



DEATH AND MOURNING AMONG MIGRANTS INFORMATION GUIDE

Laura Chéron-Leboeuf, Lilyane Rachédi and Catherine Montgomery, with the collaboration of Fabienne Siche

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INTRODUCTION

As globalization and migration continue to change the sociodemographic face of modern society, life events such as death and bereavement in a context of migration have become important issues. In Quebec, however, aside from a few groundbreaking events¹, the topic of death and, particularly, mourning and bereavement among immigrants has not been sufficiently documented. The few studies and research reviewed for this guide were mainly in the area of health (from a medical, nursing or palliative perspective), aimed at adapting support practices in a context of diversity (ethnic, cultural, linguistic, etc.).

The contents of this guide are based on the results of a study funded by the SSHRC under the *Programme jeunes chercheurs* (Rachédi, Mongeau, Le Gall, Montgomery, Boisvert and Vatz-Laaroussi, *Deuils des immigrants: pratiques rituelles funéraires et réseaux transnationaux*, 2013-2016) and a review of local and international literature (Rachédi, Montgomery and Halsouet, 2016).

The objective of the SSHRC project, which we will call the “*Deuils*” study, was to gain a better understanding of the mourning and bereavement experience of immigrants living in Greater Montreal. The sample consisted of 21 bereaved individuals—11 men and 10 women (7 Christians, 9 Muslims and 5 Hindus)—and 14 key informants: 11 men and 3 women. Of the informants, 4 were Christian, 7, Muslim and 2, Hindu. One informant worked in the funeral home business.

When the results of our study based on the stories of the people we met were disseminated to people working in health and social services, we realized there was a need for information on the subjects of death and mourning. The need for knowledge in this area was clearly expressed by professionals working with this population, and the

1 These include the following conferences and seminars: CEETUM (Centre d'études ethniques des universités montréalaises), *Pluralité religieuse: enjeux sociaux, politiques et juridiques*, study day on death and end-of-life care, March 11, 2016. LERARS (Laboratoire d'expertise et de recherche en anthropologie, rituels et symbolique), *La mort en son temps regards croisés sur la temporalité des pratiques du mourir, de la mort et du deuil*, Montreal, May 9-10, 2013. ACFAS (Association francophone pour le savoir) congress, *La figure méconnue de celles et ceux qui accompagnent la fin de la vie: les proches aidants et les intervenants professionnels*, Laflamme, D. (dir.), Montreal, May 13, 2014. CERII (Chaire d'enseignement et de recherches interethniques et interculturels), *La mort musulmane en contexte d'immigration et d'islam minoritaire: pratiques, normes, revendications, « accommodements » au Québec et ailleurs en Occident*, Chicoutimi, April 26-27, 2010.

bereaved individuals and key informants with whom we spoke deplored the lack of information on resources available to them in terms of both practical steps to be taken and psychological support.

In addition to filling in the gaps noted during the literature review, this guide attempts to provide a more complete explanation of immigrants' grieving processes and identify existing resources available to them.

This guide has been designed to be a practical, easy-to-use tool for professionals in the medical and social services sectors, but it may also be useful for funeral homes, religious associations, managers and civil society actors—in short, for anyone interested in knowing more about the death and mourning experience in migrant populations. The information provided is far from exhaustive: our goal is to encourage readers to become informed, to raise awareness and to promote reflection on the subject, thus contributing to the dissemination of knowledge.

The guide is divided into three sections:

- I. A summary of what is known about death and mourning among migrants, including an overview of the religious and funeral rites and rituals practised by different cultures and religions.
- II. A description of the norms and legislation that currently govern death and the preparation of bodies in Quebec and Canada.
- III. A list of resources: information on places of worship, consulates and pertinent publications, concluding with a modest selection of novels and films on death and mourning among migrants.

The first two sections include excerpts from personal accounts obtained during the *Deuils* study, as well as four interviews with bereaved immigrants that eloquently illustrate certain observations drawn from grey literature. These interviews are presented in narrative form.

Finally, boxed texts are scattered throughout the Guide. Those labelled “To learn more” provide references to pertinent works or articles, while the “Did you know...?” boxes offer additional information of interest on various subjects.

We hope you enjoy this Guide.

IMPORTANT FACTS ABOUT DEATH, MOURNING AND MIGRATION

Mourning is a natural process that occurs following the loss of a loved one, consisting of a number of adaptation reactions related to the loss. The experience of grief following death is an inevitable, universal experience that touches all those who were close to the deceased person, regardless of their religion or social/cultural context. There are certain aspects of the grieving process of immigrants, however, that are different from those experienced by members of the host society. Immigrants are faced with different challenges, particularly in connection with practising their funeral rites within the Canadian judicial system and having to go through the grieving process a long way from home. Their responses to those challenges, however, have resulted in the emergence of a wide range of resources and strategies for mutual aid that we will present at the end of this section.

1. DEATH, MOURNING AND MIGRATION: ADDITIONAL CHALLENGES

Immigrants going through the bereavement process have further challenges to cope with in addition to their grief. One of the most significant is the **impossibility of practising certain significant rituals**, which can make the mourning process even more difficult. Moreover, as migrants, **they are already caught up in a series of multiple losses and bereavements** (related to their new environment, cultural framework, family ties, socio-professional status, etc.). The loss of a loved one must be included in a migratory process that is full of manifold challenges and new experiences, requiring a great deal of energy. Having to go through such important stages in the life cycle as illness and death without the physical presence of close family and friends adds an additional burden to these losses (Rachédi and Halsouet, 2015).

Conception², whose father passed away in Columbia, clearly expresses the significance of receiving news of the death of a loved one back home for an immigrant:

“Of course, there was the impossibility of travel and having to go through everything at a distance, which was made worse by the fact that we were newcomers in the process of adapting to a new life. When it happened, we hadn’t yet learned to speak French, so we had to continue our studies. It was really difficult: our feelings of powerlessness and grief made it hard for us to concentrate on learning a new language. Whenever I remembered my recent loss, I would start to cry. I had to leave the classroom on several occasions.”

Immigrants whose loved one has died in their country of origin and who want to return in order to participate in the funeral and burial rites are faced with other obstacles, not the least of which is having to decide whether they can afford the cost of the trip, both financially and in terms of their professional and family responsibilities. For immigrants whose status is precarious (refugees or asylum-seekers, for example), leaving the country is simply not an option. If, for any of these reasons, an immigrant is unable to return to his or her native country to participate in the funeral rites, the entire grieving process may be affected. In addition to the sadness related to loss, he or she may experience guilt and a longer period of denial.

The majority of immigrants are therefore forced to mourn from a distance. Montgomery and others (2010) identify two types of mourning from a distance:

- Following illness or death occurring in Quebec, but far from family (who are in the country of origin or dispersed around the globe)
- Following the illness or death of a loved one who stayed in the country of origin or migrated to another country.

Béatriz, born in Columbia, tells of her difficulties in dealing with the illness and death of her mother who had remained in Columbia:

2 To respect the privacy of the people we interviewed, all names used here are fictitious. Interview content has been freely translated from French into English.

Business is more important than feelings

My name is Béatriz. I came to Canada for the first time in 1991 as a tourist, then returned to Columbia, where I was married in 1993, the same year I immigrated with my husband. My son was born here in 1996. Since then, his father and I separated and I have a new partner. I have family and friends all over the world. Here in Toronto, I have two cousins, a man and a woman. I also have an aunt in Ontario. I am close to my brothers and sisters, as well as to my step-father. Most of them are still in Columbia, but one of my brothers lives in Venezuela. I also have an aunt living in Italy and a girlfriend living in Germany. I am quite close to them, even though they are far away. I have a lot of friends in Columbia and some here, especially in connection with my work with the elderly.

Since I have been living here in Canada, I have had to cope with the deaths of many people who were close to me. Several of my friends were killed during the violence in Columbia. My half-brother, my step-father's son, was kidnapped. In 2000, I also lost my grandmother. The hardest death for me, however, was my mother's. She died of pancreatic cancer in August 2014, a year after it was diagnosed. I spent a lot of time with her during the last year of her life. I travelled between Canada and Columbia seven times in one year, once staying with my mother for three months with my son. During his summer holidays, I left him in Columbia with my family so that I could come back and fulfill my obligations in Canada. I hadn't even been back for 10 days when my sisters called me to tell me that my mother had decided it was time for her to go. I immediately flew back, and my mother died two hours following my return to the family home.

