



CENTRE FOR
CIVIC RELIGIOUS
LITERACY

LE CENTRE
DE LITTÉRATIE
RELIGIEUSE CIVIQUE



2023 Annual Report



Introduction

The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy (CCRL) is non-religious non-profit committed to promoting religious literacy to foster understanding about religious, spiritual, and non-religious identities and people in all sectors of society.

We do this to support individuals in various spheres of society to recognize the richness and contributions of religious, spiritual, and non-religious identities of peoples in Canada and the world.

We work across the land called Canada to some, and Turtle Island to others. In doing so, we recognize all the Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Métis, and Inuit) that have lived on this land for generations and continue to, before all others arrived as settlers, immigrants, and refugees.

At CCRL, we continue to learn about the treaties that inform the history and relations across this land. We are especially cognizant of this as our office is located in Tio'tia:ke (Montréal), on unceded territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka People.

We honour and respect these nations and Peoples, and are consistently mindful of this history in all our work.

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Message from the Interim Board Chair

This year CCRL celebrated its 5th anniversary, its first lustrum! So, congratulations for all who have contributed during these five years to our flourishing organization. Special congratulations for our Executive Director, Alice Chan, for all her hard work, her dedication, and her great leadership during all these years.

This year, I am struck by the large number of presentations and workshops given in Canada and the US as well as the multi-year projects made possible by several funders and conducted in strong partnership with nearly 20 organizations. CCRL is in very good shape. Given the developments in several parts of the world at the moment, the work of the Centre on civic religious and worldview literacy is more needed than ever so that peace and justice can reign.

We have grown internally as well. At the end of 2022 four new members joined the Board: Dwight Newman, Lorna Turnbull, Ellen Greenspan, and John Valk. They bring insights from their specific expertise and from other parts of Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and New Brunswick. Due to various reasons, I became Interim Board Chair and John Valk became Interim Vice Chair. Together, we have improved the governance framework for CCRL. The final proposal will be on the table in the 2023 AGM.

Rotating off after five years as Board Member after the AGM, I extend deep appreciation and gratitude to our advisors, our donors, the members of the CCRL Team, my fellow Board Members, and - words are not enough - to our Executive Director, Alice Chan.



Prof. Em. Dr. Siebren Miedema

Message from the Executive Director

2023 was a year of exponential growth amidst very challenging circumstances. As we further developed our large projects, a number of our team members faced significant struggles, both family and health related. For this reason, and many more, we mark our five-year anniversary with deep appreciation to our CCRL team members. The deep commitment from our full CCRL team was clear and strong. Our incredible partner organizations supported us along this challenging time, whether they knew it or not.

Partnership from federal and private funders, along with generous donations from individual donors made all this work possible. I personally thank each one of our team, partners, funders, and donors for their incredible commitment.

Despite the struggles in 2023, we continued on the same trajectory as we had in 2022 but at an even stronger step. This includes our new logo and website – both captures our focus on promoting understanding among various age, community, sector, and regional groups, often by creating a space to dialogue. Both sets us up for the future!

In 2024, we aim to continue and strengthen our new and existing projects, and developing relationships. They now pave the way for a more sustainable and deeper impact. Global wars, climate change, reconciliation are matters that are top of mind, in addition to the intersecting identities of (dis)ability, sexual orientation, gender, race, and immigration status, in relation to religious, spiritual, and non-religious identities. These increasingly polarized nexuses are challenging to broach, but this is where our work and skillset lies. Thank you in advance for partnering with us in this work!



Sincerely,

W. Y. Alice Chan, PhD
Executive Director &
Co-Founder

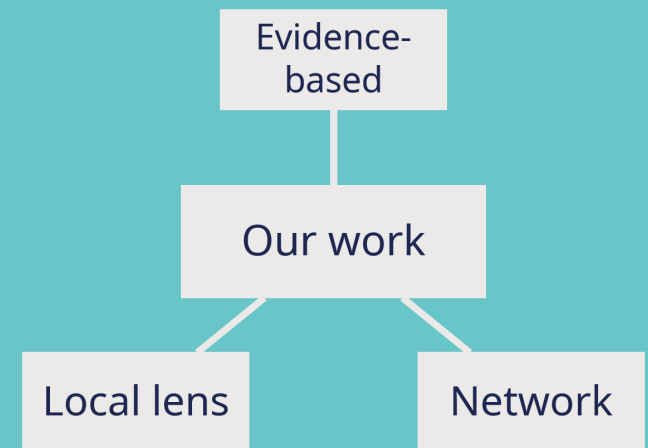


Our Approach

Our intersectional approach enables us to consistently engage with race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, abilities, language, socio-economic status, immigration status, and job status, among other factors, that co-exist in people's lives. It opens up our work to engage actively with social, political, economic, and legal concerns in society across sectors.

