Discrimination*. The events were peaceful until neo-Nazis converged on the anti-racist protestors and began heckling them. Two men were eventually arrested, one for throwing a rock and another for assaulting someone with a skateboard.

Calgary experienced another incident in 2017 when a rally at city hall turned into a violent altercation between Calgary’s Street Church and Anti-Fa members. Bill Whattcott, an anti-abortion and anti-gay activist was preaching a sermon when Anti-Fa members began their counter-protest. Scuffles consisting of kicks and punches broke out between the two groups, but no serious injuries were reported and no arrests were made.

Contemporary Picture

To date, LWE in Alberta has not generated any major violent incidents in Alberta. It is important to note that the groups and individuals in the movement, based on their current tactics and behaviour, do not represent a threat to members of the general public in the province and there are no indications of planned violence. The activity, whether it is violent or non-violent, continues to be mainly reactionary in confrontation with right-wing groups (e.g., white supremacist, patriot and militia groups) or law-enforcement. The movement on the whole is largely peaceful, but if confronted or provoked, or if there is a

presence of right-wing groups or law enforcement, reactive violence can and does occur.

The OPV assessment identified Calgary and Edmonton as the primary hubs of LWE in Alberta. It further noted that Anti-Racist Action Calgary and Anti-Fa have approximately 20-30 active members. Recent fractures have occurred in the wider movement, particularly in the Calgary region between moderate and more extreme “anarchist” members of the group. In total 3-4 individuals among this group can be identified as supportive of violence during confrontations with the far right and law enforcement.

In our interviews with law enforcement agencies throughout Alberta, multiple respondents identified the presence of militant anti-fascists as a local concern, but none were able to point to discrete instances of planned violence that posed a serious threat to members of the general public. Vandalism of public or private property and physical confrontations between Anti-Fa and members of white supremacist or patriot and militia group were primary areas of concern.

Endnotes

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PATRIOT & MILITIA GROUPS

PATRIOT & MILITIA GROUPS

Activity Level (2018):

- Increasing

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Three Percenters
- Sons/Soldiers of Odin
- Canadian Infidels / The Clann
- True North Patriots
- Northern Guard

WHAT ARE PATRIOT & MILITIA GROUPS?

Contemporary patriot and militia groups are motivated primarily by xenophobia and anti-government views. Collectively, the groups share anti-Islamic sentiments and increasingly view politicians in all orders of government as complicit in the degradation of Canadian values. Through their protests and social media activity, the groups focus on grievances and fears related to the control of Canadian borders, criminality and terrorism among newcomers and refugees and anger over the recession in Western Canada. Groups and individual adherents view segments of the government as their enemy, first and foremost the Liberal-Federal and NDP-Provincial government in Alberta, whom they view as largely responsible for the social and political issues they are focused on.

While differences exist between these groups, patriot and militia groups blend anti-government views and conspiracy theories to produce highly nationalistic ideologies. Militia groups tend to engage in varying activities including firearms training, survivalism and “prepping” activities. These activities are embedded within a culture of outdoor recreation, firearms and camaraderie. Militia groups in Alberta also believe themselves to be aligned with the military and to an extent, law enforcement. By comparison, patriot groups are more focused on online activism, protests, ostensibly charitable activities and street patrols that primarily target visible minority newcomer and refugee communities - Muslims in particular.

For the purposes of this report, patriot and militia groups will be discussed in the same section. The nature of the broader anti-immigrant and anti-government movement in Canada has resulted in these groups frequently working alongside each other, if not in direct cooperation with one another, and members often move fluidly between groups. However, there are also numerous examples of in-fighting among local groups and their leaders – a common phenomenon across different typologies of extremism.

Locally and internationally, the emergence of contemporary militia and patriot groups represents the confluence of a number of local and global political, social and economic trends. Economic stagnation and recession in Alberta and Western Canada, and increased migration from non-western countries have created an environment where some individuals feel “left behind” and that the character of their country is being irrevocably changed. They further believe that the government is either ignorant of, or complicit in, these social and economic changes. Patriot and militia groups, therefore, see it as incumbent upon themselves to defend their version of Canadian values, perceiving themselves as the last line of defence against an amorphous threat.

All of these groups are imbued with some anti-immigrant beliefs; however, they are specifically focused on Muslim immigrants and residents. They believe that increasing Muslim immigration will mean an erosion of Canadians’ collective identity and rights, the implementation of Shari’a law and an increase in terrorism. Some groups and individuals believe these trends are inevitably leading to a violent confrontation with Muslims in Canada.

To understand the emergence and activities of these groups in the Canadian context, it is essential to first provide a brief overview of the American militia and European patriot movements that have influenced the formation, ideology and behaviour of local groups. Patriot and militia groups in Canada draw on these two distinct influences, which shape their identity, ideology and tactics.

THE AMERICAN MILITIA MOVEMENT

While it traces its lineage back to the 1960s, the wider American militia movement represents a relatively new subset of “right-wing extremism” – with a majority of the groups emerging in the 1990s. However, these groups draw on much deeper American political and social traditions - dating back to the Minutemen of the American

Revolution and the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. The latter promotes the need for a militia to maintain security in the United States and the right to bear arms among America citizens. The survivalist and Christian identity groups (see sub-report on white supremacism) that grew in the American Midwest and West in the 1980s are more recent antecedents.

In this sense, the militia and patriot movements in the United States are distinctly linked to the lore of early American history but also draw on some of the same experiences, grievances and social networks that furthered the growth of white supremacy and anti-government extremism in the late 20th century. For example, the Ruby Ridge Standoff and siege at Waco Texas (which took place in 1992 and 1993, respectively) in the United States were two events that very much drove the emergence of the more organized militia, patriot *and* white supremacist groups in the 1990s. These events cemented the belief amongst the adherents that the federal government was tyrannical, or becoming tyrannical and attempting to subvert the rights of its citizens. This belief animated attacks like the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, which was the deadliest terrorist attack in the United States prior to 9/11 and caused law enforcement to more intensely monitor and disrupt these groups, resulting in a decline that lasted until the late 1990s-mid-2000s. Despite this decline, a number of terrorist plots emerged from segments of the movement in the late 1990s (e.g., the 1998 Michigan Militia multiple bombing and murder plot). The election of Barack Obama in 2008, and concerns over firearms restrictions/legislation led to a rapid re-emergence of the movement in the late 2000s and 2010s.

Today, the Southern Poverty Law Centre estimates a total of 689 patriot groups (as of 2017) in the US - 273 of which are militias.¹ Recently, militia groups like the Oath Keepers and American Three Percenters have become more prominent after self-mobilizing as “security” details for several far-right events. While the majority of American patriot and militia groups have not engaged in violent acts, a subset has proven to have the intent and capacity

for large scale, mass casualty terrorist violence. Disrupted bomb plots in Oklahoma (2017)² and Kansas (2016)³ by splinter groups of local militias demonstrate the potential for this movement to create an environment where terrorist violence is viewed as justified and necessary.

EUROPEAN PATRIOT GROUPS

Two strands of activism and activity in Europe have driven the growth of European Patriot groups and a wider anti-Islamic social movement. Both of these strands have had an impact and influence on the North American context. First, organized, transnational protest groups like Germany's Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamization of the Occident (PEGIDA) are a manifestation of a growing social movement made up of far-right politicians, Internet bloggers, personalities and online communities that are steadfastly opposed to the presence of Muslim communities in European societies.

Second, a more aggressive and violent manifestation of this movement has emerged in the form of vigilante groups such as the Soldiers of Odin (SOO), who have their roots in white supremacist ideology and networks. The first "strand" has generally been restricted to organizing protests, marches and hosting anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant speakers, while the second has engaged in more aggressive and sometimes violent vigilante "street patrols" in neighbourhoods with a high concentration of newcomer, immigrant and visible minority populations. These street patrols are ostensibly framed by the groups as providing security in areas where they can detect and address crime. In practice, many of these street patrols in Europe have devolved into vigilante-style justice, and

have been openly violent, discriminatory, and used to intimidate newcomers and visible minorities.

The impetus or driving factors behind the emergence of this movement and groups are complex. On one hand, an influx of economic migrants and refugees from war-torn countries and failed states in the Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia into Europe in recent years, especially from 2014 onwards, together with economic hardship and dislocation among segments of European labour, has spurred the emergence and growth of reactionary, anti-immigrant groups in Europe. Furthermore, many of these groups are highly nationalistic and suspicious of or vehemently opposed to regional integration efforts under the European Union.

Therefore, as with other forms of extremism, the rapid growth of grassroots anti-immigrant and patriot groups in Europe have been driven by top-down and bottom-up processes. From the top-down, far-right parties have emerged and have a growing influence in Hungary, France, Poland, the Nordic countries and elsewhere. These parties are generally opposed to political integration under the European Union (EU), and what are perceived as lax and dangerous approaches to migration and border control. From the bottom-up, social movements have increasingly organized and used on and offline forums to mobilize protests and spread their (mis)information.

In Canada, militia and patriot groups have taken inspiration from both American militia and European patriot groups. This has included the adoption of shared ideas, grievances and tactics. Via social media and direct contact with group chapters, these movements have mobilized around concerns such as criminal activity in migrant communities, terrorism and widespread perceptions that governments are failing to protect their "true citizens".

Understanding Patriot & Militia Movements: Beliefs, Tactics, & Grievances

Patriot and militia groups replicate and re-package much of the same language and ideas found among white supremacist and nationalist movements in North America and Europe, but for the most part, they couch these ideas in language that focuses on national, rather than explicitly ethnic, identity. Many catchphrases and memes used by most groups in the movement focus on Canadian nationalism - defined in a very specific, often exclusionary way. However, groups on the fringes of these movements are more overt about their true beliefs, using slogans like “it’s okay to be white” or naming one of their groups “Patriot Pride, Canada Wide” - a thinly disguised variant of “White Pride, Worldwide”. The increasing prevalence of Neo-Pagan (e.g., Odinism) symbolism and ritualism among some patriot groups (e.g., SOO) is another feature of these groups that is also common to certain white supremacist groups.

Recognizing the clear overlap among individuals and ideas associated with both white supremacy and patriot/militia groups, there are some differences. These differences can be seen in the ideology, tactics, grievances and defined enemies of the respective movements. For example, among patriot/militia groups there are individuals that support Israel and Zionist movements. Specifically, members of patriot groups have in the past supported and co-operated with the Jewish Defence League at events and around issues where there is a shared interest. These sentiments and actions would not occur within traditional white supremacist groups that

are highly anti-Semitic in orientation.

Further, there is some ethnic diversity within most of the patriot and militia groups active in Alberta. Again, this does not exist among neo-Nazi, white power skinheads and other traditional white supremacist groups. Finally, as opposed to traditional white supremacist groups, many of the militia movements active in Alberta – the Three Percenters in particular – are for the most part, supportive of law enforcement and the military - beliefs not shared by some patriot groups and nearly all white supremacist groups in the province.

Several Canadian patriot or militia groups have also attempted to publicly distance themselves from the more overt racism and discriminatory language that defines many of the organizations active in this space. However, several members of law enforcement noted that this civility was often quick to break down, especially when groups target Canadian Muslims:

It’s what they don’t say, right. It’s always what they don’t say – we’re handing hampers out to the homeless, we’re doing food drives...but then you press a certain button – immigration policies – and all of a sudden the Canadian flag goes up and that’s when you start hearing the things they don’t want to tell you.

- Law Enforcement Member

There is some divergence among these groups in terms

of their often contradictory messaging around immigration and minority communities. These mixed messages and outward appearances can create a great deal of confusion in media coverage and public opinion about the groups. It also makes it more challenging for members of the police who are trying to discern the threat posed by the groups in terms of a threat to public safety and their potential for perpetrating hate crimes.

The interesting thing with them is they're pro-law enforcement, pro-responsible immigration and small government. They're like a dichotomy. You recognize there's something going on there – to try to pin it down is a tough one. We've never been able to link it to any criminality or hate, yet the stuff they're posting is really anti-Islamic...some of it is just vile.

- Law Enforcement Member

The attempts of some militia and patriot groups to improve their image, in part through narrowing their opposition and bigotry and creating a more broadly appealing ideology, is not unique to Canada. The SOO in the United States have demonstrated similar behaviour and tried to dissociate themselves from the white supremacist roots of the SOO. However, based on research from the Anti-Defamation League, this split was more superficial than substantive, which appears to also be the case for a number of Canadian chapters.⁴

Local groups have also been carrying out ostensibly charitable and volunteer activities that aim to improve their

public and media image and further recruitment. While many of these activities have failed to garner positive publicity (and indeed a large number have backfired, resulting in negative media coverage), some local groups have elicited positive feedback on social and mainstream media, especially in smaller population centres in the province. When covering or discussing these activities it is important to keep in mind the ideological foundations of many of these groups.

[There is] the opinion that they were there to serve the community, help the old lady across the street, those kinda things...good people doing good work in the community, despite their anti-Muslim rhetoric.

- Law Enforcement Member

The complexity of ideas and behaviours these groups display creates some challenges for outside observers in terms of assessing threats they may pose to public safety. However, what is clear is patriot and militia groups are a conduit for bigoted, often hateful, speech and behaviour that can undermine the social fabric of Canada through spreading conspiracy theories and divisive rhetoric that targets certain communities, Canadian Muslims most especially. While not directly and conclusively linked to violence, conspiracy theories can play an important role as a “radicalizing multiplier”⁵ in cementing the us vs. them narrative or framework of many of these groups. Collectively these features of the movement create a sense of crisis, which can lead to a situation where individuals may come to view violence as urgently necessary.

Contemporary Trends in Patriot & Militia Movements

The emergence and growth of the patriot and militia movement in Alberta closely mimics trends and factors that influenced the movements' growth in Europe, the United States and other provinces of Canada. In Alberta, the rapid and dramatic growth witnessed among patriot and militia groups in particular, is linked to the election of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and former Premier Rachel Notley in 2015. Prime Minister Trudeau and former Premier Notley were frequent targets of the group in social media activity (posts on Facebook and Instagram, use of memes and sharp, sometimes violent, criticism). In particular, Prime Minister Trudeau is frequently linked to popular conspiracy theories among these groups who view the Liberal government as either willfully ignorant of the threats posed by immigrant communities, or as active agents who are directly responsible for emerging threats. For example, the non-binding Motion 103, introduced into Canadian Parliament by the Liberal Government as a condemnation of Islamophobia in Canada (passed in March of 2017), is frequently cited among local groups as evidence of the government's complicity or active promotion of Islamic beliefs and law in Canadian society.

Also of note, the growth of these groups also neatly coincided with the height of the sharp economic recession in Alberta, which produced considerable hardship among wide swaths of Alberta's workforce, with tradespeople and field staff in the energy sector being most significantly impacted. Many of the leaders and members of Alberta's patriot and militia movements belong to these categories

of labour. These trends very closely mirror the growth of the American militia movement after the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and concurrent "Great Recession" that heavily impacted the United States and economies around the world. Many of the same tropes and grievances that emerged in the United States after Obama's election – hidden plots to confiscate firearms, a belief that immigration and economic policies are being used by the government to aggressively push a socially progressive agenda at the expense of the working class and "real citizens", are also present in the Albertan context.

TUMULTUOUS INTRA & INTER-GROUP RELATIONSHIPS

A recurring trend in these groups' short history in Alberta is the on-again off-again cooperation and informal alliances between and within various groups and individual members in the province. During the movement's initial rise to prominence in Alberta, many of the patriot groups would cooperate by organizing protests together and were in turn supported by militia groups who provided "security" to defend against the perceived enemy - the anti-racist or anti-fascist counter-protesters who usually outnumbered members of the patriot groups.

As discussed elsewhere, the tendency of individuals in these movements to frequently change affiliations and

engage in struggles over leadership is not uncommon. Since their emergence in Alberta there have been several publicized instances where members of existing patriot or militia groups have formed new groups in response to inter-personal and ideologically driven conflict within existing groups. Specifically, leadership that was perceived as either ineffective or too controlling was a frequent catalyst for splits. Also, the presence of members who were viewed as too extreme (i.e., leaning towards more traditional white supremacist and neo-Nazi ideas), or too caustic, unstable and aggressive created fissures within established groups.

There also seems to have been a persistent inability of groups to develop agreement around core messages, shared goals and activities. This is compounded by the fact that many people willing to show up to rallies and actively promote the cause on social media tend to be self-aggrandizing and seek out leadership within established groups or barring that, create their own. These actions often do not sit well with the membership, who may view such aggrandizement as harmful to the movement as a whole, or the messaging that accompanies it too hardline in orientation.

We've seen a lot of changes – those groups seem to be very fluid. If you wanna talk in-fighting and inability to pick leadership and follow, they're the poster children for that.

- Law Enforcement Member

All of the fracturing that [the group] has experienced has occurred over [their leader's] ownership, the lack of voting and elections, the idea of having a president for life ... they don't like the lack of a democratic process.

- Law Enforcement Member

Another common issue that precipitated splits was the underlying tension present within a number of these groups between members whose primary interest is fraternal, albeit niche, behaviours like “prepping”, organized target shooting and outdoor activities, and those more

inclined towards activism like protests, acts of charity and conducting street patrols.

There was a split in late 2017 between those who wanted to do protests and those who wanted to be in the woods.

- Law Enforcement Member

Some people there were more right-wing than others – some thought what they were doing was enough, some want to go further, more protests about immigration, more things of that nature.

- Law Enforcement Member

These groups kinda splinter off quite quickly because the level of extremism isn't the same throughout the group.

- Law Enforcement Member

To an extent, these issues and trends are unsurprising given the relatively new nature of the groups and their highly varied leadership and organizational capacities. Since many of these groups have only emerged and experienced growth in recent years, it stands to reason that there will be a period of rapid change, re-organization and demise among patriot and militia groups in Alberta for the foreseeable future, until some sort of stable equilibrium is established. The end result of this reorganization is difficult to predict and is likely dependent on the ability of shifting leadership to attract and maintain a stable base of membership and consensus around messaging, goals and activities.

RECRUITMENT & VETTING

Recruiting tactics and success vary between groups – although all active groups are primarily reliant on social media (Facebook in particular). For the most part, the process involves joining a group's support page, which may or may not be supplemented with a closed forum for “members” of the group. Among the more organized groups, initial screening and subsequent acceptance

into the online community is obtained by answering a series of questions related to reasons for wanting to join, location in the province and in some instances whether or not you possess a firearms license. Subsequent to this, prospective members usually meet with a designated member of the group: the leader for smaller groups or “chapter presidents” or “security officers” in the case of larger groups with a wider provincial presence.

Interest in, and recruitment into these groups appears to be at least partially reliant on the publicity generated by media reporting on the groups. Prior to a number of stories, in particular about larger patriot groups in the province in late 2017 and into the summer of 2018, many of these groups were facing a pronounced drop in membership and public interest. Subsequent to these articles being published, there was a noteworthy spike in potential new members, at least in some urban and rural areas of the province.

Since [the media] put a story out on it, their numbers have increased now. Two months ago, they were on the verge of going their separate ways and closing the chapter... [The] story boosted their morale, boosted their numbers.

- Law Enforcement Member

[Now that they have been covered by the media] they'll have people go to them and find them out. Previous to that – you know how you sign up for basketball, they did that but for [a large group in the province].

- Law Enforcement Member

Managing the link between recruitment and media coverage is challenging as there is a clear need to provide the

public with an understanding of the nature of these groups, which must be balanced against an imperative to avoid providing a platform or conveying an outsized threat posed by militia and patriot groups. Balanced, evidence-driven reporting and avoiding sensationalism, are important steps in reducing the impacts of media on recruitment.

The larger militia groups, in line with their more hierarchical, paramilitary-like structure, usually engage in some sort of vetting process for new members, often involving individuals the groups have designated as security officers or sergeant-at-arms. Current and former leadership of many of the province’s larger militia groups; for example, have been quite vocal about their vetting process to weed out “radicals”. For the most part, authorities are skeptical about the ability of these groups to prevent more overt white supremacists or individuals who may be prone to violence from becoming members. However, there have been some publicized instances of groups reporting members they believed to be prone to violence or holding overtly neo-Nazi beliefs to law enforcement.

I don't think they want the attention, so the likelihood of them taking on a loose cannon, they're not going to take the wannabe extreme guy who gets in peoples' faces just because he can.

- Law Enforcement Member

A consistent theme in the law enforcement interviews were members stressing the importance of groups engaging in some form of self-policing and reporting when an individual they encountered generated concerns related to violent extremist ideas and violent intent.

Patriot and Militia Movements in Alberta

HISTORICAL PRESENCE

As indicated earlier in this report, patriot and militia groups in Alberta are representative of a relatively new movement in the province that grew in the wake of a period of local economic distress. A rapid onset recession in 2014, caused by a collapse in commodity prices, oil in particular, created a substantial spike in Alberta's unemployment rate and hardship for working adults and families. Between November 2014 and November 2016, the unemployment rate in Alberta more than doubled from 4.4 per cent to 9.0 per cent. During this period, foreclosures on residential properties increased by roughly 25 per cent and similar spikes were seen in credit card delinquency and other indicators of economic distress.

The result of these trends was the emergence of a large pool of unemployed skilled, semi-skilled and unskilled workers, some of whom felt as though the federal and provincial governments had either failed to adequately aid them during a period of hardship – or were even directly responsible for their plight. Simultaneously, increasingly vocal populist politicians and networked social movements online spread ideas, grievances and ideologies that helped to frame discontent and anger. Put simply, there was fertile soil, for the emergence of groups employing anti-government rhetoric and the ideas that define patriot and militia movements nationally and internationally. A common trend identified during

the research was the involvement of unemployed, working-class Albertans in patriot and militia movements. These individuals commonly associate their plight with the actions of the provincial and federal governments.

Illustrating the importance of these trends on driving the formation and behaviour of local patriot and militia groups is the observation that vast majority were established and experienced rapid growth from 2015 onwards. While media articles about the Albertan chapters of SOO have been circulating since around 2015, when the group became more established in the province, the public first became acutely aware of the emergence of patriot and militia groups during the summer of 2017,. This took place when the Alberta chapter of the Three Percenters (Threepers) acted as security for a high profile anti-Islamic rally organized by the Worldwide Coalition Against Islam (WCAI) outside Calgary City Hall.

Between 2015-2017 Patriot and Militia groups expanded at a rapid rate in a manner that has not been seen in the province among “right-wing extremist” groups since the growth of the Klu Klux Klan in the 1920s and 1930s. Sometime in 2017, total “membership” in these groups peaked somewhere between 600-700. Since that period, the movement has ebbed and fluctuated and as of late 2018, was represented by a total of roughly 300-500 active members. While online activity around the groups (e.g., “likes” and “follows” of Facebook pages) may suggest higher levels of interest, as high as a few thousand,

active members who attend protests, meetings, “call-outs”, social events and training is significantly lower.

THE CONTEMPORARY PICTURE

Despite a period of recent decline in membership, the largest patriot and militia group in Alberta remains the Three Percenters. There has been extensive reporting of the group participating in various types of firearms and paramilitary-style training across the province, although there appears to be a high degree of variability in the type of training offered between “Threeper” chapters - with southern Alberta chapters generally being more organized and active. Different chapters of the group have organized first aid courses, weekend survival exercises and firearms training. Reports of more substantive military style-training in rural areas are present but remain unsubstantiated to date.

An important point on these groups’ contemporary activities is that, to date, there are *no incidents of planned violence or indication that organized patriot and militia groups are conducting or planning acts that would represent a significant threat to public safety or national security*. However, there are still concerns that individuals associated with, or more accurately on the margins of these groups, may carry out “lone actor” or small network violence. Returning to the findings on recruitment and vetting, there is little doubt more extremist elements exist that are aligned with white supremacist ideology and the promotion of violence through this ideology present in or trying to infiltrate these groups. Lone actor violence on the fringes of these movements may in part be motivated by the alarmist and xenophobic rhetoric of the groups, the training in which they engage and their ready access to firearms and military equipment. This behaviour, paired with beliefs that organizations are not doing enough to pursue their goals (i.e., serious threats not being addressed through appropriate and concrete actions), could conceivably cause an individual or small

group to mobilize to violence as evidenced by the two plots in the United States mentioned above.

While there are some in-group norms against *offensive violence* - as seen among local militia groups - the notion that violence can be justified in certain circumstances still exists. These ideas are embedded in the very identity of the groups as a “last line of defence” against various impending threats. Through the identification of acute and existential threats to Canadian society, thought to be emanating primarily from minority religious communities, specifically Muslims and larger “globalist” plots, these groups create an atmosphere that promotes conspiracy theories and alarmism. Individuals involved in these groups for prolonged periods of time lose their ability to critically evaluate the claims of their own community, assess their validity and reconcile them with their reality and experiences.

Over 2018, the public activities of these groups in Alberta’s two largest cities have bifurcated: activity among Calgary patriot and militia groups has significantly decreased, whereas activity among patriot groups in Edmonton has rapidly grown and among some groups, escalated. This escalation was most apparent when one group, the Clann, confronted worshippers outside of Edmonton’s largest Mosque a few days previous to the anniversary of the 2017 Quebec City mosque attack.

