# An Encounter with Hate: Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremists

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*Abstract*

The proliferation of intolerant and extremist views includes social media sites that have a far reach for prospective audiences. The focus of the larger research study under discussion is on the anti-Indigenous racism that prevails in Right-Wing Extremist social media communications that appeal to some youth. Youth Cultural Right-Wing Extremist groups use the internet (and the technology associated with social media) as a medium to spread these extremist ideologies. Schools serve as ideal locations to proliferate hateful messages and recruit other students. This paper draws upon poetic inquiry to best describe the researcher's experiences with the phenomenon under investigation and, in turn, encourage readers to position themselves in the space of the experience.

*Keywords:* *Right-Wing Extremism; Anti-Indigenous Racism; Education*

## 1. Introduction

There is an undeniable rise in Right-Wing Extremist sentiment across Canada. These racist ideologies manifest into hate speech and violence against racialized, minority, and marginalized peoples. Hate speech essentially fosters discriminatory comments and criticisms directed at specific groups (Wong et al., 2015). Moreover, the proliferation of intolerant and extremist views includes social media sites that have a far reach for prospective audiences. This analysis and reflection are an outcome of an exploratory study that examines how right-wing social media platforms produce cultures that appeal to a sense of belonging, particularly for youth that perceive nationalist ideals as being increasingly undermined. Significant to the research context is the fact that social media platforms used by right-wing youth groups are not subject to the standards and regulations of public-school educators. In the absence of such scrutiny is the emergence of racist views based on misconceptions of historical truths as they relate to Indigenous and settler relations.

Interesting to the more comprehensive research project from which this reflection stems is the emergence of Youth Cultural Right-Wing Extremist groups (see, for example, Freilich et al., 2009), that

particularly use the internet (and the technology associated with social media) as a medium to spread these extremist ideologies. In this way, schools serve as ideal locations to proliferate hateful messages and recruit other students (that may be feeling disenfranchised from mainstream social and political circumstances) into engaging in hate-motivated rhetoric and behaviour.

This paper draws upon poetic inquiry to best describe the researcher's experiences with the phenomenon under investigation and, in turn, encourage readers to position themselves in the space of the experience (Cherubini, 2023a; Langer & Furman, 2004). The poems, in the case of this analysis, are narrative based but entirely interpretive since they share the encounter between the researcher/poet and the details of the topic as they engage in the research process (see, as well, Apol & Apol, 2021). It is an attempt to describe, perhaps in a manner that is more conducive to poetry since it is not confined to the limits and bounds of formal writing, personal responses to the interpretation of the accounts related to Youth Cultural Right-Wing Extremist groups as they are described in the literature.

## 2. Context of the Topic under Discussion

It is undeniable that the proliferation of hate speech has significant adverse consequences on targeted groups in society (Cherubini, 2023b; Daniels, 2009; Mahoney, 2009). In addition, the spread of hate speech contributes to the creation of radicalized communities of individuals that define themselves as defending traditional values and nationalistic beliefs and actively and strategically target those groups in society that do not share these ideologies (Freilich et al., 2009). The racist ideologies espoused by these Right-Wing Extremist groups often promote violent behaviour in order to impose their ideologies in society (Berlet & Vysotsky, 2006). The internet and the use of social media have merely increased the reach of these Right-Wing Extremist groups since it is, in effect, a means of borderless communication that enables a membership culture that encourages active participation (Caiani & Parenti, 2016; Conway, 2016; Marwick & Lewis, 2017). Social media online platforms provide the space for Right-Wing Extremist groups to voice their resentment against the political realities of the day that, from their distorted perspectives, have social repercussions on the nationalist ideals upon which the country was founded.

Particularly noteworthy to the research under discussion, therefore, is the manner in which these Right-Wind Extremist groups appeal to the subculture of Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremists. Through provocative clothing, music, and symbols, the Right-Wing Extremist social media sites promote ideologies that aim to radicalize young people (Freilich et al., 2009; McNicol, 2016). Since schools bring youth together, it is recommended that educators (including school principals and teachers) become aware of these social media sites and the extremist views that are meant to appeal to especially those individuals that may harbour resentment against minority and racialized people (Department for Education, 2016). The issue is made more complex in consideration of the fact that the rise of hateful and intolerant ideologies that once were housed in school buildings during school hours are now disseminated outside the school walls at all times of the day (Davies, 2016).

