info SECTE CULT
depuis 1980
since

Annual Report

2022
-
2023

info SECTE CULT

Centre for Assistance and for the Study of Cultic Phenomena

Since 1980

5655 Park Avenue, Suite 208
Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4H2

Phone: (514) 274-2333
Fax: (514) 274-7576

www.infocult.org
infosecte@qc.aibn.com

Office hours 9 AM - 5 PM

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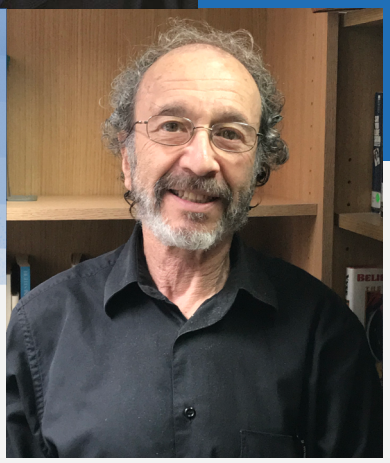


Message from the President and the Executive Director

The year 2022-2023 generated close collaboration between members, volunteers, staff and the board of directors of Info-Cult. This joining of forces has contributed to taking a step further towards the realization of the mission of the organization, which stands out not only for its originality, but also for its bilingualism.

With the help of numerous volunteers, and drawing on the experience of online work acquired over the past three years, staff members have been able to improve and maintain the offer of services (including three online support groups offered on a monthly basis). In this context, as those seeking help can now contact staff in many different ways (online, by telephone, via videoconferencing, etc.), it was necessary to undertake significant technological updates. Thus, a major overhaul of the means of communication was carried out, in particular the installation of a new telephone system and a new website. Improvements related to information sharing systems have also been made to ensure data security and the confidentiality of individuals who request our services. Spread out over the course of the year, these efforts aim to increase the organization's outreach as well as the accessibility of services.

As for promoting the study and advancement of knowledge on cultic phenomena, an online survey system was set up during the year. The data collected will make it possible, among other things, to better understand the experiences and needs of people who seek the services of Info-Cult. The organization has also adopted a research policy that respects Canadian ethical standards. The purpose of this initiative is to facilitate the call for participants in research projects that may sometimes involve individuals whose profile corresponds to some of our clients (in particular, former group members). Finally, with the goal of stimulating written work dealing with cultic phenomena, the second competition for the Dianne Casoni Award was launched at the end of 2022. This award now rewards two types of publications : scientific and popular.

Lastly, in terms of raising awareness of cultic phenomena, the organization continues to conduct, on a regular basis, campaigns online (emails, social media, etc.) and via traditional media (radio, TV, print media). In addition, throughout the year, members of the board of directors and the staff of Info-Cult participated in several awareness-raising and educational activities about cultic phenomena. Training sessions were also given in post-secondary institutions and organizations. In addition, participation in meetings, seminars and scientific symposiums afforded the opportunity to offer many presentations and conferences. Such events are invaluable opportunities for networking and sharing expertise. By stimulating reflection and exchanges based on most recent scientific data, these meetings also make it possible to discuss best intervention practices and dispel certain myths.

Once again, we are extremely grateful to be able to count on a team that, every day, promotes the autonomy of Info-Cult, as well as meeting its objectives, by collectively contributing to the well-being of people affected by high-demand groups and cultic phenomena.

Marie-Andrée Pelland

Mike Kropveld

Profile of Info-Cult

Profile, Mission and Perspective

Profile

Founded in Montreal (Quebec, Canada) in 1980, *Info-Cult: Centre for Assistance and for the Study of Cultic Phenomena*, is the only organization of its kind in Quebec and in Canada. Its field of expertise is in groups ("cults", "new religious movements", etc.), belief systems and ideologies. Also distinguished by its bilingualism, Info-Cult offers different support and information services in response to the various individual requests and to the needs of the community related to cultic phenomena.

- The organization provides support and guidance to former members of groups as well as to families and loved ones.
- Info-Cult houses one of the most important documentation centres specialized in this area.

Mission

Info-Cult's mandate is to:

- promote the study of cultic phenomena;
- sensitize, inform and educate the public about these phenomena;
- assist individuals with difficulties related to these phenomena.

Info-Cult aims to promote the dignity and integrity of the individual, respect for individual and collective rights, freedom of thought and expression as well as the right to access information.

Perspective

Info-Cult focuses on the understanding of an individual's *engaging in* and *exiting from* various groups. It also pays particular attention to terminology being used and values a nuanced analysis that considers the structures as well as the internal and external dynamics of groups.

This approach allows it to better:

- understand the individuality of experiences;
- identify and understand settings that may involve risks of harm;
- equip individuals to face their own challenges;
- support individuals in the understanding of their experiences.

Structure

Board of Directors

President

Marie-Andrée Pelland
Assistant Professor, Sociology Department, University of Moncton

Secretary

Michael Crelinsten
Executive Director, Jewish Public Library

Treasurer

Marie-Hélène Frappier
Marie-Hélène Frappier, Professor of Philosophy, Ahuntsic College

Directors

Céline Castillo
Mike Kropveld (Executive Director)
Adriana Pacheco**
Louis Raphael
Isabelle Renaud*
Carolle Tremblay
Sarah-Michèle Vincent-Wright

* Departure during the year
** Replacement during the year

Staff

Permanent

Founder and Executive Director

Mike Kropveld (full-time since 1980)

He has been recognized for his work in this field by:

- the Government of Canada who awarded him the 125th Commemorative Medal "in recognition of his significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada" (1992);
- the *International Cultic Studies Association* (ICSA) who presented him with the Herbert L. Rosedale Award "in recognition of his leadership in the effort to preserve and protect individual freedom" (2007).

Assistant to the Executive Director

Antoine Tardif (part-time since January 2020)

Intervention Support worker

Sam Downs (part-time since March 2021)

Contractual

Paul Dawson | Web Services
Benjamin Proulx-Mathers | Web hosting services
Gabriella Scali | Graphic design
Danielle Vincent | Secretary

Community Involvement

Members

The organization relies on the support of 32 members who are all interested in the dynamics of groups or sensitized to the issues of cultic phenomena.

They come from a wide range of backgrounds and have varied profiles. The list includes in particular:

- former members of groups;
- parents of active or former members of groups;
- academics;
- lawyers;
- mental health professionals.

Volunteers

The reputation and active presence of Info-Cult depend on the involvement of its 83 volunteers. Thanks to this essential support, the organization can pursue its mission and its objectives.

65 volunteers live in Quebec, in **9** regions.

18 other volunteers live outside Quebec. 13 of them are based in Canada: six in Ontario, three in British Columbia, two in New Brunswick and one in Nova Scotia, and one in the Yukon. There are also 4 volunteers from the United States (Arizona, California, Florida, New Jersey), and another one from the UK.

Info-Cult's volunteers includes:

- professionals from various fields (education, mental health, law, sociology, criminology, library science, information science, arts, business, IT, real estate, etc.);
- researchers or students;
- individuals with one relative involved in a high-demand or high-control group;
- former members of groups (who offer peer support to other former members of groups or their loved ones by sharing their experiences;
- individuals interested in cultic phenomena.

Because of its small staff, Info-Cult depends on the diversity of expertise and contributions from its volunteers, including:

- support for former members and families;
- facilitating support groups;
- policy development;
- publicity for the organization;
- public awareness (participating in webinars, conferences, etc.);
- media presence;
- fundraising campaigns or soliciting donations;
- research and grant requests;
- technical or IT resources;
- assistance with the organization of events, symposiums or conferences;
- review and evaluation of submissions for the Dianne Casoni Award;
- sorting and cataloguing new acquisitions at our documentation centre;
- drafting or revising documents (grant directory, mental health resource directory, etc.);
- translation;
- video editing;
- graphic design;
- subtitling videos;
- designing and updating our website;
- updating our social networks;
- sending articles to our mailing lists;
- legal advice;
- research;
- loans or donations of miscellaneous equipment;
- loans of workspaces or premises for meetings;
- monetary contributions for renting space or for catering services during meetings;
- food preparation;
- transportation;
- general office work.

Administration and Finances

Administration

The operations of Info-Cult are carried out by the executive director. Policies and orientations of the organization are determined by the Board of Directors, which is made up of professionals working in a variety of fields and community settings: education, research, mental health, legal, IT, business.

The Board meets regularly either in person, by videoconference or by conference call. An email is sometimes used for consultation and decision-making as needed.

During the last fiscal year, the Board met online **7** times. The annual general meeting also took place online on **June 15, 2022**.

Last year, the Board of Directors also convened its members, its staff and several volunteers for a full day of annual strategic planning. This meeting took place in Montreal on October 15, 2022, where 9 people attended. The organization plans to repeat the experience on a regular basis in order to better identify its challenges and optimize its coordination.

Financing

MSSS Grant

Info-Cult is mainly funded by the *Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services* (MSSS) through the ***Programme de soutien financier aux organismes communautaires*** (PSOC). This annual and recurring grant is its primary source of funding.

Private donations

Registered as a charity (Revenue - Canada No. 125754242 RR0001), Info-Cult depends on self-financing as an essential component of its functioning.

Several fundraising campaigns are carried out by staff throughout the year to generate private donations:

- Spring: a few dozen letters are sent out to ministers, foundations, communities and private groups.
- Early summer: several hundred emails are sent to new users.
- Fall: hundreds of emails and a few dozen letters are sent to past donors.
- At the end of the fiscal year: a few dozen fundraising emails are sent to recent users.

Moreover, as in the previous year, 2022 was also marked by three spontaneous fundraisers that were initiated on Info-Cult's Facebook Page. These citizens' initiatives, which bear witness to the relevance of the mission of Info-Cult, raised a total of $2,486 from 38 contributors.

Finally, in addition to the contributions received in recognition of Info-Cult's services, Board members also took part in these self-financing efforts by occasionally offering their professional expertise to their clients in exchange for donations directed to the organization.

Over the course of 2022-2023, **216** individual donations were received, including three from foundations and three from regular donors. The total number of all donations equals **$28,416**.

Other funding requests submitted during the year:

- Financial assistance from the City of Montreal to NPO tenants (obtained)
- FRSC-Centraide (awaiting processing)

> Thank you so much for getting back to me. I would love to be able to speak with you directly as this is very important to me (...). I see there are places I can make a donation to your organization and would love to do so simply because you took the time to get back to me. My email and questions were not exactly what we call to be normal questions so I thank you for not disregarding them.
>
> **Family member**

Financial Report

Financial results for the year ending on March 31, 2023

The financial results of Info-Cult for the period from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 show revenues of **$184,830** as well as expenses of **$148,500**. The surplus for the year thus reach **$36,330**, while the unrestricted net assets for the year amount to **$34,939**.