My mother was an extremely important person for me and for the whole family. She was a leader. I was happy to be able to spend her last months with her and attend the funeral with all my family and friends. It was a very emotional and moving event. But now I have other problems. I had a lot of major expenses and the institution I worked for decided to let me go because of my frequent absences. I also had to pay to change my son's airline ticket, even if it was because of a death and I had the death certificate with me. I realized that no one in Columbia lives the way they do here.

Here, business concerns seem to be much more important than people's feelings. The death of a loved one isn't considered to be a valid reason for a long absence, and you lose your job. I was also penalized by the Quebec government because I couldn't look after my income taxes while I was looking after my mother.

The loss and loneliness we feel here, being far away from our families, from the people who really understand our pain, and the differences between the cultures and the way of seeing things—all those things are very difficult when we are mourning the death of someone close to us. For example, in Columbia, we always commemorate the one-month anniversary of someone's death. All the family and friends get together to attend mass and visit the cemetery. I wasn't able to be part of this ceremony, which I found very hard. It was on a Saturday. Everyone was there and I was here, all by myself. My son was with his father. I would have liked to be able to talk to someone who could understand me and I felt very isolated. I went to a class but the teacher soon realized how unhappy I was and let me go home early. I bought lots of flowers and a bottle of wine, and I answered all the calls and messages I had received from family and friends. I cried a lot. In the end, it was my partner who consoled me. Religion has also played an important role. My mother was a devout Catholic and so am I. So, at 10:00 in the evening, I said my own little prayer in my house filled with flowers.

The thing that has given me strength is God and my faith. I also brought back a little pillow that I had given my mother for her chemotherapy sessions. That pillow was like amulet that made me feel close to her. Whenever I have a headache, the pillow seems to relieve my pain. The last months I spent with her were so important, both for her and for me. Whenever I feel sad, I think of what she said: "I love you. Thank you for being here with me." Then I feel better. I remember that I had a Columbian friend who was waiting for his refugee status to be approved and couldn't leave the country. During that time, his parents and his brother all died. Since he couldn't go home, he suffered a great deal. He told me that I was lucky to be able to be with my mother and look after her, even if I went into a lot of debt.

A part of me hopes that other immigrants who have to go through a similar grieving process see things that way. But another part of me would like to see the host society give more moral support to bereaved people and make it easier for them to be with their loved ones. It's not normal that some people can't go back and be with those they love. I'd like to organize a demonstration or something that would make people aware of this situation so that they could try and change things.

When a loved one dies in the host country, **immigrants may be faced with legal and administrative obstacles that prevent them from carrying out certain funeral rites**. Since failure to respect ritual funeral practices can affect the grieving process, these additional difficulties can also make the process more complex. Different beliefs and religions naturally have different rituals for preparing a body after death. An overview of the various beliefs and rituals related to death and mourning as practised by six religions—Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Sikhism—is provided on pages 13-14.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Oxford Dictionary defines a ritual as “a religious or solemn ceremony consisting of a series of actions performed according to a prescribed order...especially one characteristic of a particular religion or Church.” Rituals surrounding death first developed outside of any religious or institutional framework. The invention of the tomb goes back almost 100,000 years (Buissonière, 2009).

1.1 RELIGIOUS AND FUNERAL RITES: PROVIDING SUPPORT FOR THE LIVING

Funeral rituals evolved in response to the rupture in the social fabric caused by death that was perceived as a **threat** (Buissonière, 2009). They serve several purposes: although they were initially intended to prepare the dying and the dead for the next life, they are also largely focused on providing comfort for those who mourn (Thomas, 2003). The grieving process can be affected by the degree to which ritual funeral practices—cultural or religious—are correctly observed.

Since death is part of a specific cultural framework, the rituals that surround the final moments of life and the preparation of the body often determine the fate of the deceased (Droz and Froidevaux, 2002). **The concept of the “good death” is not just a medical phenomenon; it varies based on religion and culture. Having a “good death” is primarily related to the rituals and religious beliefs and the conditions that will ensure the deceased’s safe passage into the afterlife** (Causton, 2012). Failure to respect prescribed funeral practices can sometimes cause the “death” of the deceased by denying him or her access to a hypothetical life after death (Droz and Froidevaux, 2002, p. 5), transforming the deceased into an evil spirit destined to haunt the living. In Guinea, for example, the deceased will not become a protective spirit unless the required rituals have been fully carried out. For some communities, the idea of a “good death” means maintaining ties with one’s place of origin (Saraiva and Mapril, 2013). Different beliefs surrounding the conception of death have a significant influence on all aspects of funeral rituals: the final moments of life, preparing the body for burial, funeral rites and commemorative ceremonies (Droz and Froidevaux, 2002). It is therefore important to understand how different religions view death and their funeral rituals.

1.2 A FEW EXAMPLES OF RITUALS PRACTISED BY DIFFERENT RELIGIONS

It is important to understand that there is not a single standard vision for each religion. **Our goal is not to perpetuate stereotypes, but to provide an overview of the diversity of beliefs, religious rituals and practices based on different faiths and geographical, cultural and social contexts.** Two people of the same religion who come from different countries may not necessarily practise the same rituals or have the same vision of their religious beliefs. Moreover, certain circumstances such as the age of the deceased or cause of death can have an influence on funeral rituals, even within the same culture. Other factors, such as the migratory process or generational differences, can affect individuals’ relationship to their religion or adherence to funeral rituals. On the following pages, we present six of the world’s major religions’ concept of death, end-of-life rituals, beliefs regarding the afterlife and preparation of the body of the deceased.

TO LEARN MORE

Buissière (2009); Causton (2012); Droz and Froidevaux (2002); Saraiva and Mapril (2013); Thomas (2003).

TO LEARN MORE

Aggoun (2006); Bacqué and others (1997); Causton (2012); Dimé and Fall (2011); Droz and Froidevaux (2002); Gaudet (2011); Lestage and Raulin (2012); Rachédi and others (2010); Repos Saint-François-d’Assise (2007); Thomas (1985).



CHRISTIANITY

Christians believe in eternal life after death. During the period prior to death, they prepare by asking for God's forgiveness, seeking reconciliation with those with whom they had differences, or requesting a final confession of their sins. The forgiveness of sins is usually granted by a minister or priest in the last moments of life (when possible). Christian funeral traditions vary depending on the denomination (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican or Orthodox), country and cultural community of the deceased. For example, cremation is authorized by Catholics and Protestants, but forbidden for members of the Orthodox church. Members of the church are usually buried in a Christian cemetery.



ISLAM

For Muslims, death is seen as the will of God (Allah), an integral part of his ordained cycle of birth, death and resurrection. Excessive displays of emotion may be seen as a failure to accept death.

During the final moments of life, the dying must turn their eyes to Mecca and raise their index finger while reciting or hearing the profession of faith, or shahada. Muslims are traditionally buried on the day of their death, with their face turned toward Mecca. Preparing the body for burial is an elaborate ritual that must be carried out by a person of the same sex. Married couples may be an exception to this rule, as it is permitted for a widower to carry out the rite for his wife and vice versa. It is important for Muslims to be interred in a Muslim cemetery, as they must be buried alongside others of their faith.



JUDAISM

The Jewish faith holds that life is a gift of God that only He can give and take away. Death is therefore seen as a stage in the cycle of life. Since respect for life and the integrity of the body are of primary importance in Judaism, nothing must be done to aggravate the state of the dying person or hasten his or her death. Since it is important for believers to be at their loved ones' side at the end of their life, they will usually suspend their activities to accompany them as they breathe their last.

Jewish funeral rituals and preparation for burial are carried out by the *Chevra Kadisha* ("sacred society"). The members of this group are responsible for all necessary preparations to ensure a proper funeral: ritual washing, dressing the body in white shrouds and placing it in the casket. When burial occurs outside of Israel, the Chevra Kadisha places earth from Israel in the casket. According to Jewish tradition, the funeral is held at the cemetery, never at the synagogue, as the dead body is considered to be impure. In this religion, the grave is the place where the essence of a human being is celebrated. Burial is therefore a symbolic act that reflects the identity as well as the spiritual dimension of the deceased.



BUDDHISM

Buddhism is a set of doctrines, ideologies and practices that differ around the world. All practitioners agree, however, is that since death is no more than a simple transformation from one state to another, it must be welcomed with calm and serenity. It is a natural, inevitable process that enhances spiritual practice.

Funeral rituals, which vary a great deal depending on the Buddhist school and place of origin, are intended to help the deceased person on his or her voyage, show family respect and prevent an unfortunate future rebirth for the consciousness. The concepts of voyage and rebirth are fundamental, as Buddhists will have several lives and deaths that are the reflection of their actions.



