

# DEMOCRACY IN ACTION



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Acorn Institute Canada 2012 Year End Report

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## ACORN INSTITUTE CANADA 2012 YEAR END REPORT

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#### ***About Acorn Institute Canada***

ACORN Institute Canada (AIC) is a charitable organization that uses research and training to address the problems in low-income communities. We believe that the poverty, discrimination, and community deterioration that exists in low-income communities is a result of a lack civic engagement, community leadership and financial literacy. AIC exists to address these deficiencies by providing research and training through the national non-profit organization ACORN Canada to low-income communities across the country.

**[www.acorninstitute.ca](http://www.acorninstitute.ca)**



### **Community Leadership Development**

Since AIC's founding in 2005, our work in local communities has allowed us to gain extensive experience and build a tremendous knowledge base on how to develop leaders and engage communities; knowledge we have used to develop our Leadership Schools. Leadership Schools are full day trainings designed to give community members and leaders the skills necessary to build a local community organization. As leaders are developed locally, they take over the facilitation of leadership

schools to ensure they are organically connected to the community in which they take place.

AIC's leadership school program engages the community with the goal of creating local community leaders who are better equipped to impliment on community-based ideas about how best to address the socio-economic challenges that affect all low-income people.



### **Tenant Working Groups**

The tenant working group model of civic engagement arose after participants in our workshops, trainings and meetings identified negligent landlords as their single largest concern affecting their community. This model calls for graduates of our leadership schools that have identified landlord issues as their primary concern to establish working groups with other concerned tenants in the neighbourhood. Working with other community stakeholders, the tenant working groups can leverage change in their community and tie their efforts together with the other tenant working groups to move towards a larger, more structural change. They allow

tenants and community members to build a greater understand of multiple levels of government processes and to educate and share knowledge with each other.



### Financial Literacy

Through partnerships with banks, credit unions and other financial institutions in recent years we've carried out a number of different financial literacy projects. These projects have taken different forms in different cities but have allowed us to provide our constituency with financial literacy classes with an emphasis on predatory lending avoidance and understanding and maximizing tax benefits. These are ongoing projects and partnerships that continue to expand each year.

### Key Highlights from 2012

- On March 17 we gathered 20 community leaders from across the country in Brampton for a national Leadership School. Participants were given the opportunity to build leadership and outreach skills to take back to their communities.
- This year with support from the Community Foundation of Ottawa and working with community leaders and volunteers, we built on our existing financial literacy program in Ottawa through guiding hundreds of families in filing taxes and managing personal and household finances.
- We partnered with the Vancouver Foundation on our Healthy Homes project in downtown Surrey, which produced many victories including the introduction of a Standards of Maintenance by-law. Community members participated in focus groups and meetings with the City of Surrey and community partners to build networks and expand low income tenants' capacity to understand by-laws and municipal processes.

### 2012 Institutional Funders

- Vancouver Foundation
- Community Foundation of Ottawa
- Ontario Trillium Foundation
- Communications Energy and Paperworkers Union
- Atkinson Charitable Foundation
- J. W. McConnell Family Foundation