REVENUES

Government funding	$122,451
Programme de soutien financier aux organismes communautaires (PSOC)	$121,340
City of Montreal: Financial assistance to Non-profits	$611
Quebec: Discretionary Funds of Ministers	$500
Deferred revenue from previous years	$30,000
Donations	$28,416
Earnings from services	$3,397
Other	$566

EXPENSES

Salaries and wage levies	$112,080
General operating expenses	$20,489
Professional fees	$8,861
Public relations	$4,383
Other	$2,076

Support Services

Help, Support and Information

Since 1980, Info-Cult has been an essential community resource to assist those who need help or information regarding groups or cultic phenomena.

The organization receives different kinds of requests:

- help, advice and general support;
- specific assistance;
- referrals to or from professional resources - public or private;
- information about various groups, beliefs or cultic phenomena.

Responding to these requests is the principal service offered by Info-Cult. It is also the one to which its staff devotes the majority of its time.

Accessibility

Office hours are usually Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm.

Over the past year, Info-Cult overhauled its telephone system, adopting cloud computing technology. With individual extensions, employees can now receive calls outside of regular hours and access their voicemail remotely at any time. These improvements have helped to increase the availability of Info-Cult services.

Approach and perspective

Since education and awareness are integral to its mission, Info-Cult's response to the various requests for help or information always reflects its nuanced perspective on groups and cultic phenomena.

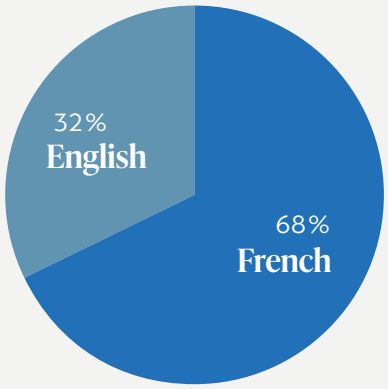
Its analysis of individual experiences promotes a holistic approach which takes into account the factual information that is available. On an interpersonal level, Info-Cult offers advice that values dialogue and focuses on the improvement of relationships between family, friends, professionals or community groups.

As a result of more than 40 years of experience in this field, this approach continues to evolve and expand through numerous exchanges with local and international partners.

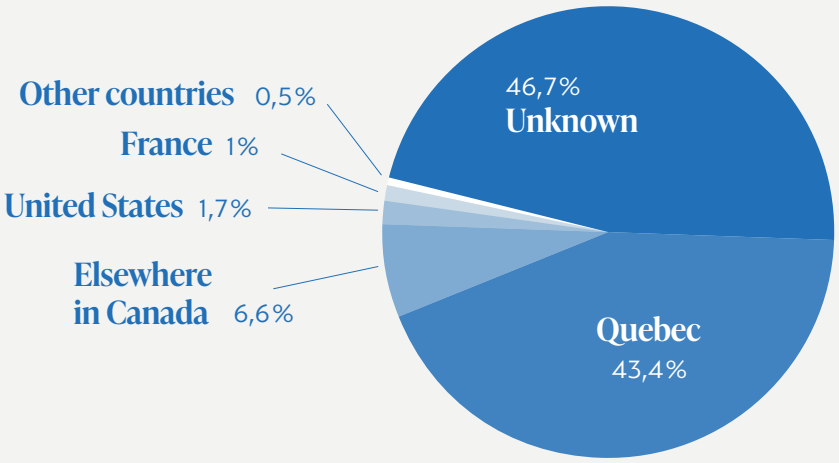
Statistics - ORIGIN OF INQUIRIES

During 2022-2023, the organization responded to **829** requests.

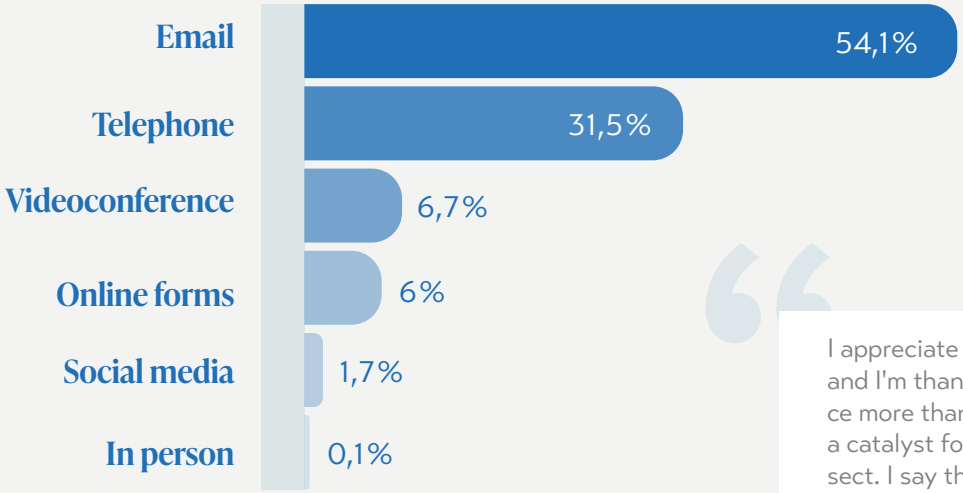
LANGUAGE



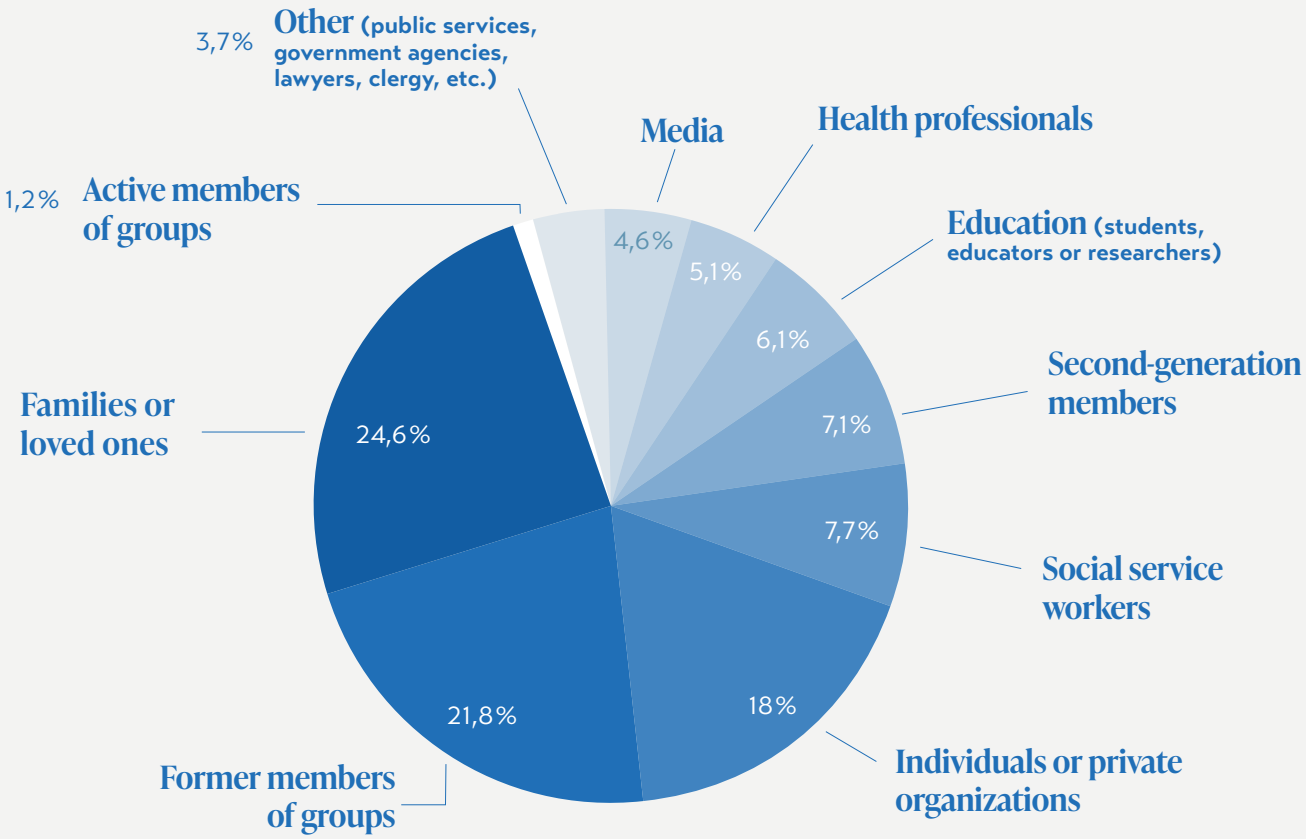
TERRITORY COVERED



COMMUNICATION METHODS



> I appreciate all that Info-Cult does and I'm thankful for your assistance more than a decade ago. It was a catalyst for a loved one to exit a sect. I say thank you every day.
>
> Family member



These different categories of requests have *specific needs.*

For example, requests from ***families or loved ones*** may come from parents, children, spouses, friends, colleagues, etc. These individuals may express concerns about a loved one's commitment or belonging to a group. Many are looking for different kinds of support: mental health, mediation, legal aid, etc.

As for ***former members or active members***, they usually seek help to better cope with their experiences. Some former members may have problems integrating or reintegrating into society after leaving a group. Others just want to chat and have the opportunity to validate their feelings when they are going through difficult times. In this regard, the support groups provided by Info-Cult enable its participants to break their isolation and benefit from a mutual understanding. Finally, several seek help, information or references for other resources: mental health, housing, education, legal aid, social services, etc.).

Another category of individuals seeking help are ***second-generation members***. This designation applies to people whose history or involvement (more or less active) with a group is tied to the membership of their parents (or guardians).

