

CENTRE FOR CIVIC RELIGIOUS LITERACY  
LE CENTRE DE LITTÉRATIE RELIGIEUSE CIVIQUE

# Annual Report

2025



# Message from our Board Chair



“It is the best of times and the worst of times”. This was the opening line of Charles Dickens’ famous book *A Tale of Two Cities*, written in 1859. In many ways we also live in the best of times but also the worst of times. In Canada and many parts of the world many of us experience freedom, prosperity, peace, and opportunity. But many others experience the opposite—poverty, conflict, war, imprisonment. How much of this results from conflicting worldviews and religious strife—a hatred, misunderstanding or ignorance of the religious other?

CCRL seeks to promote civic discourse that leads to religious and worldview literacy—to alleviate strife in our society. As you read the 2025 Annual Report, you can see that CCRL has made some significant strides again this year in that direction. It is now celebrating its 7th year of existence, and I am amazed with all that it has accomplished given its size. Special thanks to our Executive Director Alice Chan and the CCRL Team for all their hard work, dedication, and leadership in moving CCRL forward over these 7 years.

Alice and other team members have been involved in a number of events this past year. You can read about these in the latest CCRL Newsletter. Each extends the profile and reach of CCRL. One early goal for 2025 was to increase awareness of CCRL and its work. That was done in part by creating CCRL Chats and attending more conferences. This led to numerous positive responses. What is most encouraging in all of this is listening to what people say when they discover CCRL and what it is doing. They indicate that there is a serious lack of civic discourse, awareness and engagement with those of various religious, spiritual and secular worldview perspectives. CCRL is attempting to change that—one step at a time.

I extend deep thanks and appreciation to our advisors, donors, CCRL team members and CCRL Board members for all their encouraging work, support and trust this past year. May the new year bring many blessings as we embark on civic religious and worldview literacy projects that promote peace and understanding.

**Dr. John Valk**

# Message from our Executive Director



CCRL celebrated its 7th anniversary this year. The number seven is significant for some religious, spiritual, and secular traditions. It can signify tranquility, the end of a cycle, the beginning of another, curiosity, imagination, and fullness.

For example, the Indigenous Seven Generations Principle is mindful of the seven generations before and the seven to come. Some Hindus recognize 7-year cycles within the 4 *ashramas* (life phases). The *Torah* (first 5 books of the Hebrew bible) instructs Jews to let the land lie fallow every 7th year.

As we reflect on our 7th year, there is much to be thankful for. The Civic Literacy Youth Network (now Hope Network) has been revised to engage the changing dynamics of young Canadians. Work to continue the “Faith and Belief Friendly Workplace” training in rural communities persists with local partners. Our project on spirituality among adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities deepens as we hear from family members. For the first time ever, we offered teacher training to Quebec teachers in the midst of Quebec’s ongoing conversations about secularism.

We also initiated CCRL Chats and contributed to a variety of smaller engagements and conferences. This included an invitation to attend the Inter-Parliamentarian Union’s 2nd International Conference on Interfaith Dialogue—unique because the IPU predates the League of Nations and the United Nations as the oldest convening body of international parliamentarians. It included a sitting with the Pope where he shared a message to parliamentarians and world leaders about protecting the common good of all communities.

We experienced transitions this year as well. Co-Founder Dr. Sabrina Jafralie moved from CCRL to focus on other commitments towards social change. Board members Gail Fayerman and Dr. Lorna Turnbull did too. Dr. Bryan Hillis, another committed Board member, passed away from cancer. Each individual shaped CCRL’s foundation. We are sad to see them go but we thank them for their heart and lasting contributions.

We welcomed three new team members and confirmed our accountant, creative, website, and IT leads, all in addition to our existing and incredible subject matter experts and Board of Directors. Our new strategic plan for 2025–2028 (on p.4 of this report) further strengthens our foundation.

As we stepped into 2025, we planned for the long-term, to stay focused, be alert, adaptable, and to care for one another in our unpredictable times. Despite challenges and losses this year, I can say that we achieved our goals. The varied experiences and conversations in 2025 paves strong steps for us and a sense that we are stepping into a new cycle of CCRL’s history.

We foresee economic challenges for non-profits and Canadians in 2026. Funding will be even more competitive. But our goal is to reach more Canadians with our vision and mission.

Thank you for your invaluable support and partnership.

**Dr. W. Y. Alice Chan**

# Our New Strategic Plan

This year marked the end of our 2022–2025 strategic plan.