HINDUISM

Hinduism is one of the many religious traditions based on a series of sacred texts, oral traditions, rituals and practices. One of the beliefs shared by these religions is that death is just one of the normal, universal stages in the cycle of life. Hindus believe in reincarnation, that the soul and the body are inter-dependent and of equal worth. They therefore prepare for death as for an essential life transition. Hindus divide life into four stages: childhood, adolescence, adulthood and old age (also called student, household-er, hermit and wandering ascetic). The death rituals and funeral rites depend on which stage of life the deceased has reached.

Traditionally, the dead body is cremated on an outdoor pyre, set alight by the eldest son. The ashes of the deceased are generally scattered over the Ganges or a nearby watercourse.



SIKHISM

The fundamental principle of Sikhism is that all human beings are equal, regardless of sex, race, age or religion.

All baptized persons, or 10% of the Sikh population, are required to uphold the five articles of the faith.

Sikhs believe in reincarnation based on an individual's actions in present and past lives (karma). It is the moral worth of a person's actions that determines in which form the soul will be reborn. For Sikhs, death and sleep are two representations of the same state; they see death as a long sleep, and sleep as a temporary death. The faithful will always strive to ensure peaceful surroundings for the dying, free from loud expressions of grief or other noise.

After death, the family looks after washing the body of the deceased, often using yogurt as a cleansing agent. The body is then taken to the home so that family and friends can pay their final respects. According to Sikh tradition, the bodies of the dead are always cremated, with the exception of newborns or very young children, who are buried.

The information in this section gives us an idea of the diversity of religious beliefs surrounding death and the beliefs of what constitutes a "good death" and appropriate funeral rites. For migrants living in a new country, however, these rites and rituals must be transformed to comply with the socio-judicial requirements of the host country.

TO LEARN MORE

Barou (2005); Mezzouj (2005); Montgomery and others (2010); Moreras and Tarrés (2012); Rachédi and Halsouet (2015); Rachédi and others (2010); Saraiva and Mapril (2013). See also the video “*Chez nous les morts ne sont pas morts*” on the SHERPA website.

1.3 WHEN DEATH OCCURS IN A MIGRATORY CONTEXT: CHOOSING A BURIAL SITE AND TRANSFORMING RITUAL PRACTICES

Another challenge faced by bereaved immigrants is the choice to inter the deceased in the host country or repatriate the remains for burial in the country of origin. Some authors even view this decision as an indication of an immigrant’s integration/non-integration into the host society, using the term “rootedness” to qualify immigrants who choose to bury their deceased in their new country. Several factors can influence the choice of burial site: family influence (from relatives in the country of origin and children born in the host country), religious consideration (fear of failing to respect religious funeral rites in the host society), or attachment to the country of origin. The administrative, financial and legal obstacles can be extremely onerous, even prohibitive, however, for immigrant families who wish to repatriate the body of a loved one who has died in the host country.

As mentioned earlier, immigrants’ traditions surrounding grieving, funeral rites and disposal of the body can be different from those practised in Quebec (see p.13-14). Certain constraints and administrative and legal requirements of the host country can prevent immigrants from carrying out their religious rituals in their entirety. **In spite of the legal context, however, immigrants whose religious practices are different from those of the host society have developed strategies to preserve their beliefs and traditions as much as possible, even if it means transforming certain funeral rituals when a loved one dies in their new country. These strategies are usually related to preparing the body for burial and the conditions of burial.**

Grieving relatives of the deceased can be very creative in their attempts to comply with their traditions as closely as possible, resulting in what has been called a “*bricolage des rituels*” (Petit, 2005)—an adaptation, or bricolage, of rituals. As the term suggested, this consists in adjusting, modifying and sometimes relocating funeral rituals in the host society or country of origin. In Quebec, these rituals must be viewed in a context of secularism. Secularism is the result of the desire of the State to free itself from any religious control. According to Parent (2011), the four principles of secularism are separation of the Church and the State, neutrality of the State, freedom of expression (which includes freedom of belief) and citizen equality. Although the version of secularism applied in Quebec is far from rigid, there are no provisions for the death of immigrants living in the province. Legislation governing death and preparation of the body of the deceased still reflects Canada’s Judaeo-Christian heritage and does not allow for religious diversity.

The death of the *other* (the immigrant) crystallizes the challenges associated with managing different religious approaches to preparing the body, its fate after death (symbols, beliefs, representations, etc.), regulation of burial sites (for example, cemeteries and requests for confessional burial ground, purchase of portions of land from funeral industries), as well as those faced by organizations and health and social services.

The SSHRC study by Rachédi and others (2013-2016) described, specifically in the Quebec context, many instances of adapting ritual practices to the legal framework of the host country, resulting in truly intercultural constructions or “bricolages.” Different forms of adaptation correspond to different “types” of bereaved immigrants, each with specific consequences for the host society. We have identified three types of adaptations which we will describe in this section:

- forced adaptation or renunciation
- cultural hybridization (“*adaptations métissées*”)
- adaptation in continuity with the customs of the host society.

Narayan, a Nepalese-Bhutanese, explains the funeral rituals practised by Hindus and how he carried out those rituals in Quebec when his father died in Nepal:

Thirteen days of mourning

I was born and raised in Bhutan, but we had to leave for Nepal in 1992. I lived in Nepal until 2010, when I immigrated to Canada with my wife and two sons, who were seven and twelve at the time. My family lives in different parts of the world. I have one sister and eight brothers, all of whom live in the United States except for one of my brothers who lives in Denmark. My mother died when I was younger, and my father died just a few years ago. My wife's parents are still in Nepal.

When my father died in 2011, we had been here for only 10 months. He was 80 years old when he had a bad fall and died two weeks later. Four of my brothers were at his deathbed in Nepal. Everything happened very quickly. On the day he died, one of my brothers called me with the news. It was very hard because I wanted to be with my father. I wanted to go back home, but it wasn't possible—the paperwork was very complicated and we didn't have enough money. My sister and brothers who weren't in Nepal couldn't go home either. Since we couldn't come together in one place, we decided to carry out the rituals in several places at the same time.

We are of the Hindu faith, and our funeral rites last for 13 days. They begin with the cremation of the body, then we place the ashes in a river or other watercourse while conducting various rituals and prayers. Then, the whole family gathers together in one house and doesn't come out until the thirteenth day. We stay together and pray together. There are different prayers for each day, getting longer and longer every day. On the twelfth and thirteenth day, the prayers last almost all day. During those 13 days, the male family member who was closest to the deceased must shave his head, and we all wear no more clothing than is required to preserve our modesty. We eat food we have prepared ourselves only once a day, and refrain from using salt⁴. The priest comes every day to pray, and at the end of the 13 days we thank him by offering him gifts and a cow, the symbol of Shiva. In our family's case, since we were geographically dispersed, we couldn't do all that exactly, and we couldn't do it together. But we did what we could, as required by our religion. My brothers in Nepal looked after the actual funeral rites. My father was cremated, and his ashes were scattered in a river near his home. Then, my brothers and my sister and I all carried out the mourning ritual with our own families.

My wife accompanied me in the rituals. Here in Sherbrooke, there is a pandit, or Indian priest. He followed all the rituals with us. We also received support from the Nepalese-Bhutanese community. Since we couldn't go out for 13 days, several people helped us by doing the shopping, making meals,

⁴ Since salt comes from the sea, it is considered to be contaminated by all the cremated remains carried down by the rivers. Refraining from eating salt is therefore a symbolic gesture.

looking after the children, and so on. They also helped us financially, because it costs a lot of money to do all that. At the end of the mourning period, we are expected to organize a big feast to thank everyone. Before we began the rituals, I went into a kind of depression because I knew we would need a lot of money to respect all the rites, and I didn't have any. I also thought that I would have to do everything all by myself, and I didn't know how I could do that without leaving the house. I had only been in Canada for 10 months, and I felt very isolated. But, in the end, people helped us a lot. I don't know how we could have done it otherwise. The financial aspect of funerals and mourning is a real obstacle for many immigrants who have lost loved ones. The people helping us also called the French language school to explain why my wife and I couldn't come to class. My brother in Denmark and brothers and sister in the United States were also able to carry out the rituals in their homes. The only thing we didn't do was offer the pandit a cow as a sign of our gratitude. You can't really do that here...

What helped me during the period of mourning were the rituals and the support I received from the community. Just being able to communicate with my family on the telephone and through Internet messaging and talk with my friends and the Nepalese-Bhutanese community here did me a lot of good. We were in contact with a community organization in Sherbrooke, but we didn't ask for help from them or any other organizations during that time. We didn't know who to ask for help with the mourning process.

