

Annual Report 2016 - 2017



info **SECTE**
CULT

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CULT

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PRESIDENT AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we look back over the past few years, the need for our services is increasing as reflected by the complex nature of the requests we receive. Sadly, the psychological, physical and financial abuse of people in high demand groups has not diminished. As society continues to be faced with a host of social, political and economic challenges, there is a tendency to want to believe that there is a simple solution to the stresses and problems of everyday life. Since Info-Cult's beginnings, there have been countless numbers of new groups that have emerged claiming to help improve people's lives and make the world a better place to live. Many of these groups are well-meaning and helpful to its members. However, there are a significant number of groups who may start out with the best intentions but soon begin to exploit and manipulate their members in order to achieve their own ends.

Since Info-Cult began serving the community in 1980, we have received tens of thousands of inquiries from friends, families and others concerned about someone in a harmful and extreme group. As the only organization of its kind in Quebec, Info-Cult is an important and vital resource for those looking for information and how to help a loved one involved in a high control group. It is not an easy task. There is no magic solution or simple recipe that we can offer to resolve a problem. However, we are able to provide the necessary assistance that, at the very least, can help reestablish contact and work towards a solution favorable to all parties. Every phone call and face-to face meeting requires a considerable amount of time, but this is what we have been doing since the day Info-Cult opened its doors, and this is what we will continue to do in the future, which is to help all those who reach out to us.

As we enter our 38th year of providing unique and very sought-after services to the public, we want to emphasize once again that what we have accomplished so far, and what we can hope to achieve in the future, is only possible thanks to all the individuals, groups, organizations and institutions that continue to support us in our mission, including the many volunteers, who so kindly offer their time and expertise. We are truly appreciative of all their support.



Carolle Tremblay
President



Mike Kropveld
Executive Director



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1. INFO-CULT

Profile

Info-Cult is one of the leading organizations involved in responding to questions and concerns about cults, new religious movements and related groups and subjects and the only organization of its kind in

Canada. Info-Cult houses one of the largest collections in the world of information in this field and we provide a variety of services in response to individual and community needs.

Objectives

The objective of Info-Cult is to promote the dignity and integrity of the individual, the respect of collective and individual rights, the freedom of thought and expression, and the right of access to information.

Our objectives are:

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

Board of Directors, Members, Volunteers, Staff

Board of Directors

President

Carolle Tremblay
Lawyer
Jolicœur Lacasse Avocats

Secretary

Michael Crelinsten
Executive Director
Jewish Public Library

Treasurer

Dianne Casoni
Full Professor
School of Criminology, University of Montreal

Directors

Jean-Pierre Fafard
Retired Lawyer
Formerly with Sylvestre Fafard Painchaud



Directors

Gilles Guilad Krief
Avocat
Sylvestre Fafard Painchaud

Christophe Nowakowski
Psychiatrist

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

Herschel Segal
Businessman

Executive Director

Mike Kropveld

Members

There are **24** who include former group members, parents, academics, lawyers and mental health professionals who share a common concern about

the “cult” issue and are involved in supporting the activities and services of the organization.

Volunteers

Volunteers play an essential role in Info-Cult’s daily operations. Many people assume that Info-Cult is a large organization with different departments. The reality is Info-Cult operates with a skeleton staff. This impression has come about as a result of the profile Info-Cult has attained and is in large part due to the countless hours that volunteers have dedicated to the organization. There are more than **30** volunteers who donate their time and expertise to our organization.

Volunteers are involved, in policy development and decision making, providing legal advice, publicity, office work, fund-raising, research, public education, helping to organize conferences, cataloguing of new acquisitions to our documentation centre, translation of documents from English to French and French into English, in constructing and maintaining our web site and in a very important area - support to ex-members and families.

Volunteers who are former members play an integral role and we cannot underline enough the time that

they have volunteered to talk with:

- Other former members in need of support;
- Families who were in a time of crisis; and
- The media in search of a former member’s experience.

Volunteers include:

- Professionals (including educators, mental health professionals, lawyers, business professionals, etc.) who recognize the need for Info-Cult and its services.
- Concerned individuals who have taken the time to learn about the issue.
- Individuals who have, or have had a child, sibling, parent or friend involved in a cultic group and understand the harm that such a problem can cause.
- Former members who want to use their experience to alert others to the potential harm that involvement in a group can entail.

Staff

Info-Cult's founder and Executive Director Mike Kropveld was the only full-time staff person, assisted by one part-time contractual employee.

The Executive Director serves on the:

- Board of Directors [since 2009] **International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA)*** and as Chair of the ICSA Conference Committee

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

The Government of Canada: In 1992 he received the 125th Commemorative Medal *in recognition of*

significant contribution to compatriots, community and to Canada.

ICSA: In 2007 he received the HERBERT L. ROSEDALE AWARD *presented in recognition of leadership in the effort to preserve and protect individual freedom.*

* The International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA) founded in 1979, is the leading professional organization in the field. Based in the United States, ICSA is a global network of people concerned about psychological manipulation and abuse in cultic groups, alternative movements, and other environments. (www.icsahome.com)

Decision Making and Funding

Decision Making

The day to day operations and decisions are taken by the Executive Director. On matters that touch on policy and the direction of the center, Info-Cult's Board meets during the course of the year. **Four Board meetings** and a **General Assembly** were

held during the year.

Alternative methods such as conference calls or email are used to reach a consensus on matters that require a rapid decision.