The focus of the larger research study under discussion is on the anti-Indigenous racism that prevails in Right-Wing Extremist social media communications. The literature suggests that the historical racism experienced by Indigenous peoples in Canada is a direct outcome of harmful and oppressive colonial practices (Perry & Scrivens, 2018; Perry, 2008). According to the research, Canada "is itself a legacy of centuries of persecution of minorities [including Indigenous peoples] that normalizes mistreatment of those who do not appropriately conform to the preconceived hierarchies" (Perry & Scrivens, 2018, p. 173). It is concerning that the same youth that have been educated in Canadian schools and have supposedly been made aware of the troublesome history of settler and Indigenous peoples' relations, perceive any merit in the misinformed truths and racist ideologies promoted by Right-Wing

Extremist groups (Ghosh, 2018) aimed at youth.  To some extent, the extremist ideologies have currency for those youths that, like terrorists, have a profound resentment for society and for what they perceive as historical wrongdoings (Navarro, 2013; Sieckelinck et al., 2015).  Youth, as a result, are attracted to the collective identity shared by members of the Youth-Cultural Extremists since it affirms their belonging to a larger cause (Ghosh, 2018; Taylor, 1994).

## 3. Methods

Auto-ethnographic poetry is purposely chosen since this analysis shares the researcher's encounter (as poet) with the realities of anti-Indigenous racism as it exists across Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremist social media platforms and is described in the literature (Lahman et al., 2010; Lapum, 2008).  The methodology aligns with the researcher's interest in poetry.  Poems, from this perspective, are a means to describe the context and emotion that exists between the poet and topic (Furman et al., 2007).  Poetic expression is not necessarily bound by the same conventions of formal writing.  It allows the researcher/poet to invoke an emotional response from the reader in lieu of their own encounter with the poetic descriptions (see, too, Rapport, 2008; Shapiro, 2004).

The poems that are shared in the paper are based on the notes that were recorded throughout the comprehensive literature review on the topic under discussion.  They represent the researcher's/poet's more contemplative and reflective responses to the data (Goodall, 2016).  The researcher completed a review of the peer-reviewed literature (from 2015 to 2017) as it applied to online Right-Wing extremism and anti-Indigenous hate in school-aged youth across Canada.  The data were initially coded and then sorted into themes.  The data were subsequently revisited after four weeks to provide the necessary time to re-encounter the literature and respective findings from a more clear and deliberate position.  The intent, as it has been noted, reflects an objective of qualitative research to analyze, describe, and bring to light critical experiences (Carter et al., 2018; Furman, 2004).  The poems that follow are framed by some of the codes and themes that represent the key findings of the literature review.

## 4. Discussion

Although there were numerous codes and several themes that were an outcome of the literature review, the ones that follow seem most relevant to the discussion of this analysis.  The respective codes and themes are presented in poetic form.

To begin, the comprehensive literature review on Right-Wing extremism and anti-Indigenous hate in school-aged youth across Canada was most revealing.  The research literature underscores the disturbing trend of Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremist social media to share what they erroneously claim to be commonplace beliefs of assumed truths intended to slander Indigenous peoples.  The insults are couched in terms that are motivated by hate.

### 4.1 The Reach of Hate

Hate.

As it is written in yesterday.

As it is embedded in the story.

It is a historical character

Of a dubious nature

That remains defiant.

Hate.

As it is written in today.

As it is entrenched in relations.

It is a contemporary character

Of a ruthless nature

That is defiant.

Irredeemable in the light of truth.

Oversimplified assumptions.

Refusal to consider alternatives.

Takes precedence over compassion.

Even understanding.

Insensitive to hurt.

Unmoved by pain.

Unaffected by injustice.

Hate.

As it might be written tomorrow?

And harbour in the generations.

Is it a timeless character

Of a clearly misunderstood way of being

That will resist time?