I know that it isn't always easy for outsiders to understand how important the 13 days of mourning are for us, and that it is something that has to be done as a family. When we told the people in charge of the French language school that I would be absent in order to carry out the mourning rituals, they asked that my wife come to class anyway since it was my father who had died, not hers. But my wife was my strongest support; we were equals in that mourning process. It was important that she be there with me. It would have been good if people at the school had been more aware of this mourning ritual—they would have better understood what we were going through at that time.

Every year, on the anniversary of my father's passing, we have a ritual ceremony to commemorate his death. I have a treasured photograph of him that I use every year for this ceremony. It's the only thing I have from him, and each of my brothers and sister has one, too.

Everyone dies one day; it's a cycle. Keeping objects isn't what's important. What's important is to remember the person, and rituals are very helpful for that. If I die here, I don't want my body to be taken back to Nepal. It wouldn't be necessary. I could be cremated here, and my ashes could be scattered in a watercourse here just as well. It would be important to me, however, that my sons respect the 13-day mourning ritual.

ADAPTATIONS, CONSTRAINTS AND RENUNCIATIONS

Certain immigrants view any transformation of their ritual practices as a constraint, and thus experience them in sorrow. Abdul Rafi, a key informant from the Muslim community, told us that according to the tenets of Islam, it is forbidden to defile the body of a deceased person in any way, whether by dissection, removal of tissues or organs or even transplant. The autopsies required in certain cases can therefore be highly distressing for bereaved immigrants, who become critical of such “non-negotiable” adaptations. Another key informant explained that, at the time of burial, the head of the deceased must face the east. Although this has great significance, the family of the deceased has little control over the organization of the cemetery (Zivadin, Christian priest). This informant also told us that although some cemeteries allow families to choose a burial site facing east, this is unfortunately not always the case, particularly outside of urban areas. These “forced” renunciations reinforce immigrants’ desire to preserve the ritual practices of one’s homeland and the desire to demand they be accepted by the host society.

CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION (ADAPTATIONS MÉTISSÉES)

Other transformations can be seen as necessary and acceptable by immigrants. This is the case for Muslims, for example, who, since they cannot be buried directly in the ground as required by Muslim tradition, choose to place a ball of earth under the right cheek of the deceased. Certain strategies have also been introduced for Hindus as well.

To symbolically preserve the role of the eldest son in lighting the funeral pyre, he may be offered the possibility of pressing the button that ignites the incinerator. Also, instead of scattering the ashes of the deceased in the Ganges, some Hindus will carry out this ritual in a nearby river. Narayan explains the situation in Quebec:

“We’ll try to do it here. If we believe that the river is holy, or ‘Ganga,’ we can carry out all the required activities in a river right here in Saint-Jérôme. It’s not important to me. Every river is sacred, or ‘Ganga.’ But if it’s possible to go to the actual river Ganges, that’s even better.”
(Narayan, Nepalese-Bhutanese, Hindu)

This type of cultural hybridization is integrated into the mourning process of immigrants who are prepared to adapt their practices to the context of the host society.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Certain changes are simply the result of influences by the host society. This has happened in the Muslim cemetery in Bobigny, France, where such phrases as “We will never forget you” have begun to appear on tombstones. These allegorical expressions of mourning are generally unknown in Islam (Alaoui, 2012). Similar changes have also been seen in some of Montreal’s Islamic cemeteries (Dimé and others, 2011; Milot and others, 2011), as well as in the Fuenjirola cemetery in Spain.

ADAPTATIONS CONSISTENT WITH THE HOST SOCIETY

Sometimes changes to traditional funeral rituals can be seen as opportunities, as was the case with a Muslim mother from the former Yugoslavia who lost her daughter. Here in Canada, she was able to cremate her daughter and keep the urn containing her ashes at home, which was a comfort to her in her grief. This woman was happy to realize that the laws in her new country allowed her to make a choice that would have been forbidden in her native country (Rachédi and others, 2015). This mother explains:

“We chose cremation because we had already lost one child who had been all alone in another country. We didn’t want that to happen again. We’re here now, but who knows what could happen tomorrow? We could move, or go back to our native country... so having the urn with us means that, whatever happens, our daughter will be with us.”

Although the mother was criticized by certain people in her community, she was very happy to have been able to make the choice she did.

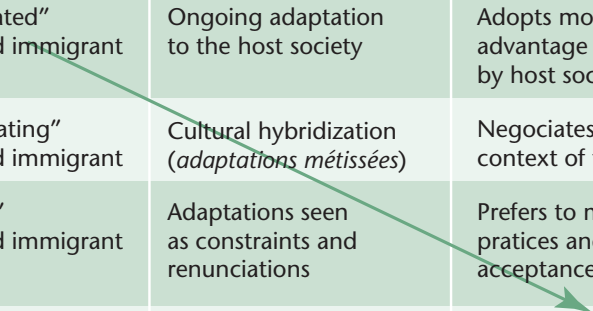
“This was something that really helped me a great deal, and I thank Quebec for giving me the possibility.” (mother, former Yugoslavia)

TO LEARN MORE

Alaoui, (2012); Dimé and others (2011); Therrien and others, (2011); Petit (2005); Rachédi and Halsouet (2015); Sarenac (2013).

This form of adaptation is part of a process of assimilation, as the bereaved immigrant takes another step toward being assimilated into the host society, adopting most of the practices and even taking advantage of options offered by the host society.

The diagram below summarizes the three adaptation strategies presented above, as well as their consequences for the host society.



Types/Reactions	Ritual funeral practices	Consequences for host society
“Assimilated” bereaved immigrant	Ongoing adaptation to the host society	Adopts most practices and takes advantage of context offered by host society
“Negociating” bereaved immigrant	Cultural hybridization (<i>adaptations métissées</i>)	Negotiates practices in the context of the host society
“Critical” bereaved immigrant	Adaptations seen as constraints and renunciations	Prefers to maintain traditional practices and demand their acceptance by host society Intercultural bricolage

Translation of *Figures d’endeuillés* diagram, (Rachédi and others, 2016)⁵

⁵ Rachédi, Montgomery, Halsouet and Javorka. (2016). *La mort des immigrants du Québec, un impensé symbolique de la laïcité ? Des endeuillés témoignent*. In connection with the congress on *La laïcité à l’épreuve des identités. Enjeux professionnels et pédagogiques dans le champ social, médico-social et éducatif*. France: Université de Mont-Saint-Aignan, February 4-5, 2016.

2. DEATH, MOURNING AND MIGRATION: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

So far, we have presented difficulties experienced by bereaved immigrants and strategies for adapting significant rituals. It is important to recognize, however, that many immigrants have also developed their own resources. Local and transnational networks and information technology are highly instrumental in helping immigrants deal with grief.

2.1 LOCAL NETWORKS

Local networks (mono- or pluri-ethnic) can be made up of neighbours, groups of friends or community organizations. The strength of these networks lies primarily in their geographical proximity and knowledge of the environment and local resources. That knowledge allows these networks to play an important role in giving immigrants guidance and advice on how things are done in the host society and providing assistance in emergencies or ad hoc situations. When a member of the community dies, for example, the network comes together to offer condolences, help with meal preparation, and so on. Local networks are joined by transnational networks.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Congolese community in Canada is relatively young, the result of a recent wave of immigrants. The non-profit organization *Communauté congolaise de Montréal* (COCOM) has taken steps to honour the dead: in 2015, the funeral home Magnus Poirier prepared the bodies of 25 deceased individuals from the Democratic Republic of the Congo for viewing. This average of two bodies a month is quite demanding for the Congolese community, which is not large in comparison to the number of deaths. To that preparation must be added the many messages of condolence to close family members still living back home or elsewhere in the world, whose deaths must be commemorated.

(Marie Rosaire Kalanga, transcultural psychologist)

Marduk, a native of Iran, tells how he grieved for his father from a distance with the support of his family, friends and members of the Iranian community:

My family and friends were my initial support

My name is Marduk. I lived in Iran until the age of 40, when I came to Quebec with my wife and son. That was in 2011, when my son was seven years old. In Iran, I had been a doctor for 15 years, but here, I am a Master's student in genomics. A year ago, my father died suddenly. It was one of my brothers who called to tell me. It was a shock that was very difficult for me to get over. Unlike my mother, my father had had no health problems; his death was very sudden. I was very close to my parents. When I was in Iran, I looked after their health and helped them a lot. It was difficult for us when I immigrated to Canada. Sometimes I'm sorry I came. I tell myself that if I had stayed at home, I could have helped them much more. It's thoughts like those that have made my loss more difficult to accept, I think.