We have carved three goals to guide our growth step-by-step in the coming years (July 2025 to June 2028):

**1** Support organizations, sectors, regions, etc. in their efforts to use religious literacy towards greater social inclusivity

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**2** Strengthen program evaluation to document the impact of religious literacy towards policy and long-term change

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**3** Sustain financial growth through diversified funding

Each overarching goal will be supported by annual goals in six strategic areas:

- Partnerships
- Programs/Services
- Marketing & Communications
- Finance
- Human Resources
- Governance

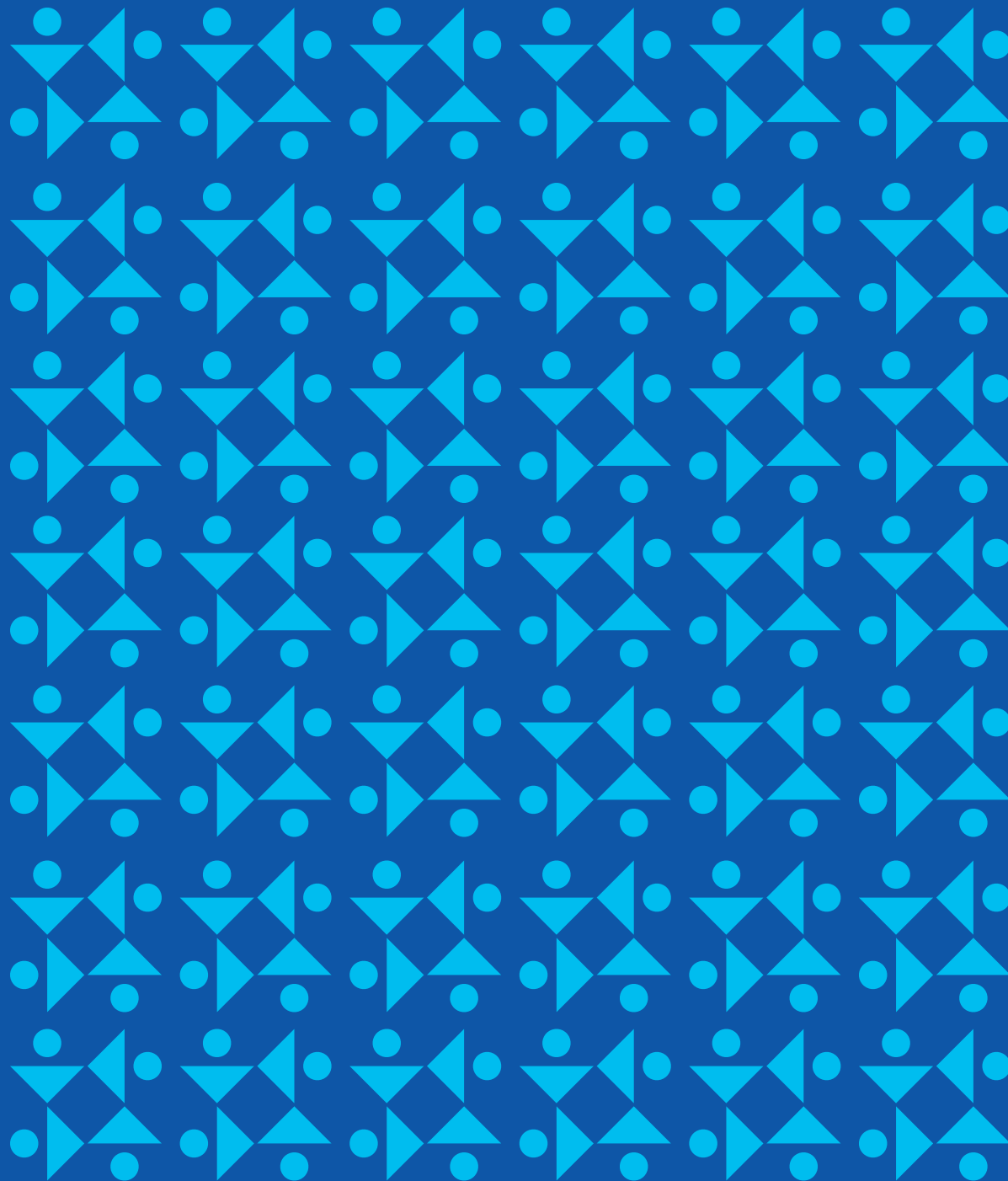
Our pathway to change will be informed by these annual goals and guided by our three-pronged approach of collaboration in strong partnership to offer evidence-based, context-specific initiatives.

These next three years are exceptionally significant as they will carry us into our 10-year anniversary in November 2028.

Please join us to promote religious literacy in sectors and regions of Canada. Let's help people live, work, and engage better together.

# Our Projects

Religious literacy is a practical knowledge and skill set that can help us live, work, and engage better together. Our projects reflect the various ways to make this happen.



