



OPCAs in the Anti-Lockdown Movement

Ideologies like Freemen on the Land and Sovereign Citizens are finding new life in the movement against pandemic restrictions



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“Organized pseudolegal commercial arguments” (OPCAs) is a legal and academic term for varieties of schemes made in hopes that one has found a secret trick to get out of legal accountability. Much of the time they are made by desperate or gullible people hoping to find a way to get out of trouble, though some anti-government ideologues also find them attractive, and scammers try to make money by promoting them. Those who rely on them in court are sometimes ruled as vexatious litigants. Colloquially they are often conflated with their better known varieties such as Sovereign Citizens or Freemen on the Land, although these are technically just specific strains of OPCAs (in practice, much of their rhetoric and concepts overlap). There are some other ones that have recently gained popularity, and more will likely emerge in the future.

OPCAs had been on the decline in Canada since their heyday a decade ago, due in part to some of the “gurus” getting arrested and repeated legal failures, but recently they have started to become popular online again. Much of this was due to governmental measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic, some of which gave police authority to enforce social distancing through fines and arrests. This caused fears that people could be penalized merely by being outside, at least initially. Adopting OPCA and anti-government ideologies is done in resistance and opposition to existing public health and safety measures as well as the hypothetical futures of mandated vaccines or microchips that anti-lockdown activists fear.

What's old is new

Some long-time advocates of OPCAs used the pandemic early on as an opportunity to promote their false solutions. One of the most notable is Kevin Annett, who is best known for [finding Pope Benedict XVI guilty of genocide in one of his sham courts](#) and then claiming credit for his resignation.

As early as late March, Annett made a video calling for a mass defiance campaign against public health measures, claiming without evidence that his “Republic of Kanata” had citizen militias trained to help people resist arrest. Despite his video getting a little circulation, it did not amount to anything on the ground. I know Annett has done at least a small amount of networking with anti-lockdown activists in British Columbia, and some have expressed support for him. His podcast from when I have looked at it regularly consists of conspiracy theories regarding COVID-19. Some of Annett’s material involving theories about occult elites, child trafficking and the Indigenous residential school system have also been circulated as QAnon and related conspiracy theories gain more adherents.



More recently, Annett has made or popularized statements declaring that COVID-19 restrictions are illegal. These were done on behalf of something called “Oceanside Common Law Assembly” which as far as I and others can tell he made up (or is so covert only he knows about it), as well as his own Republic of Kanata. These statements went viral enough in Facebook groups to gain the attention of fact-checking groups which refuted them.

Another longtime OPCA advocate to come up in the anti-lockdown movement is David Kevin Lindsay, a detaxer who has been active since the 1990s and spent time in prison for tax evasion. He runs a project called the Common Law Education and Rights or CLEAR Initiative. CLEAR Initiative organized multiple anti-lockdown protests in Kelowna. Lindsay was also a speaker at Vancouver’s large “Freedom Rallies” in September and October with CLEAR Initiative being listed as one of the sponsoring groups partaking in the event. He has also

appeared on Laura Lynn Tyler Thompson's livestream show. According to the esteemed Meads v. Meads ruling on OPCA litigants, David Lindsay was "*at minimum a cheerleader... for an attempt by OPCA litigants to arrest an Alberta Provincial Court judge during a hearing*"

CLEAR Initiative has almost no public online presence. Searching for it brings up reports of Lindsay's past pseudolegal schemes and white nationalist Paul Fromm's website where letters sent from their e-mail list are reposted, telling people on the e-mail list to sign up for a Telegram group which requires his verification to be in. Lindsay seems to have some offline links to Paul Fromm as well. Fromm has attended at least one of his anti-lockdown protests in Kelowna, and on his website described Lindsay as a "freedom fighter." Lindsay seems to have a much longer record of associations with Paul Fromm and other white nationalists, as documented by Anti-Racist Canada.