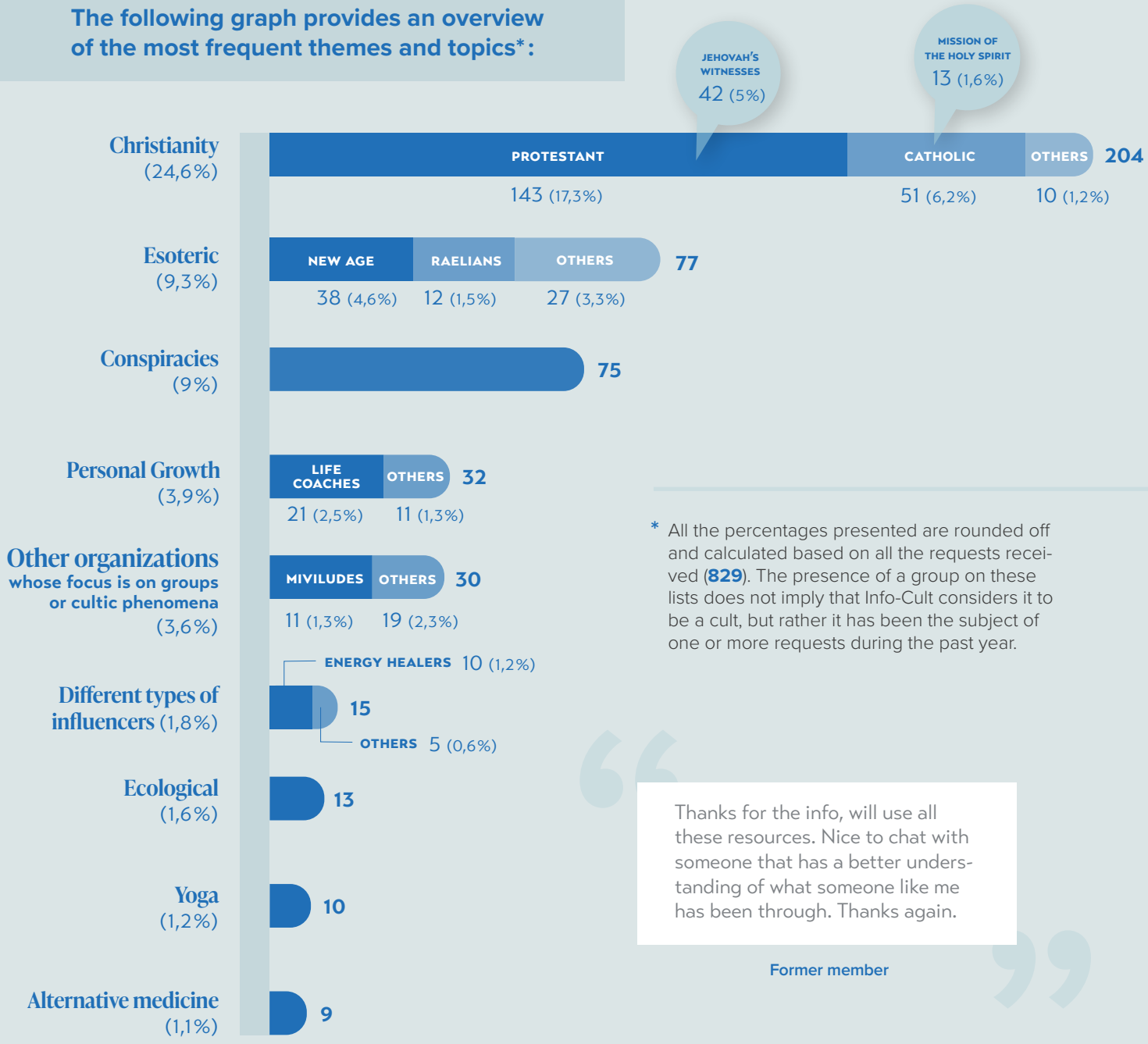
Lastly, requests from ***individuals or private organizations*** or from the ***media*** may be related to particular questions or attributed to curiosity about specific groups, beliefs or cultic phenomena.

Statistics - CONTENT OF REQUESTS

Of the 829 requests received, **208** were related to family concerns (24,2 %), whereas **15** of these requests specifically related to a situation involving one or several children (1,75 %).

Finally, of these 829 requests, Info-Cult also identified **273** different topics which, in turn, may be associated with groups, organizations or individuals or even diverse traditions, beliefs or ideologies. These subjects are then grouped into more general *themes*.

The following graph provides an overview of the most frequent themes and topics*:



* All the percentages presented are rounded off and calculated based on all the requests received (**829**). The presence of a group on these lists does not imply that Info-Cult considers it to be a cult, but rather it has been the subject of one or more requests during the past year.

> Thanks for the info, will use all these resources. Nice to chat with someone that has a better understanding of what someone like me has been through. Thanks again.
>
> Former member

Support Groups

For former members

In response to the needs expressed by former members, Info-Cult started its first support group (in French) in 2018.

Initially, meetings took place in person, in Montreal. Available online since 2020, former members from outside of Montreal can now benefit from this service.

A second support group (in English) for former members began in 2020.

Offered free of charge, these meetings are intended for those who **have experienced or are experiencing controlling relationships**. This can include various challenges in connection with groups, systems or environments with a high level of commitment, demand or control.

In the past year, Info-Cult received 84 requests to participate in these groups and an average of 8 participants attended each meeting.

> I would like to express my gratitude (...) for the compassionate manner they held space for me during the meeting we had yesterday. I truly felt respected, comfortable to express myself and heard. Thank you so much.
>
> Former member

This support group aims to provide a confidential space that can:

- allow the victimization experience to be expressed freely;
- foster the exchange between people who share similar experiences;
- promote mutual recognition and understanding;
- help break the feelings of isolation;
- improve the transition of these individuals following their experiences in groups.

With a maximum of **10** participants and lasting an hour and a half (**1h30**), these **monthly** meetings are facilitated by two experienced volunteer professionals (from the areas of mental health and social intervention) as well as an Info-Cult staff member.

For families and loved ones

In response to the needs expressed by families and loved ones, Info-Cult started a third support group (in French) in 2021.

Offered online, this free service is intended for **families and loved ones of people living or having experienced controlling relationships**. This can include any situation in connection with groups, systems or environments with a high level of commitment, demand or control.

> Thank you very much for your time the other day. I really appreciate the time you took to speak with me... Kind regards.
>
> **Family member**

This support group aims to provide a confidential space that can:

- provide participants with resources so that they can better support their loved ones who are former members or active members of groups;
- foster exchanges between people who share similar experiences;
- promote mutual recognition and understanding;
- alleviate or reduce feelings of guilt and helplessness.s.

With a maximum of **10** participants and lasting an hour and a half (1h30), these **monthly** meetings are facilitated by two experienced volunteer professionals (from the areas of mental health and social intervention) as well as an Info-Cult staff member.

In the past year, Info-Cult received 45 requests to participate in these groups and an average of 5 participants attended each meeting.

Research

With its extensive network and thanks to its specialized documentation centre, the expertise of Info-Cult is regularly called upon for accurate information about groups, beliefs or cultic phenomena.

People requesting this service come from anywhere in the world. They include:

- Researchers;
- Academics;
- Students;
- Lawyers (for assistance on legal issues);
- Media (radio, television, newspapers or other);
- Filmmakers or documentarians.

> Thanks so much for helping me and my student RAs (Research assistants) yesterday. Info-Secte is an amazing asset.
>
> **Professor**

Other initiatives aimed at promoting the study and advancement of knowledge related to cultic phenomena were carried out in 2022-2023:

- Design and implementation of an online survey system. So far, a few hundred respondents have used the system, including **185** in French and **85** in English.
- Development of a research policy to facilita te the transmission of calls for participants in research projects. **Five** researchers have since benefited from this policy and two of them have been able to complete their studies.

Legal or Judicial Affairs

Concerted adjustments

With the religious and cultural pluralism that is present in Quebec society today, it sometimes happens that religious beliefs or practices come into conflict with established standards. At times, such situations can be dealt with in court (even up to the Supreme Court of Canada) and become widely publicized, as was the case during the "reasonable accommodation" controversy in Quebec at the turn of the 2000s.

For several years, Info-Cult has been a key community actor, which, as a result of its response to the concerns of citizens linked to various groups or communities, was able to avoid potential legal pitfalls. Requests for help can come from individuals, landlords, schools, businesses, organizations, government agencies, etc.

Benefiting from a large network of contacts and access to accurate, reliable, up-to-date and contextualized information regarding thousands of groups, the expertise and nuanced approach of Info-Cult contributed to the attainment of peaceful solutions and concerted adjustments. Some of the situations may include:

- religious holidays;
- working conditions;
- blood transfusions, vaccination and other medical matters;
- clothing, religious or other symbols;
- behaviours, practices;
- schooling (private and public);
- diet.

Expert witness

From a legal standpoint, Info-Cult is sometimes asked to testify as an expert witness in criminal and civil law cases in Canada as well as in the United States. The organization is also sometimes called upon to act as a consultant and to assist lawyers in the preparation of different cases (divorce, child custody, fraud, real estate disputes, etc.) in Canada, the United States and even in Europe.

Information and Awareness

Documentation Centre

With several hundred thousand archival documents, Info-Cult's library is unique in Canada.

Its rich collection includes a wide variety of documents related to cultic phenomena or to different kinds of groups (religious, political, personal growth, etc.) The documents come from different sources and offers various perspectives on the ideologies, worldviews, structure and dynamics of these groups.

The documents come from different sources, based on various approaches and perspectives.

The collection includes:

- more than 3000 books;
- thousands of articles from newspapers, journals, and magazines from local, national and international sources;
- hundreds of research reports, theses and dissertations;
- government reports, legal documents and international rulings;
- more than 1200 hours of programs or reports in audio and video formats;
- documents from a variety of primary sources (from different groups, biographies, etc.).

Considering the rarity, quality and good general condition of the documents that make it up, the specialized collection of Info-Cult continues to be a valuable resource for the education and research community. Students, teachers and researchers are grateful that it complements the catalogue of more traditional libraries (university, municipal, national, etc.).

With the aim of enhancing this collection and improving access to its catalogue, the modernization of Info-Cult's documentation centre continued in 2022-2023. Material acquisitions (equipment), donations (furniture, computer equipment) as well as numerous voluntary contributions have indeed enabled the best spatial arrangement of our premises and significant computer technology advances.

Communications

Mailing Lists

Since the early 2000s, Info-Cult has been providing a free information service by email. Anyone who subscribes to this service can receive, on a regular basis, a selection of articles in French or in English from different sources on a variety of groups or topics related to cultic phenomena. Other mailings may include information about upcoming events, reports, TV programs or movies. Subscribers receive an average of **22** articles per week, for a ratio of about 15 articles in English and 7 in French.

Presently, there are **741** subscribers to this service (which corresponds to an increase of **19%** compared to the previous year) with 433 people on the English mailing list and 308 on the French list.

> The list of subscribers includes former or active members of groups as well as media, politicians and professionals from various backgrounds: social workers, psychologists, community workers, lawyers, police, etc.