When I learned that my father had died, I wanted to go home, but I couldn't leave my wife and son alone here, so I didn't go. I have four sisters and two brothers, all living in Iran. It was hard not to be with them. We talked about what we were going through on video chat, especially with two of my sisters and one of my brothers that I'm closest to. That helped a bit. Then, my brother came to Canada six months later, and that really helped me. But the person who helped me the most was my wife, Fatima. For a week or two, she went everywhere with me—to the university, everywhere. She wanted to give me her support and did everything she could to be with me. Some of our neighbours who had become our friends, several of whom were from Iran, were also very supportive. When they learned of my father's death, they came over and spent time with me, offering their sympathy and support. They held a ritual in remembrance of my father. They helped me a great deal—not financially or anything like that, but psychologically. They did everything they could to help me, which I really didn't expect. I felt that they really understood my situation.

My family and those friends were my initial support, followed by the Iranian community in Montreal. I organized a ceremony for my father at the community centre, and some 70 or 80 people—women and men—came to offer their condolences.

We talked and ate together, paying homage to my father, who was actually quite well known in Iran. He had been very involved in religion, and had been a professor at the university and in religious schools. Some of his students now held very senior positions. For those reason, one of my friends took the initiative of contacting people my father knew well. One of them wrote his biography and sent it to my friend, who read it to the assembly at the commemorative service.

Then I organized another commemorative event at my home, to which I invited my neighbours. I was also able to talk about what I was going through with two friends at the university. I didn't go to the clinic or to any other organization because I didn't know who could help me. Since I'm a very introverted person, I didn't expect to receive any kind of assistance and didn't look for any, either. I didn't know anything about the CLSC, and even if I had, I'm not sure I would have gone. The death of my father was, and still is, very hard for me—not just because he's gone, but because it led me to question my choice to come here. I think it would have easier if I had been in Iran.

My sisters and brothers offered to send me some objects that had belonged to my father, but I didn't want anything. It's already hard enough without having reminders of him around me all the time. So I just asked them to keep an old kettle for me that my father had inherited from his own father. For me, it's more of a symbol of my identity than a symbol of my father, who treasured the kettle for the same reasons. My father was grateful that he knew his ancestry, and was very attached to his family identity and genealogy. He was also a very good person. I believe that I have inherited his character traits. I was born in Tehran, but my father's entire family—his father, grandfather, great-grandfather and all our ancestors—were from a small city called Saoud.

I am very attached to Saoud. I am also attached to my ancestors, because they were very well known for their involvement in that region, and were recognized as being people of great kindness who did a lot to help others. When I die, I would like to be buried there, like my father and his fathers before him.

If I could offer some advice to people who are mourning the loss of a loved one far from their family, it would be to take advantage of the support offered by their friends and family, to keep them close. It's very important during the first days and weeks following the funeral. Afterwards, it gradually becomes easier to deal with the situation. At the beginning, it's important not to remain isolated. I would tell them to go out with friends, family and the members of their community in order to obtain comfort and ease their grief.

2.2 TRANSNATIONAL NETWORKS

Transnational networks are made up of relatives, friends and other significant people living in an immigrant's country of origin or elsewhere in the world. Even when family members are scattered around the globe, they are still able to provide each other with assistance and support. The preservation of these bonds is what enables transnational networks to fulfill their role of supporting and guiding immigrant families throughout their trajectory, especially in times of death. Transnational networks provide different forms of assistance in such circumstances, starting with the geographical displacement required to provide support to loved ones. This transnational movement is not in just one direction: trips of varying duration are made to the immigrants' new country and to their country of origin. In their examination of the specific connection between transnational and local networks, Montgomery and others (2010) mention the advantages of having a range of mutually reinforcing networks that "weave a substantial social fabric around an individual at significant moments in the life cycle." That was the case for an Algerian couple whose child died shortly after birth and who, thanks to money collected from those in attendance at the funeral, were able to purchase a plane ticket to allow the bereaved mother to go home to Algeria and share her grief with her loved ones (Montgomery and others, 2010).

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Association de sépulture Musulmane au Québec (ASMQ) has also negotiated an agreement with Magnus Poirier funeral homes to obtain a Muslim cemetery plot in Montreal. <http://www.sepulturemusulmane.ca/>

Faisal, a native of Senegal, talks about the difficulties related to mourning from a distance and the support he received following the death of his father:

“Man is the remedy for man” (Senegalese proverb)

My name is Faisal, and I am from Senegal. I came to Montreal, Quebec in 2008 as a permanent resident. I was 33 years old at the time. My older sister had already been living in Quebec for 10 years. My other sister, who is younger, is still living in Senegal, as is my brother.

My arrival in Quebec was not easy, and I had a lot of trouble finding work. In April 2010, the year my father died, I had just started at my first job here. My father, who was 83 at the time, died as a result of an illness. It was my little sister who called me at 5:00 in the morning to give me the news of his death. It was a big shock; I didn't know what to do. I decided to call my employer, who gave me a few days off, then I went to be with my big sister and her husband. From her house, we called our aunts and our cousins. Some were in Toronto, but others were in France, the United States and Italy. We had to tell them what had happened. We used every kind of network: Skype, Facebook, telephone, email... Thanks to technology, it's easy to communicate. Before 10:00 that morning, I had already received messages of sympathy.

All of my family and friends knew how attached I was to my father. I have the name of his own father—my grandfather—and that created an close bond between us. I was completely at a loss;

I didn't know what to do. I was with my fiancée, and we had planned to go back to Senegal to get married once we had saved enough money, but now, with my father's death... I was afraid of losing my job if I went home and, anyway, I couldn't afford it. I talked about it with my mother, who told me not to come because my father was going to be buried very quickly in accordance with Muslim custom, and that I wouldn't be able to get there in time. It was my brother who looked after everything.

It was still a really big shock for both myself and for the whole family. Our father had died, would be buried in our absence, and we wouldn't see him again... My sister and I needed to be a part of all that, so we decided to organize a funeral here in Canada on the same day. We informed all the people who were close to us and they came to offer their condolences and share our sorrow. When someone dies, all you can do is pray, so they prayed with us. My sister had a friend who was very religious and who had been here for a long time. He helped us a great deal in organizing the funeral here in Quebec. This friend knew an imam who had come here from Guinea, and he got everyone together from the mosque. He came to my sister's house and carried out rituals and prayers at her home and at the mosque. After all we had been through, the religion was a great comfort to us, but so were all the people who came to be with us. When those who are close to us come to connect with us and support us, it's really important. Life is based on relationships. As the saying goes, "Man is the remedy for man."

Nothing will ever change the fact that we were unable to be present at my father's funeral in Senegal. For my sister and me, it will always be our greatest regret. I don't know if there are organizations that could have helped us; we didn't know where to turn. Maybe if we had received financial assistance for the plane tickets, we could have participated in the three days of mourning even if we missed the funeral. At the time of my father's death, our close friends and family transferred money to us to help us travel back home, but since our work made it difficult to take time off, we preferred to send the money to my mother.

A few months later, however, I was able to put together a combination of loans, some money from my sister and what I had set aside for my marriage in order to pay for a trip to Senegal. My fiancée and I went together and were married there. I also organized another funeral for my father while I was there.

It was an important duty I had to fulfill, and it did me a lot of good. We repeated the rituals and prayed with everyone and the neighbourhood imam. I brought back a suit of my father's that I wear when I pray. It means a lot to me: since he liked that suit, it's as if he were here with me.

It helps me to know that my father died peacefully in his old age, and I was grateful to be able to pray beside his grave. He was buried in the Muslim cemetery not far from the family home. I would like to be buried there as well when I die. Every year, here and in Senegal, we commemorate the day of his death. It helps a lot. What also helps is moral support. I went into a lot of debt in order to go back home, but that's not really important. What's important are all the people who came to offer us comfort and support. Now I try to do the same for others who need it, because I know what kind of financial, moral and psychological difficulties they are going through. It really is incalculable. I believe that at times like that, we have to come together—regardless of our religion—to find out what resources are available in our neighbourhood, in our country. We have to go and try to obtain information, build relationships. We should initiate an action plan for grieving families in an immigrant land to ensure they can obtain not only financial support but also moral and psychological support. That is the appeal I am making to the government and organizations.