Funding

Info-Cult receives funding from various sources. In **2016-2017**, Info-Cult received its annual grant from the **Quebec Ministry of Health and Social Services**. In addition, discretionary funds were received from our provincial:

- Ministre responsables des Relations canadiennes et de la Francophonie canadienne, leader parlementaire.

Other sources of funding included:

- Individual donors
- Foundations,
- Companies,
- Religious communities and private groups,

Info-Cult is a registered Canadian charity - Revenue Canada No. 125754242 RR0001

History of Community Service

Info-Cult was founded in **1980** under the name **Cult Project** and at the time was under the auspices of the B'nai Brith Hillel Foundation of Montreal. In August **1990**, **Info-Cult** was formed as an independent, bilingual, non-denominational centre run by a Board of Directors concerned by the impact of cult phenomena on our society.

Info-Cult is widely recognized for many of its services and specifically for its expertise in assisting families and individuals affected by cult-related problems and in providing the community at large with objective information on “cults”, “new religious movements” and related groups and subjects. Info-Cult has evolved since its founding and like the groups that it observes and studies has developed and modified its perception and understanding of cult phenomena, which is in turn reflected in the services it provides.

Through the years, there have been numerous events of note. A few selected ones include:

- Since our inception, and again in **2016-2017**, Info-Cult has assisted hundreds of individuals and families looking for help and information.
- 2014 - 2015 The recent global concerns about radicalization, extremism and violence, are what Info-Cult has been dealing with since we began operating in 1980.
- 2012: Info-Cult hosted the *International Cultic Studies Association* Annual Conference in Montreal. This conference is the only one of its kind in the world.
- Prior to December 21, 2012 Info-Cult responded to questions and concerns from the media and families about the “End of the World”.
- 2010 marked 30 years of service to the community. Over that period Info-Cult responded to tens of thousands of requests, detailed in our Statistics section.
- 2009: Info-Cult (www.infocult.org) has been on line for 10 years, providing a wealth of English and French information and is constantly updated.
- Info-Cult in collaboration with two other Montreal organizations organized a 2 day conference at the University of Montreal. ***Du croire à l'extrême et des pratiques sectaires: prendre en compte et intervenir.***
- Info-Cult plays a key role in organizing ICSA international conferences. Since 2009 our Executive Director, who is on the Board of ICSA, has served as Chair of the Conference Committee. In 2012 it was held in Montreal.
- The Publication in 2006 of Info-Cult's book by Mike Kropveld and Marie-Andrée Pelland, **The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function**. an updated English version of ***Le phénomène des***

sectes : l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes published in 2003. The two versions are downloadable from Info-Cult's website at no charge. Production of this book was made possible thanks to a grant from Québec's Ministère des Relations avec les citoyens et de l'Immigration and the English version thanks to the support of Canadian Heritage.

- In 2005 Info-Cult celebrated its 25th Anniversary of public service. A booklet commemorating the event was published and included congratulatory remarks from prominent individuals. The booklet is available on our website.
- 1999: www.infocult.org was launched.
- In the years 1994 and 1995 the world saw and heard about the tragedies related to the Order of the Solar Temple in Canada, Switzerland and France, the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and the Aum Shinri Kyo in Japan. Info-Cult served as an important resource to the media and others for background information about those groups and to assist in providing a context to understanding these tragedies
- Info-Cult released its educational documentary *Beyond the Mirage* in 1994 an original English version of its French version *Au-delà des Mirages* which was launched in 1993

The documentaries were made for the general public, with a special focus on youth, to raise

awareness about the cult phenomenon. The videos have been used as a teaching tool in schools across Canada and the United States

- Also in 1993, Info-Cult submitted a report to a Quebec Parliamentary Commission on "alternative therapies". In its submission concerns were raised about the harm associated with the practices of certain alternative therapies.
- 1991 a bilingual information pamphlet was published by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (R.C.M.P.) in collaboration with Info-Cult. The pamphlet, entitled *Are You Vulnerable?* was distributed throughout Canada.
- In the 1980s different reports were completed, such as in 1987, on cultism in France, funded in part by the *Office Franco-Québécois pour la Jeunesse*; in 1986, on charitable solicitation in Canada, funded by *Consumer and Corporate Affairs Canada* and in the same year on consumer problems related to new religious movements in Quebec, funded by a grant from *l'Office de la Protection du consommateur du Québec*. And in 1982, on cults in the Francophone sector in Montreal.

Testimonials (Selection over the Years)

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! Best,

Bonjour,

Je voulais vous remercier pour notre conversation téléphonique et ces informations. Cela est très apprécié. Je vous ai trouvé très gentil et professionnel. J'ai décidé de ne pas y aller finalement. ..J'ai écouté mon intuition et mes rêves... Je vous remercie. Bonne continuation.

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

Bonjour Mike, je vous écris pour faire un suivi au sujet de mon frère X, finalement tout s'est bien réglé, nous nous sommes parlés et il a raconté pourquoi il avait écrit cette lettre, d'un autre côté nous avons pu lui exprimer ce que nous nous avons vécu (quand je dis nous, je parle surtout de mon père) alors tout est bien qui finit bien. Un gros merci pour vos bonnes paroles données si généreusement. Ce fut très utile.

... Shunning is not a nice practice. This group doesn't blow people up but they promote emotional terrorism. Thanks for your help.

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!

... Vos courriels sont très appréciés. Votre travail contribue à la réflexion : qu'est-ce que la liberté, qu'est-ce que la liberté de religion, qu'est-ce qu'une communauté de foi. Il ne faut jamais faire l'économie de la raison humaine. Merci pour votre travail...Sœur...