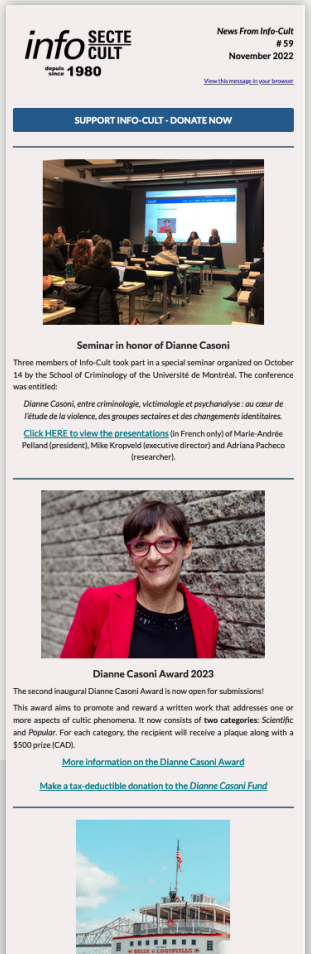
Newsletter

Since 2005, Info-Cult has published a newsletter a few times a year or special announcements that it sends to subscribers to its newsletter. In addition to reporting on the organization's news and encouraging donations, this newsletter also serves as a platform in relation to certain current topics.

In 2022-2023, five editions were published and distributed to 2,984 unique email addresses (on average), including 1,883 in French and 1,101 in English. At the end of this year, the total number of subscribers to the newsletter was **3,062** (1,943 in French and 1,119 in English), which corresponds to a growth of **5.3%**.

The average opening rate of these newsletters is 38.2% in French and 42.1% in English, which corresponds to an average increase of **37%** compared to the previous year.

A PDF version of the newsletter is also published on the Info-Cult website and on its social media.



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News From Info-Cult
 # 59
November 2022

View this message in your browser

SUPPORT INFO-CULT - DONATE NOW

Seminar in honor of Dianne Casoni

Three members of Info-Cult took part in a special seminar organized on October 14 by the School of Criminology of the Université de Montréal. The conference was entitled:

Dianne Casoni, entre criminologie, victimologie et psychanalyse : au cœur de l'étude de la violence, des groupes sectaires et des changements identitaires.

Click HERE to view the presentations (in French only) of Marie-Andrée Pelland (president), Mike Kropveld (executive director) and Adriana Pacheco (researcher).

Dianne Casoni Award 2023

The second inaugural Dianne Casoni Award is now open for submissions!

This award aims to promote and reward a written work that addresses one or more aspects of cultic phenomena. It now consists of **two categories**: *Scientific* and *Popular*. For each category, the recipient will receive a plaque along with a $500 prize (CAD).

More information on the Dianne Casoni Award

Make a tax-deductible donation to the *Dianne Casoni Fund*

> I have read this and other articles you've sent, some of which I've emailed to clients, who, like myself, are former cult members. Thank you for your good work! All the best.
>
> **Former member**

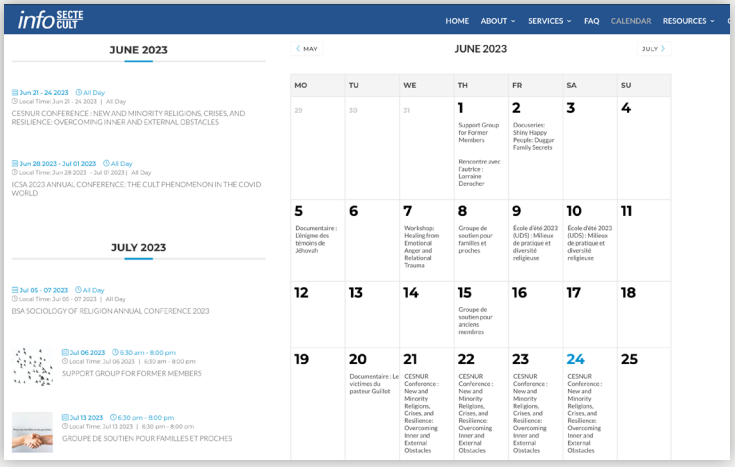
Website

A new version of Info-Cult's website was finalized and launched in 2022, following a complete overhaul that was initiated in 2020.

The website offers information on the structure, mission, services and history of Info-Cult as well as advice and general information about groups and cultic phenomena.

The site also contains a calendar that includes main events related to this field (broadcasts, conferences, training, documentaries, etc.).

In 2022-2023, **106** different events were announced on this calendar, which is also published monthly on social media. In addition to contributing to a better dissemination of knowledge, publicizing such a large number of events creates many opportunities for dialogue with the various organizers and researchers who appreciate this service.

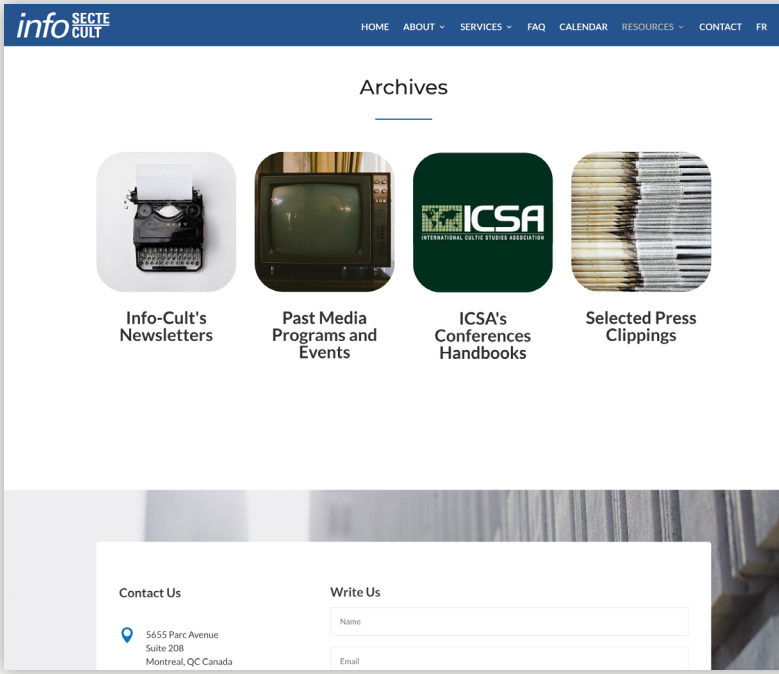


Users can also consult Info-Cult's documentation catalogue and access all its publications as well as a large collection of legal documents and government reports from around the world.

Finally, several other features of this new site (forms for support groups, FAQs, etc.) allow Info-Cult's staff to save a lot of time. In addition to its usefulness, other future developments on this site will have the potential to develop research opportunities, in particular through the implementation of a polling system and a database.

With its first version in 1999, Info-Cult's website has since received tens of thousands of visits on average each year.

On behalf of those who benefit from invaluable information resources, Info-Cult wishes to express its gratitude to all the people who, over time, have donated their time and expertise for the creation, maintenance, updates and improvements to this site.



> Your new website is great! Simple, clear, good graphics - easy to use!
>
> Public

Other online activities

Info-Cult maintains its presence on various online platforms. These make it easier to reach a broader audience by providing information or publishing different views on current topics of interest.

The Facebook page of Info-Cult has been online since 2013, thanks to the initiative and hard work of a volunteer. At the end of 2022-2023, this page had **987** likes (up **14%** from the previous year) and **1,092** followers (up **16.8%**).

Online since 2017, the page had **201** hits by the end of the year (up **13.6%**).

Online since 2020, the page had **203** followers at the end of the year (up **32.7%**).

The Info-Cult YouTube channel was completely revised during the year 2022-2023. It encompasses a dozen videos, including documentaries co-produced by the organization (*Au-delà des mirages* and *Beyond the Mirage*). The collection is also now divided into playlists (conferences, videos in French and English, etc.).

Media Presence

Over the years, staff, board members and volunteers of Info-Cult have been contacted by thousands of media, either for information or to conduct national and international interviews for television or radio programs. They are also consulted for documentaries or for magazine or newspaper articles. Some of them are listed below.

Radio or Podcasts

Provincial-National

C.I.E.U (Gaspé),
C.H.R.C. (Quebec),
C.H.O.I. (Quebec),
C.J.A.D. (Montreal),
C.J.F.M. (Montreal),
C.K.A.C. (Montreal),
N.T.R. (Montreal)
Qub Radio
Radio-Canada
C.B.C. Radio (As It Happens, Let's Go),
C.F.R.A (Ottawa, Ontario),
C.F.R.B. (Toronto, Ontario),
Q.R.77 (Calgary, Alberta),
C.K.N.W. (Vancouver, Colombie-Britannique), etc.

International

B.B.C. Radio (UK),
Fastband.com
Internet Radio Network,
Newsweek Radio
Radio Austria
Radio France International
Radio RTBF (Belgique), etc.

Télévision

Canal D (Légendes urbaines)
Canal Historia
CBC (National News, 5th Estate,
Club illico, TVA (Claire Lamarche, J.E., Le Match de la vie, TVA Nouvelles)
C.T.V. (Canada AM, National News, Newsworld, Sunday Edition)
FOX (Fox on Psychology, Fox News)
Global (News)
MAtv
NBC (Dateline)
Radio-Canada (Enjeux, Enquête, Les Décrypteurs, Infoman, Montréal ce soir, Second regard)
Radio-Québec (Droit de parole)
RDI (Les Grands Reportages)
TQS (Le Grand Journal)
Télé-Québec (Les Francs-tireurs)
Vrai

Print media

National

Acadie Nouvelle
Canadian Press
Canoe.com
Globe & Mail
ici.radio-canada
Journal de Montréal
Journal de Québec
L'Actualité
La Presse
Le Devoir
Le Droit
Le Nouvelliste
Le Québec sceptique
Le Soleil
Maclean's Magazine
McGill Daily
McGill Newsroom
Métro Montréal
Montreal Gazette
Ottawa Citizen
Québec Science
Toronto Star
Toronto Sun

International

Amazon News Media
Agence France Presse
Baltimore Sun
Boston Globe
Deseret News
Elle (Malaysia)
Le Figaro
Le Monde
Le Nouvel Observateur
Le Point AFP
London Daily Telegraph
Miami Herald
New York Daily News
New York Times
Newsweek
Phnom Penh Post (Cambodge)
Reuters
The Walrus
Time
Undark
USA Today
Vice Magazine
Wall Street Journal

Last year, Info-Cult responded to 16 requests for information or an interview from different media stakeholders.