2.3 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT): THE “CONNECTED IMMIGRANT” (DIMINESCU, 2006)

Information and communication technology (ICT) is an invaluable tool for immigrants who want to create and maintain transnational networks, whether by telephone (landline or mobile), social media (blogs, wikis, social networking, Skype), traditional media, electronic banking, letters and so on. These tools add value to their transnational communications, enabling them to see and talk to family and close friends in real time. ICT makes it easier to circulate advice and pass on news, both good and bad. Carmen, a woman interviewed in connection with the SSHRC study (Rachédi and others, 2013-2016), talks about how she uses ICT to maintain her connection with the members of her family:

“My network is my family back home, especially my mother, who I’m always in contact with on Skype, the Internet, by telephone... My four brothers and three sisters are all in Mexico as well. I have other networks elsewhere that are very important for me: thanks to a blog that my aunt set up, I’m in constant contact with my cousins. Every day, we post photos, share our news and give each other support via the Internet.

When Carmen’s father died, she told us that she had *“made a video of [her] father, including photos and scenes from his life in homage to him, and also posted photos on Facebook, along with a dictionary of special phrases he liked to use [she laughs] and that we were all familiar with... it’s nice to remember him that way.”*

These communication tools can also play an important role when a loved one dies, especially when family members living abroad cannot attend the funeral. **Information and communication technology thus plays a major role in maintaining transnational networks. In the event of a death, for example, these tools allow bereaved immigrants to contact their family and close friends around the world in order to inform them, offer condolences and organize—or even finance—the funeral.**

Some funeral homes have also begun to offer families access to online applications like Skype or FaceTime during the actual funeral service, giving family members living abroad the opportunity to watch or even virtually participate in the ceremony.

In addition to giving bereaved immigrants a way to stay in touch with their family abroad and virtually attend a funeral, these tools can serve other purposes. There are, for example, a large number of websites that offer online support to the bereaved. Falconer (2011) has divided these sites into different categories: information resources, online support groups, social networks and online memorials (such as cyber cemeteries and memorial sites).

As we have explained in this section, mourning from a distance involves all sorts of uncertainties that result in additional challenges for bereaved immigrants, for whom the death of a loved one is just one more loss among the many associated with the migratory process. We began by looking at the role of funeral rituals for the bereaved. We also presented some basic information on the religious rituals practised by six different religions. Since various administrative and legal restrictions of the host society make it impossible for certain religious funeral rituals to be reproduced in their entirety, we presented three types of adaptation that bereaved immigrants have applied to accommodate those constraints: forced adaptation or renunciation, cultural hybridization (adaptations métissées) and adaptation in continuity with the host society. To face these challenges, immigrants also use such resources as local and transnational networks and information technology.

The following section provides practical information on the procedures to follow when someone dies, as well as the laws and standards that govern death and care of the body after death.



TO LEARN MORE

Baldassar and others (2007); Bogui and others (2013); Bryceson and Vuorela (2002); Falconer (2011); Gardner (2002a); Goulbourne and Chamberlain (2001); Le Gall (2009); Mazzucato and others (2006); Montgomery and others (2010); Proulx (2008); Rachédi and others (2010); Reynolds and Zontini (2006); Smati (2013); Vatz Laaroussi (2009); Diminescu (2002).

DEATH IN CANADA AND QUEBEC: PRACTICAL INFORMATION

(LEGISLATION AND STANDARDS GOVERNING DEATH AND CARE OF THE BODY AFTER DEATH)

This section provides information for immigrants on the procedure to be followed in the event of death. This information may be useful for immigrants who are unfamiliar with the laws of the host society—or for native Canadians who do not necessarily know the legal norms and steps to be followed after a death.

1. ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOLLOWING A DEATH: WHAT IMMIGRANTS ARE REQUIRED TO DO

When a loved one dies, families are faced with a myriad of administrative procedures. We have divided these procedures into four categories:

- Financial aspects
- Settlement of the succession
- Death benefits and indemnities
- Labour/employment standards.

Note that these procedures are not necessarily in the order in which they must be carried out. There may also be other steps to complete, depending on the immigrant's personal situation, i.e., whether there is a surviving spouse, inheritor, liquidator of the succession, etc.⁶

⁶ The English legal terminology used in this document is based on the translation of the Quebec Civil Code.

FINANCIAL ASPECTS

The mandatory, succession liquidator or the family must notify the deceased's financial institution as soon as possible. On receipt of the proof of death (from the hospital or funeral home) or death certificate issued by the provincial government, the accounts in the name of the deceased (including joint accounts) will be frozen until the liquidator has been appointed. The liquidator must present the bank with proof that the will search has been carried out (search certificate). This proof authorizes the liquidator to open an estate account in the name of the deceased into which all his or her assets can be assembled and the necessary transactions processed.

The liquidator must inform all service providers (Hydro-Québec, telephone company, Internet provider, etc.), financial institutions (bank, *Caisse populaire*, credit card company, etc.), employers and landlord of the death in order to prevent any fraudulent action on the deceased's accounts and minimize interest costs. He or she must also determine whether the deceased held insurance: life insurance, accidental death insurance, mortgage life insurance, car insurance or credit card insurance. Copies of proof of death and will search will be required by all service providers.

TO LEARN MORE

- Revenu Quebec
- Canada Revenue Agency

DID YOU KNOW...?

A will is a "document by means of which a person bequeaths his property and expresses his last wishes in the event of his death" (translation of definition provided by the Quebec government). The family of the deceased needs this document in order to settle the succession. Three forms of will are recognized under the Quebec Civil Code:

- Notarial will: drafted and certified by a notary
- Holograph will: handwritten and signed by the person him/herself. Generally, when someone has prepared this type of will, they keep it in a safe place (with their personal papers or in a safety deposit box, for example) and inform someone they trust of its location.
- Will before witnesses: prepared by the person him/herself (testator) or another person and signed by the testator and countersigned by witnesses.

If the family does not know if the deceased had a will, they must file a search request with the Registers of Testamentary Dispositions and Mandates of the *Chambre des notaires du Québec*.

DID YOU KNOW...?

If someone withdraws funds from the deceased's account without notifying the financial institution, that person is considered to have accepted the succession of the deceased and, as such, could find themselves responsible for his or her debts.

SETTLING THE SUCCESSION

All successions have a liquidator (i.e., someone in charge of settling the deceased's succession), even if there is no will. The liquidator may be named in the will; if there is no will or no liquidator is named, the heirs must share the responsibilities. They may also appoint one of their number to be the sole liquidator or hire a professional (such as a notary or lawyer) to fulfil this function. The liquidator must ensure that the deceased's declarations of income (provincial and federal) have been prepared before requesting a certificate authorizing the distribution of the property of a deceased person.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The death certificate and copy of the act of death are civil status documents that are required in order to settle the succession. Most funeral homes will help the family of the deceased obtain these documents, but they may also be obtained by contacting the office of the *Directeur de l'état civil*.

TO LEARN MORE

- Guide: "What to do in the event of death" published by the Quebec government: http://www4.gouv.qc.ca/EN/Portail/Citoyens/Evenements/deces/Documents/guide_deces_anglais_2016_2017_web_V2.pdf
- Information kit for members of cultural communities dealing with terminal illness or death.

DEATH BENEFITS AND INDEMNITIES

The maximum amount of the Special Benefit for Funeral Expenses offered by the Quebec government under its Social Assistance or Social Solidarity programs is \$2,500 and may be granted by the *Ministère du Travail, de l'Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale*. Eligible expenses for this benefit include "everything related to the funeral, including the cost of transporting the remains to be interred in his country of origin, up to the maximum amount provided" (translation, Government of Quebec, n.d.). Although priority for this (taxable) benefit is given to individuals who have paid funeral expenses, certain conditions apply for receipt of the benefit. There are three types of financial assistance provided under the **survivor's benefit granted by the *Régie des rentes du Québec***, based on personal situation:

- Death benefit
- Surviving spouse's pension
- Orphan's pension.

N.B.: In order to be eligible for this form of financial assistance, the deceased must have made sufficient contributions to the Quebec Pension Plan.

DID YOU KNOW...?

If the liquidator is a family member living abroad, there may be significant fiscal repercussions. In such cases, the succession is considered to be a “foreign succession” and, as such, is heavily taxed.

QUEBEC LABOUR STANDARDS IN THE EVENT OF DEATH

Quebec’s labour standards are the minimum standards for employees who do not have a labour agreement. In the event of a death, these standards grant employees leave based on their relationship to the deceased. For example, an employee may be absent from work for:

Five days, including one day with pay, in the case of the death or funeral of:

- his or her spouse
- his or her child
- the child of his or her spouse
- his or her father or mother
- his or her brother or sister.

One day without pay in the case of the death or funeral of:

- his or her son- or daughter-in-law
- his or her grandparents
- his or her grandchild
- the father or mother of his or her spouse
- the brother or sister of his or her spouse.