Pour l'aide que M. Mike Kropveld m'a apporté il y a quelques années avec une grande compétence, compréhension et aussi pour sa grande ouverture d'esprit. En espérant que ce don puisse aider le moins possible d'autres personnes. J.

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 and has taken up much of my life since April. 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.

A.

Bonjour, J'ai du abandonner la proposition de reportage dont nous avons parlé ...Cependant, merci énormément pour vos explications. Cela m'a beaucoup aidé. Cordialement, Étudiante en Journalisme

Vous n'avez pas idée combien vos conseils me sont précieux. Je les avais tous notés après notre rencontre. C'est vraiment de ce genre de conseils pratiques dont j'avais besoin! Merci encore, M.

Dear Mike, I always "mean" to send you more donations than I do. You'll never know truly how much I appreciate your organization and the work it does. Sincerely, N

Bonjour Mike, J'ai pensé te donner les nouvelles vu que ça fait longtemps qu'on s'est vus. Je suis maintenant certaine de ne plus vouloir être de « X ». Je ne fais pas de démarches pour me dissocier officiellement, mais je 'fade out' comme on dit. Et j'ai commencé à le dire à mon entourage, comme à mes collègues de travail, ma famille et mes amis proches (membres ou non).

...I will tell you that our son is now a practicing psychologist...You advised us...to Stay cool/that it did not sound like he was involved with a cult, and you were right. Best wishes for 2009.

Je quitte mon travail demain après 35 ans de travail au secteur public et para-public. Je dois donc me désabonner de ton service d'information. J'ai beaucoup apprécié les collaborations que nous avons eues au fil des ans. Non seulement ton expertise est unique mais la façon dont tu sais en faire bénéficier le public et les intervenants de tous les secteurs est remarquable. Tes conseils ont toujours été judicieux et ton approche a toujours témoigné d'un grand respect pour les gens que tu as aidés. Ce fut un plaisir de te connaître.

Merci infiniment de m'avoir communiqué l'adresse (courriel) actuelle de Dianne (nom fictif). Cela m'a permis de reprendre contact avec elle. C'est vraiment sympathique pour moi.

I hope all is well for you and Info-Sect. We are busier than ever... too busy really. I just wanted to let you know that we appreciate this news service that you provide. We look at it and utilize/download many of the articles. Thanks so much. Take care, Bob

Je ne puis laisser passer l'occasion de la fin de ce merveilleux colloque des deux derniers jours sans vous remercier d'une façon toute particulière de votre dévouement à organiser cet évènement...J'ai puisé dans ces conférences, des ressources nouvelles de compréhension que je pourrai vulgariser sur le terrain auprès des gens que je connais et à qui j'offre de l'écoute suite à leur passé dans des milieux religieux fermés.

... Je trouve que vous faites un travail en profondeur depuis tant d'années, travail qui agit comme une vague de fond et qui nous mènera un jour pas trop lointain, espérons-le, vers une législation plus éclairée concernant les droits des enfants sur ce sujet très pointu. Mieux équipés, nous pourrons alors éviter à d'innombrables enfants les effets néfastes des expériences en milieux sectaires totalitaires, et par extension mieux accompagner les enfants-adultes qui posent le geste volontaire de quitter de tels milieux. Je suis reparti mieux outillé pour la compréhension des effets et des étapes du parcours psychologique quand il s'agit d'enfants élevés en bas âge dans ces groupes, avec de meilleurs moyens d'intervention et avec une ouverture plus humaine sur des possibilités d'aide pour ceux qui font l'expérience du vécu en milieu sectaire. J'espère avoir encore l'occasion de puiser à votre savoir. Humblement, David

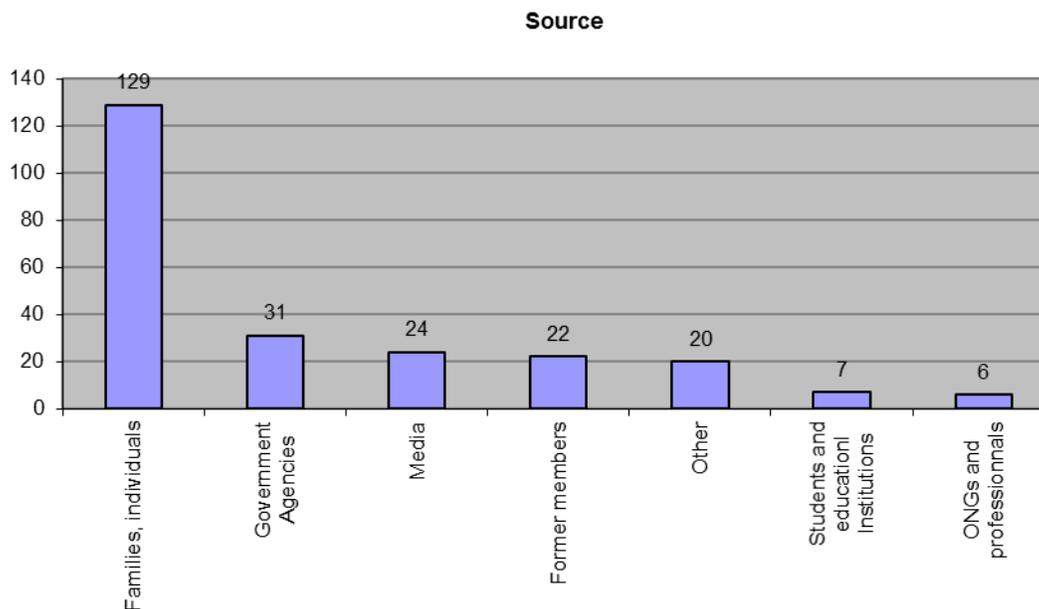
2. STATISTICS

Info-Cult received about **801 new** requests by phone, email and Facebook in **2016-2017**. The total does not include repeat inquiries.