In this way, we engage, include, and work alongside local communities and organizations; often acting as a bridge that translates academic knowledge and skills practically & relevantly into a lived space.

Our 3-prong approach embodies the experiences, insights, and skills among our team of award-winning educator-researchers who live across Canada. Together, we ensure our customized work is evidence-based, locally relevant, conducted in partnership, and specific to the needs and interests of the communities and sectors we engage with.



Our Projects

The following summarizes our projects in 2023.

In addition to our projects, we promote religious literacy through individual or short engagements.

As before, we engaged the public, academics, and students in 2023 across Canada and in the US:

- Aspen Institute, Religion & Society Summit, “Religion, DEI and Business: Supporting Employee Resource Groups and Growing Pluralism” presentation, Washington, D.C.
- Magnetic North Conference, “Being proactive in rural Canada: Creating mechanisms for inclusive workplaces that support employers and employees” presentation, Sudbury, ON
- McGill University, Faculty of Education, “What is Religious Literacy: A lifelong learning skill” workshop, Montreal, QC
- Metropolis Conference, “Anti-racism Framework for Addressing Being, Becoming, Belonging and Understandings in Rural Communities”, Calgary
- Montreal Behavioral Medicine Centre, “Religious Literacy: A lifelong learning skill” discussion
- Pathways 2 Prosperity conference, “New framework to address racism long-term in rural communities” and “Faith and belief-friendly workplaces in rural Canada: Two pilot initiatives to support employers and employees”, Montreal
- University of Northern British Columbia, Environmental Studies, “Religion and the Environment” workshop series, Prince George, BC



Supporting Rural Employers

Reach: Temiskaming Shores and Area, ON

Duration: Dec 2021—May 2024

Amount funded: 216,500 CAD, for all partners over two years

Funder: The WES Mariam Assefa Fund

Conducted in strong partnership with:



Description: This partnership supported employers, immigrants, and refugees in the Temiskaming Shores & Area Chamber of Commerce region by establishing a faith-related employee resource group (ERG) and a faith-friendly workplace certification for rural employers.

Relevance to religious literacy: The Interbelief ERG (IERG) and “Faith and Belief Friendly” Workplace certification were co-created with partners and locals, focused on promoting understanding about religious, spiritual, and non-religious staff, colleagues, and clients in the workplace.

Needs we addressed:

- Professional development, as most locals we met had not received prior diversity, equity, and inclusion training
- Community building through monthly IERG gatherings over lunch, as well as dialogue and idea sharing during training
- A way for employers to show staff that they welcome and value all identities, supporting retention, client/customer care, and encouraging recruitment in the area

Outcomes:

- 10-monthly IERG sessions, with regular attendance
- 8 individuals/organizations “Faith and Belief Friendly” Certified in the Spring
- 14 completing Fall training
- Opportunity to share project in 4 conference settings



87.5%

“Do you feel more prepared than before to improve or change the way you engage with religion, spirituality and non-religion in your workplace?”

Spring cohort said “Yes” or “Yes, very much”

Next steps:

- Explore additional funding to offer this locally
- Conduct further evaluation of the initiatives
- Seek ways to extend these initiatives beyond Temiskaming Shores



IERG session and local speakers



Certified locals, Spring cohort

Preserving Griot Traditions

Scope: Halifax, Montreal, Toronto, Amber Valley, Vancouver

Duration: Apr 2022-Mar 2024

Amount funded: 150,000 CAD, for all partners over two years

Funder: Canadian Heritage, Ecclesiastical Insurance's Community Impact Grant

Conducted in strong partnership with:



WEST ISLAND
BLACK COMMUNITY
ASSOCIATION

L'ASSOCIATION DE LA
COMMUNAUTÉ NOIRE
DE L'OUEST DE L'ÎLE



Description: This project is creating an intergenerational pan-Canadian online resource to document the influence and role of Black communities in Canada from Afro-Canadian perspectives – a missing patch of Canadian history. We are engaging local Black youth in this process as they interview local Black elders.