The individuals involved in the patriot movement in Edmonton have, at least for the time being, coalesced around a relative handful of local leaders, some of whom had been expelled from or left groups in the past for being too volatile. This is a concerning evolution that could lead to an escalation in behaviours, like that which was witnessed in the Mosque incident. In smaller population centres, the activity of these groups is less common and chapters in smaller, southern Alberta cities have struggled to build momentum. By comparison, patriot and militia groups in northern Alberta (e.g., Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray) have built a more solid base of support and engage in activities on a semi-regular basis.

Lastly, the emergence of the Yellow Vests may have a significant impact on the future trajectory of the patriot and militia movement in Alberta. Prior to this movement, emerging participation and sustained public activism around concerns over immigration was largely constrained to members of patriot groups. The Yellow Vest movement has re-energized areas of activism and engaged a broader set of individuals, some of whom may now gravitate towards more organized patriot or

militia groups. Known leaders and members of patriot and militia movements are actively participating in and seeking to direct the movement, which they view as an opportunity to relay their message and gain new recruits. The shift from individual groups to a more amorphous and somewhat mainstream “movement” increases the probability of sustained and engaged activity among local patriot and militia groups.

Endnotes

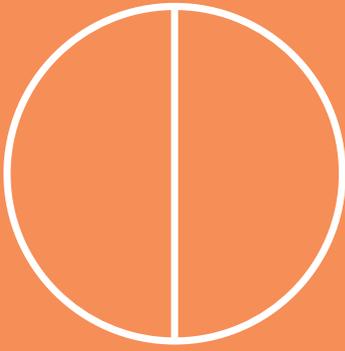
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SINGLE-ISSUE VIOLENT EXTREMISM

SINGLE-ISSUE VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Activity Level (2018):

- Involuntary Celibate (Incel) – Increasing
- Animal Rights – Decreasing
- Environmental – Static
- Anti-Abortion – Decreasing

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Incels

WHAT IS SINGLE-ISSUE VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

Single-issue extremism is a catch-all description that includes a number of ideologies and grievances which can drive violent extremism. Single-issue extremists are focused on a specific political issue and do not necessarily seek far-ranging political, ideological or religious changes in society. Misogyny, environmentalism, animal rights advocacy and opposition to abortion are some areas of political and social activism that have historically produced violence. Like other forms of violent extremism, single-issue extremists may turn to the use of “extreme force and violence for the purpose of coercing a government and/or population to modify its behaviour with respect to a specific area of concern.”¹ Among these groups and individuals, there is also a desire to enact change through urgent and emergency measures - based on their perception of some form of crisis.² Given their narrow interests and activities, this form of violent extremism has been subsumed under a single, somewhat convenient, category.

Groups or individuals involved in single-issue extremism may embed themselves within, or emerge from other political and extremist movements. For example, an individual who is violently opposed to abortion may identify with the larger Christian Identity movement with its white supremacist foundations. Similarly, a violent environmentalist could engage with the broader anarchist movement. Others may eschew an explicit political motive or frame and remain more intently focused on the nature of the specific issue itself.

Single-issue extremists differ in terms of their core beliefs and behaviours - depending on the ideology and grievances that drive them. Today, many single-issue groups have formed communities on the Internet, creating similar patterns of socialization and indoctrination witnessed in other areas of extremism. Arguably, it is this trend that has been the biggest driver of single-issue violence in recent years – particularly around misogynistic movements like Incel.

The diversity of ideas and ideologies contained under the banner of single-issue extremism makes labeling and understanding it difficult. Subsequently, classification by governments, law enforcement agencies and organizations focused on terrorism and prevention can be challenging. Individuals in these agencies may ask whether the activities and violence associated with single-issue extremism should be considered terrorism, or not, within existing legal and policy frameworks.

Each subset of the category is distinct, with very little convergence of ideas between them. Because of this, a neat, singular definition that encompasses all groups, their specific grievances, beliefs and desired outcomes does not exist. Each movement must be outlined and described individually. Challenges further arise as each single-issue movement is somewhat limited in terms of activities and size in comparison to other forms of violent extremism in Canada. The exception being the Incel movement, which is growing in terms of adherents and threat level, especially in the aftermath of the April 2018 Toronto van attack. As shown by this report and the recent activities of single-issue groups, there is a need for governments and law enforcement to monitor and evaluate the dynamic threats that emanate from this category of extremism.

ANIMAL RIGHTS EXTREMISM

Animal rights extremism is grounded in a strong conviction that animals have rights that are equal to those of human beings and need to be protected from abuse and exploitation. Based on this steadfast belief, there is a willingness to employ extra-legal (criminal) measures and in some instances, violence, to protect the rights of animals. For the most part, violence associated with animal rights activism is focused on inflicting damage on buildings and infrastructure associated with corporations and government agencies engaged in animal testing or slaughtering: for example, by targeting facilities and

equipment. A common demand among these activists is the immediate cessation of any action that allows for the abuse and profiteering from animals “whether for food, clothing, consumer safety, scientific advancement, or entertainment.”³

Animal rights extremism largely emerged in the context of 1970s Western Europe. Ronnie Lee became the face of the movement when he founded the group “Band of Mercy” in England in 1972. In 1976 he formed the only “organized” extremist animal rights group, the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), which continues to be active in North America and Europe. The ALF has been responsible for property crimes, arson attacks and vandalism across North America and Europe, including Alberta. The first incident occurred between December 14th and 15th, 1991, in Edmonton. In that instance, Billingsgate Fish Market delivery trucks were spray-painted, had their tires slashed and were subsequently lit on fire, which resulted in \$100,000 in damages.⁴ The second event occurred at the University of Alberta on June 6, 1992. Twenty-nine cats were taken as well as files pertaining to the sources supplying dogs for animal research to the University. Following these two incidents, there have been no notable instances of criminal animal rights extremism in Alberta. However, individuals or small cells associated with the ALF continue to claim credit for acts of sabotage or vandalism across Europe – including breaking into farms and releasing animals, destroying hunting towers or vandalising businesses they view as profiting from the trade in or consumption of animals.

ENVIRONMENTAL EXTREMISTS

Environmental extremism can be defined as any “direct or indirect use of force, willful damage, or violence against persons, groups, or property that is used to terminate, prevent, or minimize human alteration to any part of the natural environment or its animal species.”⁶ These attacks happen at “forestation projects, recreational use

of wilderness, hydro-electric operations, land-based telecommunication and energy services, animal research laboratories, resource production, and agricultural developments.”⁷ Environmental extremists work to prevent, hinder or stop any activity that is, or could be harmful to, the environment, broadly defined.

The Earth Liberation Front (ELF) is one of the most prominent environmental extremist groups; it formed in England in 1992 and spread to Europe in the early to mid-1990s. Today the group purportedly has a presence in more than 15 countries. ELF has undertaken attacks at logging and deforestation plants and genetic modification and engineering facilities. These acts have included arson of automotive dealerships, sabotaged power lines, the “spiking” of trees in old growth forests that is aimed at damaging logging equipment and vandalism and destruction at housing developments in areas that are deemed to be environmentally sensitive.⁸

Other active organizations today include the Deep Green Resistance (DGR), which has set out a four-phase plan to combat environmental damage moving from networking and mobilization, to sabotage and asymmetric action onto system disruption and finally, decisive dismantling of infrastructure. DGR promotes a hybrid model of activism, blending legal, what they term “above ground” activism, with criminal or violent “underground” action.⁹ Mirroring the movement seen among other extremist groups, they encourage underground activists to plot and carry out activities individually or in small cells to avoid detection. Like the ELF, they also maintain a registry where activists can claim attacks or sabotage.

Environmental extremism in Alberta has similarly focused on the destruction of infrastructure and equipment associated with environmental degradation, including oil and forestry sites. Vandalism of oil and gas field equipment and the use of “spiking” in service roads associated with the industry have been driven by environmental activism. The most notable series of incidents in Alberta’s history has been associated with the Trickle Creek

Environmental-Christian community situated in North West Alberta and their now deceased patriarch, Weibo Ludwig. The community, which sought rural isolation in a remote section of the province, has characteristics of a fundamentalist Christian community.

The community’s original environmental grievance was grounded in perceptions of the negative impacts of the oil and gas industry on the community, its residents and livestock and the inability or unwillingness of government and industry regulators to address their ongoing complaints. Specifically, the Trickle Creek community and Weibo Ludwig in particular, believed that sour gas wells in close proximity to the community were causing health problems for livestock and people living in the community. These grievances generated an escalating cycle of activism.

An early example of this activism is an incident where Weibo Ludwig went into a provincial building in the regional centre of Grande Prairie and poured sour crude oil in the lobby. Through the 1990s, hundreds of instances of vandalism occurred in the area against oil and natural gas industries in northwest Alberta, many of which were presumed to have been perpetrated by members of the Trickle Creek community.¹⁰ In 1997, vandalism turned to more overt forms of violence when two explosions occurred at well sites operated by AEC West. In 1998, a similar explosion occurred at a well site operated by the oil and gas producer Suncor. Weibo Ludwig was convicted of these bombings in 2000, and sentenced to 28 months in jail.

There have been other minor and major incidents of vandalism associated with environmental activism in Alberta. For example, a more significant occurrence took place in Edmonton on January 10, 2009, when unidentified individuals threw Molotov cocktails at the house of the former President and Chief Executive Officer of Syncrude Oil. The fire destroyed his residence and caused over \$1,100,000 in damages.¹¹

INCEL/MISOGYNISTIC EXTREMISM

Involuntary celibates or “Incels” are a highly misogynistic movement composed almost entirely of boys and men who identify themselves as being unable to establish romantic and sexual relationships with women. From these experiences, the movement has established shared grievances, a sense of community, a shared language and identified women and some men as responsible for their plight. Many Incels demonstrate a profound sense of self-loathing, in large part due to how they perceive their personal appearance and attributes. Incels frequently lament their social ineptitude and perceived unattractiveness to the opposite sex.

The movement identifies the root of their misfortune in cultural and generational change, shifting gender norms, the advancement of feminism and the women’s liberation movement. Incels believe these social developments have created norms and expectations where women have too much agency and autonomy to select their own sexual partners. These social developments impede the (re)establishment of a desired patriarchal society for the Incel community— one in which women are obedient and sexually accessible. Incels have ordered these grievances and beliefs through the construction of an ideology and a particular interpretation of history. A lack of sexual intimacy is perceived as the greatest, although not sole, injustice the community faces.

There are dozens of labels and classifications employed within the various elements of the Incel community. Within their ideology men and women are placed in categories, and certain groups of categories are subject to the greatest and most violent criticism. Sex workers and women who are sexually active are often labelled as “whores”. Other women are placed in typologies that are given women’s names, which are perceived as carrying specific physical and mental attributes. For example, “Stacys” are said to be physically attractive women who are unattainable by most males. Generally, Incels idealize

virgins and women who are seen as controllable. Names and classifications are also assigned to males such as “Chads”, who are characterized as good looking, fit males who have ready sexual access to women. Incels espouse anger, resentment and feelings of inadequacy towards “Chads” whom they see as traditionally “masculine” men.

There is overlap between Incels online culture of “shit-posting” and memes and other groups’ active online including Men’s Rights Advocates (MRAs), the more extreme Men Going Their Own Way (MGTOWs), and the alt-right. However, Incels’ entrenched opinions and rhetoric towards socially desirable males (Chads) distinguishes them from other MRAs or MGTOWs who do not define themselves in opposition to other men. Rather MGTOWs have sworn off relationships with women entirely and are instead focused on protecting men’s individual sovereignty. Further, MGTOWs believe feminism leads to what they term a “gynocentric society” where women’s rights are prioritized at the expense of men.

Similarly, traditional MRAs focus primarily on what they see as the dangers of feminism and its perceived discriminatory and oppressive nature towards men; however, they still desire relationships with women. Moreover, MRAs tend to emulate and project stereotypically masculine traits (such as dominance, strength, and emotional repression) as the reasoning behind their right to control women.

As opposed to MRAs and MGTOWs, Incels often link their perceived shortcomings with regards to societal stereotypes of masculinity as the reason for their predicament rather than trying to embody these stereotypes, as MRAs do. Nonetheless, Incels still believe they are entitled to women and have the same structural goal as MRA and MGTOW groups: a patriarchal society. As in other extremist movements, there is a projection of an idealized society and proscribed measures that can be taken to address the sexual crisis of Incels. In some segments of the movement, the more self-loathing aspects of the community are emphasized, and there is a kind of grudging acceptance of a social structure that is seen as

disallowing access to sexual intimacy for Incels.

Among the more extreme elements of the movement, violence against women (including sexual assault) and violence against an unjust society are viewed as justifiable measures for addressing deeply felt grievances. Incels have identified individuals whom they perceive as heroes or “martyrs” for the movement. For example, the clearest example of this phenomenon is the self-identified Incel, Elliot Rodger, who killed seven people including himself and injured 14 others in Isla Vista, California in 2014. Before the attack, Rodger authored a personal manifesto and an uploaded video clip that has since been celebrated within the movement. He outlined the abuses he felt throughout each period of his life, accentuating the cruel ways that women treated him, his inability to find a female sexual partner and his undesirable physical appearance. Stating, for example:

Ever since I've hit puberty, I've been forced to endure an existence of loneliness, rejection and unfulfilled desires. All because girls have never been attracted to me. Girls gave their affection and sex and love to other men but never to me. I'm twenty-two years old and I'm still a virgin. I've never even kissed a girl. I've been through college for two and a half years, more than that actually, and I'm still a virgin.¹²

Rodger's manifesto and attack became the blueprint and ultimate goal for other violent Incels. Just over a year later, Chris Harper-Mercer killed nine people and left eight others injured before killing himself in a mass shooting at a community college in Roseburg Oregon. Similar to Rodger, Harper-Mercer left a personal manifesto describing his approval for Rodger's attack and his inability to obtain a girlfriend.

My whole life has been one lonely enterprise. One loss after another. And here I am, 26, with no friends, no job, no girlfriend, a virgin. I long ago realized that society likes to deny people like me these things. People who are elite, people who stand with the gods. People like Elliot Rodger.¹³

The attack carried out by Harper-Mercer is reflective of a violent notion common on Incel forums - to “ER” (Elliot Rodger). The term “ER” ultimately implies that if an Incel has thoughts or motivations to commit suicide, they should support the global Incel movement by taking civilian lives along with their own, akin to what their martyr Elliot Rodger achieved in Isla Vista, California. This concept is routinely mentioned and promoted in the comment section of individual Incels posts regarding suicide and depression on Incel forums. This indicates that not only are Incels being inspired by the actions of past violent Incels, they are also being encouraged to commit violent acts from others inside the movement. As in other extremist movements, acts such as Elliot Rodger's or Chris Harper-Mercer's are seen as justifiable expressions of violence in the name of a greater cause and a shared grievance. And, as in other movements, acts of terrorist violence can have a knock-on effect within the wider extremist milieu through inspiring like-minded individuals.

Limited pre-existing research and data make it difficult to estimate just how large the global Incel community is, what its presence in Canada is and how many individuals within the community consider violence to be legitimate or necessary. However, there are upwards of 40,000 members contributing to some popular online forums. For example, prior to Reddit shutting down the r/incel board, there were over 40,000 active members. Incels.is – a private discussion board where individuals are required to go through a screening process to contribute, has roughly 9000 active members.

ANTI-ABORTION EXTREMISM

Anti-abortion activism has been a relatively mainstream phenomenon, animated primarily by a conservative interpretation of Christianity. There is some overlap in the beliefs of non-violent and violent anti-abortionist activists but where they diverge is in their beliefs about the acceptability and necessity of violence as a tool to stop the practice of abortion. The rhetoric used by both groups' frames health care practitioners as "butchers", "murderers" and "baby killers". In short, violent activists view abortion as murder and believe those who carry out the practice should be punished accordingly.

For non-violent activists, pickets outside of clinics, the displaying of graphic images of abortions on public property and other forms of legal/political activism are preferred methods of trying to affect change. Conversely, for violent extremists, their activism takes the form of threats and violent attacks against medical professionals and facilities/clinics (e.g., arson, bombings, etc.). These individuals believe they are engaged in a form of proactive violence against abortion providers, whom they view as murderers: in their minds, their actions are saving the lives of the unborn.¹⁴

The most notable violent anti-abortion group is the Army of God. Active primarily in the United States since 1982, the group has committed kidnappings, murders and an abundance of property crimes in pursuit of their desire to end abortion. The group routinely uses religion to justify their motives and believe that they are fighting Satan. Their published manual explains how the Army of God "is a real Army, and God is the General and Commander-in-Chief."¹⁵ A recent act of anti-abortion extremism occurred on November 29, 2015, at a Planned Parenthood clinic in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Robert L. Dear killed three people and left several others injured.

By comparison, Canada has not been subjected to the same level of anti-abortion extremism as the United States. However, there have been violent instances. For instance, on July 11, 2000, Dr Garson Romalis, based in British Columbia, was stabbed in the lobby of his clinic. Before that incident, he had been shot in his home by a sniper in 1994. The sniper attack was one of three similar incidents that took place in British Columbia, Ontario and Manitoba in the 1990s.

Contemporary Trends in Single-Issue Movements:

As noted above, single-issue extremist activities in a number of categories peaked in the 1990s and included environmental, animal rights and anti-abortion extremism. Animal rights and environmental extremism at this time were aimed at the destruction of commercial infrastructure - attacks against individuals and the public were virtually non-existent. To date, animal rights, anti-abortion, and environmental violent extremism has not led to fatalities in Canada. The same cannot be said of the Incel movement.

Incels have proven to be a demonstrable threat to public safety, as shown by the attack in Toronto in April of 2018. As the sole suspect at the time of publishing of this report, self-identified Incel member Alek Minassian is accused of undertaking a large-scale terrorist attack, which left ten dead and another 16 injured. The event in Canada is part of a series of violent incidents in North America that took place among Incels after the inspirational (for the movement) Elliot Rodger's attack in 2014. Shortly before carrying out his attack, Minassian posted the following message on his Facebook page:

Private (Recruit) Minassian Infantry 00010, wishing to speak to Sgt 4chan please. C23249161. The Incel Rebellion has already begun! We will overthrow all the Chads and Stacys! All hail the Supreme Gentleman Elliot Rodger!"¹⁶

The Toronto van attack demonstrates both the ability and willingness of Incels to carry out acts of mass casualty terrorism and the difficulties that law enforcement and national security investigators face in detecting and preventing these kinds of attacks.

As violent threats appear from not only more "traditional" extremist movements like those associated with AQAS and White Supremacy, there is also the emergence of a new generation of individuals, groups and movements that are willing to employ acts of mass casualty terrorism in the name of a cause. Violent groups are demonstrating inter-group hybridization and learning as groups and movements with different ideologies adapt tactics that have demonstrated "success" in generating casualties and psychological impacts beyond the immediate target of violence – for example, the use of vehicle-rammings. In light of this trend, governments, law enforcement and intelligence agencies face future threats that are more dynamic, more difficult to detect and thereby increasingly challenging.

RECRUITMENT

An underlying trend that links contemporary forms of single-issue activism is the dominant use of social media and online forums to recruit new members and promote their cause. As in other extremist movements, chat rooms, mes-

saging services and forums promote ideological platforms, establish a sense of community and normalize extremist behaviours. While each subset of single-issue extremism has unique characteristics, online recruitment is a tool that each one has harnessed to spread their movement's desired outcome and policy changes.

Environmental and animal rights violent extremists have used their online platforms to promote events, obtain financial support and expand their movements globally. In the case of anti-abortionists and Incels, many never meet face to face and attacks are often conducted by lone actors and driven by online activities. For anti-abortionists, online webpages such as the Army of God's platform are used as key recruitment tools for extremists associated with the movement. In the case of the Incel movement, which operates its entire content sharing and communication online, social media has worked as a connecting platform for Incels to share their personal grievances and collective self-loathing in a public fashion while retaining a degree of anonymity.

The online community functions as a support system as other Incels will reach out to offer support or advice and develop friendships without any direct connection. These indirect personal relationships that are formed are rare for those within the Incel community as many discuss struggling with social anxiety and isolation, difficulty

making friendships, and forms of mental illness. Permissibility for their outlandish beliefs in a community environment through forums and chat rooms has normalized ideas within even the most violent fringe of the movement. Recent data indicates how the flow of antifeminist ideas and information is rapidly spreading across social media. For example, the Red Pill "philosophy" has proliferated across a series of interrelated communities, including Incels and Men's Rights Activists (MRAs). *Taking the Red Pill* refers to "waking up" or the dramatic realization that men are the real "oppressed" and "marginalized" class in society – not women. These ideas are not unlike sentiments found amongst white nationalist and identitarian groups that focus specifically on the perceived marginalization and victimization of white males. The Red Pill ideas are one of the most common tropes found on popular Incel sites such as Reddit, 4chan and Incels.is. Incel subculture is sustained by this type of internally accessible or insular communication – memes disparaging women, categorizations of people into broad groups, and tropes such as the blue, red and black pill (referring to the period before one becomes aware of the 'truth' about relationships between men and women, rejecting the norms and adopting a more misogynist approach to relationships, and a fatalistic acceptance of one's own shortcoming and perceived inability to form a relationship, respectively).

Contemporary Single-Issue Activity in Alberta

Thus far, Alberta has not experienced an organized and deadly attack associated with single-issue violent extremism. However, single-issue extremism, especially in relation to the Incel movement, represents a growing and significant area of concern. There are active members of the Incel community who are situated in Alberta, primarily in the major urban centres, who celebrate and promote the kinds of acts of violence that were carried out in Toronto in 2018. The recent emergence of Incel subculture and its rapid expansion online has created a new and somewhat amorphous threat for law enforcement agencies and investigators. Government, non-government and law enforcement agencies tasked with prevention of violent extremism and terrorism are struggling with questions of how to categorize and address this new form of extremism.

One public case associated with Incels is the trial of Sheldon Russell Bentley, who is accused of murdering Donald Doucette in July of 2015, in Edmonton, Alberta. Doucette was unconscious when Bentley, a security guard, stomped on his stomach and ultimately killed him. There was no provocation that led to the attack. At Bentley's sentencing hearing, a forensic psychiatrist and a probation officer reported that Bentley's anger and frustration stemmed from his inability to find a sexual partner. The crown prosecutor noted, "He (Bentley) seems to put himself into the category of an involuntary celibate person."¹⁷ It was also noted that his sole relationship was for five months when he was 27 years old - he described it as the

happiest time of his life.¹⁸ Outside of this case, there is no publicly available information on the number of active and violent Incels who are currently present in Alberta.

Environmental extremism also remains an area of concern in Alberta. Northern Alberta oil and gas sites continue to be impacted by vandalism and damage that is not caused by theft. In 2018, vehicles on lease roads were targeted with spikes and vandalism. There were also incidents of oil and gas pipeline shootings. In 2017, \$500,000 in damages was inflicted on a pipeline close to Hythe, Alberta. No charges were filed and the perpetrator(s) are still unknown. Besides this incident, local law enforcement officers have noted the following incidents in Alberta that were typical of the minimal environmental activism taking place in recent years:

XXXX was drilling on his property... [he was] charged with uttering threats, two years ago, when XXXX started drilling [according to him] they 'ruined his property' and he wasn't being compensated.

- Law Enforcement Member, Alberta

Speculatively, an uptick in incidents of environmental activism (both legal and criminal) is possible around the contentious construction of the Trans Mountain Pipeline. Within this context, the most likely form of violence would be minor, reactive and during protests, and sabotage or vandalism of equipment along the route is another possibility.

Finally, with respect to anti-abortion extremism, Alberta has not been exposed to any recent violence. Members of law enforcement that we interviewed discussed a pro-life presence in Alberta, especially in more rural areas, but as the officer below notes – this activity is decidedly non-criminal in nature:

We've had a problem with the anti-abortion protestors with explicit signs...they're normally protesting lawfully so there isn't much we can do with that.

- Law Enforcement Member, Alberta

To date, anti-abortion groups have protested peacefully and exercised their rights within the law in Alberta. In 2018, the provincial government enacted Bill 9, which created a minimum 50-metre no-protest zone around abortion clinics. There has been strong opposition to the bill from pro-life advocates as some have cited it goes against Canadian freedom of speech laws. With this heightened exposure to abortion clinics in Alberta, it is possible there could be an uptake in violence against abortion providers and clinics. Again, this would most likely be reactive violence in the context of protests.

Endnotes

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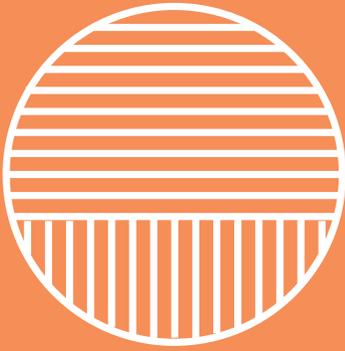
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WHITE SUPREMACY & ASSOCIATED IDEOLOGIES

WHITE SUPREMACY & ASSOCIATED IDEOLOGIES

Activity Level (2018):

- Traditional White
- Power Groups: Declining
- White Nationalist & Identitarian Groups: Increasing

Primary Active Groups and Movements:

- Blood and Honour
- Combat-18
- Identitarian Movement
- Christian Identity Movement

WHAT IS WHITE SUPREMACY & ASSOCIATED IDEOLOGIES?