These requests represent; individual and family concerns about a loved one beginning to get involved in a group or presently a member, individuals asking for information about a specific group or looking for general information on the cult phenomenon. Requests from professionals, businesses, non-profits, and other private and governmental institutions relate

to a specific client, case, or situation. The media is quite interested in this issue and requests were for either interviews and/or information. In addition, members of groups (religious and others) contacted us with concerns about their involvement or to provide us with information about their organization.

Breakdown of Tabulated Requests *



* Only for those requests that have been charted. It does not include a breakdown of the numerous email or FACEBOOK requests nor those who call repeated times during the course of a year.

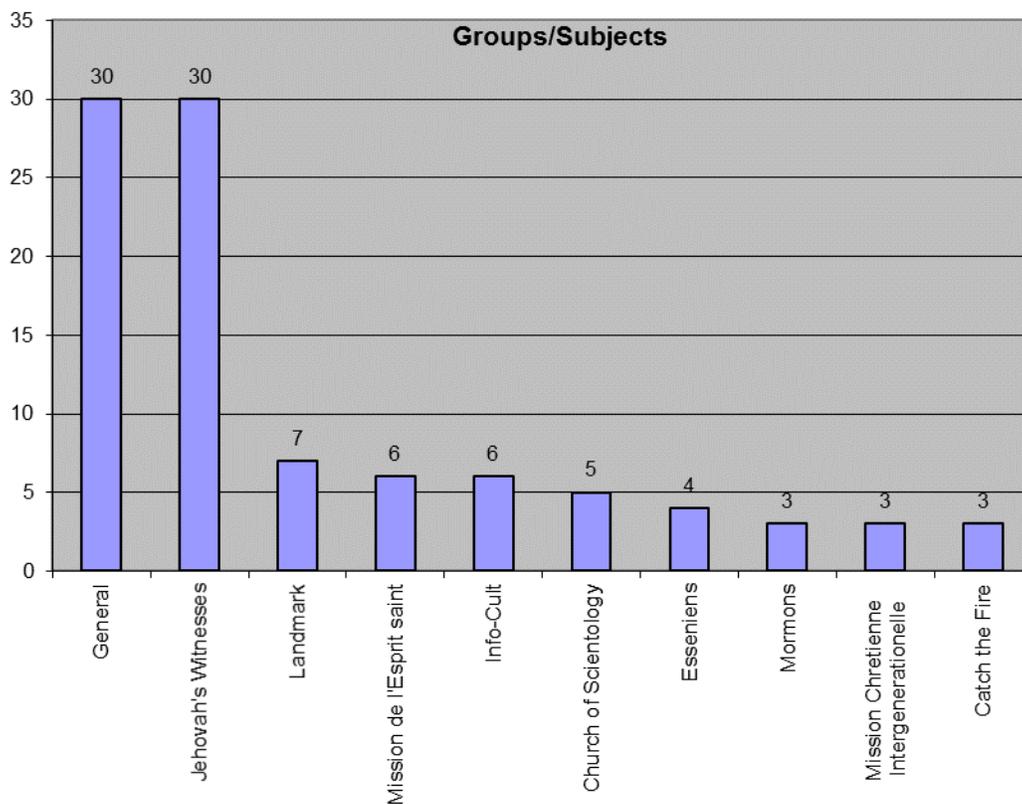
Breakdown of Subjects/Groups**

This year we received requests on about **133** different groups or subjects.

The most requested in **2016 - 2017** are indicated in the graph below. The majority of requests were either for general information on the cult phenomenon or concerned specific family situations.

In most of those cases the name of the group was known but in a number of situations the name was unknown.

For most of the subjects/groups calls were also received from the media.



**The inclusion of a group on this list does not denote that it is a cult only that an inquiry was received about it and does not include a breakdown of all email or FACEBOOK requests.

Info-Cult Statistics: 1980-2016

The lists below provide a snapshot, of three decades and the last six years of the 10 most requested groups or subjects, including the number of requests. Certain groups or subjects appear throughout, while others have changed. There are several reasons to explain this. Firstly, some of the new and marginal groups are more present in Quebec from which we get the most requests, thereby generating more interest or concern. Secondly, specific events or tragedies generate increased media scrutiny and subsequent public interest. For example, Satanism was a hot topic in

the 80s and 90s as a result of numerous newspaper stories, books and TV programs on that subject. As well, since their beginnings, the Raelians have been the focus of countless media stories and exposes, including worldwide media coverage of their claims of having cloned a human being. Following these false claims, the media has been less willing to give the Raelians the publicity it seems to crave. Finally, some groups have ceased to exist over the years, or have changed the ways in which they operate, thus attracting less attention and public interest.