# Spirituality among Adult Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

## Reach

Metro Vancouver,  
British Columbia

## Duration

January 2024–  
December 2026

## Amount funded

\$110,000 (2025)

## Funders

Redleaf Foundation and  
posAbilities

## Conducted in strong partnership with

posAbilities, Burnaby  
Association for Community  
Inclusion, Kinsight, Curiko  
(all organizations in the  
community living sector)

This multi-phase exploratory project began in 2024. Last year, we began phases one and two. This year, we completed phase two and began phase three. Each phase revolved around a specific question:

**Phase 1:** How do agencies (and their staff) understand and enact their role in spiritual literacy and support?

**Phase 2:** How do adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) learn about and engage in spirituality?

**Phase 3:** What are thoughts, experiences, observations, and feelings among family members of adults with IDD who engage with spirituality?

## Relevance to religious literacy

All people are capable of engaging with their spiritual life and may have interest in developing their religious literacy alongside their spiritual development (religious or secular). Our literature review, surveyed agency staff, and focus group participants all confirmed this. However, surveyed staff said that they “don’t have adequate training about how to talk about religion and spirituality,” that “there are insufficient guidelines around how to engage with spirituality,” and that “family members [of adults with IDD] or colleagues could have a problem with [discussion or support of spiritual interests/development].”

## Needs we are addressing

To bridge the gap between staff skills, community needs, and family tensions, we spoke with six adults with IDD in one-on-one interviews and two meetings to co-analyze findings. We are also inviting family members to complete surveys and participate in focus groups to learn more.

The project partners approached CCRL to engage with this research after observing that the sector focuses primarily on supporting the external needs of adults with IDD, e.g. skill-building, activities, and recreation, and typically ignores the internal needs. This project aims to bridge that gap by understanding the perspectives, questions, and concerns of staff and people served. As is our practice, findings will be shared directly with staff, agencies, adults with IDD, and locals in Metro Vancouver. In doing so, our ongoing project provides Canadian voices in a discussion mostly informed by US-based studies. It also foregrounds the voices of adults with IDD, which tend to be overshadowed by other voices.

## INSPIRATION



**Janette Bundic** participated in Curiko activations about spirituality and was inspired to make this video and loved learning from Tanya. She shared this video with us so that more people can learn about spirituality.

## Outcomes thus far

- Video of phase one findings to partners and agency staff
- Online presentation of phase one findings at the Canadian Health & Well-being in Developmental Disabilities, February 2025
- Six one-on-one interviews with adults with IDD
- Three sense-making groups with Curiko facilitators who engage with adults with IDD
- Two co-analysis meeting with five adults with IDD
- Video presentation that shared phase two findings with 68 locals at the Burnaby Together Community Forum, May 2025, Burnaby
- Presentation of phase two findings at the Canadian Society of Studies in Religion, June 2025, Toronto
- Initial survey distribution to family members of adults with IDD

## Next steps

- Continued survey distribution to family members of adults with IDD
- Focus groups with family members
- Peer-reviewed publications of findings from phase two and three
- Share findings in relevant blogs and newsletter
- Video presentation to staff and adults with IDD in Metro Vancouver and beyond

This ongoing project presents new insights at each turn. We are excited for the new knowledge and relationships that will develop in 2026 and how we can share this information with others towards long-term sustainable change.



### left to right

Emcee Sara Shaw (Burnaby Neighbourhood House), Monique Nielson (posAbilities), Tanya Auton (Curiko), and Janette Bundic (Curiko participant and adult with IDD). Panelists at the Burnaby Together Community Forum (May 2025, Burnaby), co-presenting project findings with Alice Chan and Margie Patrick on pre-recorded video.

## PUBLISHED FINDINGS



A summary of Phase 1 and its findings were published and available online in the *Journal of Disability & Religion*.

[READ HERE](#) 



If you would like a copy of the video, conference presentation, or reports of findings, contact [info@ccri-clrc.ca](mailto:info@ccri-clrc.ca)

## WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED SO FAR

“I think I describe myself as spiritual because it encompasses so much of what I experience around God or spirituality. Rather than saying religious, but I sometimes have said I’m religious.”

**AVA\***  
PARTICIPANT WITH IDD

“Spirituality is getting in touch with your inner self. We know that out there, there is another force that I know that we’re often awe struck about or in wonderment about, regarding like, the beautification of nature, like the animals, the patterns, designs of things we see in life, like the colour, just like the whole overall of questioning beauty all around us or, or curious about like, sounds and noise. And I say that because sensory is important too, for people have to touch, feel if they can’t hear, or maybe they can’t see. But like I said, it’s relevant to all people with disabilities.”