Often considered a sub-category of what has been loosely described as Right-Wing Extremism (RWE), or the “far right”, white supremacy and its associated ideologies are centred on ideas of racial exclusivity and superiority. White supremacists reject, sometimes violently, basic democratic principles of individual equality and rights in favour of a vision of a society where racial identity and hierarchy becomes the basis of political and social life. White supremacy and associated Christian identity, neo-pagan (Odinism), white nationalist and identitarian movements frame, in different ways, their desire for the reinforcement or reestablishment of the privileged position of individuals of European heritage in western societies and advocate for different tactics and methods in order to achieve this goal.

These groups may profess secular and religious beliefs, differ on who truly belongs in a “white society” (i.e., some will call for the exclusion of Catholics, Eastern Europeans and others) and the level and extent of violence they are willing to use in order to reach their vision of a racially exclusive society. However, they also have much in common. What binds these groups and movements together are shared grievances, slogans, teachings and tactics. Given their preference for racial privilege and uniformity in western states, the groups share a fervent opposition to non-European migration and multiculturalism (as both government policy and a way of life).

While there is considerable cross-pollination of ideas and tactics within the wider white supremacist movement, there is also some variation in terms of the political and religious philosophies that underpin the movement’s groups. Long-standing organizations that have persisted for generations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, which grew out of the American

Civil War and Jim Crow Southern United States; neo-Nazi groups and related skinheads which sprung out of the 1970s and 80s skinhead music culture of Britain and North America; and more religiously inclined Christian Identity and Neo-Pagan groups, exist alongside the more recently established elements of the white nationalist and identitarian movements. While all of these interpretations share a desire for a racially exclusive “white society”, it is worthwhile briefly noting their characteristics and differences.

NEO-NAZI & WHITE POWER SKINHEAD GROUPS

More representative of established white supremacist groups, neo-Nazis draw on the symbolism, actions and writings of the fascist war-era German leader Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist party. Neo-Nazis were largely non-existent in the decades that followed the Second World War but began to appear in the latter part of the 20th century. Neo-Nazis view Jews as their primary enemy, but also target ethnic minority communities, LGBTQ communities, anti-fascist groups and others. For these groups and individuals, Nazi symbolism can be particularly attractive, not only as a representation of their belief system but also as a means of spreading fear among their enemies and competitors within the wider neo-Nazi movement.

White power skinheads are an associated movement that has frequently employed Nazi symbolism, including salutes, the use of HH and 88 tattoos (HH standing for Heil Hitler and 88 representing the 8th letter of the alphabet and the same statement) and swastikas. These groups emerged out of the white power music scene of the late 1970s and 1980s in the United Kingdom. Representative of stereotypical white supremacists for many – white power skinheads often shave their heads and frequently display a sort of uniform - Doc Martin footwear or steel-toed boots, suspenders and bomber jackets. Spearheaded by figures such as Ian Donaldson and his band Skrewdriver, Blood

and Honour in the UK, and George Burdi and Resistance Records with bands like RAHOWA (an abbreviation of “racial holy war”) in Canada, white power music mobilized a generation of disaffected white youth.

WHITE NATIONALISTS, IDENTITARIANS & THE “ALT-RIGHT”

Represented today by articulate and clean-cut leadership in the form of figures like Richard Spencer, white nationalists and associated movements such as identitarians, together with the so-called alt-right, represent the newest generation of white supremacism. As educated and well-dressed white supremacists with trendy haircuts, suits and designer clothing, the newest generation of the broader movement has outwardly sanitized its appearance and the language it uses to spread its racism and bigotry.

Much like other white supremacists, white nationalists believe that race and racial exclusivity should become the basis of political and social life in western states. Drawing on ideas and energy from North American and European populist and far-right parties, they are highly opposed to immigration from non-European states and multiculturalism. They are also heavily focused on white genocide or “replacement” conspiracy theories which rest on the idea that immigration and “race mixing” will eventually destroy Europeans, racially and culturally. To achieve their vision, white nationalists propose a number of violent and non-violent strategies – including forcible deportations of non-whites from western societies and the formation of independent white-only homelands. There have been a number of violent incidents including homicides that have been tied to individuals and groups professing a white nationalist outlook.

CHRISTIAN IDENTITY MOVEMENT & NEO-PAGANISM (ODINISM)

Christian identity groups hold to a distorted interpretation of Christianity that paints whites as the direct descendants of the ancient Israelites and Abraham, and Jews and non-whites as the damned and cursed descendants of the biblical figure Cain. The earliest origins of the Christian Identity movement can be found in the early 20th century, but its zenith in popularity and size occurred under the stewardship of Richard Butler, founder of the Aryan Nations. Butler took on the bizarre mix of Christian ideas, white supremacy, anti-government sentiments and neo-Nazism that framed the early Christian Identity movement in the American West, and developed it into a unifying force among white supremacists in the 1980s. Butler and the Aryan Nations hosted supremacists from around the world, but primarily from the United States and Canada, at his compound at Hayden Lake in Northern Idaho during his annual “Aryan Nations World Congress” – which in the mid-1980s attracted hundreds of

attendees. Through these congresses, Butler and the Aryan Nations drove networking and the closer alignment of Christian Identity and white supremacist groups. Today, a host of groups adhere to aspects of Christian Identity and continue the legacy that Butler (now deceased) began.

Growing out of the uncomfortable recognition of some white supremacists that Jesus Christ was of Jewish origin and the adoration of Nordic, Celtic and Germanic cultural and religious traditions, white supremacist groups have turned to ancient polytheistic traditions contained in Paganism and religious beliefs that loosely draw on Norse beliefs - such as Odinism. Similar to what was seen among neo-Nazi groups in previous generations, these adherents heavily draw on symbolism (both Nordic and Celtic) and ideas of racial purity as grounds for opposition to modern liberal and multicultural political cultures. This symbolism has become particularly popular among new generations of white supremacists, nationalists and the “alt-right” who have sought to move away from the historical baggage associated with neo-Nazi imagery.

Understanding White Supremacist Movements: Beliefs, Tactics & Grievances

The diversity of groups that exist in the broader white supremacist movement can be distracting and misleading, as there is more that draws these groups together than divides them. While an exhaustive review of the ideas, grievances and tactics that drive white supremacy today are outside of the scope of this report, what is presented here are the central works, slogans and goals that define the broader movement, both in recent history and today.

In many ways, the shared ideas and interests of white supremacy can be summed up through a slogan that represents a rallying call for a broad range of groups. This slogan originated with one of the most violent white supremacist organizations of the late 20th century - the Order, and one their members, David Lane. Referred to in the movement as the fourteen words, the slogan reads, “We must secure the existence of our people and a future for white children.” The saying pulls together key themes of the broader white supremacist movement – such as the increasingly popular and broadly replicated (among white supremacist groups) idea of “white genocide”. The fourteen words appear frequently in white supremacist symbolism - for instance, “1488” which denotes a combination of the fourteen words and Heil Hitler, appears in numerous documents, tattoos etc. Groups like the Order and other violent extremist groups associated with white supremacy – such as White Aryan Resistance (WAR), Blood and Honour and the Hammerskins, have drawn on slogans like the fourteen words and shared writings that form the basis of their ideology. Importantly, these texts

also shape the methods and tactics, which they use to meet their political goals.

Another example of an important text for the movement is the early 20th century forged Russian document known as the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. It is popular among supremacist groups who commonly refer to western governments as the Zionist Occupation Government (ZOG) and identify Jews as their primary enemy. The forged *Protocols* details the minutes of a meeting that sets out a plan for global domination by Jews and associated banking interests.

Arguably, the most commonly read and cited works for white supremacists is the *Turner Diaries*. Written by a former physics professor and ardent white supremacist, the novel depicts a future where the American government is overthrown and a worldwide “race war” leads to the extermination of non-whites, Jews and other “race enemies” on a global scale. The book details the use of terrorism and guerilla warfare by a cadre of white supremacists to achieve their political goals and eventually establish a racially homogenous society. Since the publication of the book in 1978, groups and individuals almost immediately began emulating aspects of its storyline; for example, the Order modelled itself on the small terrorist cells depicted in the early sections of the book. It has also been suggested that the Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh’s attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in 1995, mirrored attacks on a Federal Bureau of Investi-

gation (FBI) building depicted in the *Turner Diaries*.

Small network and “lone actor” terrorist attacks, like the violence carried out by the Order and Timothy McVeigh and his co-conspirators, have been a relatively common feature of violent white supremacist groups. Important historical leaders in the movement like Tom Metzger, leader of the violent WAR, and Louis Beam, a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), have written widely circulated essays on what is known as “leaderless resistance”. These teachings have been adopted by a number of violent white supremacist groups, such as the Combat-18 wing of Blood and Honour. The following section of Beam’s essay sums up a key element of the strategy:

[Leaderless resistance is] a system of organization that is based upon cell organization, but does not have any central control or direction, that is in fact almost identical to the methods used by the Committees of Correspondence during the American Revolution. Utilizing the Leaderless Resistance concept, all individuals and groups operate independently of each other, and never report to a central headquarters or single leader for direction or instruction.¹

Outside of their general opposition to racial diversity, white supremacists have also been historically driven by specific grievances and incidents that are seen as evidence that support their conspiracy theories. An import-

ant example is the siege at Waco, Texas in 1993, where the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) and the FBI engaged in a standoff with the Branch Davidian cult at their compound, resulting in an exchange of gunfire, a fire at the compound and the deaths of 82 members of the cult, including 20 children. Another example is the standoff at Ruby Ridge in Northern Idaho, which took place in 1992 and resulted in the deaths of the 14-year-old son and wife of Randall Weaver, who had ties to local Aryan Nations groups. Events like Waco, Ruby Ridge and more recent developments like the election of the first Black American president (Barack Obama), are seen as evidence that widely circulated writings and conspiracy theories are factual.

More contemporary writings and grievances within the movement have tended to focus on anti-Islamic sentiments, “white protectionism”, opposition to multiculturalism and “cultural Marxism” (a euphemism used among white Nationalists to negatively characterize social democracy, socialism and those engaged with social justice issues), anti “globalism”, pro-gun rights or so-called “alt-right” perspectives. Today, a new generation of white supremacists has created significant innovations within the broader movement - they have sought to create a more palatable and mainstream version of white supremacy. The white nationalist slogan “it’s okay to be white” is a good example of a catchphrase that captures this sanitized version of white supremacy. These trends have also been supported by political and technological developments in the early 21st century.

Contemporary Trends in White Supremacy

EMPOWERMENT WITHIN A POPULIST POLITICAL CLIMATE

In recent years, white supremacy in North America and Europe has been stimulated by two associated trends, one bottom up and one top down. The latter is characterized by the reemergence of far-right and populist politics on both sides of the Atlantic, and the former by the widespread diffusion of ideas and broadening of recruitment via an ever-evolving Internet, with its forums, applications and social media platforms.

The election of parties that are distinctly opposed to non-European immigration, multiculturalism and “globalism” in countries like Poland, Hungary, Austria and Italy, has empowered white supremacist and associated groups. The election of Donald Trump in the United States became a rallying call for American white supremacists. That particular branch of the movement saw a massive 600 per cent growth in their follower-base from 2012-2016 on Twitter.² Out of the most popular hashtags of the white supremacist movement on Twitter during this period, Trump-related hashtags ranked second only to #whitegenocide.

It is difficult to objectively measure the impact of the growth of populism and far-right politics on white supremacy. However, through political support of some of the movement’s ideas and priorities (like curtailment of

immigration from non-European countries), populist and far-right politicians have created a sense of permissibility and acceptance for white supremacists and their ideas. These trends have aided organized groups and a new generation of leadership that seeks to make their views more mainstream and palatable to a wider audience.

RECRUITING A NEW GENERATION OF WHITE SUPREMACISTS

Feeling increasingly empowered and emboldened in the current political climate, white supremacists in North America and Europe have been taking full advantage of technological change in the online space and their ability to expand recruitment techniques.

The widespread availability of white supremacist materials online, the ability to find like-minded people and potential recruits and the level of social interaction afforded by the Internet, is a game changer for the broader movement. These spaces allow established veterans of the movement and new and potential recruits, a greater degree of freedom where they can express views and opinions that would be seen as offensive in much of society. Don Black, the founder of Stormfront (one of the internet’s largest white supremacist platforms) summed up the role of Internet in recruitment, stating:

The net has provided [the movement] with the opportunity to bring our point of view to hundreds of thousands of people.... [websites] which are interactive, provide those people who are attracted to our ideas with a forum to talk to each other and form a virtual community.³

In more recent years, white supremacist content has moved far beyond venues like Stormfront – there is now a plethora of venues where recruitment and indoctrination can occur. For example, users engaged on popular counter-cultural forums such as 4Chan, 8Chan and Reddit share posts, create memes (images and short videos with accompanying text) and rapidly distribute those messages through highly diffuse but interconnected networks. In turn, these messaging tools are distributed in even more popular social media platforms – such as Twitter and Facebook.

THE RISE OF “LONE” ACTORS

As mentioned previously, the fundamental change in tactics among white supremacist groups – moving from larger group-based violence towards individual or small-cell (groups of two or three individuals) had been greatly aided by the proliferation of these broader, often virtual networks online. The increased accessibility of white supremacist texts, cultural artifacts (songs, posters, memes etc.) and discussion groups has made it easier for individuals to ideologically affiliate with the movement without making physical contact with other members.

Today, a complex social movement has been established online through which white supremacist ideology is diffused and re-energized. This network does not have formal leadership per se but is rather made up of bloggers, independent writers, social media “influencers” and supporters who help to spread ideas and narratives that drive lone actor and small network terrorism.

Through this movement, established ideas and tropes – like the idea of white genocide (i.e., that the “white race” is being driven to extinction through migration and the mixing of races) and the 14 words slogan are repackaged and “sold” to a new generation. For example, #whitegenocide is one of the most popular tags used in white supremacist messaging online today. Memes, “shit-posting” (a non sequitur like communication style used to express irony, engage in “trolling” or otherwise interrupt online discussions) and highly insular language, sayings and slogans are used within this social movement to create forms of communication that promote violence and are attuned to a new generation.

A concrete example of how these ideas and messages can drive lone actor attacks among white supremacists is the horrific New Zealand mass shooting/terrorist attack in March 2019. In that event and in social media posts leading to the event, the attacker made consistent reference to white genocide theories and the 14 words. Moreover, there was also identification with previous incidents and attackers as both Alexandre Bissonnette and Andres Breivik were identified as examples of heroes for the cause. What is emerging among lone actors is a trend where mobilization to violence occurs largely online, outside of the purview of law enforcement and national security agencies.

Never truly “alone”, these individuals interact with an online community and perceive themselves as part of a broader movement. Nonetheless, they can go about attack planning and execution without necessarily physically engaging or meeting with members of the extremist community. Cases like that of Alexandre Bissonnette are exemplary and instructive on this emerging phenomenon. These kinds of cases (e.g., the 2019 New Zealand attacker, Bissonnette and Breivik) demonstrate how difficult detection and prevention of lone actor attacks can be. One area in which detection could be improved is through paying careful attention to the language and statements of members of online communities and any indication of individuals to carry out violent attacks. According to one study, roughly 70 per cent of lone actor

terrorists leak their intention to act and 90 per cent leak their ideological convictions.⁴ Creating greater awareness about this kind of behaviour, both among law enforce-

ment and the public is an important step in creating prevention around an increasingly challenging trend.



White Supremacism in Alberta

HISTORICAL PRESENCE

White supremacist groups have a long-standing history in Alberta that can be traced back to the early 20th century and the activities of a well-known organization imported from the United States – the Ku Klux Klan. By 1927 the KKK had recruited over 1000 members in the province. By 1930, the Klan had 11 local chapters and by 1931, the group’s membership had grown exponentially, with over 50 local chapters and between 7000 and 8000 members.⁵ While the KKK’s growth in Alberta was both dramatic and dynamic, its popularity was relatively fleeting, as by the mid-1930s the group devolved into small, primarily rural pockets.

From the 1930s to the 1980s white supremacy, at least insofar as being represented by distinct and identifiable groups, was largely absent in the province. The KKK experienced a small resurgence in Alberta in the 1980s with growing rural, semi-urban and urban pockets concentrated around Lethbridge, Western Alberta and Northern Alberta. In 1988, two younger members of the KKK (Robert Hamilton and Timothy Heggan) were charged and convicted over a plot to detonate explosives at the Jewish Community Center in Calgary. During this “resurgence period” the KKK membership in Alberta may have numbered as high as 100.

During the 1980s, and into the early 1990s, Alberta’s KKK, and emerging Aryan Nations groups, had linkages to

arguably more active contingents of the KKK in Saskatchewan. Members of the latter were engaged in violent acts during this period, including the murder of trapper Leo LaChane from the Big River First Nation, by Carney Nerland (a member of the KKK and a senior figure in a branch of the Aryan Nations).

In the early 1980s, high school teacher James Keegstra from the village of Eckville in western Alberta, was charged and convicted of hate crimes under the Canadian Criminal Code for teaching holocaust denial and anti-Jewish conspiracy theories to his students. Mirroring other senior white supremacist figures in Canada, Keegstra was politically active in the Social Credit Party of Alberta (he was later expelled).

By 1990, Terry Long, leader of the Aryan Nations in Canada, was hosting white supremacist festivals close to the Saskatchewan border at Provost. Long networked extensively with fellow Alberta white supremacists and had links to members of the KKK and Aryan Nations in the Prairie provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. In this sense, Long was a unifying force among white supremacists in Western Canada in the 1990s. At that time, Long resided in a small town close to Eckville (Caroline). Mapping the activities of white supremacists in the province at this time reveals identifiable concentrations of activity in western Alberta (West of Red Deer to the vicinity of Rocky Mountain House) and the Provost-Lloydminster area.

Larger cities like Calgary and Edmonton were also impacted by the growth of white supremacist networks in Alberta at the time. For example, the short-lived but violent Final Solution Skinhead group (active from 1989-1992) was active in Edmonton. The group grew rapidly during this period, numbering as many as 20 individuals. Foreshadowing the activities of neo-Nazi groups in the 2000s, the group distributed hate propaganda, engaged in violent confrontations with anti-fascist groups and carried out violent assaults on perceived enemies.

Terry Long's departure from the province in the 1990s (driven in part by legal pressures and increased media attention), left a significant void in leadership in Alberta. Shortly thereafter, the wider white supremacist movement effectively collapsed into "rogue crews" and small, mostly criminally involved groups of white supremacists. This ushered in a relative period of quiet in Alberta between the mid-1990s and mid-2000s.

MORE RECENT YEARS

By the mid-2000s influential white supremacist leaders moved into the province from other regions of Canada, and between 2006-2017 the city of Calgary became an epicentre for violent white power skinheads, neo-Nazis, and the white nationalist movement in Canada. In particular, the period between 2008-2012 witnessed the highest level of violence from white supremacist groups since the early 1990s. During these years there were roughly ten noteworthy incidents of violence. This included serious assaults on immigrants and visible minorities in Calgary and Edmonton, at least five homicides, and periodic bouts of infighting between supremacist groups involving assaults, attempted murder and the use of explosives (pipe bombs).

Much like in the early 1990s, the re-emergence of white supremacy as a significant and violent force in Alberta was driven by relatively capable leadership and net-

working activities. Between 2006-2009 the nucleus of a formidable and violent new white supremacist group in Calgary was established and named Aryan Guard. Other notable groups during this period include the violent, conflict-prone and now defunct Western European Bloodline (WEB), a small contingent of the Volksfront group and the American white supremacist group White Aryan Resistance, which retains a minor presence in the province to this day. Other groups with a small or negligible presence include ID Canada, the Brotherhood of Klans, Daily Stormer, Lucifer's Legion, Aryan Brotherhood and the KKK.

One group that grew rapidly in Alberta (White Boy Posse) in the late 2000s and early 2010s clearly demonstrates the nexus that exists between organized crime and violent extremism. Active in a number of smaller and larger urban centres in Alberta (e.g., Whitecourt, Lloydminster, and Edmonton), where they profited from the economic boom, the gang distinguished itself through its use of neo-Nazi symbolism (swastika tattoos, hanging of Nazi flags in clubhouses etc.) and ideology. The group has been tied to multiple murders in Alberta and Saskatchewan (members have been convicted of three murders to date), including the murder of a pregnant woman in Saskatoon and the beheading of another victim.

By far the largest and most relevant group in recent years is Aryan Guard/Blood and Honour. At the time of its founding in 2006, Aryan Guard was a white power skinhead group that drew heavily on neo-Nazi symbolism and held to the principles contained in the 14 words.⁶ The group was also supported and its leadership mentored, by some of the most senior and long-standing white supremacists in the country. By the end of the 2000s, the Aryan Guard had morphed into a chapter of the British-born Blood and Honour skinheads and a branch of Combat-18, with the latter operating around principles of covert resistance. This development spoke to the abilities of the group's leadership to maintain and grow an organization despite the notorious infighting and splintering that has taken place within Canadian white supremacist circles, including

in Alberta. Speaking to the leadership capabilities of the group, a member of law enforcement observed:

I think he proved here that he had a fairly successful business plan for recruiting, and he was able to build the numbers, on both sides. Build the ideology, but then also the Combat 18 portion who are true extreme guys willing to commit the violence.

- Law Enforcement Member

[He] does a better job, I think, of being better organized, not drawing attention, and just seemed to have a better plan... Did a good job, was able to build a group and separate the two out – so he has the neo-Nazi side but also creates Blood and Honour which is the more extreme or violent component [Combat-18].

- Law Enforcement Member

He stopped drawing all the attention to himself...his attitude changed, and he became much more respectful and reasonable... More what I saw out of the organized crime guys that I dealt with... he seemed to take a page out of their book. Started wearing regular clothes to not draw attention to himself, not the high-laced boots and Nazi clothing.

- Law Enforcement Member

From 2013 onwards, Blood and Honour was in an expansionary period – peaking at roughly 60-70 members between 2016-2017. Mirroring trends in the broader white supremacist movement in North America and Europe, Blood and Honour adapted to the times and took advantage of a new generation of sympathizers. During its expansionary phase, there was a concerted effort to make the group more palatable and accessible to new recruits (e.g., so-called “alt-right”). The group engaged in online recruitment, softened its neo-Nazi messaging and adopted the increasingly popular language and theme of European heritage and pride.

Whatever the success of the group in Southern Alberta, especially in the Calgary region, expansion into the rest

of the province has proven difficult. For example, there have been multiple failed attempts by Blood and Honour and other groups to expand to the provincial capital.

The group has tried, repeatedly, to move to Edmonton, but they have failed to establish a presence. They get likes on social media, but that’s about it... there were some combat-18 stickers found at the legislature grounds.

- Law Enforcement Member

The Capital region was not spared from white supremacist violence and activities during this period (2006-2017). For example, there was a rash of violent attacks in the city targeting visible minority and newcomer communities in 2011. Most of the activities (e.g., propaganda, sticker and poster distribution) and violence that occurred was conducted by groups and individuals based in Southern Alberta, or by the smaller networks and individual adherents based in Edmonton and surrounding bedroom communities.

THE CONTEMPORARY PICTURE

To date, Alberta has not experienced an organized terrorist attack associated with white supremacy. Consistent with trends seen in the rest of Canada, violence has tended to be reactive, internecine or targeted on visible minority groups. Most of the violence, both external and internal to the movement, has been largely random and fuelled by the culture and behaviour of the movement (white power music, hyper-masculinity, alcohol and narcotics consumption). The noted exception to this trend has been some of the more targeted infighting between groups in Calgary between 2009-2010 and the foiled KKK bombing of a Jewish Cultural Centre in Calgary in the late 1980s.

White supremacy and associated ideologies continued to impact Albertans in a number of communities and regions throughout Alberta in 2018. The past year has seen

significant developments among prominent groups and leadership that has ushered in a period of decline in the broader movement. In some key regions like Southern Alberta and Calgary, membership in established groups (i.e., Blood and Honour and Combat-18) has declined by 50 per cent or more. Given the group's prominence and the recent period of growth that it experienced (2016-2017), the exit of key Blood and Honour/Combat-18 leadership is a meaningful development that could usher in a period of dissolution similar to what was witnessed in Alberta in the early 1990s. To date, this last point remains speculative.

The assessment identified Calgary and surrounding areas as the primary concentration of white supremacist and associated ideologies in the province. Smaller concentrations and isolated individual adherents are present in Southern Alberta, Central Alberta, the Greater Edmonton Region and Northern Alberta. While a majority of smaller networks and individuals inhabit small regional centres like Lethbridge, Medicine Hat and Fort McMurray, more isolated rural cases were also found. A small and declining presence of white supremacists can also be found in provincial and federal corrections facilities in Alberta.

There is some recent evidence of activity among Christian identity groups in the province (e.g., distribution of pamphlets). Further, individuals linked to white supremacy and related ideologies also continue to engage in criminal activities, including trafficking in narcotics and firearms. There is an ongoing nexus between the broader white supremacist movement and organized crime.