Below is the list of media appearances by Info-Cult or its members in 2022-2023:

Christian Centre Church

August 13, 2022 - Saskatoon StarPhoenix
'They tried to tear us apart': How a Saskatoon church with radical ideology-controlled students, families

Unification Church

August 4, 2022 - La Presse
L'influence de la «secte» Moon

Ior Bock

July 13, 2022 - InsideHook
The Strange Story of Ior Bock

Neosurvivalism

October 18, 2022 - Le Soleil
Du gangstérisme au néosurvivalisme

Dianne Casoni Award

June 6, 2022 - LitNet
Major international award for Erika Bornman, author of Mission of malice

Raël

January 7, 2023 - Tou.tv
Les Femmes de Raël (documentary)

January 10, 2023 - Pénélope, Première chaîne (Radio-Canada)
Discussion: Le documentaire Les femmes de Raël

January 11, 2023 - ici.radio-canada.ca
Le documentaire Les femmes de Raël: comment en vient-on à suivre un gourou? (Article from Charles Rioux)

January 14, 2023 - La Presse
Les ravages de Raël (Article from Hugo Dumas)

January 15, 2023 - Tout le monde en parle (Radio-Canada)
Sylvie et Martine: Elles ont quitté Raël

March 4, 2023 - Vrai
Raël QC (documentary)

General

August 9, 2022 - Radio X 98,1 CHOI FM (Quebec)
Discussion avec Marie-Andrée Pelland d'Info-Secte

January 30, 2023 - Get a Life Podcast
Interview with Mike Kropveld

Dianne Casoni Award

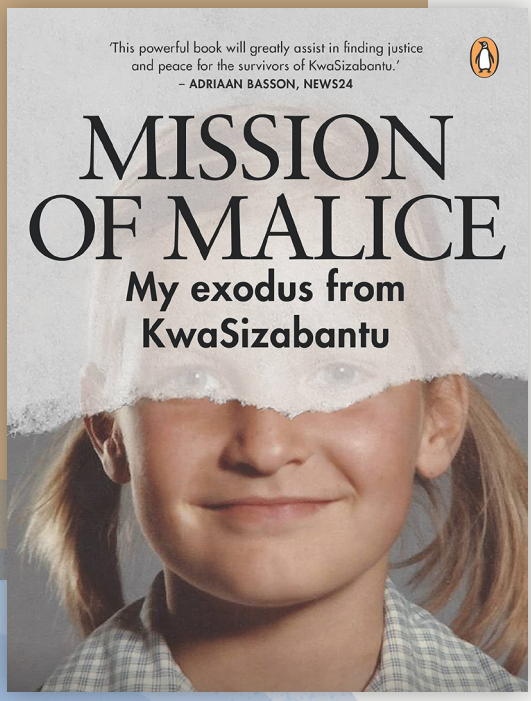
Dianne Casoni was an important collaborator of Info-Cult for more than 25 years, in addition to sitting on its board of directors for more than a decade. She was a prominent figure in research in the field of religion and cultic phenomena. As an experienced psychologist and psychoanalyst, she taught for over twenty years in the School of Criminology at the Université de Montréal.

To honour the memory of Dianne and to highlight her important contributions to research, Info-Cult established the Dianne Casoni Award in 2020. Created with the approval of her daughters, this award aims to promote and reward written work which addresses one or more aspects of cultic phenomena or which deals with the various areas of intervention in cultic environments.

For the first edition of this award, 24 applications were received and submitted to an evaluation committee, including:

- nine biographies;
- four theses;
- three scientific books;
- three scientific articles;
- three press articles;
- an article published in a blog;
- a novel.

Accompanied by a $500 CAD scholarship and a commemorative plaque, the first Dianne Casoni Award was given to South African author Erika Bornman, for her book entitled *Mission of Malice: My Exodus from KwaSizabantu*.



This autobiographical work highlights the ways in which victimization can be experienced within a group (the KwaSizabantu Mission) in relation to its functioning and its internal dynamics. As a source of inspiration for people with similar experiences, this book also contributes to a better understanding of cultic phenomena and can help professionals (in a mental health setting, in particular) to better understand the issues that former members of groups may face in their social integration processes.

The award ceremony consisted of two video presentations (in French and in English) which were produced by Info-Cult and posted on various platforms, on the occasion of the annual conference of the *International Cultic Studies Association* (ICSA) that the organization has been co-organizing for many years.

In addition to the publicity carried out by Info-Cult staff, other publicity related to the call for submissions and the announcement of the 2022 winner was published by two American partners (in the Cult NEWS 101 newsletter and in *ICSA Today*, vol. 13, no. 3).

Educational and Training Programs

Info-Cult offers various types of training and educational programs to meet the needs of different communities within the public, parapublic, private or non-profit sectors:

- clients or service users;
- students;
- employees;
- professional orders, unions, judicial community, etc

These training aims to inform and to make participants aware of cultic phenomena and to provide resources so they are better able to:

- provide assistance to members or former group members;
- assess social or religious groups who seek collaboration;
- assist an employee or client who has been affected directly or indirectly by these phenomena;
- recognize situations of victimization or potential abuse.

Here are the presentations that were offered during the 2022-2023 year:

- Mike Kropveld (Executive Director) was invited by the *Maison des femmes de Drummondville* to give an online talk entitled "*The phenomenon of cults*", that was attended by 12 people on April 12, 2022.
- Marie-Andrée Pelland (President) was called upon to give a presentation, in person, at the *Muriel McQueen Fergusson Center* (in Fredericton, New Brunswick) along with a colleague (Céleste Goguen). Entitled "Experience of Coercive Control in a Religious Cultic Groups context: *Analysis of former members' testimonies*", it brought together more than 90 people, including several stakeholders and mental health professionals, on November 23, 2022.
- Mike Kropveld (Executive Director) was invited by a teacher from the Institute of Religious Studies (associated with the Université de Montréal), to give a presentation on the history and approach of Info-Cult as part of a seminar with four students, on February 23, 2023.

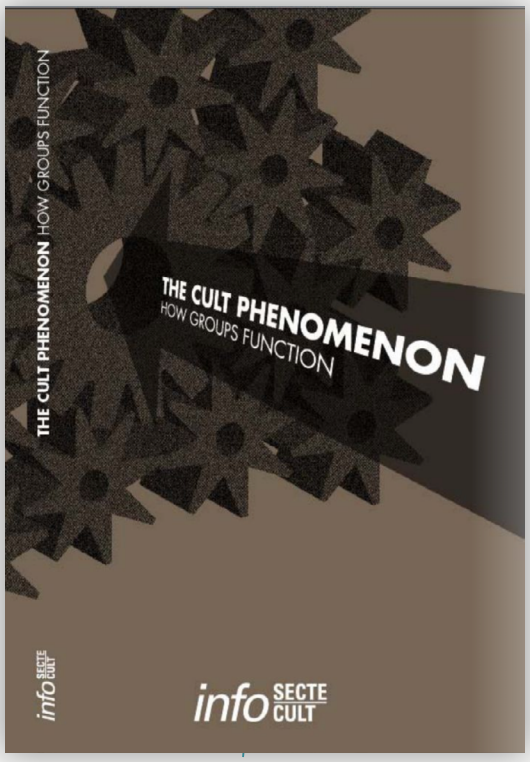
> Thank you for your continued tireless devotion towards this important work.
>
> **Family member**

Publications by Info-Cult

Book

Info-Cult's book, *The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function* is the English version of *Le phénomène des sectes: l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes*. Both versions can be downloaded for free from Info-Cult's website.

Also available in hard copy, these books are a relevant resource in understanding group dynamics and the cultic phenomena.



Other publications

Info-Cult's staff, colleagues and board members have published a number of works over the years and below is a selection from the last ten years.

Note that the complete list of publications is available at no cost on Info-Cult's website.

Lamboley, M., Pelland, M-A. & Goguen, C. (2022). *Introduction: Numéro spécial en hommage à Dianne Casoni*, Criminologie, Volume 55, No. 1.

Pelland, M-A., Vacheret, M. & Wemmers, J-O. (2022). *Les gardiennes de l'honneur: Entre victimes et agentes de contrôle coercitif dans des communautés patriarcales*, Criminologie, Volume 55, No. 1.

Colin, M., Lefebvre, S. & Casoni, D. (2022). *Endoctriner et radicaliser sur la Toile: De l'usage des mèmes par l'extrême-droite*, Communication, Volume 39, No. 1.

Pacheco, Adriana. (2021). *Internados y niños autóctonos en Canadá*, La Razón de México, 6/8/2021.

Kropveld, Mike. (2017). *A multi-perspective approach for understanding and evaluating groups*, presentation given at a conference in Wuhan (China), December 2-3, 2017.

Kropveld, Mike. (2016). *Info-Cult at 35: Observations, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, ICSA Today, Volume 7, No. 2. pp. 10-14.

Kropveld, Mike. (2015). *UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE: THE INFO-SECTE/INFO-CULT PERSPECTIVE (An Interview with Michael Kropveld)*, Cult Awareness movement - World Religions and Spirituality Forum, Posted 12/29/2015.

Segal, Herschel. (2015). *Opinion: Une vision étroite de la radicalisation*, La Presse, version en ligne, le 3 septembre 2015 (version imprimée, le 31 août 2015).

Info-Secte. (2015). *Rapport sur Lev Tahor*, Communiqué de Presse, 13 juillet 2015.

Segal, Herschel. (2015). *Opinion: Federal anti-radicalization efforts have taken too narrow an approach*, Montreal Gazette, July 16, 2015.

Tremblay, C. & Kropveld, M. (2015). *Radicalisation et dérive sectaire: des parallèles?*, Le Huffington Post Québec, 6 mars 2015.

Casoni, D., Pacheco, A., & Kropveld, M. (2015). *State Intervention Against The Baptist Church of Windsor: From Law-Abiding Citizens to Perpetrators of Severe Child Physical Abuse*, International Journal of Cultic Studies, Vol. 6, 2015, 83-99.

Pacheco, Adriana. (2015). *Quebec francophone Conservative Protestants and youth protection laws: Conflict between secular law and divine law?*, News from Info-Cult #29, February 2015.

Tremblay, C. & Kropveld, M. (2015). *Opinion: Terrorist groups and cults have some things in common*, Montreal Gazette, February 20, 2015.

Giambalvo, C., Kropveld, M., & Langone, M. (2013). *Changes in the North American Cult Awareness Movements, Published on ICSA's website and also appeared in a shorter version in the book Revisionism and Diversification in New Religious Movements*, Edited by Eileen Barker, Ashgate Publishing, pp. 227-245.

Pelland, M-A. & Kropveld, M. (2013). *Gourous et adeptes*, Nouvelles d'Info-Secte #25, juin 2013.

Pelland, M-A. & Kropveld, M. (2013). *Gurus and Follower*, News from Info-Cult #25, June 2013.

Langone, M. & Kropveld. M. *et al. (2013). Benefits of dialogue.* ICSA Today, Volume 4, No. 3, pp. 2-7.

Kropveld, Mike. (2013). *Info-Secte.* Présentation à l'Association francophone pour le savoir (ACFAS), le 6 mai 2013.

Kropveld, Mike. (2012). *The End of the World*, News from Info-Cult #24, December 2012.

Kropveld, Mike. (2012). *La fin du monde*, Nouvelles d'Info-Secte #24, décembre 2012.

Other Outreach Initiatives

Sometimes, events or outreach initiatives can have an impact on Info-Cult in a more or less direct way.