**SANDRA**  
PARTICIPANT WITH IDD

“...the inner girl in me will be happy because I wanted to do this for a long time and I didn’t know how, so it’s cool...I’ve always wanted to like do this but I didn’t know how or I didn’t have the chance or the, the way to really to put my story to connect- ,...like connecting to myself, connecting with (others), and how to help others so this is great to finally get the chance”

**ELLE\***  
PARTICIPANT WITH IDD

“[Many people] think that people with a neurodivergent brain don’t have an understanding enough...and not grasping it, but actually, we may be understanding at a different level than they realize”

**CO-ANALYST**  
FEB. 12, 2025

\*Pseudonyms

# Professional Development for Western Quebec School Board Teachers

## Reach

Western Quebec School Board (WQSB), QC

## Duration

February–November 2025

## Amount funded

Pro-bono

## Funders

Centre for the Study of Learning and Performance (CSLP), Concordia University

## Conducted in strong partnership with CIVIX, CSLP

This one-day professional development aimed to support English-speaking teachers from the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB) who are teaching the Culture & Citizenship Quebec (CCQ) curriculum. This new program was established in 2024 with a variety of content requirements but with limited English resources from the Quebec Ministry of Education. With a common focus on promoting civic education and dialogue skills, the project partners and CCRL decided to survey teachers and explore how we can help them teach the course more effectively.

## Relevance to religious literacy

As religious literacy includes the understanding of religious, spiritual, and secular perspectives, it is a skill that supports the required skills development in various parts of the curriculum about culture and citizenship education in Quebec. Religious literacy supports educators in discussing Quebec as a secular state that continues to develop its application of *laïcité* (a form of French secularism) in its policies and institutions, ways to understand the Indigenous peoples and history (a requirement in secondary school curriculum), and how to include and discuss religious identities and culture in the elementary curriculum, though it does not mention religion explicitly. Our five principles of religious literacy relate to each curriculum expectation and can help teachers engage with the depth and breadth of each discussion.

In 2024, we published an article that discussed the CCQ and religious literacy in greater depth: Chan, W. Y. A., Hirsch, S., & Tiflati, H. (2024). [“The Relevancy of Religious Literacy in Social Studies Curricula: Quebec’s CCQ as a Case Study.”](#) *Religions*, 15(9), 1046.

## Needs we are addressing

CCRL and our partners surveyed English and French speaking Quebec teachers in Spring 2025. Survey responses showed a difference between English and French teachers, where 46% of English respondents said that “there are no (PD) opportunities I know about” compared to 16% of French respondents. As a result, we decided to support English speaking teachers first. Qualitative survey responses showed a desire for support and resources about democratic dialogue and ways to discuss gender, sexuality, and religion in class.





Alice Chan (left) and Hicham Tiflati (right) presenting our workshop to teachers at the Western Quebec School Board head office, Gatineau, Quebec.

### Outcomes thus far

- 183 survey respondents:  
104 English; 79 French
- 21 teachers on PD day
- 6 teachers attended our workshop

Anecdotal feedback about the day:

“Best PD I’ve had in years”

“PD that treats us as professionals”

More details about the day are published by the CSLP [here](#).

### Next steps

- Continue conversations with the partners and WQSB to extend the PD Day or offer it to other educators in the school board
- Continue conversations with WQSB teachers who reached out to learn more about religious literacy

Project partners and CCRL aim to continue this PD where possible in the new year. Videos and resources from this one-day PD have been documented so that it can be shared easily with others in the future.

If you or others you know are interested in this PD or something similar, please contact [info@ccrl-clrc.ca](mailto:info@ccrl-clrc.ca).