With the decline of neo-Nazi and white power skinhead groups in Alberta, white nationalist and identitarian groups are arguably best situated to take advantage of demographic changes, new technologies and online communities, and local and international political trends. There is evidence of a new and engaged generation of white nationalists in Alberta. Groups and leadership that are capable of employing the more sanitized and therefore more widely appealing language of the white nationalist movement could reinvigorate white supremacy in the province. There is some evidence of this trend in recent periods of growth (2016-2017), within online communities where Albertans are active, and at post-secondary institutions in Alberta.

Endnotes

¹ Louis Beam, “Leaderless Resistance” February 1992 <http://www.louis-beam.com/leaderless.htm>

² JM Berger. Nazis vs. ISIS on Twitter: A Comparative Study of White Nationalists and ISIS Online Social Media Networks. George Washington University, September, 2016, https://cchs.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2371/f/downloads/Nazis%20v.%20ISIS%20Final_0.pdf, accessed July 16, 2018.

³ Pete Simi and Robert Futurell. *American Swastika: Inside the White Power Movement’s Hidden Spaces of Hate*, 87.

⁴ Lasse Lindekilde, Francis O’Connor & Bart Schuurman, “Radicalization patterns and modes of attack planning and preparation among lone-actor terrorists: an exploratory analysis,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* (2017), 12.

⁵ Howard Palmer, “Nativism in Alberta,” *Historical Paper* 9, no. 1 (1974), 143.

⁶ Brett Gundlock, A New Look at Calgary’s Neo-Nazi Movement, *Vice News*, https://www.vice.com/en_ca/article/exkmvz/a-new-look-at-calgarys-neo-nazi-movement



HATE CRIMES & HATE INCIDENTS IN ALBERTA

HATE CRIMES & HATE INCIDENTS IN ALBERTA

The three primary threats or areas of impact related to hate, extremism and violence this report has identified are national security, public safety and Canada's social fabric. The continued rise in hate crimes and hate incidents clearly impacts our country's social fabric and is therefore essential to consider. The same underlying sets of beliefs about the "other" or an out-group, which lead individuals to engage in violent extremism are present, albeit to a lesser degree, among individuals who commit hate crimes or hate incidents. In other words, these phenomena exist along a continuum – the relationship between them cannot be ignored.

Throughout our interviews with human service professionals and community members, concerns around the significant surge in police-reported hate crimes or hate incidents were common topics of discussion – with

many participants indicating a link between hate crimes/incidents, social polarization and violent extremism.

Beyond this link, respondents also discussed the variety of impacts that these sorts of incidents have on individuals, families and communities – the ways in which the climate created by these occurrences makes it harder to outwardly practice your faith with dignity, express your identity or figure out your place in Canadian society. These kinds of experiences negatively impact feelings of security, general well-being and community safety.

Based on our research, the OPV developed specific recommendations to aid in countering the spread and growth of hate. These can be grouped into two broad categories: reporting and responding.

REPORTING HATE

- Civil society initiatives like **#StopHateAB should be expanded and promoted** more rigorously. They offer an opportunity to record incidents, which are either non-criminal or where the victim does not want to report to law enforcement. This data is useful for organizations active in prevention and can aid in policy development and research. Moreover, it provides victims with an opportunity to share their stories.
- Statistics and discussions related to hate crimes and hate incidents should be expanded to better capture the **intersectional elements of hate**. Understanding the intersectional identity of victims will help improve programming and prevention efforts as well as help organizations that deal with victims of hate to better anticipate the needs of prospective clients.
- **Capturing and publicly sharing the location of hate incidents** will similarly improve the ability of government and civil society to develop responses. For example, based on our research, individuals seem to be disproportionately targeted while using public transit, whether on a vehicle or at a station. This sort of information is relevant to policymakers and practitioners but is not presently readily available.

RESPONDING TO HATE

- **Law enforcement and government agencies must continue to become more proactive (to prevent) and responsive to hate crimes and hate incidents.** Especially in racialized communities, the perception that police services do not take these incidents seriously has wide-ranging repercussions on their relationships with police.
- Law enforcement agencies should aim **to supplement the training provided to recruits on hate crimes by including modules on this in other specialized courses**, like those offered to members as a part of counterterrorism or equity and diversity training programs.
- **Adequate resourcing of hate crimes units is essential** – officers in units we spoke with expressed their feelings that they were overextended and faced structural barriers to engaging in a satisfactory level of proactive outreach.
- **Civil society organizations engaged in responding to hate** by either raising awareness about the impact of hate or providing support to victims, **should receive additional multi-level government support.**

Measuring & Documenting Hate

Alberta's Muslim, Black, Jewish, Indigenous, South Asian and LGBT communities all discussed the impact of hate and said they believed there were more hate-related events over the last three to five years. Respondents were nearly unanimous in their belief that measuring hate crimes/incidents – due to the damaging but non-criminal nature of most incidents – was exceptionally challenging. By their nature, hate incidents fall below the criminal threshold but can still have a deleterious impact on social cohesion and a community's sense of belonging in Canada. A major hurdle to accurately measuring hate was reluctance within some communities to reporting these crimes, primarily for one of two reasons.

First, many people were concerned that reporting hate incidents could generate more attention to their community, which in turn could invite increased victimization. Instead, these communities decided that avoiding reporting – and media attention in particular – was the best way to deal with hate crimes and hate incidents. Second, there was recognition of the non-criminal nature of many incidents and the challenges associated with levying hate crimes charges, so victims did not feel that it was worth their time to report these instances of hate. In light of this, many individuals described a need for greater awareness and utilization of civil society tools like #StopHateAB, developed by the Alberta Hate Crimes Committee. Such tools are effective options to supplement more traditional crime reporting through law enforcement.

The release of the 2017 hate crimes data by Statistics Canada generated a significant amount of media attention focused on the nearly 50 per cent year-over-year rise in national incidents. This rise was driven in large part by a jump in the number of hate-related property crimes (vandalism, graffiti, etc.). The Statistics Canada data also shows a rise in victimization in Alberta, with rates in both Edmonton and Calgary rising – although both cities still have a per-capita rate below the national average (there were 192 police-reported incidents in Alberta in 2017).

Religious minority communities, most especially Muslim and Jewish communities, are increasingly targeted with hate crimes. Indeed, the increase in these incidents since 2012 is startling. For example, between 2012-2015 there was roughly a 250 per cent increase in police-reported hate crimes targeting Canadian Muslims. In 2017, this number increased by a further 150 per cent. That same year the Canadian Jewish community reported a 60 per cent spike in police-reported hate crimes; they remain the most impacted religious minority community in Canada when it comes to police-reported hate crimes.

An important caveat to note here is that while this increase is certainly due in part to a rising number of incidents, several law enforcement officers we interviewed also noted that victims they spoke to were increasingly willing to file reports. As awareness of the problem grows and reporting improves, the statistical and qualitative data that can be drawn from these incidents can be used



to shape prevention programs and lobby multiple levels of government for greater action.

Definitely an increase in reporting – and that is our goal here. A lot of times people won't report it.

- Law Enforcement Member



Victimization

Accurately capturing data when measuring hate crimes is challenging, as the way in which the data is recorded does not effectively deal with the intersectional elements of victimization. For example, if a Canadian-Nigerian woman who wears a hijab is targeted, determining whether to code the attack as motivated by religious or racial hatred is not easy, but it may be these particular overlapping identities that are central to her victimization. Until this issue is somehow better dealt with in crime reporting, it will be difficult to truly grasp the scale, scope and nature of the problem in Canada.

That said, the primary group affected by hate crimes (in nominal terms) were Black Albertans (35 incidents), followed by Arab or West Asian Albertans (30), Muslim Albertans (26), East and Southeast Asian Albertans (18), Jewish Albertans (16) and LGBTQ+ Albertans (16). It is important to note that different communities tend to have different reporting rates and therefore this cardinal ranking may or may not reflect actual rates of victimization. For example, there were only four police-reported hate crimes targeting Indigenous Albertans - from our research and interviews with Indigenous leaders in the province, this is certainly not an accurate reflection of experiences with hate among First Nation, Metis and Inuit communities. Moreover, these crude rates do not capture the effects of structural hate and racism, which, for example, disproportionately affect Indigenous peoples.

MECHANISMS OF VICTIMIZATION

Respondents tended to describe hate as functioning on two levels: targeted and structural. Individual-level hate refers to direct actions directed at groups or individuals. Example of this include, things more commonly associated with hate crimes or incidents such as physical violence, threats of violence, graffiti, vandalism, slurs, refusal of service, etc.. Conversely, structural hatred or discrimination refers to mechanisms and structures that may not be overt or easy to identify but serve to replicate discriminatory and racist practices. Historically, this includes things like the residential school system, the “sixties scoop”, the internment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War and Canada’s “none is too many” policy towards Jewish refugees in the interwar period.

Individualized Hatred

Most individuals did not identify themselves as having been personally victimized by a hate crime; however, almost all said that they had experienced discrimination, been sworn or slurred at and many said that their places of worship or community centres had also been targeted. Their responses also demonstrated recognition that hate affects people – even those with the same identity – in different ways and operates on different levels.

You have the verbal, the mental, the emotional. The things that are coming your way from different people. Sometimes I remember thinking it's coming from all different types of angles.

- Male, Indigenous Leader

There is the stuff that is very difficult to deal with and doesn't fall into violent extremism but is the interpersonal anti-Semitism – the jokes, you know. It hasn't happened for a couple of years but the basketball team from the Jewish academy used to have people throw pennies on the court as they were walking on.

- Jewish Community Leader

If you don't meet the definition of who is dominant, and who is favoured, you are subject to hate. Anything that contradicts the norm. The farthest away from the top receives the most hate (black, Indigenous, queer, not able-bodied). The definition of who is dominant varies from society to society.

- Female, East African Youth Leader

When it comes to young people, absolutely they feel unsafe due to the fact of different types of individuals they come across that may have that anger or hate towards them, a misunderstanding of their culture, a misunderstanding of the values and beliefs of Indigenous people. I know some Elders find it difficult interacting sometimes with different individuals, some of our youth... moreover [if] you're looking at the community [it] is slowly starting to become more aware and understanding but there still is a long way to go to get away from those biases or anger and hate.

- Male, Indigenous Leader

Muslims homes have been vandalized and mosques. We have had hate literature distributed. The events that happen globally if it is perpetuated by someone who claims to be Muslim, we end up paying the price.

- Muslim Community Leader

We are not accepted by the communities we live in. The colonizers called us animals and until today we are looked at as animals.

- Female, Indigenous Leader

I think people are trying to find some sort of justice, don't differentiate between different types of people... Muslims aren't homogeneous.

- Male, Muslim Leader

Some of the common hate we receive include not being served in restaurants and the non-Indigenous person gets waited on first.

- Female, Indigenous Leader

Community perceptions of victimization closely matched those of law enforcement officers that we interviewed, who identified non-violent criminality as making up the majority of their files, while pointing out that violent incidents tended to target members of the Muslim or LGBTQ+ community.

The majority of things we're dealing with are going to be graffiti related, so whether that's a mosque, a school, a church – swastikas are popping up. One week it'll be one or two, and then nothing for a while.

- Law Enforcement Member

Jewish and Muslim – if you're going to get hate mail and hate posters, it is going to be one of those two. The actual crime – when I'm looking at it - an assault charge - it's probably more of a mixture between LGBTQ and Muslim.

- Law Enforcement Member

Intersectionality & the Hijab

A common theme in the research was the intersectional nature of many hate crimes and hate incidents. Individuals who visibly or ‘outwardly’ belonged to more than one targeted group tended to experience a higher level of victimization than others. Specifically, women who chose to wear the hijab – a visible indicator of their faith – were cited as frequent targets. For example, respondents spoke of a common experience - Muslim women being targeted with verbal abuse in grocery stores, gas stations and other retail stores. This trend was not explored fully in our research and represents an area or priority for future activity.

Yes, because not only am I black, Somali, Muslim and immigrant and a woman who covers up, I feel that I am looked at as a target. We are even treated differently than other Muslims from the Middle East.

- Female, East African Community Leader

I believe that Harper had stirred things up after he issued the “Muslim Hotline”. People became more embolden to harassing Muslims, particularly Muslim women. Muslim men are not visibly Muslim, so they aren’t attacked as much.

- Male, Muslim Youth Leader

Usually, it is the Muslim women that have faced the most harm. - Female, Muslim Leader

Structural Hatred & Oppression

As mentioned above, while most people focused on individual victimization, a few also noted the ways in which structures and institutions continue to perpetuate harm on minority communities. For Indigenous respondents, these comments referenced lingering institutional biases created during a darker period in Canadian history. For Canada's Muslim community, this type of victimization was something that emerged in the post-9/11 era, when sweeping national security reforms invariably cast too wide a net.

You have institutional hate – that creates a toxic environment to live and to work in, and I hear a lot of that from my community...it can be a very straight forward thing or can be very disguised, but you know it when you see it.

- Indigenous Community Leader

I'd have to say my community and myself at different times have been impacted by hate in the forms of discrimination, racism, some people have experienced violence, loss of finances, housing, incarceration, hospitalization.

- Indigenous Community Leader

I have not experienced direct hate where call you name in your face. I have however faced hate where I am always flagged at the airport because my name is associated with others who may have committed a crime. Maybe it is because I send money back to my family in Somalia.

- Male, East African Youth Leader

There is systemic hate and as a result, you have a community that is underemployed, higher rates of suspension mean they are not staying in school long enough to finish their education. As a result, you have a rate of illiteracy, how someone thinks about the problem determines how they come up with solutions.

- Female, West African Leader

I see a lot of quiet sleeping racism being practised in boardrooms and at workplaces.

- Male, West African Youth

Change the way we are being treated in hospitals, in schools, by law enforcement and more employment for our people and housing. There are a lot of good people out there and we only have problems with the bad apples and the ones that hate us.

- Female, Indigenous Leader

I don't think there's any instance where I actually felt the person hated me (during structural racial discrimination), it's very different from the rage or fear, for instance when [individuals overtly target us].

- Female, East African Youth Leader

What comes to mind is the Indigenous people not having access to water, that is a violent act. When you have reserves that don't have equality of education.

- Female, Indigenous Leader

Effects of Hate

A general theme that emerged from the interviews was an acknowledgement that victimization – and an associated heightened awareness in one’s own background and identity – was creating and deepening fractures within society, the results of which are wide-ranging. For many, they express concern about the fact that their “Canadian-ness” is being increasingly challenged and eroded by an increase in discrimination and hate. This was a particularly acute concern for youth or individuals who worked closely with youth. Navigating questions of identity and belonging is already hard enough during middle and secondary schooling, having a heightened sense and insecurity of your identity can certainly make things significantly harder.

And we say we have freedom of religion, and we do – I still agree with that in Canada but all of this is affecting the generation coming up and making them have an inferiority complex whereas we’re thinking ourselves as lesser when that shouldn’t be the case. The youth are still developing their identity – they’re thinking – what I am, or how I am portrayed, is less than everyone else. For our kids, that is leading to a problem of confidence. That is something scary. We want leaders, we don’t want people who think they’re inferior to everyone else. They’re going to go into silos which also isn’t something we want. They’re going to feel either alone or they won’t interact with the rest of the students. How can you benefit society if you feel inferior to it?

- Male, Muslim Youth Leader

I have lived here since 2001, I have never had a problem – you really didn’t think you were Muslim, you were just a regular kid playing at the playground. I didn’t even face racism. But now, you are more cautious now. Because of the events that have happened...you think that it is going to happen to you, you’re on your back foot, you’re defensive. And you may think it is a hate crime, but it is just a guy, or a person, being rude or he cut you off, but he would cut anyone off.

- Male, Muslim Leader

If there is a specific news report and people in the office are talking about it the next morning, you know it’s a bit uncomfortable. If you have kids, for example, people might question if their children will be safe. Will it be safe for them or maybe it will be easier for them not to wear the hijab out? So, a lot of it is indirect, but it still affects the mentality of the people who deal with it.

- Male, Muslim Youth Leader

We want our institutions to be publicly Jewish and we don’t want to live behind fences...we want our kids to wear Magen Daveeds and Kippot if they want to, and for that to go without comment, or worse.

- Female, Jewish Community Leader

Beyond the individual impact, leaders from many minority communities noted a general decline in their community’s resilience to episodes and experiences with hate – due in part to a belief that not only was this

type of victimization increasing but that it was becoming increasingly politically acceptable to do so.

People are genuinely worried about the level of security at our institutions. And it's a challenge because really its perception and not reality, but at the same time you can't be unprepared.

- Male, Jewish Community Leader

Because of what happened in the south – even though the federal position is very positive – because of Trump getting elected in the south and a lot of him and his anti-Muslim comments being made in a public light, I believe that has really transferred over. A lot of people are empowered by the ideology being imported from the South.

- Muslim Community Leader

It is moving to the centre – it isn't a right-wing or left-wing issue. I don't think it is organic, I think there is some kind of political element to it...this is well-organized – the language the same, the line of attack the same – trying to penetrate into society and make it a norm.

- Muslim Community Leader

Some of these people expressing hate are occupying the seats of government and that is a problem and it is symbolic of something. It is one thing to be expressing hate in the streets but it's something else to do it at the steps of City hall. That goes against our value as Canadians.

- Female, West African Leader

The government should do something about this. Do you want what is happening in the U.S. after Trump? The country is boiling. If we don't want Canada to end up like that, we need to do something about it. We will have more and more hate organizations if don't stop this. We have people at work who support Trump and post his pictures all over the lunch room and public spaces at work. It is not a surprise that they start harassing people who look like me. Trump and his hate speech encouraged these people. They never harassed me before Trump.

- Male, East African Leader

Especially among the youth we interviewed, there was a heightened awareness of the intergenerational effects of structural hatred, racism and discrimination – and how these institutions and processes become self-reinforcing – almost unconsciously. Some parents we spoke with also acknowledged the specific impact hate had on their children – many of whom were second-generation Canadians.

A lot of times when we think of hate or justice, we're focusing on the top and seeing ourselves at the bottom. We're creating the very power imbalance. It's important to understand the structures that occupy us, that's for our education, but I'm afraid of our community internalizing that knowledge and believing we don't have any power.

- Female, East African Youth Leader

There's a physical effect on our community when we think of ourselves as constantly disempowered when really we have power, and we can heal ourselves.

- Male, East African Youth Leader

It's a spiritual question, it's a question of our souls and what our souls have had to endure for centuries, what ideas we have internalized about our worth and the understanding in our bodies of what it means to have a positive relationship. We're dealing with traumas that are not our. Our young people have endured wars they were not a part of. Our own parents have not had the privilege of healing. The truth is always present to us, to know an alternative other than fighting, to play, to be joyful. That practice helps me to navigate the middle between systemic heaviness and the internal smallness. Where the sharing and the art is, there's space to grow and talk.

- Female, East African Youth Leader

I feel like the second generation are the most vulnerable kids. The Somali kids are dealing with a lot of racism and discrimination. My son was so harassed so bad and ganged up on at work that he quit his job, doesn't leave the house and lost about 130lbs. They tried so much to aggravate him so he could do something or quit his job.

- Male, East African Leader

Responding to Hate

Individuals we interviewed also discussed how they often felt as though hate crimes or hate incidents were not addressed appropriately by law enforcement – response times were slow, charges were rarely laid and community concern in the aftermath often went unaddressed. While there was a general appreciation that many incidents reported were not criminal, people felt as though there was more law enforcement could or should do.

There's a lot of graffiti incidents. We have recordings we give to the police, but it takes months to get anything done. Mosques now aren't even naming themselves mosques.

- Male, Muslim Leader

You report this to the police, and nothing is done - where is the security here for our community?

- Male, Muslim Leader

I believe in the power of community. Sharing information, not holding back information. It struck me that so many agencies don't share information. It's sad to see the ego game between RCMP and CSIS.

- Male, Jewish Leader

We also need to do more about taking hate crimes reports more seriously. People get discouraged reporting hate crimes when they know nothing will be done to solve the crime.

- Female, Indigenous Leader

As discussed in other sections of this report, officers also expressed frustration with a perceived reluctance within the Crown Prosecutor's office to pursue criminal charges. In many instances, the police will advocate for a charge to be laid but the prosecutor will decline to proceed. While there is an understandable discomfort with prosecuting these sorts of crimes, the damage done to communities by a consistent failure to proceed with charges is significant. Moreover, this gap between police and the prosecutor also influences the perception of law enforcement within certain communities, which can create barriers to future reporting if the general perception is that police are unwilling or unable to do anything.

Couple of youth – painting swastikas, and recently we found several nooses up in a tree – targeting buildings that were well occupied by minorities – the boy that we charged even said he hates black people and we consulted with the Crown on hate crimes, but it just doesn't meet that threshold.

- Law Enforcement Member

Officers whose duties included dealing with hate crimes mentioned how law enforcement agencies were taking this type of criminality more seriously than they had in the past and investing additional resources in these types of units. Officers we interviewed noted that the perception around this type of policing was changing and was no longer viewed as an unenviable assignment. This was paired with a general increase in both specialized and

general training (i.e. training received during recruit class on identifying and investigating these incidents).

A lot of the stuff that we do get is from the junior members – and I think that’s a reflection of us going to the recruit classes. Whereas someone like myself, before I came here, I wasn’t aware of what a hate crime was.

- Law Enforcement Member

In light of this new environment and the challenges associated with managing hate crimes and hate incidents after they occur, communities have started to work together and cross-train members in awareness and general safety planning – an attempt to proactively prevent such occurrences. The Jewish community, which has a long history of being targeted in Canada, has been able to provide support to Muslim communities around topics like individual awareness and the security of places of worship.

Phone calls, bomb threats, mail violence, [it] has shattered the sense of security in the community. People are asking me proactively about security, they’re coming to me to do threat assessments, applying for funding to secure their buildings, asking for training. We’ve held 3 different training sessions in the past year, the first was organizations only and expanded to community members. The Muslim community has reached out to us as well. We taught them how to deal with different scenarios, like bomb threats.

- Male, Jewish Leader

Now it seems like Muslims and Jews are working together, to address the threat from white supremacists. There’s an unknown fear. Before, you knew which organization was after you, or who was after you. Now it can be like any Caucasian on the street, and that creates a deeper fear factor in the community...It feels like we’re regressing, where people before were assimilating, now people are condensing around ethnic and religious identities. (Male, Jewish Leader)

While this sort of grassroots cooperation and programming is vitally important and speaks to the strong bonds between and within communities in Alberta, there is still a pronounced lack of programming or organizations focused specifically on these issues.

There has been a decrease in programs that address racism and discrimination. There are very few groups where people who are victims can go to for help. People don’t know where to go.

- Female, Filipino Leader

Conclusion

The impact of an increasingly polarized social climate is apparent among members of every community that we interviewed. In the contemporary global climate surrounding hate and extremism, where Jewish and Muslim communities have been subject to horrific levels of violence, hate incidents and hate crimes need to be taken more seriously than ever. For example, the mass shootings/terrorist attacks in Pittsburgh at the Tree of Life Synagogue in October 2018, and the Christchurch mosques attacks in March 2019; these events are not “one-offs”, they are representative of a trend of attacks on religious communities and places of worship that can be traced back (at least) to the attack on a Sikh Temple in Wisconsin in 2012, and the attack on a Black Church in South Carolina in 2015. In Canada, we are not unfamiliar with these kinds of attacks. The Quebec City mosque attack in 2017, lead to the deaths of six Canadian Muslims. All of these terrorist attacks were carried out by individuals who identified with white supremacy and anti-immigrant/anti-Semitic beliefs. All of these incidents were grounded in hate.

As conspiracy theories, hateful and derogatory memes, videos and other forms of media spread divisive ideas, and politicians around the western world propagate and reinforce bigotry, there is a growing climate of fear and hatred. Tackling these issues represents a significant challenge that governments cannot tackle on their own – there needs to be a “whole of society” approach to these issues that is focused on empowering youth-led and in-

ter-cultural initiatives that engender positive messaging and the greatest possible reach.

As seen in the OPV’s research on hate, there was near unanimity in the belief that things are getting worse, not better, due in part to this global political climate where expression of discrimination, hate and broader ‘us-vs-them’ narratives are taking hold. Respondents were dismayed to see this occurring in Canada, a nation whose identity is in large part constructed on the basis of immigration and multiculturalism. However, it was encouraging to see emerging civil society responses to this growth, initiatives that we strongly believe should be supported and expanded.

Improving our response to hate will require an improved understanding of how hate is manifested in a tangible and measurable way at the individual and community level. It will require the disaggregation of data and focusing on the inter-sectional nature of hate. The structural level also needs attention – especially given the massive underreporting among Indigenous communities. Finally, there is a need to meaningfully listen to the stories of the victims who have experienced hate first-hand, whose stories cannot be drawn from mere statistics. To an extent this report has drawn out some of these perspectives and experiences. There is a need for more research – and a greater need for collaborative action.



**COUNTERING
HATE-MOTIVATED
VIOLENCE
IN ALBERTA**

COUNTERING HATE-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE IN ALBERTA

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES & SERVICE PROVIDERS FOR PREVENTION

Introduction

Countering violent extremism (CVE), referred to hereafter in this report as “countering hate-motivated violence” (CHMV), is an expanding and evolving area of public policy and practice. Internationally, CHMV programs are highly varied in terms of their composition and components. They can range from inter-cultural after-school sports programs to psycho-social intervention programs involving multiple human service agencies, law enforcement and sophisticated referral mechanisms. Optimally, these programs are attuned to local, on the ground conditions.