Relevance to religious literacy: There is a significant link between Black communities and the local church, economy, and social-culture. In the documentation process, CCRL offers the lens to understand and articulate how churches in 5 cities were or are still a site of religious, social, and political significance.

Needs we are addressing:

- The online resource will share lived histories and experiences from aging Black community members, using modern day griot storytelling – a practice of oral storytelling which is part of African diasporic culture that the Nova Scotian Black communities are familiar with, but many people are losing.
- Documenting the influence of religious sites and communities in Canadian history

Outcomes in development:

- 14 interviews in Africville (Halifax), Hogan's Alley (Vancouver), Montreal, with relationships built in Toronto and Amber Valley (Alberta) for remaining interviews
- Skills development, a sense of identity, and local knowledge as Black youth are guided and coached to interview the local elders
- Resources for local learning

Next steps:

- Website launch
- Explore further funding to include interviews and stories from other regions of Canada



Left: Interviews in progress, near Hogan's Alley (Vancouver)

Right: Ms. Linda Hatley and Corey Ross, near Africville (Halifax)



Right: Karen Diop, Dr. Sabrina Jafraie, Mr. Franz Voltaire, Montreal

Civic Literacy Youth Network

Scope: National

Duration: Apr 2022-Mar 2024

Amount funded: 130,000 CAD, over two years

Funder: Canadian Heritage

Description: The Civic Literacy Youth Network (CLYN) is a pan-Canadian online network and community for youth and young adults (Grade 7 to undergraduates, inclusive). It is facilitated by CCRL educator-researchers with exceptional experience discussing controversial topics and engaging youth. It promotes leadership development through an engagement with diversity and inclusion by encouraging interaction among community groups, skills development, and dialogue that can proactively prevent and intervene against discrimination that happens at the intersection of religion and other identities.

Relevance to religious literacy: Each meeting is centred around a specific principle of religious literacy. Through this intersectional lens, participants have the opportunity to hear guest speakers discuss topics related to religious and racial discrimination and to develop the skills needed to equip them to address these challenges.

Needs we are addressing:

- A space for youth to learn and express their concerns as they are eager for civic change and political activism against social injustices today.
- An opportunity for youth and young adults to talk with peers across Canada who are outside of their typical circles, and discuss contemporary issues related to religious, spiritual, and non-religious views.
- Understanding about the intersection of worldview identities and other aspects of identities, including race and sexual orientation.

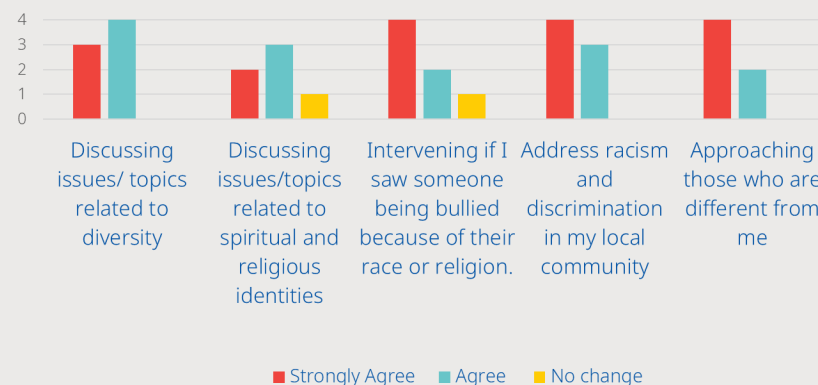
Outcomes (thus far):

- Cohort 1 (2022-2023 school year):
 - 9 participants from five provinces certified in June 2023 (Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and B.C.).
 - Exposure and engagement with 14 CCRL partners, who joined as local and international guest speakers
- Cohort 2 (2023-2024 school year):
 - 3 participants from Cohort 1 asked to return as mentor-junior facilitators to deepen their religious literacy learning and leadership skills, and support Cohort 2
 - 8 participants, thus far

Next steps:

- Explore further funding to continue program into Cohort 3

Now that I have attended all eight sessions, I see that this network has equipped and informed me to become even more comfortable and confident as a leader in:
(June 2023)



Resource to address Racism in Rural Canada

Scope: National

Duration: Apr 2022-Mar 2024

Amount funded: 130,000 CAD, for all partners

Funder: Canadian Race Relations Foundation

Conducted in strong partnership with:



Description: This research and development project aims to create a multi-faceted and intersectional resource that can equip local individuals, groups, and organizations in rural areas in understanding racism's many forms and addressing it long-term.