## CHALLENGES TEACHERS ARE FACING

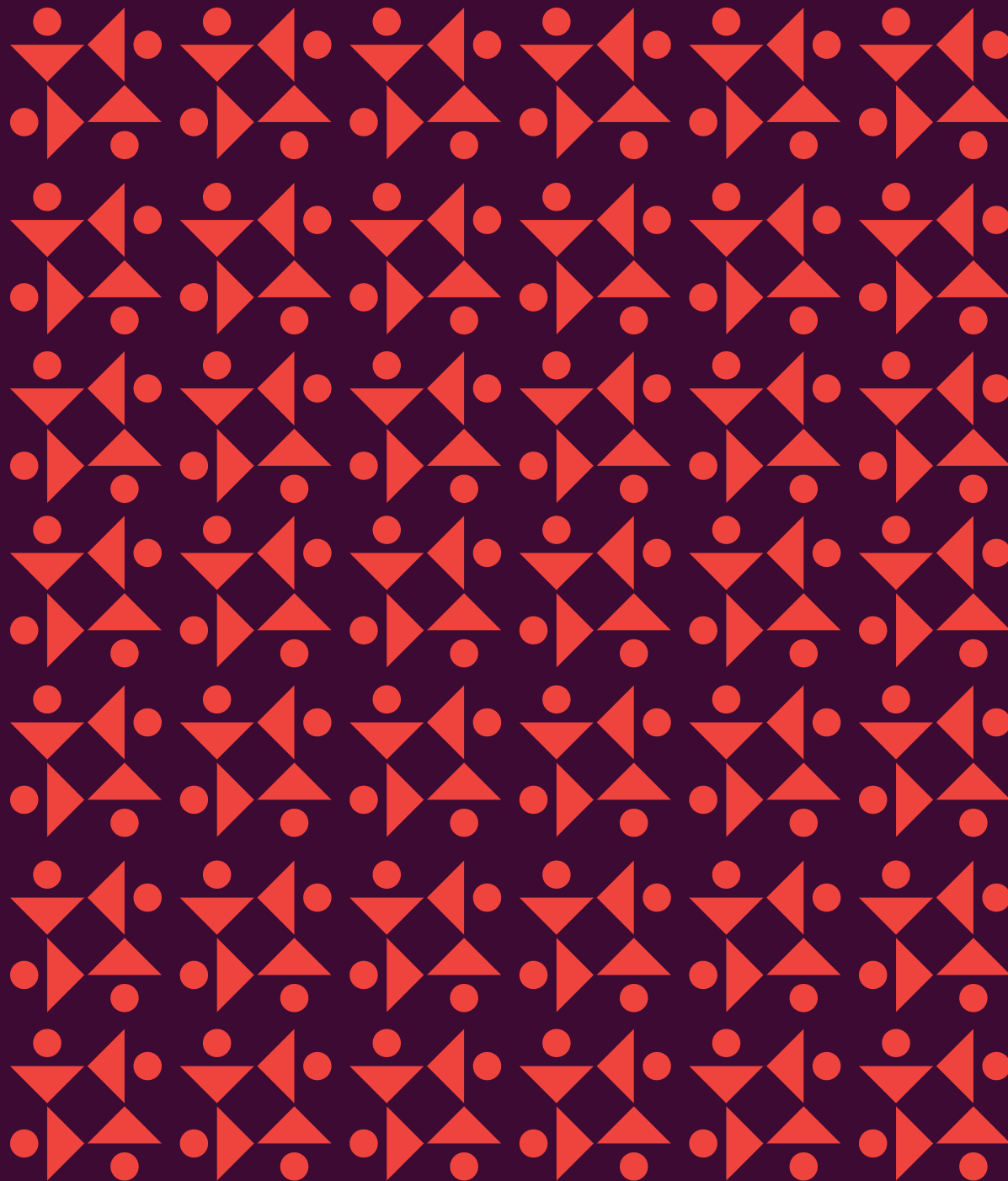
“My vice-principal told me not to teach these topics to my students because there were some parents that might react badly and complain...”

“Many students in my school are quite comfortable saying that LGBTQ students are ‘sinners’ or that trans or gay students are ‘faking it’. Those opinions make other children feel unwelcome at the minimum and more likely make them feel unsafe.”

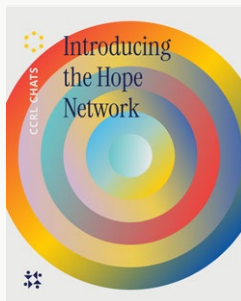
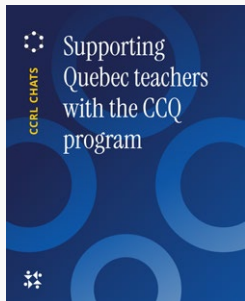
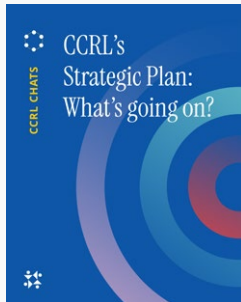
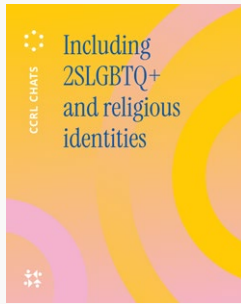
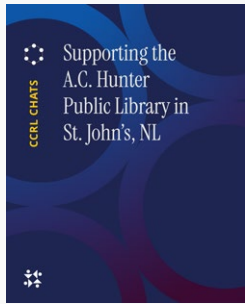
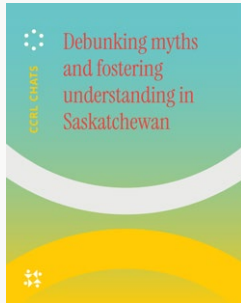
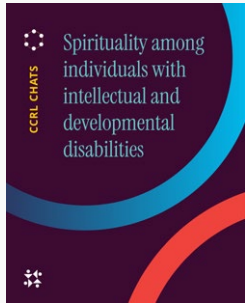
“Another problem is that some parents think that we are indoctrinating their children to woke ideologies...”

“I also feel very ill-equipped to lead discussions...”

# Our Reach and Impact



# CCRL Chats



This February, we initiated CCRL Chats as an opportunity to gather partners, friends, and the public to learn about CCRL and religious literacy through informal conversations.