As shown in the preceding sections of this report, extremism and hate stemming from a variety of ideologies, have

impacted Alberta. To meet these challenges and to pursue effective prevention, there is a need to develop localised capacity and prevention programs that are grounded in the strengths and knowledge of local communities and human service professionals (e.g., community and youth workers, mentors, social workers, psychologists and other mental health professionals).

As part of the initial phase of its CHMV program, the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV) conducted a province-wide research project to identify how impacted communities and human service professionals understood the problems of extremism and violent extrem-

ism. These questions included how they felt about the language we use to describe these issues, what factors they see as responsible for both driving the problem and preventing the problem and their views on potential longer-term solutions. As the international literature on CVE/CHMV has become increasingly precise in its identification of “good practice” in prevention, this report examines these assumptions and compares them to the opinions of community members and service providers in Alberta. Through this exercise, the OPV identifies both international and local good practice in prevention and examines how these practices overlap, reinforce, or (potentially) conflict with each other. The ultimate goal of this “action-oriented” research is to inform the design, deployment and function of the OPV’s CHMV programming and to empower other stakeholders who can participate in a cooperative and multi-agency approach to prevention in Alberta, in part through knowledge exchange. This report’s main findings are:

- There is considerable baggage and stigmatisation that exists around key terms and descriptions that are used to describe processes related to extremism and violent extremism. In particular, “radicalization” is understood by community members and human service professionals to mean one thing – namely terrorism that is associated with Muslim communities. Subsequently, the term should no longer be used in prevention programs, as more appropriate alternatives exist; “violent extremism” or “hate motivated violence,” for example, should be employed instead.
- While community members and service provider knowledge of risk and protective factors related to hate motivated violence generally align with pre-existing research findings, and little in the way of new factors were identified in this research, we should not dismiss the value of the insights offered by these individuals. Community members in particular embed these risk factors in real life experience and examples that are pertinent to Albertans and their day-to-day lives. These insights provide tangible examples of how

and where risk factors can generate extremism and hate motivated violence.

- Both community groups and human service professionals focused on the role of identity-based factors (e.g., absence of a sense of belonging among youth and inter-generational divides within newcomer families) as creating an opening to hate-motivated violence (HMV) and comparable negative outcomes (e.g., involvement in a gang). These factors were seen as creating a window, or “cognitive opening” to the exploitation of alternative identities and ideologies via recruiters or self-exploration. Trauma and mental health issues were also seen as important drivers of extremism and violent extremism.
- Protective factors and solutions to the problem of hate motivated violence identified by both community members and human service professionals include culturally relevant youth mentorship services, family-centred interventions that address risk beyond the individual-level and improved access to mental health services that are attuned to cultural sensitivities around mental health and associated barriers to access.
- Human service professionals bring their pre-conceived notions on the drivers, risk factors, protective factors and solutions to HMV that come from their education and professional experience/area of practice. Additionally, there is discomfort among these providers with the subjects of extremism and violent extremism, in part because of the stigmatisation that exists around terminology and security practices. This discomfort is also derived from a lack of familiarity, where social workers, psychologists and other professionals are not exposed to the topic during their formal education and day-to-day professional experience. The current lack of awareness and level of discomfort among human service professionals in Alberta represents a not insignificant barrier to the implementation of an effective multi-agency prevention program.

Policy Recommendations

Our research indicates that Alberta’s communities and service providers lack sufficient awareness, training and capacity to generate an effective province-wide CHMV program. Existing grassroots and professional agencies and programs lack the necessary educational resources, and training to generate a multi-agency and multi-stakeholder approach, which, as recognized here, is good practice in prevention. Meeting this vision will require specific and tangible steps, including, *inter alia*:

- Formalization of interagency collaboration (i.e., community-programs, non-government agencies, government agencies and law enforcement) through the Government of Alberta. Integration and provision of tangible resources (funding, partnerships and capacity building) to grassroots and community-based agencies and prevention/intervention efforts that have legitimacy and “buy-in” within impacted communities. Programs that provide youth mentorship, social work outreach and culturally relevant mental health supports should be prioritized. These programs should have applicability and capacity beyond CHMV.
- Implementation of responsible awareness building workshops and standardized training for stakeholders who are best positioned to identify, detect and direct (to appropriate prevention programs and law enforcement agencies) individuals and families impacted by extremism and violent extremism. These stakeholders would include school boards and administrators, teachers, service providers engaged with at-risk groups, and appropriate staff at Alberta Health Services. Training modules should be designed based on established research findings, international good practices and local knowledge of manifestations and drivers of violent extremism in Alberta. First and foremost, modules must outline the diversity of ideologies and beliefs that can drive extremism and violent extremism and avoid further stigmatization of impacted communities.
- Adapt internationally recognized best practices to local standards and needs. These practices can serve as a useful starting point for program design. Projects and programs should operate within frameworks and practices that are recognized as good practice among community members and established service providers in Alberta. Existing models that are already familiar to service providers in the province include wrap-around models of gang prevention, “hub” crime prevention models and community-based mentorship programs for youth-at-risk. These locally recognized models and practices are consistent with internationally recognized good practices in CVE/CHMV.
- Identify and integrate authentic voices of youth, women, parents and community members into all areas of program development and delivery.

Approach & Rationale

The central objective of this section of this report is to identify and understand the opinions and needs of Albertans around issues of hate, extremism and hate motivated violence. This work is consistent with the mission, vision and goals of the Organization for the Prevention of Violence (OPV). Part of the impetus for the launch of the OPV was the recognition that a gap exists in community and human service-oriented CHMV prevention programming in Alberta. A central conclusion of this report is that there is a need to address issues of extremism and hate motivated violence through a multi-faceted strategy that includes public awareness, community engagement and mobilization of outreach and intervention-based supports around impacted individuals and families. Meeting this vision of CHMV in Alberta will require the development of genuine and reciprocal partnerships between key stakeholders, including human and social services, non-government partners, grassroots and community-based programs and law enforcement agencies (municipal agencies and the RCMP). Broad-based consultations with these stakeholders and action-oriented research around the issues of hate, extremism and hate motivated violence represent a critical first step towards this vision. In the sections below the following questions are posed:

- What does security mean to Albertans and communities that are impacted by issues of hate, extremism and hate motivated violence?
- What community and service provider sensitivities ex-

ist around the language and terminology that is used to describe these issues?

- What do community members see as the causes, drivers and risk factors for extremism and hate motivated violence?
- What are considered protective factors, good practices in prevention and solutions to these issues?

To answer these questions, the OPV interviewed 52 human service professionals engaged in prevention and intervention in areas like youth-at-risk services and numerous areas of crime prevention (e.g., domestic violence and gang prevention). Additionally, we have interviewed and conducted focus groups with a total of 124 community members and leaders, including youth and women's leaders. Primary data was collected from individuals with varying roles and sets of experience. This ranges from executive directors of large service providers, community advocates, emerging youth leadership, social workers, youth workers and psychologists. A broad cross-section of community leaders from ethno-cultural and newcomer communities were consulted.

A central theme that emerged from the research conducted with community leaders and members and human service professionals was specifically related to the labels and terminology that are used to describe problems and processes related to extremism. Respondents

demonstrated discomfort with terms and descriptions like “countering violent extremism” and “radicalization”. These opinions are explored at greater length below. Responding to those sensitivities, the OPV is using “hate motivated violence” and “countering hate motivated violence” (CHMV) as alternative descriptions in this report.

Interviews with human service professionals were conducted in five regions of Alberta: Southern Alberta, Central Alberta, Northern Alberta, the Greater Edmonton Region and Calgary Region. These geographic regions roughly mimic how provincial and non-government social service agencies divide the province. Local agencies and practitioners within these zones possess knowledge of challenges facing local communities and service providers, as well as what is working in terms of prevention programs and practices. There are shared and unique challenges within specific geographic areas of the province. Liaising and consulting with these regionally

situated agencies and stakeholders represents an important step in meeting the mission, vision and program deliverables of the OPV - with its ultimate vision of a province-wide, multi-agency CHMV program.

As discussed, the OPV recognizes the importance of knowledge dissemination and awareness building as a crucial first step in generating effective prevention. The organization would like to express its considerable thanks and gratitude to participants for their time and efforts in contributing to this project. The findings that were gained from the OPV’s research will be integral to the development of CHMV programming in Alberta. The fundamental goal of the OPV is not only to address and create a good practice model of CHMV, but also to bolster, support and foster resilience within communities in Alberta. Without the generous and meaningful contribution of those who participated in the research, this vision would be unobtainable.

A Brief History of Countering Violent Extremism

Prevention and countering of hate motivated violence (broadly referred to internationally as prevention and countering of violent extremism, or P/CVE), emerged as an area of public policy and practice in Western countries within the last five to ten years as a response to identified gaps in counterterrorism. Traditional counter-terrorism understood as either a law enforcement or a military response, cannot fully address the growing problem of extremism, violent extremism and hate motivated violence. This insufficiency stems from several issues. First, traditional counter-terrorism techniques (i.e., the use of surveillance, disruption and investigation), represent largely reactive and punitive measures that cannot be used to generate long term and effective prevention. This is especially true when individuals and groups at-risk are displaying early warning signs, or when individuals are leaving the criminal justice system, or beginning rehabilitation and reintegration into society.

As shown by the most up-to-date findings on HMV and mobilization to violence, the pathway from exploration to engagement with violent extremism is often unpredictable. Criminal behaviour will not necessarily be present or detected previous to violence occurring. Further, as not everyone who explores extremist ideas and movements eventually proceeds to the stage of direct involvement, and even fewer actually commit violent or criminal acts, conducting long term surveillance on every individual who displays warning signs is arduous and unrealistic based on the limited resources afforded to law

enforcement and national security agencies. These techniques can also lead to stigmatization of individuals and communities who are targeted as suspects and create unintended and negative outcomes.

A further distinction between counterterrorism and CHMV is the clear role for the involvement of areas of government, civil society, grassroots groups and human service agencies more commonly associated with public health, community development, community safety and education. By comparison, counter-terrorism is exclusively the domain of national security and law enforcement agencies. At its most basic level, CHMV can be thought of as another form of crime prevention where human services take the lead on addressing gaps in prevention services.

CHMV seeks to address these gaps and issues inherent to counterterrorism through operating in the spaces either before or after an individual or group is actively involved in criminality and extremist violence. Most generally, programming here may be thought of as operating at one of three levels: primary, secondary or tertiary.¹ This framework is borrowed from national and international public health approaches; for example, from the work of the United Nation's World Health Organization.

Primary prevention related to CHMV involves addressing risk in a target population – often by attempting to counter “extremist narratives” or address the risk factors and grievances that we assume drive the problem. Secondary

prevention involves addressing observable behaviours at the individual and small group level. This is the stage where practitioners seek to address early warning signs of violent extremism. Lastly, tertiary programming deals with rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals who have already been actively involved in an extremist group or movement. As noted above, approaches to primary prevention presuppose that there is an understanding of what constitutes “risk factors” for a certain problem. When it comes to HMV these presuppositions can be problematic. In the public health domain, risk factors for obesity or cancer are clearly understood. Subsequently, what constitutes good practice in prevention among the general population is clear. We know; for example, that smoking cessation will reduce the number of deaths associated with lung cancer. When it comes to violent extremism, there are some observable behaviours and risk factors that we can identify as correlated to these issues. However, projecting these factors or propensities within communities or specific demographics can lead to significant moral and ethical dilemmas. What has tended to occur in this area of programming, especially with many “first-generation” initiatives (i.e., designed previous to 2012), was the re-tasking of social programs, like intercultural dialogue, social integration and inclusion for newly arrived immigrants, community-based and youth sports programs, civic education programs, and economic empowerment into “countering violent extremism” projects. No longer were programs just about drop-in soccer for newcomer youth, they became drop-in soccer to prevent violent extremism.²

This questionably designed and poorly communicated (on the whole) first wave of “CVE” programs demonstrated that broadly targeted or “blanket approach” interventions, which singled-out ethnic or religious groups, could do more harm than good.³ First wave program evaluation indicates that the intentionality behind a program’s development, including assumptions that are made about risk and protective factors, the identification and selection of target demographics and the training that is provided to project staff, have notable impacts on the effectiveness and

perceived legitimacy of services. Perhaps the most important lesson learned in these programs is that they could indirectly perpetuate stigma against ethno-cultural and newcomer communities and segments of communities.⁴

Due to the highly politicized nature of programming in this area, and the sometimes-negative reactions they elicited in communities and the media, the simple introduction of an outreach-based initiative had the potential to create tensions between targeted communities and service providers. The United Kingdom’s first iteration of the PREVENT strategy clearly illustrated these unintended consequences and hazards.⁵ Lessons were clear: either incidentally or by design – stigmatizing can take place and deepen divides within and between communities.⁶ There is some evidence that in a worst case scenario this can negatively affect participants’ engagement and experience in programs and increase their willingness to adopt extremist beliefs or engage in violence.⁷ This last hazard represents the height of negative and unintended consequences. Taken together, these observations underscore the importance of examining how program design, implementation and even the language that is used to frame projects can impact program outcomes.

Non-government and community-based programs can overcome some of these hurdles and hazards by employing culturally attuned and embedded mentors, youth workers and interventionists, who often have a level of cultural and social fluency which exceeds other human service professionals (like psychologists) and are more attuned to the rapidly changing needs and behaviours of clients. When these skills are complementary to, and integrated with other services and providers, they can improve the overall efficacy of prevention efforts.⁸ However, these programs can also face challenges: challenges based, for example, on the perception that community members and leaders are apprehensive in coming forward with concerns pertaining to their own community, in part out of fear that they will garner unwanted attention, and/or that they will become penalized through the criminal justice system.⁹ Both of these related concerns have the poten-

tial to erode critical trust, legitimacy and authenticity in community-based programs, which undermines the logic for incorporating them into such a program in the first place. Evaluations of programming across western states have clearly highlighted the potential inter and intra-community suspicions and tensions that can arise from poorly constructed CHMV programming, where communities are viewed as inherently “suspicious”, or where efforts to prevent violence are conflated with intelligence gathering or law enforcement actions.

Another relevant finding from early initiatives is that service providers and organizations need to clearly identify during the early stages of program design what CHMV program consists of, and most notably, what the goals are.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, early-stage program development, if it is to address some of the hazards of stigmatization identified above, must be designed through an open and honest consultative process that takes seriously the inputs of a broad range of stakeholders, including community groups, mental health services, education and law enforcement. This research represents the first step in this direction.

Another lesson learned from first-generation CHMV programs is the importance of the involvement and integration of multiple types of stakeholders, including NGOs, civil society, grassroots/community groups, government agencies and law enforcement that can work in a collaborative and reciprocal manner.¹¹ Effective prevention of CHMV requires a holistic approach that takes a big-picture view of the larger systems of human services and security services and recognizes gaps and strengths and weaknesses of particular stakeholders, including, perhaps most importantly, government and law enforcement agencies.

This kind of holistic approach has alternatively been referred to as a “whole of society” approach to CHMV.

There is now broad recognition in Canada and among international practitioners, that a multi-agency or multiple-stakeholder approach to CHMV represents good practice. Recognizing this preference, there are barriers to implementing the approach: within some human service programs, and among community groups that feel unduly targeted with security and prevention measures, approaches to preventing violent extremism are encumbered with a series of negative associations and connotations. Given the sensitivities and stigma surrounding the issue of violent extremism, it is understandable that non-government agencies and government agencies focused on health, education and community development will be cautious about their involvement in these programs. These concerns further demonstrate the need for early stage, open and honest consultations. Greater buy-in may also be achieved through grounding CHMV program design and language within established crime prevention and public health approaches; in other words, *normalizing* this area of programming.

In general, predictable and unpredictable barriers to effective implementation restricted the first-generation of CHMV programs. These barriers require careful mediation. Second-generation CHMV programming is more attuned to some of the hazards detailed above. Critically, establishing higher standards for third-party program evaluation related to program outcomes is a desirable if not somewhat elusive standard in new programming which can offer greater confidence in our identification of what constitutes good practice in CHMV.¹² In some ways, as latecomers to this area of policy, Canada and Alberta have benefited from observing the trials and tribulations of international programs.

Identifying Good Practices in Prevention

Recognizing some of the issues experienced in first generation “CVE” programs, today there is a growing consensus around what represents good practices in the area. Whether or not these good practices are supported by findings from robust program evaluations is a matter for a separate report. However, there are many questions that remain about the validity of established practices in CHMV internationally, questions that can only be answered after sufficient time has passed for programs to mature and be evaluated for outcomes and impacts.

International models of prevention and intervention that are discussed here, such as the Danish Info-House Model, provide foundational understandings of international good practice in the secondary and tertiary space of CHMV. However, when examining these international good practice models, there is a need to be mindful that many of these programs cannot simply be duplicated and employed within different countries, societies and communities. For example, the size and scope of the welfare state and social services and established information-sharing agreements that exist in Denmark are not present and cannot be fully replicated in Canada.

When it comes to secondary prevention, which is the area of focus for the OPV’s Alberta-based program, the effectiveness of the program will rely on the quality of the framework for intervention, the skills and training of staff, the strength and integration of partnered services and the ability of practitioners to adapt practices to

unique local, individual and family needs.¹³ The OPV has compiled with findings around good practices within CHMV and comparable areas of crime and violence prevention (e.g., gang prevention, domestic violence and youth-at-risk). The best practices listed below are most relatable to the OPV’s area of priority in CHMV, namely intervention-based work in the early stages of risk (secondary prevention). These practices would include:

- An inter-disciplinary, multi-agency and multi-stakeholder approach to intervention.
- The identification and integration of natural supports and community-based mentors that can be used in a family-based/social ecology approach to integration.
- Intervention services that effectively bridge law enforcement, human service professionals situated in government and non-government agencies and grassroots/community initiatives.

Multi-agency and multi-sectoral approaches of intervention and referral mechanisms, such as what is found in the Danish Info-House Model, are now widely accepted as good practice in both secondary and tertiary areas of CHMV.¹⁴ The Danish model sought to incorporate the prevention of violent extremism into existing crime prevention models, which relied on the integration of a variety of service providers and a strong *foundation of trust* between government agencies and the communities they

served.¹⁵ This may include professionals and agencies engaged in areas like mental health services, education, youth mentorship, youth-at-risk, addiction and community-based services. Importantly, the Info-House model focused on de-politicizing and demystifying HMV by bringing together stakeholders and partners already working in crime prevention and helping them see the analogies between the two areas of work.¹⁶

Multi-agency approaches to CHMV seek to mobilize stakeholders who are best situated to meet the individual needs of clients and their families, address risk factors and support protective factors and pre-existing “pro-social” relationships that can be used to steer individuals towards sustained disengagement. In their best iterations, this model establishes a broad yet specialized roster of professionals that can collectively operate from a multi-disciplinary and problem-solving approach.¹⁷ These “round-tables”, “hubs” or “situational tables”, however they are characterized, have the potential to create an environment that is conducive to knowledge transfer and mutual learning - a place where CHMV practices are constantly challenged and enriched.¹⁸ Given the individualized or idiosyncratic nature of individual pathways into extremism and HMV, a diverse multi-agency table or team can play an important role in ensuring that services are customized, coordinated and comprehensive.

Another identified good practice within CHMV is operating from a *family and social ecology approach to intervention* – in line with an evolving understanding of radicalization to violence through an ecological lens.¹⁹ A family-centred approach to intervention has been utilized in other programs and services such as youth-at-risk, gang prevention, domestic or “intimate partner” violence and addiction. Specifically, in relation to CHMV, a familial or social ecology focus seeks to identify positive relationships, influences and supports within families and wider social networks that can be employed and integrated into an intervention plan. These individuals can represent pillars within the intervention plan - sources of stability and support, or pro-social relationships that

can help to foster resiliency and norms of non-violence among individuals at risk of engaging with HMV.²⁰

Where appropriate family and peer supports can be incorporated within outreach efforts, in furtherance of a “wrap-around approach” to intervention, which involves bringing together a diverse team of individuals with the skills and backgrounds appropriate to provide holistic support to the individual – each member of the team can work on a specific aspect of the client’s needs. There are a number of successful examples of this type of programming in Alberta, including the Calgary Centre for Newcomers’ RealMe program, designed in cooperation with academics from the University of Calgary’s social work faculty.²¹ This program is particularly interesting as it focuses not only on a wrap-around approach to intervention but also positive identity construction, a theme with direct relevance to countering hate-motivated violence. Programs like FOCUS Toronto have also adopted a wrap-around approach and successfully applied it in cases of HMV.²²

In the OPV’s model of intervention, a client receives *both professional and “natural” supports*. Natural supports refer to pro-social influences already in the individual’s life, including friends, family and mentors. It should be recognized that in some cases, familial and peer-based supports may be unavailable, not “pro-social” in nature, or in some circumstances, a direct contributor to the adoption of an extremist worldview and violent behaviours. Indeed, having relationships with family or friends who have been engaged with violent extremism is the most highly correlated risk factor when it comes to HMV.²³ Subsequently, practitioners must be highly cognizant of these risks and thoroughly assess family and peer supports for suitability before integrating them into an intervention plan. The goal of CHMV intervention programs should be to support individuals alongside their families, through the mobilization of the best available professional supports and natural supports that exist within communities and the social circles or ecology of individual’s lives. This approach can create more sus-

tained and long-term supports for individuals, especially after the completion of a formal intervention plan.

Finally, CHMV programming must utilize *community-based knowledge and grassroots programs*. The active involvement of community partners in multi-agency models of intervention and other non-traditional partners can further enhance the efficacy, authenticity and legitimacy of CHMV programs. Community-based knowledge can increase the awareness and competence of human service professionals and their capacity to advance current and future modes of intervention. This knowledge can also be used to gain better understandings of risk and protective factors that may have otherwise been overlooked.²⁴ There are numerous examples of such programming, both specific to countering violent extremism and more general crime prevention, including ones in Boston, Toronto and Denver.²⁵

Garnering trust with community leaders and critical segments of communities such as youth and women are important – not only because this increases the perceived legitimacy of programs, but it also grants access to important areas of research that can enhance knowledge of community sensitivities around CHMV and risk and protective factors. It also aids in the identification of relevant community-based mentors and services that can be integrated into intervention models. Particularly within the intervention domain, authenticity and legitimacy are crucial to ensuring the establishment of an accessible, consent-based intervention program.²⁶

Community knowledge and supports are an essential element in a holistic or “whole-of-society” approach to CHMV.²⁷ Understanding how communities are already in-

dependently addressing these issues internally, and how human services and agencies can support and enhance these efforts, is an important step in establishing greater community resiliency to the impacts of hate, extremism and HMV.²⁸ Integrating this knowledge and expertise into CHMV programming can foster greater program accountability. Arguably, the absence of adequate consultation with community groups over the impacts of counter-terrorism and “CVE” efforts previously has negatively impacted the perceived legitimacy of these efforts. Early iterations of the UK’s PREVENT strategy are obvious examples of how legitimacy and efficacy are negatively affected by a lack of meaningful engagement.²⁹

Altogether, the use of a multi-agency model of intervention, a family-centred and social-ecological approach to prevention and the integration of community-knowledge and grassroots programs into CHMV are central elements in the OPV model of intervention. These elements reflect the mission, values and goals of the organization and are seen as consistent with the (albeit limited) knowledge that we currently have of what represents good practice in the field to date. A multi-agency approach that is informed by grassroots knowledge and practices can aid in generating a *legacy of prevention* in Alberta. This legacy is achieved through the dissemination and sharing of ideas, skills and practices.

In the sections below, the OPV outlines some of the findings from its community and human service-based research in Alberta. The research that is presented here provides snapshots of community and service-provider perceptions on the language and practices that we use in CHMV.

Local Research Findings

The OPV has conducted community and human service-based research across the province of Alberta. This research gathered information on community sensitivities and language used around the topic of violent extremism, experiences with hate and hate-motivated violence, identification of knowledge related to risk and protective factors and what service providers and communities see as good practice in CHMV. The initial phase of research and community and stakeholder engagement allowed the organization to solidify and create new partnerships with community and human service organizations across Alberta.

Human service professionals include, *inter alia*, social workers, child and youth care workers and psychologists who operate in a number of capacities such as front-line intervention, management, and program or community engagement. These individuals are engaged in areas of prevention that have some operational overlap with, or similarity to, countering hate-motivated violence (CHMV).

Community members and leaders consist of members of diverse religious, cultural and ethnic backgrounds that have provided their insights into both how and why extremism and violent extremism occur and how CHMV programs should be structured and function. The research here focused on a broad cross-section of communities and demographics and specifically sought out youth and women leaders. In addition, there was a focus on communities who have been impacted by hate and

hate motivated violence.

Within the data that was gathered for this report, a number of strengths, challenges and limitations were identified. In order to critically assess the value of the research, there must be recognition of these strengths and limitations. This recognition allows for not only contextualization of findings but also the identification of future areas of research that can address gaps.