This can result in an increase in public or media interest in cultic phenomena or certain groups. Consequently, this can provide greater visibility to Info-Cult, which, in turn, can result in a greater demand on its organizational resources.

In this regard, the year 2022-2023 was marked by several events or outings, in particular:

- *The Order of the Solar Temple* (documentary series posted on Vrai in the spring of 2022)
- *Les Femmes de Raël* (documentary broadcast on Radio-Canada in January 2023)
- *Raël QC* (documentary posted on Vrai in March 2023)
- *Ces enfants oubliés. Grandir dans une communauté sectaire* (book by Lorraine Derocher, published in April 2023 by Éditions de l'Homme)

Info-Cult wishes to thank Lorraine Derocher (sociologist of religions and expert in youth protection intervention in a cultic context) for her most recent book. Thanks to a generous donation, Info-Cult was able to distribute 15 copies of this book free of charge to people whose childhood was marked by being in this kind of cultic environment.

On behalf of the beneficiaries of this generous donation: THANK YOU!

Note that Info-Cult is planning the forthcoming broadcast of a video interview with the author, in which she discusses her latest book and the impact it has had so far in the community.

Networking and Partnerships

Collaborations

National meetings

Another new development for the year 2022-2023 year concerns a project based on dialogue, which is one of Info-Cult's fundamental values.

This initiative aims to bring together local and national partners in order to regularly promote opportunities for exchange of expertise and views on common issues and concerns. In the longer term, the goal is to explore new avenues of collaboration and consolidate community relations from a multidisciplinary perspective.

In order to accomplish this, an invitation was sent out to about twenty researchers and representatives of different organizations, and an online meeting took place on November 1, 2022, which was attended by around ten people from the following organizations:

- *Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes* (AQPV)
- *Centre de ressources et d'observation de l'innovation religieuse* (CROIR)[1]
- *Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire* (CÉINR)[2]
- *Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence* (CPRLV)

International Meetings

Since 2009, Info-Cult staff have participated in annual meetings with representatives from three European organizations:

Information Network on Religious Movements (INFORM), London (UK)	***Centre d'information et d'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles*** (CIAOSN), Brussels (Belgium)	***Centre Intercantonal d'Information sur les Croyances*** (CIC), Geneva (Switzerland)

[1] Associated with the Université Laval

[2] Associated with the Université de Montréal

The aim of these annual meetings, which can sometimes take place over two days, is to share information and reflect on current topics regarding groups and cultic phenomena. They also facilitate discussions on the type of requests received by the respective organizations during the year, as well as on the various challenges encountered on a day-to-day basis. As well, other exchanges can be related to a comparison of the work methodology of each organization involved, as well as to possible collaborations.

Finally, these encounters can also provide opportunities for dialogue with active members of controversial groups or who may be perceived as "cults".

Exceptionally, **two** annual meetings were held in 2022-2023.

As in the previous two years marked by the pandemic, the first of these meetings took place online on May 25, 2022, and was organized by INFORM.

The second meeting took place on March 22, 2023, in Brussels (Belgium). It was offered in hybrid form by the host organization (CIAOSN), which allowed two Info-Cult staff members to attend in person, and two others to take part in the discussions online.

These two meetings also welcomed the *International Cultic Studies Association* (ICSA), in order to broaden the possibilities of future collaborations.

It should also be noted that other exchanges between Mike Kropveld (Executive Director of Info-Cult) and the management staff of CIC and the CIAOSN continue on a monthly basis throughout the year.

International Cultic Studies Association

Since 2009, the executive director of Info-Cult, Mike Kropveld, has been on the Board of directors of ICSA and chairs the committee of its annual conference, which has been organized jointly with Info-Cult since 2001.

Founded in 1979 and based in the United States, ICSA is one of the leading organizations in the field of cultic studies. Its international network includes former members of groups, families, researchers and professionals who all have in common a concern for cultic phenomena and for the dynamics of groups with a high level of control, demand or commitment.

The mission of ICSA is similar to that of Info-Cult:

- Help former group members;
- Provide support for families and loved ones;
- Educate the public about these phenomena;
- Encourage and support the study of these phenomena;
- Provide resources to professionals.

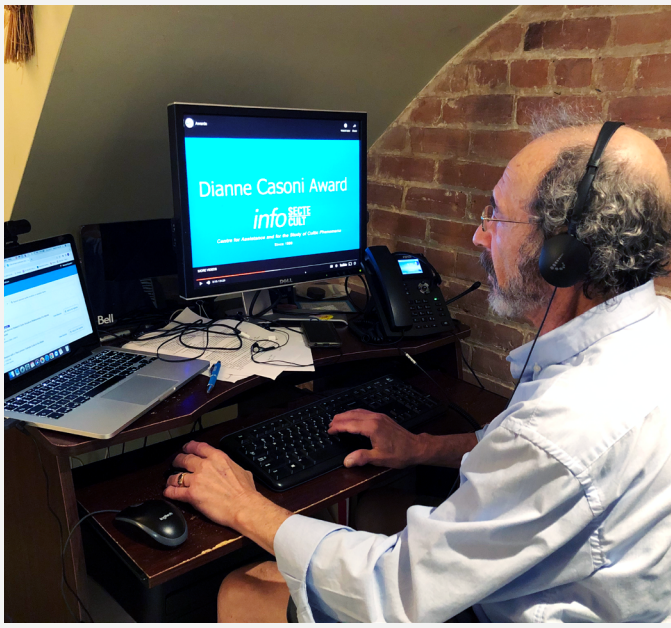
ICSA Annual International Conferences

Since 2001, Info-Cult has been co-organizing the annual ICSA (International Cultic Studies Association) conferences and promotes it through its various networks.

These multidisciplinary conferences bring together participants and international speakers including:

- Researchers;
- Mental health professionals;
- Active or former group members;
- Families;
- Students and educators;
- Law enforcement agents;
- Lawyers;
- Representatives of religious organizations.

Conference programs include panels, sessions that present research findings, and reflections or information on cultic phenomena, "cults", new religious movements, high-demand or high-control groups. Workshops for professionals, researchers and families are also offered at these conferences.



Year after year, the involvement of Info-Cult in the organization of these conferences facilitates the participation of many students, researchers and professionals from Quebec and the rest of Canada. In addition to promoting the exchange of knowledge and offering valuable networking opportunities, these conferences also offer speakers the opportunity to make presentations in front of an international audience.

These conferences take place in North America or in Europe:

2021 - Montreal (online), Canada

2019 - Manchester, UK

2018 - Philadelphia, USA

2017 - Bordeaux, France

2016 - Dallas, USA

2015 - Stockholm, Sweden

2014 - Washington, USA

2013 - Trieste, Italy

2012 - Montreal, Canada

2011 - Barcelone, Spain

2010 - Rome, Italy

2010 - New York, USA

2009 - Geneva, Switzerland

2008 - Philadelphia, USA

2007 - Brussels, Belgium

2006 - Denver, USA

2005 - Madrid, Spain

ICSA Conference 2022

Due to the pandemic, the last conference was online for the second consecutive year and took place June 24-26.

Once again, an online format enabled the event to reach a wider audience than usual, bringing together 364 participants and speakers from **16** countries. Of these, nearly thirty came from Canada, including several Quebec researchers.

Organized around the theme "*Exploring the Needs of People Who Leave Controlling Groups, Relationships, and Environments*", the 3-day conference included **70** sessions spread over four concurrent tracks. An Info-Cult staff member was responsible for coordinating one of these tracks (presentation of speakers, posting of video recordings and welcoming of participants).

The majority of the presentations were made available for viewing for 30 days after the conference.

Other events, conferences and webinars

Each year, Info-Cult staff participates in many activities in order to pursue reflection on cultic phenomena and best intervention practices. These efforts also aim to consolidate the organization as an essential community resource.

2022 CESNUR Conference

This international conference, entitled "Religious Pluralism in the Age of Globalization" took place at Université Laval, June 16-18.

Bringing together dozens of researchers, students and active members of groups from several countries, the event was co-organized by the *Center for Studies on New Religions* (CESNUR), *the Center for Resources and Observation of Religious Innovation* (CROIR) from Laval University (CROIR) and the International Society for the Study of New Religions (ISSNR).

The executive director of Info-Cult (Mike Kropveld) and its current president (Marie-Andrée Pelland) gave a talk entitled "*Reflection and Analysis on Info-Cult's 40 Years of Existence*". Presented in front of about fifty people, this communication offered an analysis of the evolution of Info-Cult since its founding in 1980. The conference program included two other conferences by Marie-Andrée Pelland, who was accompanied by two students to present recent research work.

Info-Cult's participation in this event enabled to foster the *dialogue* regarding groups and cultic phenomena.

Seminar in honour of Professor Dianne Casoni

This seminar, presented on October 14, 2022, at the Université de Montréal and bringing together around forty people, was organized by the School of Criminology and the *Interdisciplinary Center for Research on Religions and Spiritualities* (CIRRES).

The program included recent research on cultic phenomena and extremism. Its goal was to promote exchange in connection with the publication of a special issue of the journal *Criminologie* that highlighted the work of Dianne Casoni, a colleague who passed in early 2020.

The introduction to the event was provided by three members of Info-Cult's board of directors: Marie-Andrée Pelland (president), Mike Kropveld (executive director) and Adriana Pacheco (researcher). Their presentation, entitled "*Dianne Casoni, entre criminologie, victimologie et psychanalyse: au cœur de l'étude de la violence, des groupes sectaires et des changements identitaires*", was subsequently made available on *YouTube*.

Finally, Info-Cult's participation in this seminar also provided a showcase for the Dianne Casoni Award, a literary award that was created in honourof this long-time collaborator of Info-Cult.