10 Most Requested Subjects/Groups by Decades

1980-1990

- General (1,997)
- Church of Scientology (360)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (225)
- est [The Forum – Landmark Education] (173)
- Unification Church (134)
- Hare Krishna [ISKCON] (85)
- Satanism (82)
- Transcendental Meditation [TM] (51)
- Worldwide Church of God [WWCOG] (48)
- Rajneesh (44)

2000-2010

- General (1,116)
- Info-Secte (393)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (388)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (276)
- Raelians (262)
- Church of Scientology (224)
- Mission de l'Esprit Saint (124)
- Eglise Vie et Reveil (93)
- Eckankar (75)
- Mormons (74)

1990- 2000

- General (3,453)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (1,185)
- Church of Scientology (860)
- Info-Secte (760)
- Raelians (676)
- Satanism (274)
- Eglise Vie et Reveil (274)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (247)
- Mormons (240)
- Rosicrucians (235)

2010-2016 (7 years)

- General (298)
- Jehovah's Witnesses (132)
- Info-Secte (113)
- Church of Scientology (51)
- est [The Forum - Landmark Education] (44)
- Lev Tahor (38)
- Mission de l'Esprit Saint (37)
- Marcel Pontbriand (32)
- 2012 - End of the world (18)
- Apostles of Infinite Love (16)

3. SERVICES, RESOURCES AND ACTIVITIES

Assistance and Support Services

Overview

Most people's first contact with Info-Cult is by phone though the number of requests by email and Facebook is increasing every year. Over the last few years mail requests have diminished to a trickle being replaced by email. The use of the internet reflects the times we live in and we expect its use to grow in the future.

Many of the people contacting us are going through a difficult period, due to a loved-ones dramatic behaviour change on becoming involved in a group, former members who are desperately seeking assistance and support to deal with their experiences and a myriad of other callers that contact us for help. This is our most important service and the one to which we devote the most time.

In 2016-2017 Info-Cult received **801 new** requests for help and information. The requests come from people with different needs and from all walks of life. Among them are:

- **Former group** members who are having problems integrating or reintegrating into society. Increasingly over the past few years more callers include **second generation members**, (those born or raised in a group);
- **Families** who are worrying about a loved-one's involvement in a group (requests come from among others, parents calling about their children, adults about their parents, husbands about their wives or vice versa);
- **Mental health professionals**, lawyers and, law enforcement officers, or community workers seeking our advice about a specific situation or to refer a client;
- **Regular callers** who are in need of someone to talk to when going through a difficult period.

With nearly every caller we provide the added dimension of preventive education by taking the time to exclaim how Info-Cult functions, and our view and position on the issue of "cults". We clarify that we do not simply reply that a group is or isn't a cult. Even though there are extreme groups, the reality is that a simple answer in this area rarely exists. Our position is one that is moderate and balanced based on objective information as well as on our many years of experience in working in this field.

Info-Cult has assisted thousands of families and ex-cult members since 1980 and this year responded to **129 family related concerns and 22 former members**.



Mike Kropveld
Info-Cult Executive Director

Second Generation Former Members

These are former group members who were born or raised in high demand / high control groups. These Second Generation Former Members (SGAs) in contrast to other former members have no previous non-group identity and the problems they face often vary considerably from other former members. More time is required in providing them with support and assistance in helping them integrate into a world that in many cases is

foreign to them. We encourage them to seek professional help in dealing with the emotional, psychological, and financial problems they face. Major obstacles for most former members include: few professionals knowledgeable about their specific predicament, there are costs involved and they have little or no money, they have minimal marketable skills and often no support network.

Missing Persons

We receive calls from families who haven't seen or heard from a family member in months or even years. Their disappearance has been reported to the Police but uncertain of what has happened to their loved-ones and not content just to wait, they call us. These are some of the saddest calls we listen to.

We are seen as a last resort, a family grasping at straws, hoping that maybe their family member who disappeared is alive and in a "cult" and influenced to

cut off all contact with their past. The pain is evident in their voices as they describe to us the events surrounding the person's disappearance. We take the time to listen to them though the majority of these callers have no information that they can provide that would point to a group being involved in their loved ones' disappearance. All we can do is empathize with their situation and indicate that if they do find any details possibly relating to a group they should feel free to contact us again.

Reasonable Accommodation

Over the years our society has become more culturally and religiously diverse. One effect of the changes has been that individuals and groups' religious beliefs and practices have sometimes come into conflict in the workplace, schools, hospitals, etc... Some cases have been widely publicized and on occasion gone before the Supreme Court of Canada.

Info-Cult's approach is to avoid conflict, if possible. Based on our experience and access to information on thousands of religious groups we have provided information and analysis to among others, businesses, landlords, schools, government and government agencies.

Some of the situations we have been asked about include:

- Religious holidays
- Working conditions
- Blood transfusions, vaccinations and other medical questions
- Head gear
- Schooling (public and private)

- Clothing
- Diet
- Behavior

In many situations, our insight helped individuals, businesses, agencies and organizations to resolve their concerns and avoid potential problems.

Radicalization (Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization)

Attacks by terrorists here and abroad have led some to suggest that the process of radicalization is similar to cult recruitment. Some have stated that terrorist groups are cults. Regardless of the label we tag onto a group there is one striking similarity, and that is the violence that is carried out by some groups on individuals and society. For thirty-seven (37) years Info-Cult has been addressing concerns about high control groups commonly referred to as “cults” and to the issue of cultic phenomena in

general. Info-Cult’s focus has been on how and why people join or are recruited and converted to extreme and marginal groups, how these groups function, how they change over time and the role of leaders in these groups. During the past few years we have assisted family and institutions with concerns about adolescents getting involved with extremist ideologies. This year’s 2017 ICSA annual conference which Info-Cult co-organizes has as its theme: *Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization*.