Relevance to religious literacy: Racism and discrimination is often perceived at face value without recognition of racialization of religion, when religion is connected to racial discrimination and visible differences. CCRL informs the resource design through this lens and by including consideration of spirituality, religion, and non-religion among local (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and newcomer identities. It also ensures engagement with Canada's colonial history that is informed by religious and political leaders, and has shaped local norms.

Needs we addressed:

- No framework currently exists to support rural communities in addressing racism; though this is where resources are often lacking most, local culture is deeply rooted, and Indigenous communities have co-existed in separate ways for generations.
- Creation of a place-based resource to show common sites of discrimination in order to localize solutions, while understanding complexities that pertain to each site.

Outcomes (thus far):

- Surveys and interviews in Strathmore, Alberta and Temiskaming Shores, Ontario
- Direct engagement with tense relations in Strathmore that continues after the first degree murder of Kristian Ayoungman, a 24-year-old Indigenous young adult from Siksika First Nation, which occurred in 2019
- Introduction of resource in two national conferences to gather feedback from municipal and rural leaders

Next steps:

- Complete resource development and seek feedback and input from local community members
- Conduct local meetings to share final resource
- Seek additional funding to further improve resource, if needed, or ways to support municipalities in the implementation of resource

Survey findings that highlight some commonalities in rural communities, connected to key local sites:

Minorities report being regularly targeted by security in stores.
— Local, Temiskaming Shores & Area

I have seen numerous times when Indigenous friends have tried to rent, only to be told nothing was available.
— Local, Strathmore/Wheatland County

Intergenerational and Intercultural Dialogue in Rural Communities

Scope: Kirkland Lake, Ontario

Duration: Dec 2022 – Dec 2023

Amount funded: \$25,000, for all partners

Funder: Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada

Conducted in strong partnership with:



Description: This project supported the Kirkland Lake Multicultural Group (KLMG) in documenting, analyzing, and disseminating information about potential service gaps in their work to address Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action #93 and #94, focused on increasing understanding among newcomers about Canada's colonial history.

Relevance to religious literacy: As a research-focused project, CCRL provided the space to discuss discrimination and hate related to religious and spiritual identities, and a lens that could explore this reality in the analysis process. This lens and understanding is embedded into the final report and presentation as well, which increases engagement and religious literacy understanding overall.

Needs we addressed:

- The KLMG received an Ontario Anti-Hate and Anti-Racism Grant to support its programming and evaluate their work. CCRL and Dr. Crystena Parker-Shandal, CCRL team member and faculty at the University of Waterloo, supported KLMG in achieving their grant and organizational obligations and commitments.
- Created opportunities to listen to locals and discuss ongoing and emerging concerns of discrimination and hate across age groups

Outcomes (thus far):

- Further understanding of dynamics in Kirkland Lake, where CCRL has been working with Keepers of the Circle since 2019
- Further relationship building with local partners and community members that can help deepen collaborations with local partners in the long-term, if they desire

Next steps:

- A report and presentation to local leaders and community members, informing them of local perceptions, concerns, and realities related to various types of discrimination and hate



Kirkland Lake greeting, depicting its history and growth as a gold mining town.



KLMG team and CCRL Executive Director at local Powwow, Sept 2023.

Fee-for-service projects



Client: Canadian Mental Health Association—Toronto

Reach: Toronto staff and select clients

Duration: April 2022—May 2023

Conducted in strong partnership with:



Description: The CMHA-Toronto is a non-profit that offers social services and programs to promote positive mental health. It engaged project partners to support Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) efforts for staff.

Relevance to promoting religious literacy: CCRL ensured that spiritual well-being was included, and promoted an understanding of religious, spiritual, and non-religious identities, and their intersectionalities.