Respondents in all categories demonstrated a general ability to identify key values and principles that should be incorporated into local prevention programming. This includes the need for programming to be trauma-informed and responsive to the victimization that occurs around HMV. Understanding the importance of family and inter-generational dynamics and how social networks shape key risk and protective factors, were also consistently flagged by respondents.

Second, interviewees, especially among human service professionals, identified what they saw as a noteworthy gap in knowledge and services related to CHMV programming. General understandings of the problem, its definition and knowledge of specific manifestations of HMV in the local environment were routinely flagged as deficient in Alberta. While interviewees demonstrated some innate ability to identify pertinent risks, vulnerabilities and protective factors related to HMV, there was a limited understanding of what good practices in CHMV might look like.

Third, respondents consistently identified the need for CHMV programming to be rooted in responsible and collaborative-based public engagement and awareness strategies. Respondents across all categories identified the importance of establishing and maintaining positive community and stakeholder relations. These principles were viewed as essential for pursuing effective preventative strategies that are embedded in the knowledge and natural supports offered by families and communities.

Finally, the OPV's findings indicated that respondents believe there is a plethora of compounding and interrelated factors that influence potential involvement in extremism and violent extremism. Some factors that were more consistently identified by respondents include a lack of social belonging and community, a lack of self-esteem or sense of self-worth, exposure to traumatic experiences, social and economic marginalization and the role of the online space in furthering hate motivated violence.

Community Research Findings

The interviews and focus groups that were conducted with community leaders and members were focused on identifying how individuals, families and communities were impacted by hate and hate incidents, perceptions of the language that is used to describe violent extremism, and opinions on the causes and drivers of the phenomenon. Finally, interviewees were asked to offer their opinions on solutions to these issues – not only solutions that come from within communities but also from the whole of society. Through these questions, the OPV sought to develop a more holistic understanding of the subjects that are at issue in this report.

A key finding from the community research is that *framing and language matter*, especially when it comes to subjects like violent extremism. The terms that are used to describe the problem and our responses to the problem can, in some instances, create an immediate negative reaction based on the perception that they are applied primarily to certain communities. This reaction is most readily apparent within Canada’s diverse Muslim communities.

Another important finding is that the scope of programming also matters. Programs that are explicitly and functionally attuned to a single issue, such as “radicalization to violence” or HMV, may struggle with issues of legitimacy. There are two obvious reasons for this. First, because of the aforementioned baggage that counter extremism and counter-terrorism programming is saddled with among groups and communities who feel

saturated with security measures over the past (nearly) 20 years. Second, because many communities experience problems that are viewed as being more important, based on their direct impacts on individuals, families and communities. For example, issues like gang involvement, domestic violence or addiction have far greater, tangible and visible impacts in communities when compared to violent extremism. The latter occurs or is manifested at a much lower frequency – even if the events (like terrorism) generate significant impacts on society and our mutual sense of safety and trust.

In the research presented below, community leaders and members are identified through community affiliations. As important representatives of their communities, individuals in leadership positions are also identified. Additionally, youth, youth leaders and women’s leaders are distinguished as individuals and voices that have particularly useful insights for prevention programs. Where appropriate names of specific people and programs have been omitted, which is consistent with the confidentiality standards of this report. For the sake of brevity, select responses that are in-line with the general consensus, or provide meaningful insights on the questions have been included in this section.

Returning to the importance of framing the research, questions sought inputs on a number of key terms. For example, *security*, *radicalization* and *violent extremism* were examined within the community and human ser-

vice-based research. As a starting point to provide a general impression of how communities understood security, the interviews commenced with the question: “what does security mean for you, your family and your community?” The responses to this question provide a baseline understanding of how individuals, families and communities think about their own sense of safety and wellbeing.

THE MEANING OF SECURITY

Respondents provided numerous examples of what security means at the micro level (individuals and families) and macro level (communities and society). Some spoke about how security could have different meanings for different communities and how security for some communities could come at the expense of others. The impact of gender identity on experiences with security was also drawn out. There was significant similarity in some of the themes that were identified by respondents – especially in relation to the association of security and a sense of safety.

Security means knowing that when you leave your home, and even within your home, you’re able to feel safe. You aren’t worried about harm coming towards you, be it physical or emotional. Safe to express yourself.

- Female, Muslim Community leader

Security means feeling safe and content and knowing that all is well and that you’re protected. As a whole, in terms of the community, it’s someone that can feel safe going into the community doing different types of activities and knowing at the end of the day no harm will come to them.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

Anything that allows people to go about their life without concerns. Excel in their lives, without the need to look behind their shoulders or to plan ahead for a car blowing up in a shopping centre.

- Male, Jewish Community Leader

In some instances, linkages were made between a sense of security and access to resources for families and communities. Security was also related to the ability to securely access public institutions (e.g., schools), and placed within ideas of national values and identity.

Security means emotional and financial stability as well as opportunities...Security isn’t removing my rights to protect others.

- Male, East African Community Leader

For my children to go to school and return home safe. For us to go to work safe and return home safe. It’s how the people on the streets should feel. It’s also how your property, privacy and dignity should be protected.

- Male, East African Community Leader

Security means to be free from the threat of violence – that my neighbours and friends are free from threat... Freedom of speech and religion, freedom of expression, which is a hallmark of the Canadian charter of rights, all Canadians should feel safe.

- Male, Central Asian Community Leader

Respondents also drew connections between experiences with racism (at the individual and community-level) and feelings of insecurity. Additionally, in some cases, the interviewees identified structural and institutional forms of racism as sources of insecurity for communities.

It means feeling safe to walk around, free from racist name calling, accosted by police, feeling free to just be who I am without fear of someone doing a racist act against me or my family.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

Security means feeling safe, living in a safe place. We don’t feel safe here now, it’s not safe for our children. You don’t know who they’ll interact with, what police might do to them.

- Female, East African Community Leader

A right that every Canadian citizen should have. I feel that with certain communities... the term gets overused against them, especially against Muslim communities. Right-wing extremists specifically target the Muslim community, you report this to the police, and nothing is done - where is the security here for our community? If we went to the forest and started training with weapons, what would happen? But the same thing happens with white supremacists, and nothing happens to them.

- Male, Muslim Community Leader

Some individuals chose to speak more directly about security from the perspective of their own communities and ethnic, religious and gender identities.

Ability to present as a Jew, and present as a Jew publicly without any sort of fear of reprisal.

- Female, Jewish Community Leader

It means that I wouldn't worry about being targeted for dressing the way I do [wearing the hijab].

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

Most respondents conceived of security in terms of a sense of safety for themselves, their family and their community - there were also more universal and communal notions of security, the idea of a shared sense of safety and wellbeing. When seeking to address security issues (for example, basic issues like community safety and more complex problems like hate and extremism) it is important that programs and practitioners look to a broader understanding of how individuals and communities conceive of their security. When we think of safety as going beyond freedom from the threat of violence, the potential negative impacts of hate and non-violent extremism on individuals, families and communities, and their sense of wellbeing become more apparent.

WORD ASSOCIATION: UNPACKING RADICALIZATION & VIOLENT EXTREMISM

As indicated in the introduction to this section, there is little doubt that terms like “radicalization” and violent extremism carry highly negative connotations among some ethno-cultural communities. In particular, this is the case when impacted communities and community members feel targeted and stigmatized by security language and practices. The findings from a diverse cross-section of communities indicate that these terms deserve significant re-examination in terms of how and where they are used.

In some cases, interviewees responded to the word association questions by drawing out elements of generally accepted and employed academic and government definitions. For example, related to violent extremism, fear, hate and black and white world-views were identified as being associated with extremist thinking and violence.

Any extreme idea that brings you to act against an ethnic group or a colour, or against a group within society, to physically assault someone. That crosses the line of extreme to violence.

- Female, Jewish Community Leader

It's almost a sense of power and control. I'm going to flex my power in order to control your thought process, and your values and beliefs, by any means necessary. To spread those messages of hate, by any means necessary. That's what I think of.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

Bottom line it is fear, it is just driven by fear. Misguided energy as a reaction to fear and combined with lack of knowledge. You can have people doing things that are of place. Fear is [the] driving force that causes people to do a lot of ridiculous things.

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

Within the definitional questions, some individuals identified what they saw as the foundations of HMV, identified young people as particularly prone to its adoption and viewed it as an exploitative process. This perspective went on to inform their understanding of the causes and drivers of extremism. Manipulation by recruiters, inter-generational divides, social isolation and the role of media in furthering HMV were themes that were drawn out.

I think there is a part of me when I hear that word... I look at individuals that feel they have been wronged and they grew tiresome of being wronged and felt that this was the only way to help them not to continue to feel like victims or hopeless. You look at gang members, they are radicalized. Why do people join gangs? [To] have a sense of belonging, have a sense of family, have a sense of companionship... [they] got tired of... maybe they were, you know, bullied, or hate and violence happened to them, and they chose to stand united with similar individuals and feel protected and safe.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

It's kids who are hopeless, and they don't care if they die or harm others. They feel that schools and community don't care.

- Female, East African Youth Leader

It exists in every community and it happens because of frustration. When people are working hard and they [are] not achieving anything because they are marginalized, that can push them... The media help pushes this agenda.

- Male, East African Youth Leader

Outside of the responses that focused on identifying causes of the phenomenon, a majority of interviewees formed associations between the term(s) and specific extremist movements, groups and ethno-cultural and religious communities. A minority of these respondents identified groups and movements that were not associated with religious communities.

Radicalization is people on both sides of the spectrum, those who feel white superiority and those who feel black inferiority. Those who make the choice to be radicalized to respond to their environment. They are people who are responding to the stimuli of hate.

- Female, West African Community Leader

White supremacy comes to mind, not the poor immigrant coming here for a better life and taking low wage jobs.

- Male, Muslim Community Leader

What comes to mind is what happened at the mosque in Quebec. Hate is motivated by people who believe that you don't belong, and they show their anger. Radicalization is happening through media.

- Male, South Asian Community Leader

The overwhelming response by the interviewees, however, was to draw a linkage between the term radicalization and Muslim communities. This association was significantly more pronounced with radicalization than it was with violent extremism and these associations tended to come from *within* the Muslim communities themselves. In general, the reaction to radicalization was negative among those who felt targeted and stigmatized by the term. The media were singled out as driving this association among the general public.

I feel like this word is always being used to describe Muslims, particularly by the media. If someone who claims to be Muslim commits a violent crime, in my opinion, that person is not a Muslim since it's un-Islamic to kill.

- Male, Muslim Community Youth

According to the news, unfortunately, what sells is portraying Muslims as extremists... News media are so quick to point out a person's religion when they are Muslim, for others, it's someone who is [a] lone wolf, who is mentally ill.

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

It's a word that bothers me so much, and I hate it when Islam and Muslims, as well as the Somali community, are

labelled with such [a] word.

- Male, East African Youth Leader

People are normally focused on Muslim kids fighting for ISIS while other forms of radicalization exist. This is something that needs to be discussed and it means more than just religious radicalization.

- Female, West African Community Leader

In its pure form, radicalism was something people supported because it breaks away from the status quo. That was good because it's how you grow as a community. But now it's tied to religion, Islam, and ideology, it has a very negative connotation.

- Male, Muslim Community Leader

This widely shared sentiment, that *radicalization* is unevenly and unfairly applied, with the result of stereotyping and stigmatizing communities, represents the area of greatest consensus in the community-based research conducted for this report. However, Muslim communities were not alone in pointing out the problems and shortcomings that they identified in the uneven application of the term.

I think of it as pertaining to me because the dominant society looks at us as radicals. I am very vocal, so I am considered a radical.

- Female, Indigenous Community Leader

The indigenous people have been radicalized since the colonizers have been here because they were fighting for their rights. When people become desperate, they become radicalized. You can only take being used and abused [for so long].

- Female, Indigenous Community Leader

Radicalization in and of itself isn't a bad thing; it can mean a good change or a bad change, I don't necessarily think the term should be used. Anyone who stands against the status quo is a radical.

- Male, Indigenous community Leader

These reactions should provide pause - a cautionary note for those who are engaged in CHMV and counterterrorism. There is an acute need to re-examine the terminology that is employed in these areas of practice, especially in areas of programming where community engagement is a priority. If re-framing takes place it must be accompanied by a meaningful willingness to tackle multiple forms of extremism and violent extremism that are generating hate and insecurity in Alberta and Canada. Otherwise, the issue of stigmatization will remain.

DRIVERS OF HATE MOTIVATED VIOLENCE: COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Community leaders and members were canvassed for their opinions and perspectives on the drivers of extremism and hate motivated violence in Alberta. Questions were focused on uncovering the broader causes (push factors) of extremism, and questions on *how* individuals may become attracted to extremist movements. The latter was more focused on the process, or lures (pull factors) that more directly attract groups and individuals to extremism. The responses to these questions were predominantly focused on four broad inter-related categories: identity and belonging, youth susceptibility and inter-generational issues, mental health issues and manipulation and the impacts of media and social media. There was some general alignment of responses and opinions suggesting a degree of consensus among respondents. Arguably, the area of most pronounced agreement between community respondents was around the importance of identity issues in driving the phenomenon.

A lack of identity and no access to cultural foundations, they become dissonant. Loss and angst manifest themselves in an openness to more extreme narratives. Extremist groups can speak to their pain and give them everything they need: the promise of purpose and a foundation... get a new identity - think about the new names

when people join a gang or extremist group. By way of analogy, look at how many Indigenous youth attach themselves to black urban culture today.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

One issue is attachment, they lack basic attachment, they are seeking attention from family or community, but they don't get that [and] they find it in gangs or extremist groups. They find that sense of belonging, the financial support, or whatever they were longing for.

- Male, West African Community Leader

There is something that has been lacking in their life. I was asking my students what love looks like to them, and it is family. We all need that love. When someone doesn't have that they are missing that sense of belonging. The at-risk youth are seeking that, and they will sometimes find it in the wrong way.

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

Whenever people become violent extremists, they do so because they are trying to belong somewhere and a lot of it is fear driven. For example, if a young white male feels like his city and country isn't like how it used to be when his dad or grandfather were growing up... like there are more immigrants coming in, he may fear losing his country to immigrants, and he may feel that he will become the minority if something is not done about it, so he could become a violent extremist. The same fear is placed in young Muslims who feel the oppression Muslims are dealing with. I can't walk freely in my country and then turn to extremism. They are all driven by fear, and they want to belong to a place they feel like they have either lost or are afraid of losing.

- Female, East African Community Leader

For the youth, I believe it is the alienation; when you feel you don't belong, and you start to look for a sense of belonging. When you look outside of radicalization, but look at other local issues, you will see a youth that is alienated might look for acceptance among a gang to feel a sense brotherhood or sisterhood and create

another form of family, and later on realize that this is not a good fit for them and try to leave, it's too late. For the radicalized individuals... [they] might not have a lot of information, the people that are susceptible are not fully educated on the messages of the radical groups and think they mean well, and they [are] misleading them to believe that.

- Female, Muslim Youth

As seen in the above responses a number of interviewees drew parallels between the attraction of young people to gangs and an attraction to extremist groups, where both can offer a sense of belonging and a sense of security. Community leaders and members also focused on experiences with marginalization, alienation and racism as creating an opening to negative outcomes. A related risk factor identified by the community group is the role of intergenerational conflict and disconnection in creating an opening to extremism. Common struggles that many young people are faced with were also associated with the issue.

When I attend parent meetings, you can see the kids and the parents are not even speaking the same language. There is a breakdown in communication where the kids don't speak the parent's language very well, and the parents don't speak English. Who will guide these kids if they are afraid to talk to their parents? Pride is the biggest issue because it could be embarrassing if you don't understand the language, so they would rather not engage.

- Male, East African Community Leader

These kids are coming from bad environments, domestic violence in the home or poverty and so many more issues going on at home. When the parents and the community don't support these kids, then that is when we have problems.

- Female, East African Community Leader

It's how the older generations pass on what they believe. If the previous generation is not educated about racism, they tell the younger generation to just accept it, not talk about it. We're finding the younger generations are more

open to action and change... [There is] tension in immigrant families, domestic violence especially from fathers due to settlement problems.

- Female, South East Asian Community Leader

The biggest problems are schools and the homes. If a youth comes from a broken home, maybe it's a single parent household and they don't get the supports they need. If the family had supports, they can help their kids. Parents don't know their children's friends and what they are doing daily. Kids need someone to talk to and not [be] punished all the time. Schools and teachers are also targeting the kids of colour and they are being targeted when they misbehave. Sometimes the black kids get harsh punishment for doing the same things as white kids who just get a slap on their hands. This is unfair and causes kids of colour to lash out even more.

- Male, East African Community Leader

Inter-generational divides and the struggles of youth with questions of who they are and where they fit in the world are experiences that have been previously linked to a host of at-risk behaviours. This may include addiction, criminality, gang involvement and in rare cases, extremism and HMV. Identity-based factors and inter-generational divides will only provide an opening to these negative outcomes – other experiences are required to create an identification with an extremist movement or group. For some interviewees, another important part of the puzzle is trauma and mental health. In turn, these vulnerabilities were seen as an opportunity for exploitative and manipulative processes to take place.

[It's] mental illness, and it doesn't matter if they are Muslim or not. We don't know what kind of trauma people have experienced. Also, we don't know if people have the skills to solve their problems, [or] people to go to for help.

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

Perhaps it doesn't just happen overnight, but it's like that old saying - hurt people, hurt people. End of story. Looking at how people have been affected by trauma or

violent tendencies within their life and they got tired of it.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

These young people are receiving the wrong information. They are looking for association. The young man who ran over the police officer. After talking to people who know him and worked with him, he was a bit awkward, he lacked empathy. He would talk a lot about his trials of what he went through to get to Canada. His journey started in Africa, travelling through South America, to the United States and then Canada. I can assume he must have been through a lot and seen things.

- Male, East African Community Leader

I actually have a distant cousin who joined Al-Shabaab, I am not sure if he went to Syria, and nobody knows if he is dead or alive. We were all shocked because you wouldn't expect that from him - being such a shy guy and a student at XXXXX University, he was smart. I think they tapped into his emotions, they target people who don't have others to talk to. They know how to brainwash people, so they told him: "look at how your people are being oppressed you can't just sit and do nothing". They are able to do that to people who are quiet compared to someone like me who would ask questions and seek advice from others.

- Female, East African Community leader

The last area of commonality in the community opinions on the drivers of extremism revolved around the role of media and social media. This included the idea that media can frame and exacerbate the problem, as well as the problems that are created by increased access to extremist ideas and networks online today.

I feel like social media plays a big part because it connects a lot of people in different walks of life. The youth are very impressionable in general. The more you're online, no matter how much will power you have, the more likely you're to be influenced by others. The media might in general play a role because they show only one side of the story...The people who tend to support extremism

usually join because there is nothing stopping them.

- Male, East African Youth Leader

[It's] because of social media, our society is changing, homes are changing. No matter where they are in the world, kids need to feel love and they turn to social media to get that. They are looking for that connection and creating this false sense of connection. We have to receive love and connection and without it is detrimental to our survival.

- Female, Muslim Community Leader

Media has an obligation to do a better job of reporting, [and] it currently doesn't... needs to move beyond the "if it bleeds, it leads" frame.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

Extremism precedes the violence. Not every extremist becomes violent. Lack of education, lack of critical thinking, traumatic experiences, loss of job, all that comes into play. Compound that with politics and media, that opens the gateway to violent extremism.

- Male, Muslim Community Leader

As shown in the last quote, the push and pull factors identified by community members cumulatively work to create the problem of extremism and hate motivated violence. Building on these insights at the base of this process are common identity-based factors and needs related to a sense of belonging, a need to feel purpose, and emotional attachments. For some, these experiences can be particularly acute. Lack of attachments or divisions in the family can create a window to other potentially negative forms of identity and belonging. Much of this is dependent on the resources that are available to young people and the experiences that occur within their immediate social circle and wider society.

In effect, and generally corresponding to the findings from other research on community opinions on the causes and drivers of extremism, there are no "new" insights, per se, in these findings. In many ways, the opinions align with what academics and security professionals/practitioners have long identified as risk factors related to extremism and violent extremism. However, importantly, what community opinions and perspectives *do provide* is the embedding of these ideas within *culturally and locally relevant experiences*. In the absence of community-based research, academics and government analysts cannot place the risk factors they identify in their studies within these kinds of understandings.

Seeking Answers to Extremism Within Communities

The interviews with community leaders and members ended with an exploration of community-based solutions to issues of extremism and violence. Interviewees were asked to offer their ideas on “what we can do as Albertans” to address extremism. As in other areas of research, some consensus emerged in the responses. This took place around three categories: the importance of education and intercultural initiatives, the need for family-based solutions and the role of mentorship in helping at-risk youth. Among the three categories, education and inter-cultural initiatives represented the most commonly identified means for preventing and addressing extremism.

Get it into the educational system [awareness of the issue], where a majority of young people spend most of their time ... work towards explaining or identifying the similarities in-between extremism and other situations that have happened to them as individuals. Help them to understand that there's different coping mechanisms... There are different ways of addressing situations in a more productive or classy way... instead of becoming violent.

- Male, Indigenous Community Leader

By getting them involved in activities, for starters. Most young people are targeted through social media, and less internet time equals less opportunity for others to take advantage of them. Also, by having a conversation with the youth and correcting whatever wrong information that has been implanted in their heads. It's also not a bad idea to let them meet some extremists who are serving time in

jail, so they'd actually see how wrong this is.

- Female, East African Community Leader

Focus on the new generation of parents, while they're still young. We try to engage them in discussions and introduce behavioral change. We partner with a few schools where we have kids talk among themselves, and they discover that other people have similar problems, and other cultures have these problems, this make them feel more empowered. We then train the kids on how to talk to their parents.

- Female, South East Asian Community Leader

Communities should stick together and share knowledge. Reach out of the communities where radicalization is happening. Getting to the grassroots, reaching out to those who want to harm us, try to start a dialogue.

- Male, Jewish Community Leader

Talk about it, do research to understand the issue. Canada is great at Multiculturalism and inclusion, so we can do more to promote that. Parents need to be given resources to help their children.

- Male, Muslim Community Leader

Prevention through education was a maxim for many respondents. Civic engagement, volunteerism and extra-curricular activities like sports that can occupy “unobserved” time and create alternatives to spending time on social media, or with peers who are negative

influences, were other solutions offered by community leaders and members. For some, these kinds of activities need to be embedded in cultural strengths and knowledge. Inter-cultural dialogue among people from a diverse set of backgrounds was seen as another antidote to extremism. Lastly, a priority for community members was strengthening what amounts to a social foundation for most youth – the family.

It has to start with the family, there needs to be security, so they don't act out, their support system needs to bring them back home. The parents have a huge role to play. The school system needs to understand kids that come from poor families, there needs to be extra care given. Certain kids, as they form their character, need to be supported properly so they feel that society has not given up on them. When schools give up on a child and they are not supported at home, they will feel isolated, and act out.

- Female, West African Community Leader

I always give advice to parents telling them if you don't give children something positive to do with their time, they will find something to do, whether it's good or bad. It's up to all of us parents and community members to create a positive environment where they can get the right support and get the right information to avoid going down the wrong path.

- Female, East African Community Leader

Take care of them on a very basic level. Talk to them, develop their problem-solving ability. We need to do a better job of treating our children much better. We have disintegrations of families... We have people of all ages that cannot read or write. Where are these people developing their thinking skills? That is how extremism starts. When you have an empty vacuum, something will fill it.

- Female, West African Community Leader

The way we used to discipline our children in Somalia is different than the way we discipline here. In Canada it is just the parents that deal with their children to discipline them, where back in Somalia it was the entire commu-

nity that [would] help watch the children and discipline them. (Male, East African Community Leader)

The theme of needing to mobilize positive influences and supports for youth was common among interviewees who prioritized mentorship as an avenue for prevention. These pro-social influences were seen as a backstop, as means of filling gaps in positive relationships in young people's lives.

It starts with what is missing, make them feel human, you need care and love. Find them a big brother or big sister, someone who went through that path, who can bring them back. Loving people, working with a team that are part of their life, who know who he hangs out with. Don't make it more stigma – [rather] empathy – try to undo what has been done.

- Female, East African Community Leader

They need to get that love and connection, through family, siblings, or mentors, especially when they're not getting what they need in their foundational years in their homes. Schools are doing their best, but schools cannot raise your children. So many parents are neglecting their children, not because they don't love their children, but because they are struggling themselves, and need so much help with so many things and lack resources.

- Female, East African Community Leader

I think the best way to protect at a young age is to give them the supports that they require to be socially engaged in all facets of life and motivate them to aspire to have a sense of patriotism and brotherhood in their society. When someone feels that they belong it's the greater benefit for the society because they protect what's theirs. If they are alienated, they would feel the need to retaliate and find acceptance elsewhere. These radical groups are taking advantage of this. There are youth that are book smart, but they are being manipulated because they lack social skills, maybe they don't have friends, their parents are not engaging them, they don't have mentors... they don't have the skills to utilize the knowledge they gained

to uplift themselves and do good for themselves and their community... It would be nice to have mentors for youth in middle school to teach them about radicalization and how to identify the ideologies of a radical group.