I am also aware that Robert Menard, a central figure of the Freemen on the Land movement, was advertised as a speaker at a large anti-lockdown rally in Ottawa in late August, although I have not seen any video to confirm if he did or what he may have said.

STAGE LINEUP

JASON LAMBERT BAND

KELLY ANNE WOLFE
LAMONT DAIGLE
MIKE JACKSON
The Line Canada

VLADISLAV SOBOLEV
Hugs Over Masks

JOEY, ZOEY & PHOENIX
The Kids of Hugs Nation

MIRANDA REMILLARD
CODY HALLER
PHOENIX WOLFE
The Canadian Revolution

MARK FRIESEN
Forum for Canadian Sovereignty

ROBERT MENARD
World Freeman Society

AMANDA FORBES
GISELE BARIBEAU
Vaccine Choice Canada

CHRIS SKY
Mothers Against Distancing

MIKE JAY
A Teacher's Editorial

*The Quebec Resistance /
Résistance Québécoise*

DANIEL PILON
STEPHAN BLAIS

STEEVE L'ARTISS
CHARLAND

ALEXIS COSSETTE-
TRUDEL

LUCIE LAURIER
STEPHANIE
PLOURDE

JACYNTHÉ
BÉLANGER

EDITH TREMBLAY

AMÉLIE PAUL

ERIC DAOUST
SAMUEL GRENIER

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Magna Carta Lawful Rebellion

There is also a new OPCA that has become popular, this one originates from the UK, called Lawful Rebellion or Magna Carta Lawful Rebellion. It believes that one can invoke Article 61 of the Magna Carta and declare loyalty to a British baron who signed a petition warning the Queen against UK joining the European Union two decades ago will make one beyond the law, thus not obligated to pay taxes, fines, etc. One big problem with this however is that the

Magna Carta has been modified several times and the Article 61 they rely upon hasn't been part of the Magna Carta for centuries.

Lawful Rebellion has come up in the Canadian far-right a few times before, most notably when the Canadian Nationalist Party started to promote it after its leader Travis Patron got arrested for allegedly assaulting two women, but there was a surge of interest during the pandemic. One noteworthy person I've seen promote it is Lamont Daigle, now the executive director for anti-lockdown group the Line. I have also seen other anti-lockdown protesters talk about it and use online material from Lawful Rebellion advocates, whether originating from the UK or Canada. It is not clear to me however if they fully comprehend this material or would go for this approach in court.

Part of the reason for Lawful Rebellion's growing popularity is that unlike past OPCAs it has had the benefit of not having a judicial ruling rejecting it, until very recently in August. An Alberta judge made a thorough refutation of it in a landmark decision that emerged out of a child custody dispute. A woman who tried to get herself involved in the case goes by Jacquie Phoenix (real name Jacquie Robertson) as a legal representative threatened the judge with facing the gallows on charges of treason. A criminal complaint has been filed against her by Richard Warman because of such threats.

Jacquie Phoenix runs Facebook groups advocating for "Practical Lawful Dissent" each with over 10,000 and 20,000 followers, but many of the groups members are British. The National Post reports her promoting conspiracy theories on her Facebook page about the Democrats being Satanists who traffic children and dismissing COVID-19 as "nonsense."

Chilcotin National Congress

On a very small number of occasions I have seen participants of British Columbia's anti-lockdown protests reference the Chilcotin National Congress as an example of how to "go sovereign." This was a bit of a shock. The Chilcotin National Congress is a self-appointed pretender government that dishonestly tries to portray itself as representative of the Tsilhqot'in. It has been denounced as illegitimate by the Tsilhqot'in National Government. Many of its figures are not Tsilhqot'in or even Indigenous. Over the years the Chilcotin National Congress has been in the news for putting out public notices declaring its right to tax people or seize public property. Although I do not think the Chilcotin National Congress has attended any anti-lockdown protests, it has been on the sidelines and the leader of the anti-government group Unify the People which has been active in anti-lockdown protests has conducted interviews with Chilcotin National Congress members.