Complete list

During the year, Info-Cult staff took part in numerous public events, conferences, webinars and training sessions:

CONFERENCE:
***Ecological Spiritualities Conference* (Harvard Divinity School)**
- Online, April 27-30, 2022

CONFERENCE:
***ICSA Annual International Conference* (ICSA and Info-Secte)**
- Online, June 24-26, 2022

SEMINAR:
***En l'honneur de Madame Dianne Casoni* (CIRRES and UdeM)**
- On-site (Montreal), October 14, 2022

TRAINING:
***Religion et travail social* (CIC)**
- Online, December 8, 2022

TRAINING:
***La planification stratégique* (Centre St-Pierre)**
- Online, January 18, 2023

TRAINING:
***Faire connaître et rayonner son projet ou son organisme: plan de communication 101* (Centre St-Pierre)**
- On-site (Montreal), February 9, 2023

TRAINING:
***Consultations with Families of Cult Members* (ICSA)**
- Online, March 12, 2023

CONFERENCE:
***CESNUR Annual Conference* (CESNUR, CROIR, ISSNR)**
- On-site (Québec), June 16-18, 2022

WEBINAR:
***Débats polarisants* (CPRLV)**
- Online, October 12, 2022

CONFERENCE:
***La religion dans les médias* (CIC)**
- Online, October 25, 2022

CONFERENCE:
***Chances et limites du dialogue interreligieux* (CIC)**
- Online, December 20, 2022

TRAINING:
***Règlements généraux* (Centre St-Pierre)**
- On site (Montreal), January 24, 2023

CONFERENCE:
***L'emprise en contexte religieux: approche interdisciplinaire* (CIC)**
- Online, March 2, 2023

MEETING:
***General Assembly* (FECRIS)**
- Online, March 24, 2023

Community relations

On the local level, Info-Cult receives hundreds of requests for references from professionals and stakeholders from the health and social services sector (psychologists, social workers, therapists, etc.) as well as from public and private organizations including:

Help, health, safety and social services

- 811
- Youth Protection Services
- L'Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes
- Canadian Centre for Child Protection
- Crime Victims Assistance Centre (CAVAC)
- Information and Referral Centre of Greater Montreal
- Health and Social Services throughout Québec
- Director of Youth Protection (DYP)
- eSantéMentale.ca
- Federation of shelters for women
- Forward
- Indemnisation des victimes d'actes criminels (IVAC)
- Kids Help Phone
- Minister of Public Security
- Community organizations
- Regroupement des Services d'Intervention de Crise du Québec
- Missing Children's Network
- SOS Conjugal Violence
- Suicide Action Montréal (SAM)
- Tel-jeunes

Legal information

- McGill Legal Information Clinic
- Commission for Human Rights and Youth Rights (CDPDJ)
- Éducaloi
- Juripop
- Consumer protection office
- Consumer Option
- Quebec Society for Legal Information (SOQUIJ)

Information and Research

Info-Cult maintains relations with researchers and educators in several faculties at local universities:

- Département d'études anciennes et de sciences des religions - Université d'Ottawa
- Département de sciences des religions - Université du Québec à Montréal
- Department of Religions and Cultures - Concordia University
- Faculté de théologie et de sciences religieuses - Université Laval
- Institut d'études religieuses - Université de Montréal
- School of religious studies - McGill University

Over the years, Info-Cult has also developed important ties, both locally and internationally, with stakeholders interested in similar issues: individuals, researchers, associations, organizations, religious communities, ecumenical centres and multidisciplinary professionals.

In addition to contributing to the organization's influence and promoting support services that are better adapted to the realities of individuals and communities, this extended network allows a diversity of sources of information and a more efficient dissemination of knowledge and perspectives related to cultic phenomena.

Canada

- Association humaniste du Québec
- Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire (CEINR)
- Centre d'étude du religieux contemporain - Université de Sherbrooke
- Centre d'expertise et de formation sur les intégrismes religieux, les idéologies politiques et la radicalisation (CEFIR)
- Centre de prévention de la radicalisation menant à la violence (CPRMV)
- Centre de recherche sur l'enfance et la famille (CREF)
- Centre de recherche Sociétés Droits et Religions de l'Université de Sherbrooke (SODRUS)
- Centre de ressources et d'observation de l'innovation religieuse (CROIR)
- Centre for Research on Religion (CREOR)
- Narratives of Identity: Spirituality in the Modern World
- Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance (OCRT)
- Recherche et Action sur les Polarisations Sociales (RAPS)
- Religion and child abuse news
- Religion and Diversity Project
- Sceptiques du Québec

International Network

Australia

Cult Consulting Australia

Cult Information and Family Support (CIFS)

Ex-Religious Support Network (ESN)

Austria

Bundesstelle für Sektenfragen

Forum for Religious Freedom Europe (FOREF)

Belgium

Centre d'information et d'aide sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles (CIAOSN)

Human Rights Without Frontiers (HRWF)

Prévention, Recherche et Formation Emprise et Résilience (PREFER)

Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN)

Finland

Uskonnot Suomessa

Uskontojen Uhrien Tuki Ry (U.U.T.) (Support for victims of religion)

France

Association d'étude et d'information sur les mouvements religieux (AEIMR)

Association française pour l'information scientifique (AFIS)

Centre national d'Accompagnement Familial Face à l'Emprise Sectaire (CAFFES)

Centre Roger Ikor - Centre contre les manipulations mentales (CCMM)

Coordination des Associations & Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience (CAPLC)

Fédération Européenne des Centres de Recherche et d'Information sur le Sectarisme (FECRIS)

Groupe d'étude des mouvements de pensée en vue de la protection de l'individu (GEMPPI)

Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de combat contre les dérives sectaires (MIVILUDES)

Strasbourg Consortium Freedom of Conscience and Religion at the European Court of Human Rights

Union nationale des Associations de défense des Familles et de l'Individu victimes de sectes (UNADFI)

Germany

Sekteninfo NRW

Holland

Apologetics Index

CounterCultSearch.com

Ireland

Dialogue Ireland

Israel

Hillel

Italy

CESNUR - Center for Studies on New Religions

Japan

National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

Spain

Atención e Investigación de Socioadicciones (AIS)

redUNE: InfoSECTARISMO

Asociación Iberoamericana para la Investigación del Abuso Psicológico (AIIAP)

Educasectas

Sweden

Exit

Hjälpkällan

Switzerland

Centre intercantonal d'information sur les croyances (CIC)

Centre de liaison et d'information concernant les minorités spirituelles (CLIMS)

Pôle de compétences sur les questions religieuses et idéologiques

Religioscope

UK

Cult Information Centre

Family Survival Trust

Information Network on Religious Movements (INFORM)

Open Minds Foundation

United States

American Atheists

Centers for Apologetics Research (CFAR)

Children's Health Care is a Legal Duty (CHILD)

Cult Education Institute (CEI)

Freedom of Mind Resource Center

iGotOut.org

International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)

Internet Sacred Text Archive

Life After Hate

Meadow Haven

National Council Against Health Fraud (NCAHF)

Quackwatch: Your Guide to Quackery, Health Fraud, and Intelligent Decisions

RealClearReligion (Opinion, News, Analysis)

Recovering from Religion

Red de Apoyo para Víctimas de Sectas

Safe Passage Foundation

Skeptical Inquirer

The Skeptics Society & Skeptic magazine

Southern Poverty Law Center

Wellspring Retreat - Recovery for Victims of Cults and Cultic Abuse

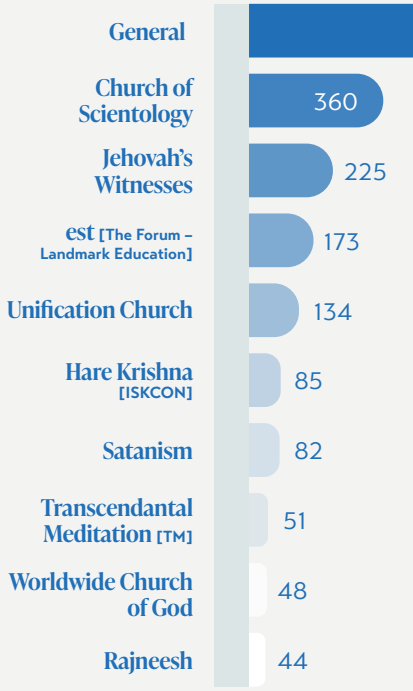
World Religions and Spirituality Project (WRSP)

History

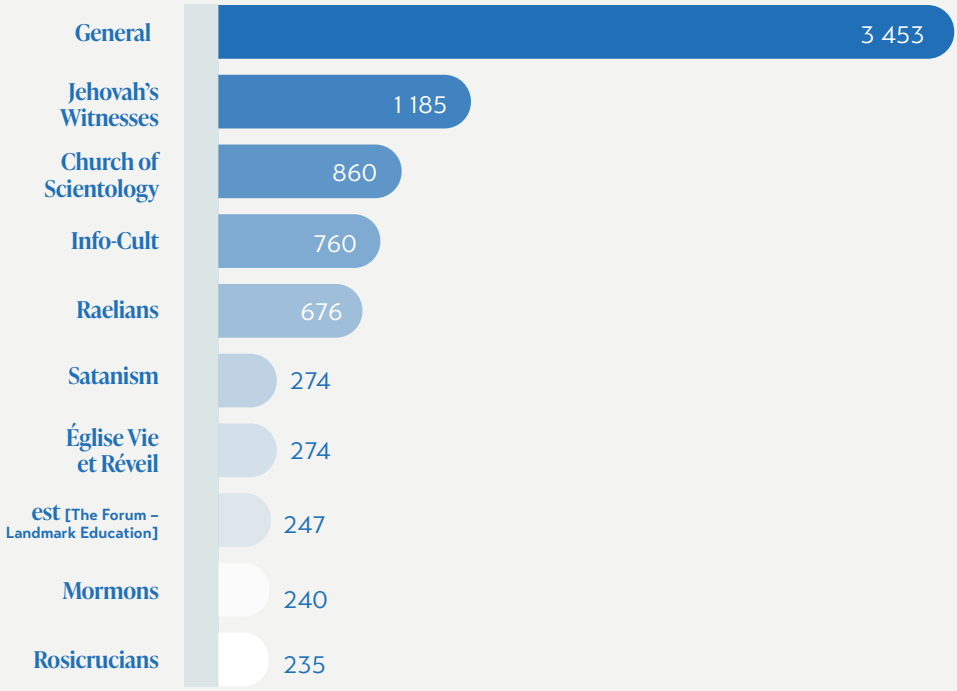
Statistics : 1980 - 2020

The lists below provide a snapshot of the 10 groups or subjects which, for different reasons, have been the subject of the greatest number of requests during each decade of Info-Cult's activity.