Education and Information Resources

Information for Students and Teachers

The subject of “cults” and “new religious movements” is included in the curriculum of many High Schools, Cegeps and Universities and we receive requests for information from students and teachers. Students are often referred to us and/or our website to obtain information and assistance for school assignments. This is an important step in the development of the study and understanding of how groups (cults, new religious movements and

other related groups) function and their potential impact on individuals and society. We take the time to respond to phone inquiries by students and frequently have students visit our offices. Student projects can range from one page written assignments, audio or video documentary projects to Master’s and Doctoral Theses. Students throughout the year from Montreal as well as from other cities in Quebec have visited our offices.

Educational Programs

Staff and volunteers are invited to provide educational programs and give workshops. Subjects covered include public awareness about cults and new religious movements and workshops on treatment issues for former members.

In 2016 - 2017, programs/presentations/workshops were carried out and included:

- Centre des Aînés du Réseau d'entraide de St.-

Léonard

- Colloque IMM, UQAM - *Comment entre-t-on dans un groupe extrémiste et comment en sortir*
- Dawson College –Cults and New Religious Movements – Montreal
- Université libre de Bruxelles - *La passion sectaire. Connaître et comprendre le sectaire d'hier à aujourd'hui (four sessions)*

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM INFO-CULT AND COLLEAGUES

Over the years Info-Cult staff, board and colleagues have given many presentations and written articles and book chapters. A selection from the past few years are presented here and can be downloaded from our website at:

<http://infosect.freeshell.org/infocult/ICPubs.html>

- Kropveld, M. (2016). *Info-Secte à 35 ans : observations, perspectives et leçons retenues*, Nouvelles d'Info-Secte, No. 37, décembre 2016
- Kropveld, M. (2016). *Info-Cult at 35 : Observations, Insights, and Lessons Learned*, ICSA Today, Volume 7 No. 2. pp. 10-14
- Info-Secte, Rapport sur Lev Tahor, Communiqué de Presse, 13 juillet 2015
- Info-Cult, Report on Lev Tahor, Press Release, July 13, 2015
- CULT AWARENESS MOVEMENT, UNDERSTANDING THE RELIGIOUS LANDSCAPE: THE INFO-SECTE/INFO-CULT PERSPECTIVE An interview with Michael Kropveld, World Religions and Spirituality Forum, Posted 12/29/2015
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Info-Cult's Book

Info-Cult's *The Cult Phenomenon: How Groups Function* was released in 2006. This book is the updated version of our French version, *Le phénomène des sectes : l'étude du fonctionnement des groupes* (2003). Both versions are

downloadable at no charge from our website. The books continue to be a relevant resource in understanding the cult phenomenon which encompasses the emergence of extreme and marginal beliefs and groups



Info-Cult's Videos

The documentaries *Beyond the Mirage* and the original French version *Au-delà des mirages* were produced as a tool to educate students and the

public. Both versions can be downloaded at no cost from our website.



Conferences

ICSA Annual International Conference

In addition to conferences and presentations given by Info-Cult staff and volunteers, **Info-Cult** is one of the principal organizers of the Annual International Cultic Studies Association (ICSA - (www.icsahome.com) Conferences. ICSA conferences and workshops offer practical assistance, research findings, and information on cults, new religious movements and other groups from the leading professional organizations in the field. Attendees and speakers are diverse, including academicians, helping professionals, former group members, current group members, families, clergy, educators, and others.

ICSA Conferences were initially held solely in the United States; however, in response to interest from outside the U.S. conferences have been held in Edmonton; Madrid and Barcelona, Spain; Brussels, Belgium; Philadelphia; Geneva, Switzerland; Washington, D.C., Montreal (2012), Stockholm, and most recently in Dallas (2016).

Working with ICSA has reinforced Info-Cult's belief in the importance of international cooperation. The international representation at these conferences reflects the global nature of this issue and over the years the growing collaboration of individuals and organizations in other countries around the world has strengthened the work we are involved in and has helped to enhance the quality of the information and assistance we are able to provide to those in need. The conferences include forums for the exchange of information, specifically new

approaches in helping individuals and families with someone in a high intensity closed group and in treatment for those who have had a cult-related experience.

Info-Cult's involvement in the organizing of these conferences offers students and professionals from Montreal, the province of Quebec and the rest of the country the opportunity to participate and learn more about this subject and to present their work before an international audience. Info-Cult's involvement has also helped to establish and strengthen our national and international contacts in this area.

Info-Cult's Executive Director has been able to attend international conferences and meetings the past few years thanks to a generous annual donation from an anonymous sponsor.

Info-Cult is again collaborating with ICSA in organizing the 2017 conference in Bordeaux, France. This year's theme is *Cultic Dynamics and Radicalization* and will feature several sessions by experts on radicalization and extremist groups.



2016 ICSA (International Cultic Studies Association) Conference in Dallas, Texas, Dianne Casoni, Info-Cult Board Member, Welcomes participants on behalf of Info-Cult

Participants at ICSA conferences include academics, mental health professional, law enforcement personnel, families, media, members and former group members and the general public.

The conference provides a range of sessions for academics, mental health professionals, families and former members.



Mike Kropveld, Executive Director Info-Cult / Info-Secte, seated on the left, moderating a panel on **Cults and Sex Trafficking**, April 2016



Conference Handbook (Dallas, Texas - 2016)

Meeting with Groups

Since 2009 Info-Cult in conjunction with three European organizations organizes **Meetings with Controversial Groups**. These meetings (participation is by invitation) are centred on topics which encourage discussion with groups often viewed as controversial or “cults” Meetings have taken place on a yearly basis among the participating governmental and non-governmental organizations. **Info-Cult** is the only non-European representative.