Each month, we heard updates about a current or past project, discussed big topics, or learned from a specialized research area. We discussed questions like:

- What is CCRL doing these days?
- How is religious literacy applied or relevant in this project?
- What is our impact?
- What is on the horizon?

## Observations

- Chats ranged from 5 to 13 attendees, which are small numbers to some but are considerable numbers when we consider the number of organizations and communities represented in each discussion.
- Representatives from at least 3 to 4 provinces attended each session.
- We engaged individuals from 9 of 10 provinces: BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NB, NS, and NL.
- New faces were present at each chat.

This has proven to be an effective means to promote religious literacy, offer an opportunity for attendees to learn from one another, and meet potential partners. We will continue this initiative into 2026.



Thank you to all the incredible partners and friends who co-facilitated a session with us:

**Dr. Abena Boachie**, Social Fabric Institute Inc.  
**Dr. Bonnie Morgan**, Memorial University  
**Doris Wang**, Saskatoon Open Door Society  
**Elaine Flores**, Rural Development Network  
**Dr. Gilles Beauchamp**, Université du Québec à Montréal  
**James Franks**, City of Temiskaming Shores  
**Mehdi Ebrahimpour**, Saskatoon Open Door Society  
**Rammy Bining**, One Light Diversity  
**Sifat Yusuf**, WES Mariam Assefa Fund  
**Soheila Homayed**, Rural Development Network  
**Dr. Willow Anderson**, Social Fabric Institute Inc.



**SIGN-UP** for our mailing list to learn about upcoming session dates and topics.

# Where we work

In addition to our projects, we promote religious literacy through individual or short engagements. This includes conversations, presentations, and workshops with the public, community groups, non-profits, religious leaders, academics, parliamentarians, students, etc. across Canada and other parts of the world.

- 1 | **Burnaby Together Community Forum**  
Burnaby, BC
- 2 | **Metropolis Identities Conference**  
Saskatoon, SK
- 3 | **Our Whole Society Conference**  
Winnipeg, MB
- 4 | **Wilfrid Laurier University, Department of Global Studies,**  
Waterloo, ON
- 5 | **Metropolis Canada Conference**  
Toronto, ON
- 6 | **CCMW's ASPIRE Project (Addressing Barriers to Employment for Muslim Women) Conference**  
Toronto, ON
- 7 | **Outils de Paix/Tools of Peace Lac à l'épaule**  
Montreal, QC
- 8 | **McGill University, Faculty of Education**  
Montreal, QC
- 9 | **Baha'i Canada, Roundtables on Belonging**  
Montreal, QC
- 10 | **Les Journées de la paix /Peace Days Montreal**  
Montreal, QC
- 11 | **Résonance 2025**  
Montreal, QC
- 12 | **L'Association professionnelle en culture et citoyenneté québécoise (APCCQ)**  
Trois-Rivières, QC
- 13 | **Inter-Parliamentary Union 2nd Conference on Interfaith Dialogue**  
Rome, Italy
- 14 | **Canadian Health & Wellbeing in Developmental Disabilities** (online)
- 15 | **CCRL Chats also engaged individuals from BC, AB, SK, MB, ON, QC, NB, NS, and NL** (online)

### CCRL Educators' Toolkit

As a team of educators, we know the dearth of religious literacy resources that are available for Canadian teachers.

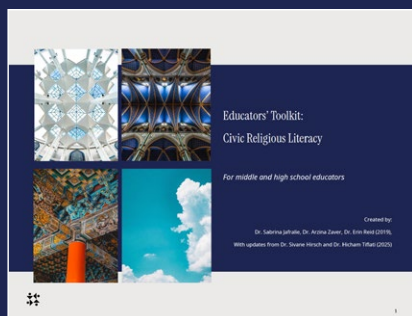
As a result, we created an Educators' Toolkit for middle and high school educators in 2019. This year, we updated the content, including a clearer definition of anti-semitism and Islamophobia.


The toolkit is **free** and available on our website in English and French.

It has five sections:

- **Student-friendly definitions**
- **Addressing Important Topics**
- **Core Competencies and Skills**
- **Sample Scope and Classroom Sequence**
- **Further Reading and Resources**

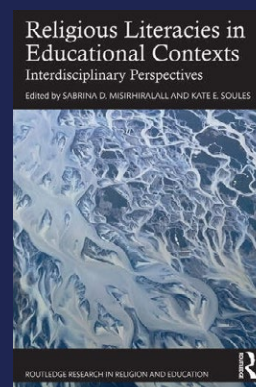
Please share this resource with the teachers in your networks. Very few educators are familiar with religious literacy. We would be happy to support them in their important work.