Needs we addressed:

- Include religious literacy and spiritual well-being in relation to mental well-being—a gap in many discussions related to mental health
- Policy and program analysis, engagement with 200+ staff across 18 sites via surveys and small focus groups, and training with a religious literacy lens



Client/Partner: Rainbow Faith & Freedom (RFF) and Egale Canada

Reach: TBD

Duration: May—July 2023

Description: RFF is a Canadian non-profit that works internationally to address religious-based discrimination towards LGBTI (lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-intersex) individuals and communities, and improve the human and equality rights of LGBTI people everywhere. Egale Canada is a non-profit that addresses homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and all other forms of oppression so that every person can achieve their full potential, free from hatred and bias. Together, they designed a resource (with various LGBTI religious leaders) to help LGBTI organizations understand the challenges faced by queer people of faith. They asked CCRL to review the full document.

Relevance to promoting religious literacy: CCRL reviewed the resource with a religious literacy lens, mindful of the diversity that exists among various individuals and communities within each religious group. We also provided feedback and suggestions towards a one-pager in the document that included an understanding of religious literacy overall.

Needs we addressed:

- Increased engagement and understanding of individuals and communities who are LGBTI and religious.

Our Finances

CCRL is a registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency, BN 752785089RR0001

We are funded predominantly through grants-based projects.

- 99% from grant funding or fee-for-service engagements
- 1% from individual donations



Financial Overview

	July 1, 2022— June 30, 2023	July 1, 2021— June 30, 2022
REVENUE		
Program income	\$319,981	\$63,750
Donations In	\$3,464	\$0
Total Revenue	\$323,445	\$63,750
EXPENSES		
Subcontractor fees (CCRL and partners)	\$248,235	\$43,430
Project costs (honoraria, supplies, etc.)	\$18,657	\$11,831
Administration	\$7,358	\$4,513
Marketing & Comm	\$5,797	\$2,217
Conference/Meetings	\$302	\$75
Professional Development	\$0	\$0
Donations out	\$0	\$0
Total Expenses	\$280,352	\$62,066
Excess of Revenues over Expenses	\$43,092	\$1,683
Net assets, beginning of year	\$11,912	\$10,228
Net assets, end of year	\$55,004*	\$11,912

*Assets include project funding that was given from funder in full at the beginning of each year or project, which has yet to be distributed to CCRL team or project partners.

Donations in this table only include those that were made before July 2023.

Accounting has been reviewed by D.O. Chartered Professional Accountants.

Thank you

CCRL is a collaborative team that works with others.



This work is not possible without the dedication and commitment from our team of subject matter experts, our supportive Board of Directors, Advisors, and Friends of CCRL.

Furthermore, we thoroughly and humbly recognize that religious literacy is one of many skills for life-long learning and simply one part of the solution—albeit an important one.

To approach the topics, issues, and gaps we see in society, we know the right partners are needed to offer a thoughtful, informed, and sustainable solution. For that, we are extremely grateful to our project partners and funders. They see the value of religious literacy and are eager to work together.

CCRL Team

Dr. W. Y. Alice Chan
 Dr. Crystena Parker-Shandal
 Dr. Erin Reid
 Dr. Hicham Tiflati
 Joseph Ching
 Dr. Margie Patrick
 Dr. Sabrina Jafralie
 Dr. Sivane Hirsch

Board Members

Dr. Siebren Miedema, Interim Chair
 Dr. John Valk, Interim Vice Chair
 Dr. Kathryn Chan, Secretary
 Dr. Bryan Hillis
 Dr. Dwight Newman
 Rabbi Ellen Greenspan
 Dr. Lorna Turnbull
 Dr. Olakunle Okingbola

Advisors

Uzma Majeed
 Dr. Robert Jackson

Friends of CCRL

Dr. Blair Stonechild
 Dr. Shauna Van Praagh

Donors

Arthur Lui
 Brenda Ikuta
 Corey Reid, in honour of Erin Reid
 David Major
 Denise Zhong
 Erin Reid
 Franz Volker Grefeinhagen
 Jennie Ferris
 Shauna Van Praagh
 The Social Good Company
 Willie Chey, in honour of Raymond Chan

Funding Agencies



Community



DIALOGUE JUDÉO-CHRÉTIEN DE MONTRÉAL
 CHRISTIAN JEWISH DIALOGUE OF MONTREAL

Partners



L'ASSOCIATION DE LA
 COMMUNAUTÉ NOIRE
 DE L'OUEST DE L'ÎLE



December 2023

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A registered charity with the Canada Revenue Agency, BN 752785089RR0001

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