- Female, East African Youth

A connecting thread can be identified in the different solutions that are offered by community members. There is a commonly identified need to mobilize positive role

models who can pass along their culturally relevant wisdom and knowledge. These positive influencers were seen as the key to helping young people grow and learn in a manner that steers them away from undesirable outcomes. While some variation exists in these strategies, much of it can be linked to the need for *positive relationships*, mentorship, knowledge and the development of essential skills and personal qualities (e.g., critical thinking, resilience and empathy).

Human Service Research Findings

As a part of its research agenda, the OPV also conducted interviews with human service professionals in five key geographic areas of Alberta: Southern Alberta (Lethbridge and Medicine Hat), the Calgary Region, Central Alberta (Red Deer), the Greater Edmonton Region, and Northern Alberta (Ft. McMurray and Grande Prairie).

As shown in the community research, there are shared risk factors and pathways to involvement when it comes to extremism and other social and criminal problems. Subsequently, human service professionals operating around areas such as youth-at-risk, domestic violence, gang prevention and broader crime prevention and community safety initiatives may offer useful insights and identify practices that may be transferable to CHMV. While the latter is in its relative infancy, the former areas of program and practice are long-standing – there is a lengthy history of projects and project evaluation that can be drawn upon. The opinions of human service professionals, especially those who have an established history of working in Alberta, can offer useful localized perspectives on issues of violence and violence prevention.

Mirroring some of the structure of the community-based research, questions with this group focused on reaction to terminology (e.g., radicalization and violent extremism), opinions on risk and protective factors and the identification of good practices in prevention that could be applied to CHMV. As shown in the research, human service professionals have had limited exposure to issues

of extremism and hate motivated violence, display a degree of discomfort with these issues and offer opinions that are coloured by their specific professional experience and education. It is clear that - the experience of these interviewees, the clientele they work with and the types of problems they address in their day-to-day practice, impact their opinions and perspectives: for example, on what they see as potentially relevant drivers, risk and protective factors related to violent extremism.

As in the other areas of research for this report, there are both strengths and weaknesses in the findings from the human service interviews. The lack of familiarity with the subject and the degree of discomfort with the topics of extremism and violent extremism represent barriers to generating awareness and capacity around these issues. Given the prominence and priority assigned to violent extremism by multiple levels of government and law enforcement, these are barriers that need to be taken seriously and addressed. This must be done in a manner that demystifies and to an extent normalizes the problems, at least insofar as it allows service providers to see CHMV as another area of (albeit unique) crime prevention. If the priority of practitioners engaged in the prevention of violent extremism is to generate a multi-agency and multi-stakeholder approach, these are important steps in meeting this vision.

Despite these barriers, human service professionals offered valuable insights during the research, especially

in relation to the risk factors that drive HMV. Drawing on their extensive experience in working with youth-at-risk and high-risk youth populations, in corrections and parole and areas of crime prevention related to domestic/intimate partner violence and other forms of violence, human service professionals are able to draw upon knowledge, training and experience from other areas of practice that are far more developed than CHMV. There is a great deal of transferable knowledge that can be drawn from these communities of practice that operate in programs that have decades of operations and program evaluations.

Given the shared opinions of community members and service providers identified in the research around the needs to address issues related to mental health, attachment disorders and issues of social isolation and marginalization, skillsets around mentorship, trauma-informed care and multi-agency models of prevention are important transferable skills and program-elements that can be adapted to CHMV purposes.

In the research presented below, human service professionals are identified through their gender and the type of services and programming they are involved in (e.g., youth-at-risk, community-based or centred services, or more general crime / recidivism prevention). Where appropriate, names of specific programs, places and people are omitted. This minimal level of identification is consistent with the confidentiality standards set at the outset of the research process.

HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONALS ON TERMINOLOGY

In the absence of their belonging to an impacted community, a majority of human service professionals are not personally affected by the stigmatization that can occur around labelling and the use of terms like “radicalization” and violent extremism. More often than not, however, they are aware of this issue and the potential negative ef-

fects on communities like Canadian Muslims. The perception of stigmatization affects their level of comfort with these issues. This “baggage” creates a level of aversion to engagement with the topic and area of practice. As with other key stakeholders, an important first step in overcoming this barrier is an open and fact-based discussion around the multiple forms of extremism and ideologies that can generate hate, extremism and violence.

The response of human-service providers to the research questions demonstrates some overlap of opinions with the community members and leaders. Some of the feedback on terms like radicalization and violent extremism generally aligns with working academic and government definitions, but the most common response was to associate the term with specific ideologies and communities. Responses that aligned with academic definitions were focused on the meaning of radical and extremism and the process-centred element of the term.

Radicalization is essentially the process of turning someone into a terrorist, what follows is terrorist violence.

- Male Practitioner, Crime Prevention

It's the far end of the spectrum. Not necessarily bad or good. I've been a radical at times in my life. One of my best friends calls herself a radical feminist, and so there's lots of positivity associated with that, but I think for mainstream people there's a lot of negativity associated... It's unknown, it's scary, it's potentially dangerous, something I can't control.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

It is someone who develops really extreme views... the kid who shot up the school, the guy in Vegas, they have unconventional [and] negative views. [They have] strong views on race that cause them to want to do harm.

- Male Practitioner, Immigration and Settlement Services

I think ideology is huge, that's one of the fundamental aspects of who we are as humans. We decide to believe nothing, or to believe in something. When we believe in

something, we have the hermeneutic of trying to keep that coherent and that is the foundation from which you live, and that will affect how you live. And, if what you believe teaches you to treat people a particular way, that's incredibly powerful.

- Male Practitioner, Crime Prevention

The other common theme (between groups of respondents) to come out of the responses on terminology was association to specific communities and ideologies. As with community members, there was some (albeit limited) identification with different ideologies.

I don't think about Muslims, or brown and black populations, I think about white supremacy and the alt-right. White hate groups in Canada. Racial profiling, carding, how black/brown people in Canada are surveilled by the police.

- Female Practitioner, Community Services

I have trouble with that word. It can connote something really negative, and with a specific population in mind - Muslim radicalization. But radicalization can be applied to a whole host of ideologies. Radicalization can also be advocacy - it can mean so many different things, but the concept has been reduced to mean a minute concept.

- Female Practitioner, Community Services

First thing that came to mind, I got to be honest, Muslims. I'm just going to be honest with you. I didn't like that, but that's actually what happened... I would look at radicalization being from an early age taught as a set of beliefs, construct, taught about the way the world is, the repetition around radicalization.

- Male Practitioner, Child and Youth Services

Your kind of typical answer is radicalization into ISIS for terrorism, I mean that's kind of the hot button topic. I think radicalization can mean a lot of different things. Radicalization to me can be very similar to the word deviance where it could go one way or the other, it doesn't necessarily have to be a negative thing.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Lastly, as respondents indicated their immediate discomfort with the terminology and the subject matter, they also noted a lack of familiarity with the topic and a need for greater training. These themes were consistently drawn out in reference to other research questions as well. This uncertainty extended to the idea of professional practice in the area for social workers and psychologists.

I think that's something with really big consequence. Seems like it's high stakes kind of work. I think it's probably not something that most people would be that comfortable with. I think as a professional... that people aren't comfortable with it, and so it's just like, I'm not going to work there. I don't think there would be a ton of people lined up for a job... working with young people who are, you know...

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

We need training, and need to know how to combat it [violent extremism] ... If we want to provide the youth tools and resources so they can recognize it in their friends and in their schools.

- Female Practitioner, Community Services

In effect, the reactions and opinions of human service professionals to terminology reinforced the need to be cautious around the terms and descriptions that are used in reference to extremism and hate motivated violence. As with the community leaders and members, the term "radicalization" drew the most pronounced negative reaction based on its perceived stigmatizing quality and association with racialization and Muslim communities.

HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONALS ON DRIVERS & RISK FACTORS

Professionals working with groups like youth-at-risk develop an understanding of the experiences and behaviours that drive negative social and criminal outcomes for young people. Those who work with homeless

populations have an intimate understanding of the impacts of poverty on their clientele. Those employed in settlement and immigration services who work with newly arrived refugees are well aware of the toll that trauma can take on newcomers and how traumatic experience can create so many negative impacts in individual's and families' lives. Specific experiences and areas of practice lead to specific ideas of what represents the drivers and risk factors that are relevant to these issues.

Human service professionals project these ideas onto problems like hate, extremism and violent extremism. As noted above, there are very few human service professionals in Alberta who have familiarity with the topics of extremism and violent extremism. These are not typically subjects that are explored during the education and professional training of social workers, youth workers and psychologists, nor are they encountered in their day-to-day work. The opinions and perspectives of human service professionals on what drives violent extremism must be seen in this light. This is not to dismiss the notion that outside or non-expert perspectives can offer new and meaningful insights on these subjects, far from it. Rather, it is to state that we simply need to recognize how opinions are shaped by experience. As with community leaders and members, service providers embed these drivers and risk factors in knowledge and real-world experiences that are pertinent to local communities. This experiential knowledge is valuable and can inform the design of CHMV programming.

Like the responses on terminology, there are some commonalities in the responses of the community and human service interviewees. For instance, identity-based factors were commonly identified by both human service professionals and community leaders and members as playing an important role in driving risk. Mental health and trauma, unsurprisingly, given the type of work that many of the interviewees are engaged in, was also cited frequently. The responses are divided into four categories: multiple and interlinked risk factors, poverty and experiences with racism, mental health and trauma and

identity and attachment issues. For some service providers, there was a need to recognize that violent extremism was driven by multiple, inter-linked risk factors.

So, definitely unemployment. A sense of hopelessness. A risk factor of course is if they've grown up in a home where they've experienced violence, or any kind of trauma but basically most... I'd say if you ask the question in each group, which I usually do, who grew up in a home where they had violence? I would say probably 80% have. Some are just a one-off experience where they drank too much and did something stupid, but most of them have grown up and watched that, and that's been their experience, right.

- Female Practitioner, Domestic Violence

Exactly the same reason a person will turn towards a gang, or similar behavior. Isolation, poverty, certain amount of feeling destitute, feeling you don't have any say...feeling powerless, lonely, not feeling a sense of belonging. These are all risk factors for young people to get involved in criminal activity and extremist behaviour.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

So reflective of 80 to 85% of them being Indigenous, the intergenerational trauma, the legacies of the residential schools, the sixties scoop, colonization, those – it's massive. That is like in every single person that comes here whether they are cognizant of it or not. The second factor that would be common would be attachment... there is a level of attachment disorder in here often demonstrated to extremes. What that looks like for the young people that are here: cannot identify a safe person, cannot identify when their vulnerability actually puts them at risk for exploitation, not knowing who to trust, or how to assess the truth of someone's intention with them.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Human service professionals who were interviewed were often working with clientele who are disadvantaged economically and experience homelessness. Drivers of the social and criminal problems that they seek to address in

their work are ultimately linked to poverty. Additionally, many of the clientele for these service providers belong to specific ethnic and cultural communities, and a number of practitioners drew a connection between poverty, social exclusion, discrimination and racism.

Racism, poverty, and mental health... I think that when you experience it every day, anyone's automatic reaction would be forget this, and forget you. Don't attribute that to me. I think the kids that have a lot of social supports, who can go home and have those conversations with their family about what this means, and how that feels, and what can we do as a family, and what can we do with our community to figure this out... That happens for some kids, but when they come to an empty house where mom and dad are working four jobs, or there's addictions, or that kind of stuff, I think you go to where you're going to feel a sense of acceptance. But I think racism and poverty here in this province are the two biggest, biggest things.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Poverty is the biggest one. I think that it's not just for young people that these things lead to violence, it's across the board. There's financial poverty, if people are hungry, desperate, they're going to go out and do whatever they need to, to get what they need. There's social poverty, lack of awareness, lack of education, lack of exposure to people who have different backgrounds, so there's less appreciation for maybe even symbols, like what the hijab means, social recognitions... We have had ethnically targeted attacks, against the police, against indigenous populations, Somalians, Eritreans. People take advantage of the women who work the streets. People take advantage of the addicted... Ultimately, impoverishment creates conditions which can lead people to violence.

- Male Practitioner, Crime Prevention

It always makes me think that someone has been oppressed... so the only way to come back through that is to push back. It's interesting to look at how that goes

over in cultures. Once a culture has been repressed then they have to stand up, they have to eventually fight back and when they do, they always over fight back.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Mental health and trauma are two issues that human service professionals tend to deal with on a daily basis. Clients with untreated mental health issues and post-traumatic stress are at risk of a host of negative outcomes – child exploitation, unemployment, poverty, criminal behaviour and violence, to name a few. Poverty and addiction strongly overlap with mental health issues in Alberta. In addition, human service professionals are increasingly recognizing the importance of childhood development and brain development on shaping adult behaviour, and how experiences with childhood trauma, in particular, can have dramatic effects on adult behaviour. With these observations in mind, trauma-informed care is becoming a standard in practice.

The kids I have worked with who have violent backgrounds or histories, or anything like that, all of them have suffered from some form of mental health. It can range from anxiety and depression to schizophrenia... I think mental health is such a huge thing, and there's such a stigma around it too. Kids are trying to figure how they deal with it, and how they explain that to people, and not be bullied or anything for having that, right. All those kids that I have worked with... they all have some form of trauma that they experienced, and they either haven't been in a place where they're able to deal with it, or if they have dealt with it, it hasn't been in a healthy way, right. So, they're either committing more crimes, they're using drugs or alcohol to cope, they're doing something to cope.

- Female Practitioner, Crime Prevention

Risk factors? Trauma, I would say 100 percent of our youth have experiences with trauma... Intergenerational, from strangers, societal, [it] can be experienced in different ways.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk services

It's multilayer events that need to take place in order to get to that point. Unfortunately, those multilayer things are very common. I think the first part is trauma or experiencing violence when you're younger... experiencing it personally, or seeing your family in violent situations, living in an area where violence is prevalent. Then you add in the fact that maybe they can't conform to social norms as easily... it [can] be a sort of disability... Then if they have nobody - it's the same reason why kids get into gangs. They don't have family - they don't have that connection. We live in a society where young adults are told you need to act like an adult, but in every other aspect they're told you can't do this - what do you do now? They're looking for their sense of independence and of power to have control over their own lives. That's why they go to gangs because they get that money, they get that power, all of their needs [are] met.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

We have people that are experiencing trauma who have not had the opportunity to process that trauma and heal from that trauma at a young age. Then what happens is the brain is still trying to make sense of that... [They ask] what is wrong with me as a result of those traumatic events and you ask those types of questions year after year. The brain basically builds itself up into psychopathology. So, you actually end up at a place where you hate yourself, and you hate everybody around you. Like tunnel vision space where there's only one solution and it's to get guns and shoot people.

- Male Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Developmentally, for young people, break it up in developmental stages... if I see violence in a five-year-old, versus a 15-year-old, it's different versus an 18-year-old. It follows developmental stages, and you expect different things at different stages because of brain development.

- Male practitioner, Children and Youth Services

Identity-based factors, detachment disorders and inter-generational divides were common risk factors and experiences identified by human service professionals as

driving criminal behaviour and violence. Both community leaders and members and human service professionals focused on these factors, which is noteworthy. Divides between children and parents, isolation from peers and from society as a whole were seen as experiences that can create a void that can be filled in a number of ways – one of which is identifying with an extremist group or movement.

Belonging. That's the biggest one. Feeling like they have a voice - what is a louder voice than becoming an extremist? You are the loudest voice in the room... The system doesn't listen, your parents don't listen, society doesn't listen, and nobody is listening to you. Then you're going to find a voice and do something.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

The answer that is truest to my heart is community. If you don't have community, if you don't have someone, if you don't think someone cares when you get punched in the face, [then] you're vulnerable. You don't believe you are worth anything. You don't believe you are worth having a good life or not having to struggle. You don't see that, and you don't see that because no one has told you or been there through those things...It's not about rich or poor, you don't see that. It goes beyond those lines...I have worked with a lot of kids that are at a disadvantage financially and so that seems like it's a reoccurring thing, but kids are vulnerable in all levels. We see that everywhere. They're vulnerable because they're detached, they don't feel loved, they don't feel connected...I'm a big believer that the lack of community really starts to make people feel vulnerable, and then once that happens, it leads to them being vulnerable in so many ways. We have the need to belong.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Lack of community, because it gives them a cause, gives you a purpose. It gives you something to fight for, and we want it as people. We want to grow and connect. So, if they can make you feel like you belong, then you belong...When you get to violent extremes when you

talk about suicide bombing, and stuff like that, you have these kids who are dying to belong. They find somewhere where they belong, they find somewhere that tells them that if they do this, they will be honoured. They will be remembered, and they are loved... They were really in this place of need, and you can be convinced of anything when you are desperate for love or belonging.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

When they can't get that sense of belonging, and fit in with their families, and they can't get that sense of belonging to fit within systems, it makes sense that they gravitate to other people who have the same issues, don't trust the system, don't trust other people, which I think can be that link that draws them together. Kids that are angry with society will often find other kids that are angry with society in their life. So, it's not surprising to me that some of these groups are often a band of youth that have experienced that chaos and trauma, severe attachment issues, and have inevitably found each other in a common cause, perhaps. How much of that is ideological?

- Male Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Another huge one I think is young people, especially in adolescence, are at such a point of identity, and trying to figure out who they are, and where they're trying to fit in the world. [They think that...] I am disadvantaged, people don't care about me, I am labelled, I have everything in the book that makes me bad, or terrible, then you're going to start to live out those labels, and you're going to start to do so in a way that brings pride back to yourself. If all of the world and society has labelled you and put you in this box, it's uncomfortable to be in that box, no one would want to be in that box.

- Male Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

I see a lot of immigrant children really suffering. The parents are suffering. They come here and... we know the social disadvantages of transferring to another country and not being able to keep the employment that you had, or not being recognized for the work that you did in another country, which I find really insane. The kids here

are left without the community they had at home, and without those types of spaces to be within communities. So, they start again looking for community and then they end up in these gangs here, things like that.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

These consistent themes of gaps or voids in identity providing an opening to potentially negative outcomes are one of the most resonant findings in the research conducted for this report. A common story emerges from these accounts, where young people struggling with isolation, rejection and common questions (for young people) of where do I belong, and what is my place in the world, are drawn to like-minded individuals, who have the same experience, the same sense of rejection, discontent and grievance. Additionally, these individuals have a shared need for a sense of belonging, family and love. The rest of the story, to a large extent, is based on chance, and who and what those young people encounter at that point of vulnerability, be it a positive and pro-social influence, or a gang, or, in rare cases, an extremist movement.

HUMAN SERVICE PROFESSIONALS ON PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Finally, human service professionals were asked to identify protective factors or tools that could be used to promote the prevention of violent extremism. As in other areas of research, there were some areas of overlap with the responses from community leaders and members. The importance of mentorship, education and strengthening families were common themes among these groups. Other respondents focused on the need for specific program types and models. Speaking from their own areas of work they identified good practices related to prevention that were drawn from various types of prevention programming.

On the whole, human service professionals displayed a

greater degree of hesitancy and confusion about what protective factors might look like around violent extremism. There was a greater willingness and more in-depth responses offered to questions on drivers and risk factors. This shortcoming can be ascribed to the level of familiarity and degree of discomfort that human service professionals displayed and expressed around the topic of violent extremism. For some, however, there was an idea that existing programs and models of prevention are exportable to this area of prevention. Consistent with the view that good practices in contemporary CHMV are marked by multi-agency models there was a preference for wrap-around or hub models (multi-service, multi-agency) that could mobilize multiple tools and protective factors around clientele and their needs.

I think the Wrap model (WrapED) works really well. Wrap can bring in multiple supports if there are no supports there, and Wrap can also coordinate the supports that are there... [that] are working in silos. We can get everybody on the same page, everybody knows all the same information, and everybody is working on that one plan. They will be mostly natural supports too, right? They'll be there longer than any professional will be.

- Female Practitioner, Crime Prevention

So XXXXX organized a number of sessions around civic engagement, one around Islamophobia which was a series, and one around faith-based engaging, and what we did, or what he did, was to take four faiths or spiritual practices, invite an artist or a youth who is an artist from that faith community to have a workshop and to have food and to talk ... I'm from this faith, but I'm also a hip hop artist. I'm also a visual artist and here is how creativity is part of my expression. Here's how that is – my faith is also a part of my identity and this invites a safe space to ask questions, and so the youth were able to ask, 'well I've always heard this about Muslims I've always heard this about Jews, I've always heard this about Indigenous elders' We use that more currently as a response and a way to engage the truth and reconciliation recommendations. We use it as well as a framework for engaging

the social justice issues as the youth identify them.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

So, there's certainly that ecological approach, which is a big factor. How youth are able to access the resources they need, and as Michael Ungar would say, how they're able to navigate and negotiate resources that they need can help build resilience.

- Male Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Strengthening families and addressing gaps in the school system were other areas that were identified by interviewees. These responses were related back to the need for young people to find meaningful and pro-social attachments and outlets for their energy and time. In a similar vein, the importance of mentorship was drawn out by the respondents.

Good family is always a protective factor. Families that provide support. I think when young people feel heard - we know because that's the relationship we've built. It's really that connection that someone else in the world out there loves me. If they had a bunch of those connections, that's the most protective. If it can be a positive role model... then that's all that matters.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Connections with people that can validate them along the way, that can care for them. I think of other ways to express those feelings of hate and frustration in different kinds of activities...sometimes it's just that release that people are looking for. Love, empathy, can prevent violence. People are a resource. We forget about using people in simple ways.

- Female Practitioner, Youth-at-Risk Services

Involvement in something. Someone to notice their strengths and passions. Research shows that just having one positive adult figure in a youth's life, who helps support, nurture them, is monumental.

- Female Practitioner, Community Services

Educate. Educate. I think education. Just understanding.... how they're being exploited by those narratives. What those people are playing on, to get them to that point. What they're saying to play on their emotions. Having an education about that and how they're being exploited is the best defence.

- Male Practitioner, Settlement and Immigration Services

Connection, social capital, having spaces. If we have spaces of consistent connection, and someone doesn't have a strong family they at least have those spaces. Schools are a really critical place for young people. The school system has challenges - and how it frames our children, what I've consistently heard is that young people feel put down.

- Female Practitioner, Community Services

Building off the shared opinions of respondents in both areas of research on the need to address relationship and identity-based gaps, human service professionals sought to address these issues through strategies and protective factors that involve meeting those specific needs. Whether that was met through strengthening family ties, or mentorship, or supports through human services and schools, the priority was to fill gaps related to belonging and a feeling of purpose.

The background features a diagonal split between a dark blue upper-left section and an orange lower-right section. A white geometric shape, resembling a stylized arrow or a trapezoid, points upwards from the bottom-left towards the top-right, overlapping both the blue and orange areas.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of the research with community leaders and members and human service professionals was to obtain locally relevant feedback that can inform approaches to prevention. International good practices in countering hate motivated violence (or P/CVE, as commonly referred to) provide a guide and a starting point upon which new programs can be designed and delivered. However, those programs must be attuned to the unique challenges that exist on the ground.

As shown in the sub-reports on different forms of extremism that are present in Alberta, there are a wide variety of ideas and ideologies that can drive hate, extremism and hate motivated violence in the province. A crucial starting point for developing effective prevention is a recognition of the diversity of ideologies and extremist movements that can generate hate and violence, and building greater awareness of these movements within the general public and among key stakeholders who are best placed to identify and address the issues. This first step is moving beyond the legacy of stigmatization of Muslim communities and demonstrating a willingness to meaningfully listen to and act upon, the concerns, opinions and insights of impacted communities.

A wide range of factors were identified by the community and human service respondents as risks or push and pull factors related to recruitment and involvement into extremist groups and movements. Rather than interpreting HMV as being a result of one specific social or psycholog-

ical factor that could be addressed through a clear cut, singular solution, respondents generally acknowledged that, as a complex problem, HMV requires a more holistic understanding and response.

There were a number of pathways and experiences that were identified as furthering this process. For example, one frequently mentioned dynamic was the role of the online space in creating a wider, more accessible and anonymous space where individuals could more easily identify with an extremism community and movement. Divides in families, especially newcomer families where the struggles of settlement and the realities of modern life can strain bonds, leaving young people largely “unobserved” to search out new relationships and supports (on or offline), was also a common pathway identified by respondents. The impacts of trauma, especially at an early age, and post-traumatic stress, were also seen as a key risk factor that can set the stage, or provide a point of entry, for an extremist worldview.

A lack of access to adequate social supports, the absence of inclusive public institutions like schools, mentors and pro-social relationships and strained financial resources exacerbate these experiences and factors, and reduce the number of pathways, or off ramps for individuals where they can be steered away from risk and find positive meaning and belonging in their lives. Some of these factors and experiences create a gap, where an extremist group or movement meets a need by offering a commu-

nity and sense of greater purpose that is not being found in an individual's family, peer group and society. Extremist movements can be particularly attractive to socially isolated, marginalized and angry youth by helping them frame their feelings and grievances in a satisfying way that grants a sense of empowerment. While extremism and violent extremism can represent unfamiliar and uncomfortable subject matters for communities and service providers, the risk factors and experiences which drive the phenomenon are well known in their ability to create risk of a host of issues ranging from domestic violence, to human trafficking, gang involvement, addiction, suicide and other criminal behaviours.