DOWNLOAD ENGLISH KIT 

DOWNLOAD FRENCH KIT 

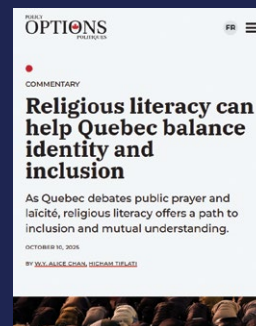
### Publications



#### Religious Literacy in Action: Five Years of Engagement in Canada

Our team publishes project findings, program evaluations, thoughts, and ideas regularly so that we can promote religious literacy further. This year, we were very happy to publish a summary of our first five years!

If you would like a copy of the chapter, please contact [info@ccrl-clrc.ca](mailto:info@ccrl-clrc.ca).



#### Religious literacy can help Quebec balance identity and inclusion

To broaden the public conversation about religious literacy and illustrate how it can be applied in daily life and social conversations, we began publishing op-eds this year as well. Please look out for future articles.

VIEW OUR PUBLICATIONS 

# Financials

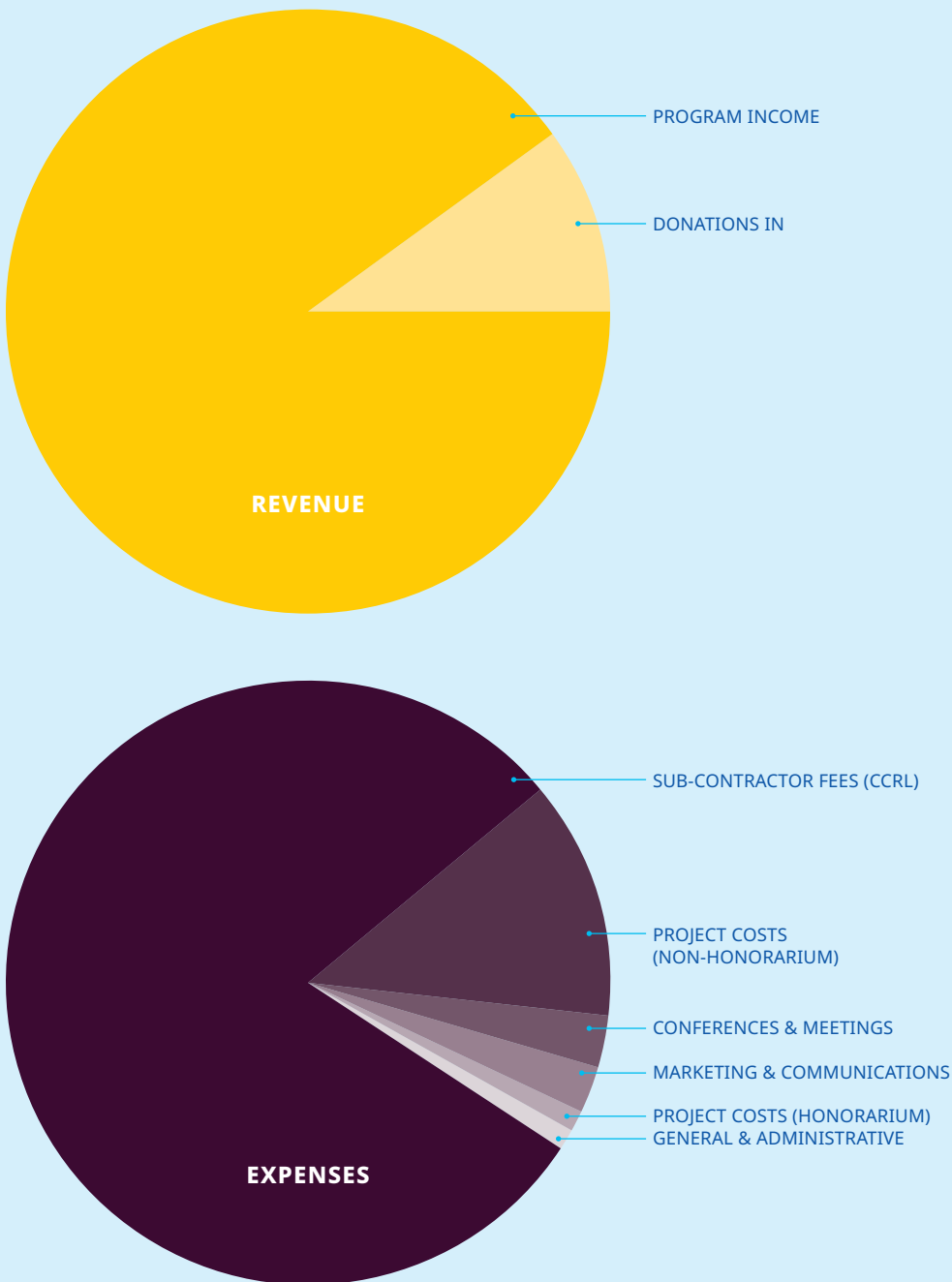
## Revenue

|                      | JULY 1, 2024 –<br>JUNE 30, 2025 | JULY 1, 2023 –<br>JUNE 30, 2024 |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Program income       | \$128,419                       | \$153,745                       |
| Donations in         | \$14,214                        | \$4,703                         |
| <b>Total Revenue</b> | <b>\$142,633</b>                | <b>\$158,448</b>                |