## 4.2 Intolerance

The views of Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremist members, as they are expressed across social media platforms and described in the literature, seem to overshadow other issues related to their discontent about the social and political realities in contemporary Canada. The members readily level criticism against pro-social movements and political protests that bring the injustices that continue to
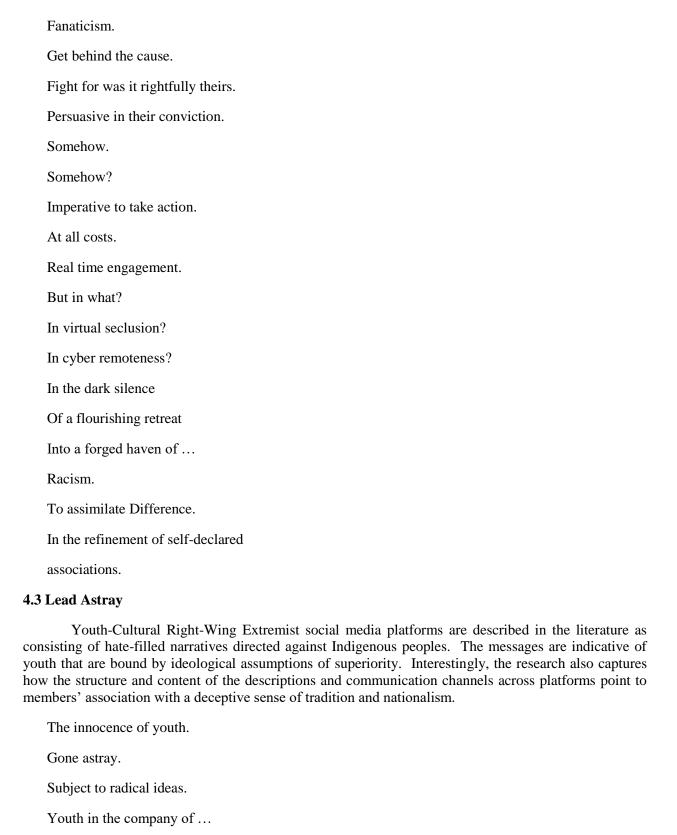
challenge Indigenous peoples' self-determination to the fore. Characteristic of members' narrative is a fundamental intolerance of difference.

To see the other as Other.

To exist in tense relations

To somehow ease the tension of difference.

The undeniable tendency to separate

One-from-another.

Because difference is threatening.

Difference attests to one's superiority.

Difference that materializes intolerance.

Difference that prohibits relations.

Difference that underlines the falseness

Of the mask.

It is difference.

Not In-difference.

To exist in spaces that do not bind.

Each space its own entity.

To case the Other as separate.

Somehow not up to standard.

Somehow not the norm.

Need to address difference.

Need to act on difference.

It is a moral imperative.

No need to think about Difference.

Difference is the unwelcome guest.

Not helpful to probe.

Neither to inquire.

No time for understanding.

Enthusiastic supporters of …

Fanaticism.

Get behind the cause.

Fight for was it rightfully theirs.

Persuasive in their conviction.

Somehow.

Somehow?

Imperative to take action.

At all costs.

Real time engagement.

But in what?

In virtual seclusion?

In cyber remoteness?

In the dark silence

Of a flourishing retreat

Into a forged haven of …

Racism.

To assimilate Difference.

In the refinement of self-declared

associations.

## 4.3 Lead Astray

Youth-Cultural Right-Wing Extremist social media platforms are described in the literature as consisting of hate-filled narratives directed against Indigenous peoples. The messages are indicative of youth that are bound by ideological assumptions of superiority. Interestingly, the research also captures how the structure and content of the descriptions and communication channels across platforms point to members' association with a deceptive sense of tradition and nationalism.

The innocence of youth.

Gone astray.

Subject to radical ideas.

Youth in the company of …

What should be unfamiliar spaces.

Feel sufficient to justify.

Feel justified in their certainties.

Are the products of misinformation.

Un-truths.

And wayward thinking.

But they have discovered a refuge.

In these simulated spaces.

In the company of narrow-mindedness.

In the crowd of others.

Extreme thoughts that invite Chaos

And Cruelty.

Both honoured

Perhaps sadly revered,

In the uncertainty of adolescence.

In the muddle of youthful misperceptions.

Chaos and Cruelty as corrupt companions.

Urging an evil view of the world

Through the lenses of ruthlessness.

Chaos and Cruelty as corrupt companions.

Taking youth by the hand

Wandering in malicious thoughts.

Chaos and Cruelty as corrupt companions.

Luring un-truths into visibility

Enticing the misinformed.

### Conclusion

The notes and findings of the literature review point to the disturbing trend of online hate and extremist ideologies in Canada. Youth, too, can be influenced by the anti-Indigenous racist views of these Right-Wing Extremist groups both inside and outside of their communities of school. The data attest to the discrimination.

Poetic inquiry allows the researcher to describe the profound encounter with data in a manner that is not restrained by what can be the limitations of formal academic writing. The reader is invited to the encounter, not to be persuaded or influenced by a certain theoretical perspective, but instead to experience the encounter themselves.

## Acknowledgments

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