The other organizations are **INFORM** (Information Network on Religious Movements) London, United Kingdom – www.inform.ac, **CIAOSN** (Centre d'information et d'avis sur les organisations sectaires nuisibles) Bruxelles, Belgique – <http://www.ciaosn.be/> and **CIC** (Centre Intercantonal d'Information sur les Croyances) Genève, Suisse – www.cic-info.ch, INFORM hosted the 2016 meeting in London and the 2017 meeting will be in Brussels hosted by CIAOSN.

Give But Give Wisely / A Policy for Renting Rooms

Two important Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are posted on our website to encourage people and organizations considering donating to a

cause to *Give but Give Wisely* or for those public and private institutions thinking of renting a room to a group to develop a *Policy*.

Documentation Centre



Info-Cult's documentation centre has acquired a vast and unique quantity of materials on "cults", "new religious movements" and related groups and subjects.

The documentation centre is the largest of its kind in North America and houses, **thousands** of files, more than **1,200** programs on audio/video cassettes, CDs and DVDs, journals, newsletters, government and legal documents, academic reports, journals and thousands of books principally in English and French with a smaller

collection of documents in Spanish, Italian, Japanese, and German. The collection spans critical and group generated information and other materials which are obtained from sources around the world.

Since 1999, new acquisitions of books, government reports, and journals to Info-Cult's documentation centre are listed on our web site with links that provide further information about the materials or access to the entire document.

Over the years our collection, which continues to grow, has become increasingly well known internationally and has attracted visitors to our centre from other countries.

Web Site

Info-Cult's website (www.infocult.org) has been online since 1999 and is regularly updated. The site provides: information about Info-Cult's history and services, advice for those who have a problem, help for those who are thinking about joining a group, general information on the phenomenon of "cults" and "new religious movements", Info-Cult's publications (including our books, conferences, articles, etc.), a large collection of government reports from different countries, a list of upcoming TV programs, conferences and other events.



Our web site provides an invaluable resource for those interested in learning about "cults", "new religious movements" and related subjects and

is visited by tens of thousands every year.

The use of our website by people looking for information on specific groups and on the cult phenomenon in general demonstrates the importance of this service. With its unique collection of information and its easy accessibility across all platforms, our website has been visited by hundreds of thousands of visitors from around the world. The planning, creation and maintenance of the site has been in the very competent hands of Robert Seely and Louis Raphael. Info-Cult is extremely fortunate to have these two dedicated volunteers, who over the years have given thousands of hours of their time and expertise to this very important project. We are extremely grateful for their commitment.

Facebook Page

The idea to start a page came from Isabelle Renaud a member of Info-Cult. She set up our page and has taken on the responsibility of maintaining it.

Isabelle Renaud has been involved with Info-Cult for over a decade. Among her other activities for Info-Cult, Isabelle has translated articles and documents from English to French and from French to English.,

www.facebook.com/infocult/infosecte

Isabelle is also helping to further Info-Cult's mission to educate the public by sharing her own cult experience with students and community groups, in addition to granting media interviews.





Info-Cult on YouTube

Info-Cult's four videos are easily accessible via our YouTube page:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/infosecte>

E-mail information lists (English and French)

To all those who are interested, Info-Cult provides a free and easily available email service whereby they can receive articles and other information on cults, new religious movements and related phenomena, announcements of upcoming conferences, television programs and updates about Info-Cult. On average subscribers who are both lists receive 25 per week.

Newsletter: News from Info-Cult

For **12 years** we have published a newsletter in which we have expressed our views on specific subjects as well as highlighting some of our activities. The newsletter which is published on an irregular basis is

Research Service

This service satisfies the needs of those who are looking for information on a group or subject and are not able to visit our offices.

The information sent on the English and French lists is generally different. There are **348** subscribers on the English list and **235** on the French list. Subscribers include individuals, former members, media, law-enforcement, community and religious groups, professionals (social workers, psychologists, lawyers, etc...).

distributed primarily by email to approximately **four thousand (4,000)** email addresses as well as mailed to selected organizations in the public and private sector and posted on our web site. In **2016–2017** four **(4)** editions were published

Requests are received from the Montreal area as well as from the rest of the province, other parts of Canada and abroad.

Media appearances

Over the years Info-Cult staff, board members and volunteers have given thousands of interviews to national and international television and radio programs and documentaries, or have provided information and interviews for newspaper and

magazine articles. In the past year, Info-Cult staff and board members responded to **24 requests** from the media, for information or for an interview. Below is a **selection** of media in which Info-Cult board and staff have appeared recently and over the past 37 years.

Radio and Television

Radio

As It Happens, C.B.C. Radio
 B.B.C. Radio, England
 C.F.R.A., Ottawa
 C.F.R.B., Toronto
 C.H.R.C., Québec
 C.J.A.D., Montréal
 C.J.F.M., Montréal
 C.K.A.C. Montréal
 C.K.N.W., Vancouver
 C.H.O.I. Québec
 Fastband.com
 Internet Radio Network
 N.T.R., Montréal
 Newsweek Radio
 Q.R.77, Calgary
 Radio Autrichienne
 Radio-Canada International
 Radio France International
 Radio RTBF (Belgium)
 BBC

Print Media

Agence France Presse
 Baltimore Sun
 Boston Globe
 Canoe.com
 Deseret News
 Elle (Malaysia)
 Gazette
 Globe & Mail
 Journal de Montréal
 Journal de Québec
 L'Actualité
 La Presse
 Le Devoir