## Expenses

|                                         |                  |                  |
|-----------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Sub-contractor fees (CCRL)              | \$91,755         | \$101,509        |
| Project Costs (Non-Honorarium)          | \$14,618         | \$9,434          |
| Conferences & Meetings                  | \$3,046          | \$295            |
| Marketing & Communications              | \$2,947          | \$3,648          |
| Project Costs (Honorarium)              | \$1,210          | \$12,086         |
| General & Administrative <sup>1</sup>   | \$1,202          | \$15,546         |
| Sub-Contractor Fees (Non-CCRL)          | –                | \$15,196         |
| Donations Out                           | –                | \$400            |
| <b>Total Expenses</b>                   | <b>\$114,779</b> | <b>\$158,114</b> |
| <b>Excess of Revenues over Expenses</b> | <b>\$27,854</b>  | <b>\$334</b>     |
| <b>Net assets (beginning of year)</b>   | <b>\$3,880</b>   | <b>\$3,546</b>   |
| <b>Net assets (end of year)</b>         | <b>\$31,734</b>  | <b>\$3,880</b>   |

<sup>1</sup> General and administrative expenses are for accounting related costs (professional fees and Intuit QuickBooks), banking charges, insurance, and various membership fees and licenses (Zoom, La Maison Cowork, etc.).




# Support Us

CCRL welcomes donations of all kinds to sustain ongoing projects and initiate new ones.

If you would like to explore other ways to support us, please consider the following or contact us to discuss other options.


## Make a pledge

Commit to learning more about religious literacy and putting it into practice in your life and community. You can read the pledge, make the pledge, post it on your socials or print it for your home, office, or community space.

DOWNLOAD PLEDGE 


## Tell others about religious literacy

Tell a friend, family member, colleague, educator, local leader, or another person about religious literacy and its practical approach to help people live, work, and engage better together. It can be as simple as sharing our website.

ABOUT US 


## Join us at CCRL Chats

Share your ideas, perspectives, and experiences with us at our regular CCRL Chats online discussions. These informal sessions are a way for us to share projects and ideas at CCRL. It is also a way for us to learn from you and others. Join our mailing list to learn about upcoming CCRL Chats.

JOIN OUR MAILING LIST 

## Help us learn

Canada is so diverse! Share a story or photo with us about how you are seeing or using religious literacy in your life. We can post it in a newsletter, program, or social media to increase everyone's religious literacy across Canada and beyond. Contact [pr@ccrl-clrc.ca](mailto:pr@ccrl-clrc.ca) to help us learn.

GET IN TOUCH 

## Help us fundraise

Host a [Giving Circle](#) to tell others about us. Organize a delicious bake sale for us. Or, donate proceeds from your next 10 km race, bike-a-thon, hockey game, soccer match, golf tournament, or special birthday celebration, etc. to us. We would be happy to join your event (if possible) to introduce our work and answer questions.

START A FUNDRAISER 

# Thank You

## FUNDERS

CLSP

posAbilities

RedLeaf Foundation

## DONORS

Anonymous

Betty Leung

Elizabeth Chan

Ellen Greenspan

Jennie Ferris

John Valk

Jonathan Tang

Rebecca Wong

Tsz Long Ng

Willie Chey



# Our Team and Partners

## CCRL Team

Dr. W. Y. Alice Chan  
 Dr. Erin Reid  
 Dr. Hicham Tiflati  
 Jennifer Au  
 Joseph Ching  
 Joshua Lee  
 Karol Gabriela Bernal Saenz  
 Dr. Kate Soules  
 Dr. Margie Patrick  
 Dr. Nicholas A. R. Fraser  
 Saima Maheen  
 Sattar Lairy  
 Dr. Sivane Hirsch

## Board Members

Dr. John Valk, Chair  
 Rabbi Ellen Greenspan, Vice Chair  
 Dr. Kathryn Chan, Secretary  
 Dr. Ehaab D. Abdou  
 Dr. Olakunle Okingbola

## Advisors

Dr. Robert Jackson  
 Uzma Majeed

## Friends of CCRL

Arlene Hache  
 Dr. Blair Stonechild  
 Dr. Dwight Newman  
 Dr. Shauna Van Praagh  
 Dr. Siebren Miedema

## Our Partners





**The Centre for Civic Religious Literacy**

2180 rue Sainte-Catherine  
Montreal, QC  
H3H 1M7  
Canada

[info@ccrl-clrc.ca](mailto:info@ccrl-clrc.ca)

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