N.B.: Relatives of the deceased may ask their employer if they have a labour agreement that entitles them to additional days of leave.

TO LEARN MORE

Labour standards: See the website of the *Commission des normes du travail du Québec* (2014), under “Death or suicide”: <http://www.cnt.gouv.qc.ca/en/leaves-and-absences/family-events/death-suicide>

Note that since January 1, 2016, the *Commission des normes du travail* (CNT), the *Commission de l’équité salariale* (CES) and the *Commission de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CSST) have been combined into a single body, called the *Commission des normes, de l’équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail* (CNESST).

TO LEARN MORE

- Visit the website of the *Ministère du Travail, de l’Emploi et de la Solidarité sociale* at https://www.mess.gouv.qc.ca/index_en.asp
- Local employment centre.

2. CANADIAN LAWS AND STANDARDS RELATED TO DEATH AND PREPARATION OF THE BODY

Canadian laws and standards related to death and preparation of the body can limit the extent to which certain religious requirements for a “good death” can be carried out. To better understand these limits, this guide looks at the administrative steps that must be taken following a death, as well as four important aspects :

- Interment, disinterment and presentation/viewing of the body
- Embalming
- Incineration and disposal of ashes
- Repatriation.

INTERMENT, DISINTERMENT AND PRESENTATION/VIEWING OF THE BODY

It is important to point out that in Canada, it is the provinces that are responsible for regulating the funeral and burial industry and that, in certain cases, municipal regulations may apply to local cemeteries. In 2016, Quebec adopted the *Funeral Operations Act*. This new act, which repeals the former *Burial Act* of 1974, stipulates that all interments must be carried out in a plot or a mausoleum located in a cemetery, and that ministerial authorization is required for interment in any other place (section 55). Disinterment must be authorized by the court (section 56) and certain conditions apply (sections 57-61).

The presentation or viewing of a body must be held by a funeral services business in the following locations:

- in a room permanently set up for the viewing of bodies or human ashes that appears on the business’s licence
- in a room temporarily set up for the viewing of bodies or human ashes, provided the business’s licence authorizes the operation of a room permanently set up for such purposes, or
- in a room operated by the business, before the body’s embalming or cremation and solely for identification purposes (section 34).

EMBALMING

The legal framework for this practice is set out in the *Act respecting medical laboratories, organ and tissue conservation and the disposal of human bodies* (RLRQ c L-0.2) as well as in the *Regulation respecting the application of the Act respecting medical laboratories, organ and tissue conservation and the disposal of human bodies* (*Ibid.*, r. 1). Embalming, “a process used to preserve and disinfect a body after death” (Government of Quebec, RLRQ c L-0.2), is compulsory in Quebec only if the body “is to be viewed for more than 24 hours, or [...] more than 18 hours after death” or if the body is to be transported outside of the province of Quebec (*Ibid.*).

INCINERATION AND DISPOSAL OF ASHES

In Quebec, it is only since 1963 that cremation or incineration, which “means an act of burning the human remains or bodies of deceased persons for the purpose of reducing them to ashes” (Government of Québec, RLRQ c L-0.2) has been permitted by the Church. Since that date, anyone may choose to be cremated after their death. This practice is regulated under section 69 of the *Act respecting medical laboratories, organ and tissue conservation and the disposal of human bodies*, which specifies that at least 12 hours must have elapsed after the attestation of death before a body may be incinerated. After the body has been cremated, the ashes are given to the family to be disposed of as they see fit, unless the deceased has expressed his or her wishes concerning the disposal of his or her ashes (*Ibid.*). Families may therefore choose to keep the ashes, scatter them, deposit them in a columbarium or bury them (*Ibid.*). The *Funeral Operations Act*, which regulates the disposal of human ashes, stipulates that the ashes must be “[handed] over to a single person in one or more containers, which must hold all the ashes” (section 70).

Furthermore, “no one may scatter human ashes in a place where they may constitute a nuisance or in a manner that fails to respect the dignity of the deceased person” (section 71).

DID YOU KNOW...?

Even though the first crematorium in Canada was established in 1901 at the Mount Royal Cemetery, it was not until cremation was formally permitted by the Church in 1963 that cremation became popular.

REPATRIATION

Canada requires that a body be embalmed prior to its repatriation to another country or province (AFIF, n.d.; Nadeau, 2013), and that bodies being transported by air be placed in a hermetically sealed coffin. Transportation or repatriation of mortal remains is the responsibility of the funeral director and may require authorization from the coroner (Government of Quebec, n.d.). The Quebec government specifies that the request to repatriate a body or ashes must be made as soon as possible following notice of death and that the time required for repatriation varies depending on such factors as cause and place of death (*Ibid.*). In reality, administrative red tape and the high cost of repatriation (which can be at least \$10,000, depending on the country of destination and weight of the cargo) often discourages immigrants who have lost a loved one from returning his or her remains to the country of origin.

DID YOU KNOW...?

The role of Quebec funeral homes in repatriating mortal remains includes:

- Contacting the consulate or embassy
- Looking after obtaining all official documents
- Making the necessary arrangements with the airline company for transportation of the remains

Note that this procedure may be more complicated and lengthy if there is no consulate in Quebec or direct flight to the country of origin.

The family of the deceased is responsible for arranging to have a funeral home in the country of origin take receipt of the remains of the deceased at the airport and organize the funeral.

DID YOU KNOW...?

In February 2016, Bill 66: Funeral Operations Act was adopted by the Quebec National Assembly. The purpose of this Act, which created a new legal framework for funeral operations, is to “ensure that public health is protected and that the dignity of deceased persons is respected. It specifies the funeral operations concerned and establishes a licensing system for funeral services businesses and another for embalmers.” The Act also “includes provisions on the preservation and storage of bodies, on cemeteries, columbaria and mausoleums, and on the interment, disinterment and cremation of bodies as well as provisions on the transportation of bodies and the disposal of human ashes and unclaimed bodies.”

LEGAL RESOURCES REGARDING FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

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Portail Québec. (n.d., b). *Exposition et embaumement du corps d'un défunt: obligations et règles* [documentation in French only]. Retrieved on August 11, 2015 from: <http://www4.gouv.qc.ca/fr/Portail/citoyens/programme-service/Pages/Info.aspx?sqctype=sujet&sqcid=73>

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Robert, M. (2014). *Encyclopédie sur la mort. La naissance de la crémation au Québec* [documentation]. Retrieved on August 11, 2015 from: http://agora.qc.ca/thematiques/mort/documents/la_naissance_de_la_cremation_au_quebec



Notre-Dame-des-Neiges Cemetery (mausoleum)
4601 Côte-des-Neiges Road, Montreal, Quebec H3V 1E7



SECTION III

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

There are close to 470 places of worship on the Island of Montreal alone (<http://www.lieuxdeculte.qc.ca/carte.php?region=06>). What follows is an overview of the various establishments devoted to different faiths—Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Catholicism and Buddhism—along with some additional references for each.

1. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PLACES OF WORSHIP

ISLAM

Since the presence of a Muslim population is a relatively new development in Quebec, its heritage is also quite young. The first mosque was built in the province in 1965 in Ville Saint-Laurent; it has since been joined by another 80, three-quarters of which are located in Greater Montreal.

There are also several Muslim burial sites. The first to be created was the *Cimetière islamique de Laval*, which was opened in the 1990s and is unique in Canada (Nadeau, 2013). This cemetery, which was already almost full in 2013, is divided into two sections: the *Cimetière islamique Sunnite* and the *Cimetière islamique Hamza*. In the private commemorative gardens at the Rideau Memorial Gardens in

Dollard-des-Ormeaux (in the northwest of the Island of Montreal), there is a section reserved for members of the Muslim community where several hundred Muslims are buried (ASMQ, n.d.). Over the past few years, there has been a strong movement among religious leaders, intellectuals and associations to create new projects for Muslim burial sites. None of these projects has come to fruition, however, as they have been refused by municipalities in the regions concerned. The *Association de la Sépulture Musulmane du Québec* (ASMQ), whose mission is to protect and promote the Muslim funerary heritage in Quebec, finally decided to create a Muslim section (Muslim plot) in an existing cemetery.

TO LEARN MORE

To find out more about the various religions' places of worship, visit the website of the Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity of the Université de Montréal at <http://www.gdcr.umontreal.ca/eng/index.html>

TO LEARN MORE

For a list of mosques in Montreal, visit <http://www.montrealarabic.com/mosques.php>

Visit the website of the *Association de la Sépulture Musulmane du Québec* (ASMQ): <http://www.sepulturemusulmane.ca/>

TO LEARN MORE

List of synagogues in Quebec: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_synagogues_in_Canada#Quebec

Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious Diversity of the Université de Montréal: <http://www.gdcr.umontreal.ca/patrimoine/connaissance/judaisme/judaisme.html> (in French)

The first Muslim burial plot was inaugurated in June 2015 in the Magnus Poirier cemetery in Laval, just north of Montreal, with space for 3,000 graves.