Le Droit
 Le Figaro
 Le Monde
 Le Nouvelliste
 Le Nouvel Observateur
 Le Québec sceptique
 Le Soleil
 London Daily Telegraph
 Maclean's Magazine
 Miami Herald
 New York Daily News
 New York Times
 Newsweek

Television

Second regard
 Claire Lamarche, TVA
 C.T.V. News, Canada AM, CTV
 Dateline, NBC
 Droit de parole, Radio-Québec
 Enjeux, Radio-Canada
 Fox on Psychology, Fox News, FOX
 Global News
 Independent Satellite News
 Infoman, Radio-Canada
 Légendes urbaines, Canal D
 Match de la vie, TVA
 MAtv
 Montréal ce soir, Radio-Canada
 National News, 5th Estate, CBC
 Newsworld
 National News, CTV
 Sunday Edition, CTV
 TVA Nouvelles
 RDI
 RDI – Les Grands Reportages
 Grand Journal, TQS
 Canal Historia
 Canal D

Ottawa Citizen
 Phnom Penh Post
 Vice Magazine
 Canadian Press
 Québec Science
 Reuters
 The Walrus
 Time
 Toronto Star
 Toronto Sun
 USA Today
 Wall Street Journal
 Western Star

4. COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND NETWORKING

Community Relations

Info-Cult has established contact with many public and private organizations. We have built a network of groups with whom we exchange information, assistance, resources and referrals either on a regular basis or according to the need.

On an ongoing basis Info-Cult receives requests and referrals from a variety of organizations. Info-Cult is also cited as a resource by academic and city libraries, community groups and referral centers, and in books, newsletters and journals. Over the last number of years the internet has played a major role in providing the public with access to resources on cults, new religious movements and related groups and subjects and Info-Cult can be found listed on a range of websites around the world. Selected examples follow:

arrondissement.com
quebec.cioc.ca/
cscapitale.qc.ca/bottindessources/info-secte.htm
quebechebdo.com
recherche.211quebecregions.ca/record/QBC1262?UseEq=on
apavecq.qc.ca/
icsahome.com
ciaosn.be
sectes-info-gemppi.ifrance.com/
awakeningscenter.ca/cults.html
cultinformation.org.uk/
apologeticsindex.org/i00.html
factnet.org/cris_org.htm
einet.net/directory/43487/Cults.htm
victimsofviolence.on.ca/rev2/index.php
ex-cult.org/
dir.yahoo.com/Society_and_Culture/Religion_and_Spirituality/Cults/

mcgill.ca/hssl/collections/links/subject/relstud/cultclinic.org/resources.html
toile.com/search
sciencepresse.qc.ca/cyber-express/286.html
lautrevoix.com/pages/org_organisme.php?orgid=2326
fecris.org
icsahome.com
<http://wrldreels.org/2017/03/13/media-room/>

Here is a selected list of local and regional organizations and groups with whom we have contact or who refer people to us:

- Consumer Protection Offices
- L'Association québécoise Plaidoyer-Victimes
- CLSC throughout the province
- Option-Consommateur
- Youth Protection Departments
- Kids Help Line
- Centre de Référence du Grand Montréal
- Public and Institutionnal Libraries
- Law Enforcement Departments
- Health professionals (psychologists, doctors, social workers, therapists, etc...)
- Community organizations such as consumer groups, youth centres, women shelters, sexual assault centres and crisis intervention centres
- Missing Children's Network
- Quebec Sceptics
- Christian Direction
- Teachers (High School, Cegeps, and Universities)
- Clergy
- Religious and cultural communities (Catholic Community Services, Federation CJA, etc.)
- Shelter for Women and Children victims of conjugal violence
- Ecumenical Center
- Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence (CPRLV)
- Secours-Amitié Estrie

National and International Networking

In addition to contact that Info-Cult maintains with a large number of individuals, agencies and organizations in the province of Quebec we have established relations with individuals, academics, professionals and organizations specializing in the area of cults and new religious movements in the province, across Canada and worldwide. This networking enables Info-Cult to exchange information and to be up to date with the current research, studies and activities in this area.

Some of the many organizations around the world with whom we have contact:

Canada:

- Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire – CEINR - Montreal)

United States

- International Cultic Studies Association – ICSA
- New England Institute of Religious Research – NEIRR
- Centers for Apologetics Research
- Freedom of Mind Resource Center
- Wellspring Retreat and Resource Center

Japan

- Mind Control Research Center
- National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

Australia

- Cult Counselling Australia

- Cult Information & Family Support Inc

Europe

- Information and Advice Center on Harmful Sectarian Organizations – CIAOSN - (Belgium Government centre)
- Human Rights Without Frontiers International – HRWF Int'l – (Belgium)
- Interministerial Mission of Vigilance and Combat against Sectarian Aberrations - MIVILUDES – (French Government centre)
- Centre intercantonal d'information sur les croyances – CIC - Switzerland (government funded)
- Asesoramiento e Informacion sobre Sectas – AIS - Spain (government funded)
- Family Action Information and Resource – FAIR - England
- Information Network Focus on Religious Movements - INFORM - England (partly government funded)
- Cult Information Centre (England)
- European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism - FECRIS – (government funded)
- Bundesstelle für Sektenfragen – (Austrian government office)
- SFRAEM (*Société Française de Recherche et d'Analyse de l'Emprise Mentale*)
- Dialogue Ireland Trust (Ireland)
- Hjälpkällan - Sweden (government funded)
- U.U.T. – Uskontojen Uhrien Tuki Ry - Finland (government funded)