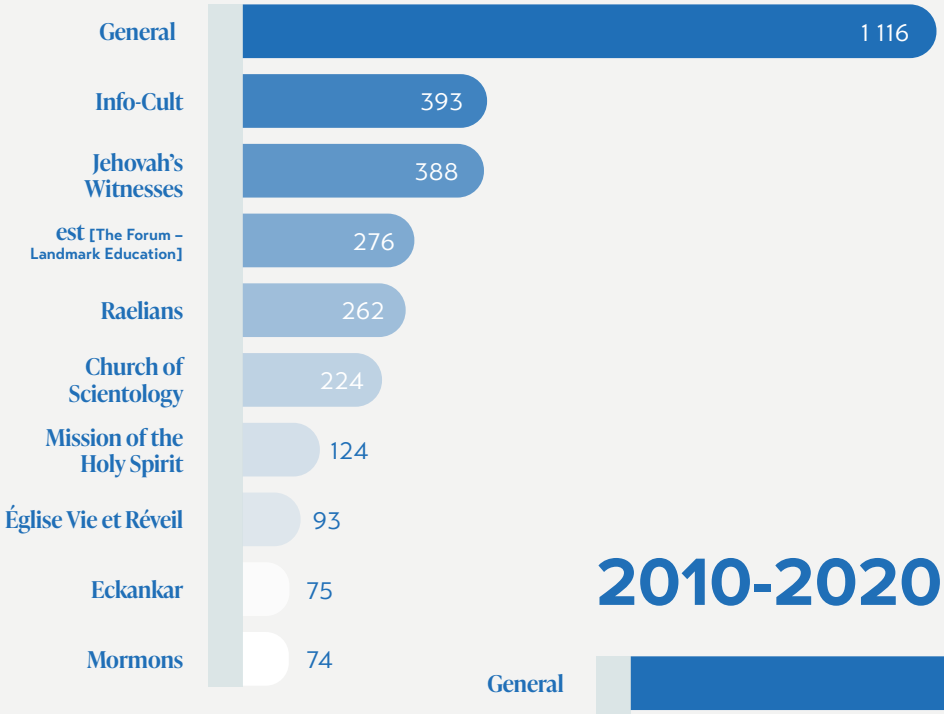
1980-1990



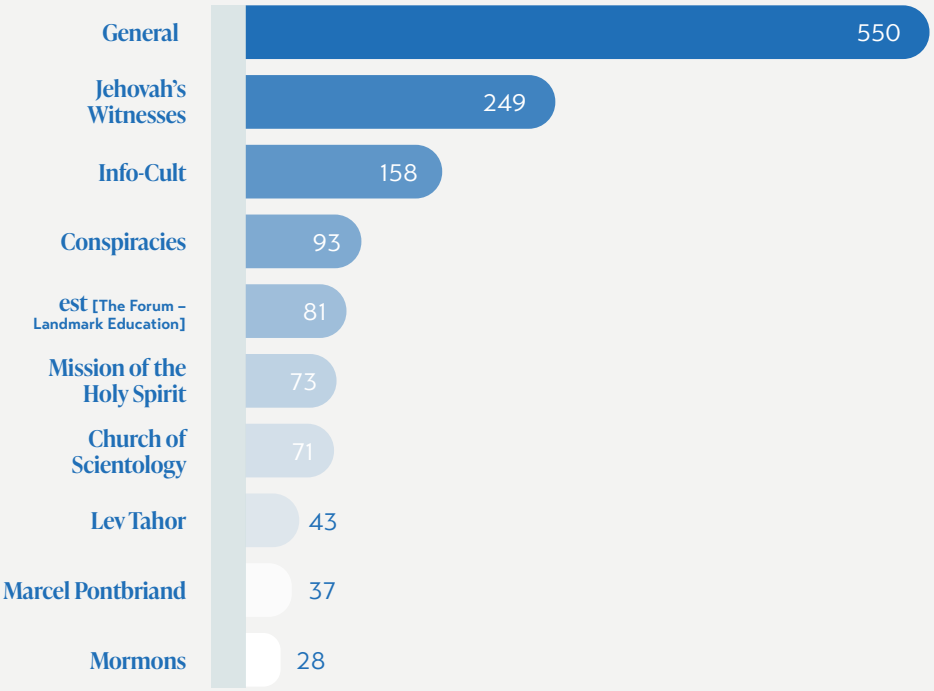
1990- 2000



2000-2010



2010-2020*



N.B. The inclusion of a group on these lists does not mean that Info-Cult considers it to be a cult, but only that it has been the subject of one or more requests.

* As data collection methods and databases were updated during the year, the statistics presented only provide a partial portrait of the requests received in 2020.

History and Highlights

Info-Cult is recognized for its expertise and the quality of its services, particularly in the support offered to families and people affected by cultic phenomena. The organization pursues its mission to inform the public and continues to promote research and reflection on group dynamics in order to more effectively intervene when needed.

Much like the groups it observes, Info-Cult has experienced many changes since its founding in 1980, whether in terms of its:

- name;
- structure and operation;
- funding;
- clientele and services provided;
- network.

A more in-depth examination of the history of the organization and its beginnings makes it possible to better understand its development and the transformations of its perspective on cultic phenomena.

Beginnings

Along with a decline in traditional religious institutions as well as a certain undermining of normative values, the last century has witnessed a change in religious institutions, paving the way for a rise in new forms of religiosity or various spiritual quests. These changes were also accompanied by a marked growth in the number of groups with different callings (religious, spiritual, political, therapeutic, etc.). During the 1960s, the proliferation of these groups sparked public curiosity and a need for information. One wonders what is attractive about these groups, especially among young adults, whose lifestyle tends to change radically following contact with a group. Towards the end of the 1970s, concerns about "cults" increased following various tragedies, notably that of Jonestown (in Guyana) where 918 people died in 1978.

1978

Founding of the **Cult Information Center**, an association of volunteers aimed at raising awareness of cultic phenomena.

1979

Under the initiative of the Montreal section of the Hillel association (a Jewish student organization that is active on several university and college campuses), conferences are organized in order to sensitize students and the population to cultic phenomena. Interest generated by these conferences, combined with the expressed needs of the community, led a small group of people (notably Mike Kropveld, Leonard Lazarus and Patrick Quincy) to consider setting up a permanent resource centre on cults. Recognizing the relevance of such a project, leaders of the Hillel organization applied for a grant from the Jewish community of Montreal in order to develop this resource centre more concretely.

1980

Under the auspices of the B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation of Montreal (a student association), the Cult Project was born. Subsidized by the Jewish Community Services of Montreal as well as by private donations, this non-profit education and resource centre on cults offers a public and non-denominational service to the entire population.

Its objectives are to:

- Develop a bilingual information and documentation centre on cultic groups and phenomena that is open to the public;
- Support families, relatives and former members of groups;
- Offer information and awareness sessions on cultic phenomena in Montreal and the surrounding area.

During its first ten years of existence, three people have been employed by the Cult Project (two with the help of government grants) and are responsible for a number of research projects. Various prevention and awareness programs about cults and "mental manipulation" techniques are presented in high schools, CEGEPs, universities, community centres and professional associations in Montreal and its surroundings.

1982

The Cult Project publishes a research report entitled Les sectes dans le milieu francophone à Montréal.

In collaboration with the Cult Project, a ten-part course entitled Coping with Cults is offered to high schools. Produced by the Jewish Education Council of Montreal and developed by Sylvia Stipelman, the program won the William Haber Prize.

1986

The Cult Project publishes two research reports:

1- *Non-profit and charitable solicitation in Canada: A Review of Techniques and Ethical Considerations* (funded by a grant from by Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada);

2- *Les difficultés reliées à la consommation rencontrées par les consommateurs dans certains nouveaux mouvements religieux et para-religieux de la Province de Québec* (funded by a grant from the Quebec Consumer Protection Office).

1987

The Cult Project publishes a report on cultism in France which is subsidized in part by the Office franco-québécois pour la jeunesse.

1988

To commemorate the victims of the Johnstown tragedy, the Cult Project undertakes an awareness campaign in Montreal, from November 14 to 18.

1990

Now located in new offices (on Park Avenue, Montreal), The Cult Project becomes Info-Cult, an independent, bilingual and non-denominational organization which is governed by a board of directors composed of legal, education, mental health, counselling and business professionals.

The mission of Info-Cult is also updated to reflect its growth over the last 10 years:

> *In order to promote the dignity and integrity of the person, with respect for individual and collective rights, freedom of thought and expression, and the right to information, Info-Cult's objects are the following:*
>
> - *Promote the study of cultic phenomena;*
> - *Raise awareness, inform and educate the population about these phenomena;*
> - *Assist people experiencing difficulties related to these phenomena.*

1991

A media campaign is organized to sensitize the Quebec population on cultic phenomenon. In collaboration with Info-Cult, an information brochure entitled *Are you vulnerable?* is published and distributed by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP).

1992

"In recognition of significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada", Mike Kropveld, founder of Info-Cult, receives the 125th Anniversary of the Confederation of Canada Medal from the Government of Canada.

Following a number of testimonies, Info-Cult makes public the case of the Médecins du Ciel, channeler healers. Certain steps taken by Info-Cult contribute to the filing of a complaint to the College of Physicians of Quebec for the illegal practice of medicine leading to healers being fined.

1993

The release of the documentary, *Au-delà des mirages* which will be followed in 1994 by the release of the English version, *Beyond the Mirage*. Directed by Jorge Martinez and produced by Info-Cult, this documentary aims to make young people more aware of cultic phenomena. It is used in Canada and the United States for educational purposes.

Info-Cult submits a report as part of a Parliamentary Commission of the Quebec government on alternative therapies.

1995

The staff of Info-Cult reflects on the concept of "cultic thinking". This terminology is now used by Info-Cult to take into account individual behaviour and group dynamics, but is not used as criteria for distinguishing groups that may represent a potential risk to its members.

1999

Info-Cult enters cyberspace and launchesthe first version of its bilingual website, which becomes a source of references on cultic phenomena and how groups function.

2003

Publication of the book, *Le phénomène des sectes: l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes (by Mike Kropveld and Marie-Andrée Pelland). This book was made possible thanks to a grant from the Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration du Québec.*

2005

Info-Cult celebrates its 25th anniversary of service to the community and produces, for the occasion, a commemorative booklet including tributes.

2006

With the help of Canadian Heritage, Info-Cult publishes *The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function (by Mike Kropveld and Marie-Andrée Pelland) an update of the French version of the book published in 2003 by the same authors.*

2007

"In recognition of his leadership in the effort to preserve and protect individual liberties", Info-Cult's Executive Director, Mike Kropveld, is the recipient of the Herbert L. Rosedale Award from the *International Cultic Studies Association* (ICSA).

2009

In collaboration with two Montreal organizations (the Association Plaidoyer-Victimes and the CINR - now CEINR), Info-Cult organizes a two-day conference at the Université de Montréal entitled: *Du croire à l'extrême et des pratiques sectaires: prendre en compte et intervenir.*

2012

Info-Cult is called upon to respond to questions and concerns relating to the "end of the world" or the end of the Mayan calendar (December 21, 2012).

During the summer, Info-Cult hosts ICSA's international conference in Montreal.

2018

In response to the needs expressed by former members, Info-Cult starts a support group in French which is facilitated by professionals offering their services on a voluntary basis.

2020

A complementary name is added: *Centre d'étude des phénomènes sectaires et services d'aide.*

Info-Cult celebrates its 40th anniversary and organizes an international congress in collaboration with ICSA (*International Cultic Studies Association*) to be held in Montreal. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conference was presented online the following year.

A second support group in English for former members is started.

2021

A support group is started for families and loved ones.

2022

Info-Cult launches its new website and creates the Dianne Casoni Award.

info SECTE CULT

depuis since 1980