Chilcotin National Congress gained further infamy when the “Chief Justice” of its “Universal Supreme Court” Suzanne Holland (a white woman) was implicated in a scheme to help release an American Sovereign Citizen named Mike Parsons from jail by attempting to kidnap a Tennessee judge and Nebraska sheriff. It is not clear to anyone why Mike Parsons or his wife reached out to the Chilcotin National Congress rather than a number of similar groups based in the United States. Whatever the case, Parsons was found guilty and his wife who was involved in the plot pleaded guilty to her charges. In online phone interviews Suzanne Holland has more or less acknowledged being party to the criminal plot. Holland has not been extradited to face her charges in the US, probably in part because she has had a lot of trouble with the law in Canada herself, and spent most of the time since in prison on a past kidnapping conviction in addition to other court related charges. However, posts on the Quatloos forum show she has still tried to file affidavits and other sham legal “rulings” from prison with the paper she is allowed to have, as well as conduct interviews by phone with a Sovereign Citizen YouTube channel.

Amusingly, Suzanne Holland appears to have had a falling out with the Chilcotin National Congress after a split in late 2019. Pages claiming to represent Chilcotin National Congress’s Universal Supreme Court put out an announcement accusing her and other former leaders of treason and calling for her arrest, stating that *“It has also been made clear that former justice of the Universal Supreme Court Sue Holland has embezzled millions from our people. She is currently wanted in the CNC land and should you see her should be reported immediately.”*

Suzanne Holland has come up again this year, doing a since deleted interview by phone with Rick Boswick and Norman Traversy, the man who keeps trying to prosecute Trudeau, in which they espoused every conspiracy theory under the sun. She and Norman Traversy filed affidavits trying to prevent the RCMP from disposing of “a massive number of exhibits” related to the investigation of Robert Pickton’s murders, which the RCMP argued was being costly to store and taking up space. The motive for the two trying to get involved in preventing this decision was a belief or claim that evidence from the Robert Pickton murders could be used to implicate Justin Trudeau in crimes against humanity and genocide. There may be valid reasons for people to want to keep the evidence for all I know, as many of Pickton’s victims were Indigenous women many people point to it as an examples of Canada’s disregard for MMIWG2S, but these people are hijacking a serious issue for their hyper-partisan fantasies. The judge dismissed them very harshly, stating that *“For the most part, the affidavits are confusing, oblique, rambling and essentially mischievous... In short, the material upon which this application purports to be founded is largely nonsense and quite at odds with any standard of evidentiary acceptability.”*

Closing

OPCAs are attractive to the anti-lockdown and patriot movements not just because they are seen as the one legal trick out of trouble. As Donald Netolitzky notes the pseudolegal arguments that the state is inherently legally defective gives them an ideological basis for rejecting its authority, and thus can be attractive to virtually any anti-government actors. While positing their own ideas of what the “common law” should entail they also envision an alternative vision of society, even if it’s an unrealistic one that has no chance of being implemented beyond a sham court.

For more information and resources on OPCAs in Canada

The [Quatloos message board has a Canada subforum](#) that tracks many of these people, although it is gossipy and not the most sensitive

[Meads v. Meads](#), the central ruling on OPCAs that explains the phenomena in Canada

[The recent ruling on Magna Carta Lawful Rebellion](#)

[“The History of the Organized Pseudolegal Commercial Argument Phenomenon in Canada”](#) - Donald J. Netolitzky

[“A Rebellion of Furious Paper: Pseudolaw As a Revolutionary Legal System”](#) - Donald J. Netolitzky

[“Broadening our Understanding of Anti-Authority Movements in Canada”](#) - Barbara Perry, David C. Hoffman and Ryan Scrivens



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Jack Reynolds Feb 26

What are your thoughts on the growing number of people being fined or 'arrested' to attending anti-Lockdown protests?

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