The solutions and protective factors identified by respondents were specifically aimed at addressing the underlying conditions that drive hate, extremism and

hate motivated violence. In large part, the solutions were about providing answers to common questions for young people on who they are and where they are going as emerging young adults.

Recognizing the needs for multiple supports for individuals at-risk, such as mental health services, outreach-based, education-based, recreational activities (e.g., sports), mentorship and the strengthening of natural/familial/pro-social relationships - multi-agency and multi-stakeholder models of prevention represent a preferred approach to prevention. This is a model that is consistent with the established understanding of good practices in CHMV, at least in the secondary (early warning signs) and tertiary (rehabilitation and reintegration) programs and consistent with existing local models of crime prevention (e.g., hubs or "situation tables").

Insights from Community Leaders & Members

There is much that can be drawn from the responses of community leaders and members in Alberta that can inform the way in which we approach and pursue CHMV. Responses to what security means to community members provide some answers to how we can conceive of the *broader impacts* of extremism, hate and violence in Canadian and Albertan society. On the one hand, at the most basic level, security means personal, family and community safety and freedom from the threat of violence. But a more nuanced understanding of security includes feelings of societal acceptance, and the ability to retain dignity in your identity within society. Experiences like hate clearly undermine a sense of dignity and societal acceptance. As shown in the sub-report on hate, subtle and not so subtle experiences with hate undermine feelings of individual and community wellbeing. Subsequently, there is a clear connection made between these experiences and security for Canada's diverse, multicultural communities.

Findings on terminology, especially the usage of the word "radicalization" to describe the process that generates extremism and HMV, have ramifications for practitioners and prevention programs. The word radicalization carries significant baggage within some communities. This is especially true in Muslim communities. In the absence of a greater willingness to broaden approaches to prevention and account for the diversity of ideological perspectives that can generate extremism and HMV, the term, or any term that is used to describe the problem,

for that matter, will retain these negative connotations.

On the causes and drivers of extremism, community perspectives do not significantly deviate from established academic and expert analyses on the topic. The value in these perspectives; however, is the ability of community members to place these causes within the context of lived experience. Accordingly, community leaders and members identified inter-generational divides, everyday experiences with discrimination, the legacy of trauma in families and associated mental health issues in newcomer and refugee communities as key drivers. Local recruiters and online communities were seen as preying on the vulnerabilities that come from experiences. Community members largely interpreted HMV as being a multifaceted phenomenon that is intertwined in personal, familial, sociological, and cultural dynamics. And, these experiences were identified as driving a number of problems, not just extremism.

From this last recognition emerges an important point for countering hate motivated violence programs and practitioners - for impacted communities, *there will always be bigger issues than extremism*. The community leaders and members interviewed for this report made that clear. The visible and tangible impacts of poverty, addiction, mental health, gangs and racism in communities will always eclipse extremism and HMV. If CHMV practitioners want to build programs that enjoy greater legitimacy, there must be a willingness to recognize this reality. These observations raise larger questions over what the

scope and remit of CHMV programs should be. If there is an unwillingness among practitioners engaged with CHMV to build capacity and directly support prevention efforts around these more impactful social and criminal problems, there should be little surprise over hesitancy or unwillingness of community mentors and leaders to support the goals of CHMV. This is a common-sense observation

Lastly, the solutions offered during the interviews flow naturally from community perspectives on the causes and drivers of extremism. The natural inclination of many is to travel further “upstream” of the problem, to the stage where risk begins, in schools and in families where young people lack necessary supports and resources.

Returning to the need to build legitimacy in prevention efforts through assisting programs engaged with other social and criminal problems, this inclination provides some clues to where prevention efforts can be targeted – in earlier stages of risk where negative outcomes are multi-directional, where young people could just as easily join a gang, as they could an extremist network or movement. In the final analysis, effective approaches to prevention will be transparent, marked by integrity and accountable to the clients, families and communities it serves. Only on this basis is a consent-based and co-operative model of prevention obtainable. The opinions and perspectives of the communities that were graciously offered in this report provide a number of clues as to how we reach these standards.

Insights from Human Service Professionals

Human service professionals consistently drew from their own areas of education, training and experience when identifying the drivers, risk factors and protective factors that they saw as pertinent to HMV. Their opinions and insights are valuable for a number of reasons. First, they are grounded in the day-to-day work of addressing locally relevant social and criminal problems. They are attuned to the most critical issues that exist in Alberta’s municipalities and regions, can draw on experience from a wide variety of prevention programs and are well aware of the gaps that exist within local services.

In discussing extremism and HMV, human service professionals were particularly attuned to the *victimization* that occurs within these issues, more so than the *perpetrator* dimension, which is a greater focus among law enforcement and other security professionals. Human service professionals identified risk-related factors as including individual and intergenerational trauma, identity and attachment issues and mental health concerns. Human service professionals also added that poverty and unemployment, a lack of access to suitable resources, oppression, exposure to violent behaviours and gaps in communal support as relevant factors that drew individuals down the path towards HMV. Above all else, they emphasized feelings of isolation and hopelessness, loss of power and control and post-traumatic stress. These conclusions largely parallel that of the community member’s responses – both reflect the importance of the psychosocial development and social determinants

of health in understanding the drivers and solutions to extremism and HMV.

Human service respondents identified resilience-based factors, the irreplaceable value of pro-social mentorship and guidance and the need for multi-agency programs that address complex risk factors. They provided detailed knowledge about what good practices look like in a broad cross-section of prevention programming and were specific in describing what they viewed as effective ways of pursuing trauma-informed practice and specific intervention techniques (e.g., a “wrap-around” model). From a social-ecological perspective, service providers emphasized the need to work in collaboration with families and other natural supports in a client’s life, and the importance of facilitating access to resources that promote healthy self-discovery. As professionals who inherently operate from their professionalized experience and “lens”, responses were intertwined with principles of front-line practice. This includes, *inter alia*, advocacy, collaboration, positive relationship building, social justice and compassion. This integration of various professional practices and principles in the responses is what represents the most notable distinction between the responses given by human service professionals and the community leaders and members.

The responses given by human service professionals are both detailed and thoughtful and provide much “food for thought” for practitioners engaged with CHMV. Of note

and importance for CHMV practitioners, human service professionals demonstrated uncertainty around some of the drivers of extremism and HMV, as well as a degree of discomfort in dealing with ideologically-motivated individuals. As a result, there is a clear need to buttress their

awareness and knowledge around these issues. Additional resources and training will be required to generate an effective multi-disciplinary and multi-agency approach to CHMV in Alberta.



Conclusion

In order to be successful in countering hate motivated violence (CHMV) programs need to account for, and meaningfully integrate, the opinions and insights of impacted community members. This is essential if the goal is the creation of a new generation of programming that is seen as collaborative, transparent and legitimate.

For those who are demonstrating an interest in extremism and violence, and for those who are seeking an exit from the hateful and violent rhetoric of extremist movements, Albertans are in general agreement on what solution looks like. Prevention of violence, helping youth-at-risk and steering individuals away from the path of extremism is ultimately grounded in relationships that can offer a window to an image of an alternative, positive future. Despite the complexity of the problem, these solutions are not “rocket science” – rather they are grounded in tried and tested good practices that have long been identified in crime prevention.

Hate, extremism and violence are highly correlated issues that exist along a continuum. They drive and reinforce each other. Holistic solutions require looking beyond how we traditionally conceive of the problem of violent extremism, as an issue associated with terrorism, national security and public safety. There is a need

to think of these issues within a broader conception of what security means for individuals and communities and the potential impacts of hate and extremism on the social fabric of Alberta and Canada.

We must also recognize that hate and extremism represent direct threats to Canadian and Albertan values as defined in the Constitution, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and our multicultural identity. These defining documents and values present an image, an ideal of Canadian society that is marked by liberal-democracy, equality and equity regardless of ethnic, religious or gender identity. There is a need to be mindful of how both extremism, and our response to extremism and associated violence, can challenge these essential facets of our social and political life.

To succeed where others have struggled and failed in the prevention of extremism and hate motivated violence, we need to fully mobilize these values and strengths together with the ideas of a new generation of Canadians. The voices and agencies of the latter are essential as we seek to brace our society against global trends and forms of extremism that are more accessible than ever before, thanks to modern technology.

Endnotes

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Glossary of Terms

Al-Qaeda is a terrorist organization whose roots stem from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. Today, Al-Qaeda represents a decentralized network of organizations and semi-autonomous groups who offer their fealty to the original founding organization and its leadership. What this network shares is a desire for political, societal and religious changes that reflect a specific interpretation of Islam and Islamic jurisprudence. This interpretation is opposed to mainstream religious interpretations. Collectively the network exhibits a diverse set of local and international grievances and goals. These goals are pursued through violence perpetrated against the “near enemy” (i.e., despotic regimes in the Muslim world) and “far enemy” (primarily the United States and its allies).

Anti-Government Extremists encompass a broad array of individuals and groups who harbour semi-structured anti-police and anti-government beliefs. Operating outside of more established anti-government movements (e.g., Sovereign Citizens and Freemen on the Land) these individuals possess more individualized belief systems. Grievances are often shaped by prior interaction with authorities and pre-conceived notions of the criminal justice system (law enforcement, judiciary, lawyers etc.), politicians, or other government representatives. Threats of violence from these individuals tend to be fixated on specific individuals and agencies. Anti-government extremism can be highly volatile and represents a demonstrable threat to law enforcement and government officials.

Anti-Social Behaviour refers to behaviour that demonstrates a lack of social understanding, empathy and/or concern for the welfare of others. This is often demonstrated through an absence of, or limiting of, social interactions in an individual’s day-to-day life. Acts associated with anti-social behaviours that create public and community concerns may include disorderly, criminal or violent behaviours. Anti-social behaviour is often exhibited in adolescence and early adulthood.

Cell-Based Terrorism refers to the organization of semi-independent small networks and groups that have limited interaction with each other or the larger organization. The level of interaction between cells and organizations can vary significantly between movements. A number of extremist groups and movements have developed writings, teachings and strategies that promote the use of cell-based or “leaderless resistance” activism, violence and terrorism. This organizational method can be used to limit the possibilities of detection by law enforcement and intelligence agencies.

Conspiracy Theories reject accepted explanations and conclusions around specific circumstances or events in favour of alternative explanations that are based on unfounded, uncorroborated or false evidence. Alternative explanations are often focused on the actions of a shadowy, powerful and self-interested elite. These theories and ideas exhibit feelings of strong distrust and scepticism towards governments, international governmental bodies and specific ethnic, religious and cultural communities. Conspiracy theories can play an important role in constructing extremist ideas and rhetoric, for example, through creating a sense of crisis around the actions and interests of “out” groups.

Daesh, also known as the Islamic State (IS) or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS), is an offshoot of Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) that emerged during the 2011 Syrian Civil War. The group distinguished itself from its predecessors through successful social media campaigns and propaganda that attracted the largest influx of foreign fighters known in modern times (approximately 40,000 - 60,000, between 4,000 and 7,000 of whom came from Western countries). Daesh also distinguished itself from its predecessor through its successful (albeit limited) creation of a state that reflected its vision of society. The group has been linked to thousands of terrorist attacks throughout the Muslim world as well as notable at-

tacks in Western states. Daesh's ideology is similar to that of al-Qaeda but can be differentiated in terms of its designation of a wider set of potential enemies, individuals and peoples who can be subject to unrestrained and genocidal violence.

Echo Chamber has been used to refer to social or online environments where an individual interacts with like-minded individuals or materials that consolidate entrenched beliefs. Echo chambers display an absence of diversity in ideas and sentiments. Within these environments, contending and differing opinions are policed, isolated and rejected. This kind of environment can produce interactions and beliefs that contribute to social polarization and extremism.

Extremism, or an extremist belief system, is characterized by a rigid and unquestioning understanding of political, social and/or religious issues. From this standpoint, there is little willingness to challenge opinions and consider alternative perspectives. Extremism, especially forms of extremism that encourage violence, are structured around in-groups, or an "us", and out-groups, or a "them", together with a negative framing of relations between these groups or communities. This kind of framing is often accompanied by a sense of crisis and calls for urgent action.

Formers refers to individuals who were previously part of an extremist or criminal network and lifestyle. These individuals have been engaged in prevention programs in part because of their first-hand experience and knowledge of processes like engagement and disengagement. It has been suggested that formers can play a role in supporting and mentoring individuals who are seeking to leave criminal or extremist networks and lifestyles.

Freemen on the Land (FOTLs) adhere to an anti-authority and anti-government ideology that is grounded in ideas of individual rights. While FOTLs draw on a broad set of historical, constitutional, and pseudo-legal ideas, they uniformly assert that the federal government is a corrupt fiction, whose sole purpose is to dispossess individuals of their rights, freedoms, and property. They place great value on their narrow interpretation of common law, specifically areas that pre-date contemporary jurisprudence (e.g., the Magna Carta). FOTLs believe that the social contract requires individual consent and that, by limiting interaction with the state, they are not required to abide by the law. Based on this understanding, they believe they are not required to interact with the state or its representatives.

Hate Crimes can refer to two things. First, "hate crimes" can mean generic criminal offences, including violence, damage to property, bullying, harassment, mischief, threats and verbal abuse or insults that are motivated specifically by prejudice against an identifiable group (e.g., race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, or disabled). Hate crimes can also refer to a specific set of criminal offences related to speech, defined under Sections 318, 319 and 320 of the Criminal Code. Under these sections, promoting hatred, publicly inciting hatred and advocating genocide are specifically identified as criminal offenses.

Hate Incident involves violence, damage to property, bullying, harassment, verbal abuse or insults that are motivated by prejudice on the basis of race, religion, sexual orientation, or other grounds. Hate incidents, by their nature, fall below the criminal threshold while still having a deleterious impact on social cohesion and a community's sense of belonging in Canada.

Human Service Professionals are individuals who work in diverse agencies and areas of programming where they seek to address a host of social ills. This may include mental health facilities, youth serving agencies, and programs that seek to address gang involvement, addiction and different forms of violence. Social workers, psychologists and youth workers are examples of professionals engaged in these arenas and areas of practice.

Identitarianism shares much in common with white nationalism. Identitarians work to influence political, economic and social policies in western states in an effort to protect and preserve what they see as their heritage and racial privilege. Identitarians focus their grievances and political opposition on immigration from non-European societies and reject multiculturalism, which they consider a dangerous policy. Identitarians point to not only the threat of immigration to white societies but also demographic trends (e.g., declining birth rates among European host populations and higher birth rate among visible minority communities). These ideas underpin common conspiracy theories in the movement (e.g., the Great Replacement). Identitarians, like other White Nationalists, promote the need for a “white” ethnostate.

Incels are a misogynistic movement composed of men who identify themselves as being unable to establish romantic and sexual relationships with women. From these experiences, the Incel movement has established shared grievances, an online community, a shared language and terminology and identified women as responsible for their plight. In addition to this, many Incels demonstrate a profound sense of self-loathing based on how they negatively perceive their personal appearance, personality and associated social standing. Incels are both violent and non-violent. The former group has identified and celebrated individuals (e.g., Elliot Rodger) who have carried out mass casualty terrorist attacks in the name of the Incel community, creating a rallying call for like-minded members.

In-Group/Out-Group are terms used primarily in sociology and psychology. These terms signify how individuals and groups categorize and differentiate themselves as members of unique, competing or opposed social groups. In-groups share an identity from which out-groups may be externalized and excluded. Out-groups may be framed as a threat (in some cases existential) to in-groups. In-group / out-group dynamics are an important feature of extremism.

Left Wing Extremism is used to categorize a wide variety of groups who coalesce around political ideologies and philosophies related to anarchism, socialism, Maoism, and Marxist-Leninist ideals. In the latter half of the 20th century “Red” groups and movements grew and were inspired by the ideas and actions of “revolutionary states” such as Cuba, the Soviet Union and Nicaragua. Some of these groups, including Red Army factions and brigades, employed terrorist violence in the pursuit of their ideological goals. A vast majority of these groups ceased to exist following the collapse of the Soviet Union and other communist states. Today, left-wing groups have mobilized in opposition to what they perceived as fascist, racist, oppressive and exploitative economic practices in contemporary society and politics. A majority of this activism is non-violent; when violence does occur, it tends to be reactive and targeted on the opposition in the context of protests.

Lone Actor Terrorism refers to individuals who commit politically motivated violent acts independently, without direct or sustained logistical support from a network or group. Despite their physical isolation, these individuals are influenced by ideologies, teachings, writings and ideas that are embedded in on and offline extremist communities. These communities imbue individuals with ideas and social processes that promote the use of violence in furtherance of a political and ideological cause. Lone actor terrorists and terrorist acts are becoming increasingly prominent, a trend that is primarily tied to a growing climate of social polarization and the rapid spread of extremist materials and communities online.

Militia Groups in Canada are motivated primarily by perceived threats related to immigration, refugees and border control. The groups view themselves as a “last line of defense” against a series of amorphous threats to Canada and Canadian society. Militia groups are also engaged in prepping, survivalist and training activities, including with the use of firearms. These activities are embedded in a culture of outdoor recreation and camaraderie. In particular, the groups share a xenophobic and anti-Islamic sentiment and differ from patriot groups in their explicit support for the military and law enforcement.

Militia groups draw on some of the traditions and culture of their American counterparts. In the United States members of militia groups have been linked to a host of terrorist plots and violent acts. This trend is not apparent in Canada.

National Security is closely intertwined with the sovereignty of the country. Historically, threats posed by other states, their militaries and clandestine activities, were viewed as the greatest threats to national security. In Canada, countering these kinds of threats is primarily the responsibility of the Canadian Armed Forces and the national intelligence agency, CSIS. Today, while the threat of foreign military invasion has largely dissipated, Canada remains attentive to the threats posed by foreign intelligence agencies. The Canadian government has also recognized the activities of “non-state actors” like terrorist groups and non-violent interference by foreign states (e.g., industrial espionage), as potential threats to Canadian values and national security.

Natural Supports are personal, informal or unpaid relationships and community-based supports that individuals can develop organically and in various environments over the course of their lifespan. Natural supports have the potential to play a crucial role in fostering prosocial behaviours, resilience, and feelings of belonging and self-worth. These supports can also play a role in buttressing and supporting prevention and psycho-social intervention programs. As “positive influencers” natural supports can aid individuals during periods of turmoil and distress and enhance the outcomes of prevention efforts. Natural supports may include, for example, family members, teachers, co-workers, community members, religious leaders, sport coaches, peers, colleagues and friends.

Patriot Groups combine nationalistic and xenophobic (most commonly anti-Islamic beliefs), in their ideologies. Patriot groups in Canada draw on traditions from both European anti-immigrant / vigilante groups (e.g., Soldiers of Odin) and American Patriot Groups. These groups are opposed to the policies of governments and political parties that they view as complicit in the degradation of Canadian values. Patriot groups organize rallies, protests, and ostensibly charitable functions and are willing to engage in outwardly discriminatory behaviour. Groups have also engaged in more aggressive and confrontational behaviour, for example, conducting self-styled security patrols around neighbourhoods and cultural/religious facilities frequented by religious minority communities.

Pro-Social Behaviours are voluntary, co-operative, and unselfish behaviours that often seek to help and benefit others. These altruistic actions are characterized by empathy and/or a desire to create positive changes in communities and the wider society.

Protective Factors are individual, familial, communal or environmental attributes and conditions that help to mitigate negative experiences and influences. In various areas of prevention, protective factors are seen as creating resilience to negative social and criminal problems. These factors operate in the opposite fashion to risk factors.

Public Safety is the responsibility of the government, an agency or institution to protect the welfare of its residents and citizens. Crime, natural disasters, and terrorism can all negatively impact public safety. Government agencies focused on justice and disaster preparedness and police and other emergency services prioritize public safety. In Canada, a government ministry (Public Safety Canada) has responsibility for these issues at the federal level.

Radicalization is a process through which individuals adopt a worldview that is opposed to the existing social and political standards, or “status quo”, of society. Through the process of becoming “radical,” individuals internalize a belief system which, by its very nature, calls for significant changes in the political, economic, and/or spiritual life of a society.

These changes can be pursued through non-violent and violent activism. This highly socialized process can vary significantly depending on the individual who experiences it.

Reciprocal Radicalization is the idea that extremist groups and movements trigger and encourage a cycle of escalating tension, rhetoric and violence amongst themselves. This mutually reinforcing process takes place between extremist groups who hold opposing belief systems and identities.

Risk Factors are attributes, conditions or characteristics that increase the likelihood of negative outcomes. These factors may be static or dynamic. Risk factors are often discussed in areas related to public and mental health, but also in relation to criminal and social problems.

Risk Indicators signal the presence of a certain outcome. By comparison, a risk factor increases the likelihood of an outcome. Rather than being a causal mechanism for a certain outcome, a risk indicator is associated with, or symptomatic of, an outcome. Risk indicators can be organised into factors relating to the behaviour and circumstances of the person involved.

Single-Issue extremism is a catch-all description that includes a number of grievances or ideologies which can drive violent extremism. Rather than seeking more comprehensive and far-reaching changes in society, individuals engaged with single-issue extremism are focused on specific grievances and goals. Examples of political issues that have fueled single issue extremism previously include animal rights, environmentalism, misogyny and anti-abortion beliefs.

Social Cohesion is a condition in which members of society display mutual trust, purpose, solidarity and co-operation within a shared community. A cohesive society coalesces around norms, beliefs and values and demonstrates an ability to pursue common goals. Social cohesion can result in a number of tangible benefits related to security, social integration and productivity.

Social Ecology is an area of academic study and understanding which seeks to illuminate how people interact with and are shaped by their social environment. A social environment is composed of layers of individuals, groups and institutions. A social ecological approach has been employed in areas of psycho-social intervention and prevention programs related to social and criminal problems.

Social Fabric refers to the broader composition of society and the interactions that take place within it. Optimally these interactions produce a socially cohesive society. Cohesive societies are socially integrated and marked by feelings of mutual trust and purpose. Conflict and divisiveness that comes from ethnic and social divides can considerably undermine the social fabric.

Social Movements are formed around shared concerns, grievances and goals. Movements are loosely organized and less formal than an established group, in large part because there are fewer barriers to membership. Social movements, including those that promote extremism, collectively mobilize around identified opportunities and a desire for change.

Social Polarization refers to deepening divides between individuals, groups and communities. These divides are framed and conceived through social identities such as race, ethnicity, class, nationality, political beliefs and gender. Local and international conflicts, divisive political and media rhetoric and online “echo chambers” can fuel social polarization and

create a climate in which hatred and extremism proliferate.

Sovereign Citizens draw on traditions and perspectives of individual freedom and limited government combined with various conspiracy theories. These theories focus on the nature and behaviour of modern government, the American monetary system and the activities of the Federal Reserve of the United States. The movement emerged in the 1960s with strong anti-government, anti-tax, anti-Semitic and white supremacist tendencies. Today the movement displays some (albeit limited) racial and religious diversity.

Terrorism is the threat of, or the use of, politically motivated violence conducted against symbolic targets, combatants and non-combatants by state or non-state actors who generate a psychological impact beyond the immediate target or victims. Terrorism is a method of political violence that can be used to spread fear and shock, generate publicity, demonstrate relevance, and inspire like-minded individuals. Terrorism is used to advance a political, religious, or ideological cause, or associated set of goals.

Violent Extremism is a term that is often used interchangeably with terrorism. Violent extremism captures a broader set of ideologically motivated activities and behaviours than terrorism. These behaviours can include advocating for and supporting violence. In this context violence can be seen as a means to address an impending threat, an abiding sense of injustice, or the perceived ills of society. Violent extremism is infused with ideas, slogans and writings that promote the use of violence.

White Nationalism refers to an ideological perspective that promotes a nationalist ideology, racial privilege and exclusivity for whites. White Nationalism and associated “alt-right” movements represent the new generation of white supremacy. Compared to White Power Skinheads, they present a more clean-cut and mainstream image. While there is diversity in their ideas and behaviours, a majority of white nationalist groups have sanitized white supremacist language and couch their messages in ideas of pride in European heritage and “white rights”, or their preference for a white ethno-state. White nationalism has been re-invigorated in recent years, in large part because of the success of populist and far-right parties in elections in Western states.

White Power Skinheads is an offshoot of skinhead culture that is associated with Neo-Nazis. These skinheads frequently employ Nazi symbolism, salutes, abbreviations (i.e., the use of HH and 88 tattoos standing for Heil Hitler and 88 representing the 8th letter of the alphabet and the same statement), and swastikas. White power skinheads emerged out of a period of economic hardship in the late 1970s and early 1980s that was particularly impactful on working class Britain. Discontent and anger among young people at that time coalesced in a white power music scene that in turn produced social movements like the Blood and Honour skinheads. Individuals who identify with this culture are representative of the stereotypical white supremacist for many, in large part because of their appearance and “uniform” (shaved heads, steel-toed boots, suspenders, and bomber jackets).

Wraparound Approach is a method or approach to prevention and intervention programs related to social and criminal problems. This holistic method of intervention involves a consultative approach among a diverse set of professionals with different skill sets, who collectively mobilize skills and services around individuals at risk. The process involves the mobilization of both professional and natural supports.



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