Islamic Centre of Quebec
2520 Laval Street, Ville Saint-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H4L 3A1

JUDAISM

The first Jew arrived in Quebec in 1760, and the first synagogue was built on the north side of Mount Royal in 1768, with Quebec City following suit 10 years later. Ever since that time, Jewish culture has been an integral part of the Quebec mosaic, especially in the Montreal region, where there are several predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods. The north slope of Mount Royal is now home to the large cemetery of the Shaar Hashomayim congregation that was founded by immigrants from central and Eastern Europe in 1846, 69 years after the founding of the province's first Jewish cemetery.



Shaar Hashomayim Congregation
450 Kensington Avenue, Westmount, Montreal, Québec H3Y 3A3

HINDUISM

In Quebec and elsewhere around the world, the primary place of worship for Hindus is traditionally the home. Every practising Hindu family reserves a sacred space in their home for prayers and rituals. The temple is a place of celebration that is particularly active during festivals. There are nine Hindu temples in the greater Montreal region.

The Hindu community in Quebec, which is primarily concentrated in the greater Montreal region, is divided into two groups:

- Hindus from northern India who worship the god Vishnu, and
- Tamils from Sri Lanka who worship Shiva.



Ramji Temple Mandhata
8155 Durocher Street, Montreal, Quebec H3N 2A8

BUDDHISM

There are some 50 Buddhist meditation centres (temples and associations) in Quebec. These places for practice and meditation are mainly concentrated in the Montreal area and are affiliated with different schools of thought or countries, like Zen Buddhism, which originated in Japan, and Tibetan Buddhism.



Quan Am Buddhist Society
3781 de Coutrai Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H3S 1B8

CATHOLICISM

Because of its rich past, the Catholic heritage (churches, convents and cemeteries) is still a strong presence in the province of Quebec. Catholic churches have historically played a role far exceeding their function as places of worship, serving as schools, cultural and community centres and meeting places. The central location of the church in virtually every Quebec village and municipality bears witness to the central role it has played in Quebec society.

Saint Joseph's Oratory and the Basilica of Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré are two monuments of Quebec Catholicism that still welcome thousands of pilgrims every year from all over the world. Constructed in 1848 on Mount Royal, Notre-Dame-des-Neiges cemetery is the largest Catholic cemetery in Canada.



Saint Joseph's Oratory
3800 Queen Mary Road, Montreal, Quebec H3V 1H6

Photographs of places of worship: Katherine Rochon

TO LEARN MORE

- Visit <http://www.gdcr.umontreal.ca/patrimoine/connaissance/hindouisme/hindouisme.html> (in French only)
- For a list of Hindu temples in Quebec, see: http://allhindutemples.com/?multi_city=Quebec OR https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Hindu_temples_in_Canada#cite_note-4

TO LEARN MORE

For the locations of Buddhist centres in Quebec, see: <http://www.jutier.net/contenu/bouque.htm>

TO LEARN MORE

For a list of Catholic places of worship in Quebec, see: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_des_lieux_de_culte_catholiques_du_Qu%C3%A9bec AND: <http://www.gdcr.umontreal.ca/patrimoine/connaissance/catholicisme/index.html> (in French only)

TO LEARN MORE

Information on funeral cooperatives: <http://www.fcfq.coop/en>

OR:

<http://www.cfgrandmont-real.com/en>

FUNERAL BUSINESSES

There are two types of funeral business: cooperative and private. There are 20 funeral cooperatives in Quebec that are members of the *Fédération des coopératives funéraires* (FCFQ), including the *Coopérative funéraire du Grand Montréal* located in Saint-Hubert.

A list of funeral businesses in Quebec is available at <https://www.domainefuneraire.com/english>

Certain services are provided by all funeral businesses:

- Pre-arrangements and last wishes
- Transfer of the body
- Preparation (embalming) and care of the body
- Visitation and viewing
- Cremation and burial
- Cemetery procedures
- Arrangements following a death abroad, or repatriation of the body or ashes to another country
- Specialized products
- Memorial cards, floral arrangements, caterers, monuments, etc.
- Death notice and obituary in the newspapers, death notice online, online funeral streaming, etc.

For more information, consult the information kit for members of cultural communities dealing with terminal illness or death.

RESEARCH

Groupe de recherche interdisciplinaire sur le Montréal ethnoreligieux (GRIMER): <http://geo.uqam.ca/recherche/unites-de-recherche/14-recherche/unites-de-recherche/31-groupe-de-recherche-interdisciplinaire-sur-le-montreal-ethnoreligieux-grimer.html>

Department of religious studies at UQAM: www.religion.uqam.ca

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at Université de Montréal: www.ftsr.umontreal.ca

Chair for the Management of Cultural and Religious-Diversity at Université de Montréal: <http://www.gdcr.umontreal.ca/eng/index.html>

Centre d'étude des religions de l'Université de Montréal (CÉRUM): <http://www.cerum.umontreal.ca/english/index.html>

Chaire de recherche du Canada Islam, pluralisme et globalisation: www.cerum.umontreal.ca/islam

Centre d'écoute et d'interprétation des nouvelles recherches du croire (CÉINR): www.cinr.qc.ca

Centre for Studies in Religion and Society at the University of Victoria: <http://csrs.uvic.ca>

Commission des droits de la personne et des droits de la Jeunesse: <http://www.cdpdj.qc.ca/en/droits-de-la-personne/Pages/default.aspx>

Montreal Religious Sites Project: <http://mrsp.mcgill.ca>

2. CONSULATES

Certain consulates offer their citizens legal and financial assistance in the event of death. Countries such as Algeria, Morocco and Columbia have also made arrangements to facilitate the transfer of bodies of nationals who have died abroad, including partial or complete payment of costs (subject to certain conditions). Immigrants who have lost a loved one are encouraged to contact their consulate to find out what services they are eligible for.

For a complete list of consular offices in Canada:
<http://w03.international.gc.ca/protocol-protocole/consular-consulats.aspx?lang=eng>

SELECTED MONTREAL CONSULATES

Algeria

3415 Saint-Urbain St.
Montreal, Quebec H2X 2N2, Canada
Telephone: 514-846-0442
Fax: 514-846-8127
Website: <http://consulatalgeriemontreal.com/v1.0/>
Email: consalg@qc.aira.com

Burkina Faso

1 Place Ville-Marie
Montreal, Quebec H3B 4M4, Canada
Telephone: 514-878-5526
Fax: 514-871-8977

Egypt

1000, De la Gauchetière St. West, suite 3320
Montreal, Quebec H3B 4W5, Canada
Telephone: 514-866-8455
Fax: 514-866-0835
Website: <http://www.egyptianconsulate.ca/>

France

1501 McGill College Ave., suite 1000
Montreal, Quebec H3A 3M8, Canada
Telephone: 514-878-4385 or 514-878-6221
Fax: 514-878-3981
Website: <http://consulfrance-montreal.org>
Email: info@consulfrance-montreal.org

Iraq

3019 Saint-Sulpice Rd.
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1B6, Canada
Telephone: 514-931-8555
Fax: 514-931-8525

Lebanon

40 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Rd.
Montreal, Quebec H2V 2A2, Canada
Telephone: 514-276-2638/2639
Fax: 514-276-0090
Website: <http://www.consulibanmontreal.com/>

Morocco

2192 René-Lévesque Blvd. West
Montreal, Quebec H3H 1R6, Canada
Telephone: 514-288-8750
Fax: 514-288-4859
Website: <http://www.consulatdumaroc.ca/>

Pakistan

3421 Peel St.
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1W7, Canada
Telephone: 514-845-2297
Fax: 514-845-1354
Website: <http://www.pakmission.ca/>

Tunisia

1255 Robert-Bourassa Blvd.
Montreal, Quebec H3B 3B4, Canada
Telephone: 514-844-6909/2342/3619
Fax: 514-844-5895
Website: <http://www.ambassade-tunisie.ca/coordonnees-consulat.html>

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⁷ This selection of French-language films and novels was compiled by Yannick Boucher (Doctoral student at the Université de Montréal), under the direction of Lilyane Rachédi (2016), with the help of a grant from the SHERPA Research and training Centre. A portion of this compilation is also available on the SHERPA website.

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